Dugin on Ethnicity vs. Race

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Since liberalism, as an ideology founded on the rights of the individual, calls for “the liberation from all forms of collective identity in general, [and is therefore] entirely incompatible with the ethnos and ethnocentrism, and is an expression of a systematic theoretical and technological ethnocide,” “ethnocentrism” and the positive affirmation of “ethnic” identity are viewed by Dugin as a potential base for resistance to liberalism. This is why he argues that “ethnocentrism” can be viewed as a positive component of National Socialism, if it is neutralized by purging it of any racial or national connotations.

Dugin’s notion of “ethnos” has nothing to do with race — he makes it very clear that it is a purely cultural, linguistic and sociological concept with no biological basis. As we shall see, Dugin’s concept of “ethnocentrism,” which he says is derived from the German sociologist Wilhelm Mühlmann (who, however, was a convinced National Socialist and racialist – in the sense that he accepted the biological reality of race as a factor in the genesis of cultures), differs from the commonly accepted meaning of this term.

As for the concept of the “ethnos” itself, in The Fourth Political Theory he only touches upon it in passing, defining it as “a community of language, religious belief, daily life, and the sharing of resources and goals.” However, he develops it much more fully in a lecture series on “ethno-sociology” (a term that means the same as cultural or social anthropology, ethnology or structural anthropology), which can be viewed on YouTube. This lecture series clarifies what Dugin actually means by the term ethnos. It also presents categories of thought characteristic of non-Western, archaic societies, which are presented as part of Dugin’s project to find an alternative to the destructive and nihilistic “Western logos.”

The first part of Dugin’s course is a very summary overview of different national schools of social anthropology, which he sees as an important peripheral scientific discipline that has the potential to challenge and subvert Western cultural hegemony (i.e., Western “racism”). Those familiar with the work of Kevin MacDonald and his book The Culture of Critique will be struck by Dugin’s very positive evaluation of figures like the Jewish-American anthropologist Franz Boas, who is famous for having tried to debunk the concept of race.

Dugin is especially interested in the French school of structural anthropology, founded by the Jewish-French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was a student of the Jewish-Russian linguist Roman Jakobson. This connection is important to Dugin, since Jakobson was not only one of the founders of the structuralist school in linguistics, but also a Eurasianist. Structuralist anthropology is also an important link between the study of pre-modern forms of rationality and poststructuralist thought, and between “holistic” conservative thought and postmodern relativism. The structuralist method — viewing a culture as a system of synchronic relations — is assimilated by Dugin to the holistic, organic view of society characteristic of conservative thinkers. Dugin also says that his concept of “ethnos” based on the work of the Russian ethnologist Sergey Shirokogorov, who studied archaic tribes living on the Siberian tundra. Shirokogorov’s work also functions as a link between the concept of “ethnos” and the political ideology of Eurasianism.

Dugin has proposed the “ethnos” and “civilization” as possible subjects of the “fourth political theory.” For Dugin, the “ethnos,” and not the individual, is the social “atom” (the simplest, most basic form of social being). The “ethnos,” however, is only fully embodied by primitive hunter-gatherer societies and neolithic agrarian societies. Again, the ethnos is not a racial group. The essence of the “ethnos,” as Dugin defines this term, is not a biological fact, but a social, symbolic, and linguistic structure. He is always careful to emphasize that the ethnos is a cultural phenomenon, not defined by blood relations or race. It is similar to the phenomenological concept of a pre-logical “life world” (Lebenswelt). The “life world” is a community’s shared horizon of understanding. The notion of life world allows Dugin to link the concept of “ethnos” to Heidegger’s concept of Dasein as being-in-the-world. This is important because Dasein is supposed to be the “subject” of the fourth political theory. The ethnos, then, is apparently a way in which Dasein exists.

Although the notion of ethnos is only fully applicable to archaic societies, it continues to exist as a residual stratum in modern societies, in the form of the timeless symbols and archetypes of the collective unconscious. In modern society, the ethnic life-world has disintegrated and society has increasingly devolved into an economic system governed by a purely instrumental, technological rationality. By taking the ethnos as a paradigm of interpretation, it is set up as the “normal” type of society, and modern society is viewed as a deviation from or distortion of this original standard. The methods of social anthropology, developed specifically for the study of primitive societies, can then be used as a critical tool in the interpretation of modern societies — something already attempted by postmodern figures like Jean Baudrillard. The non-individualist, non-utilitarian gift economies of primitive societies, based on symbolic exchange, are even presented, albeit in exceedingly vague and general terms, as the possible basis of an alternative economic system.

The ethnos itself cannot be properly understood using historical methods. This is because archaic, primitive societies are ahistorical, or prehistorical. They lack written records. They live in mythical time rather than historical time — mythical time in Mircea Eliade’s sense, the time of the eternal return of the same. The ethnos (primitive society) is not an historical community but a social structure that reproduces itself indefinitely. This means that it must be studied using the methods of structuralism, which were initially developed within the field of linguistics but later applied to the social sciences. Structuralists view primitive societies as systems of symbolic oppositions that must be studied holistically and synchronically, like a language. They cannot be adequately interpreted in causal terms, whether as the result of biological evolution (Dugin rejects evolutionary interpretations of culture as tainted by the “racist,” modern doctrine of progress) or as arising from historical processes. The ethnos is simply a phenomenological given. Although it frequently seems to be a purely theoretical and artificial construct, Dugin insists that it is empirically validated by ethnological studies of archaic societies.

Instead of historical terms, the ethnos must be interpreted in spatial (synchronic) terms. The spatial structure of the ethnos, however, is first of all an expression of the specific landscape in which it dwells. The landscape should not be understood in simply material or naturalistic terms. The landscape of the ethnos is a sacred landscape. It is not just the natural environment of a tribal group, but the symbolic, mythical space into which the natural environment is inscribed. The concept of “nature,” even in its anti-modern, romantic form, already presupposes man’s separation and alienation from the cosmos as a primordial totality. The world of naive, primitive man, of the ethnos, is a whole prior to oppositions like artificial and natural, subject and object, symbolic and the real, language and things, thought and experience, the individual and society (and in this sense, it shares characteristics with the postmodern world, in which the boundaries between the virtual and the real, the natural and the technological are erased).

What Heidegger calls “a world” is a space of possibilities rather than a collection of objects observed from the outside. There is no independently existing, transcendental subject that subsequently crosses over into the world, no objective world that confronts a detached, abstract subject. Being-in-the-world comes first, and the subject and its “sense-data” are only abstracted out of it. The philosophical opposition of subject and object conceals the primordial unity of being-in-the-world, which is irreducible to the subject-object relation. Concrete being-in-the-world is studied phenomenologically, uncovering its temporal and spatial structure.

The fundamental polarity of the ethnos is not that between the subject and object, but between the sacred and the profane. The polarity between the sacred and the profane corresponds to the polarity between the exceptional and the normal. The profane is the normal, and the sacred is a crisis in the normal course of events — an exception that suspends the oppositions that structure social reality, transcending them and tracing their limits. The sacred is both dangerous and salvific (“Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst/Das Rettende auch” — Hölderlin). The sacred marks the uncrossable limits of communal life — uncrossable insofar as the one who crosses them, ceases to be part of the community, or becomes other. The sacred is a paradigm common to nature and society, designating the primordial whole that transcends them and includes them. The sacred is the basis of norms in the sense that it is a limit that unites and gathers all the separate regions of the world, determining their “measures.” The dimension of the sacred presumably belongs to the structure of Being itself, so that it can never be entirely eliminated, even in the most secularized of modern societies – it can only be displaced and distorted.

The space of the ethnos is structured by the relation between a sacred center (pole) and a profane margin. Here, Dugin seems to draw on Mircea Eliade’s work on the symbolism of the center. According to Eliade, sacred space is founded, oriented, and ordered around a central point marked by a “hierophany”: a revelation of the sacred. The center is symbolically designated by the erection of an axis mundi, an axis that connects the various dimensions or regions of the cosmos. Space, then, is not homogenous, but differentiated by a central, vertical sacred axis or core and a profane, horizontal periphery or margin. Traditional cosmogonies frequently describe the cosmos as growing out of a central point. As Eliade defines it, the center is any point at which a vertical movement between different ontological planes or cosmic regions — between profane and sacred space, between heaven and earth, gods and mortals, the realm of the living and of the dead — can occur. It is the pole, the world-pillar, the sacred mountain — Yggdrasil, Olympus, Meru, Irminsul. Climbing a mountain, a cosmic tree or pillar is a passage from one plane to another. Yggdrasil connects the nine worlds to each other and makes it possible to travel between them. The sacred center is also the spinal column of the yogi, the Vedic sacrificial pole, the totem pole, a lingam, or a sacred tree. It is the gathering symbol of the Christian cross. It is the altar upon which the redemptive sacrificial death of Christ is re-enacted. Churches and temples are oriented around the centrality of the altar. A cornerstone or the central column of a building is another embodiment of the sacred center. The axis unites within itself the symbolism of transcendence and of foundation. It is the column that supports the “house of Being.” The center makes it possible for man to dwell in the world (the English word “home” is a cognate of the Old Norse word heimr, “world”), it is the pole that gathers, unifies, and orders a cosmos. According to Eliade, its “temporal” counterpart is the sun at its zenith — which for Nietzsche was a symbol of the revelation of the unity of Being and becoming in eternal cosmic recurrence.

While modern society revolves around the pole of the “sacred” and inviolable individual, each ethnos is gathered around a non-individual sacred axis. The ethnos views itself as dwelling near the sacred center of the world. It is the proximity to this point of origin, this source of power and pole of attraction that roots the ethnos in a landscape. It is not primarily defined by borders — by the exclusion of an “other,” an enemy — but by the centripetal attraction of a pole of transcendence.

Each civilization, while encompassing several ethne, is also organized around a pole, which presumably forms one of the poles of multipolarity. Dugin says that the symbol of Eurasianism, eight arrows radiating out from a central point, is a symbol of the “ethno-center,” a sacred pole. The radiating arrows are not only a symbol of Russian ambitions of imperialist expansion. They also symbolize the origin of Tradition in the Eurasian heartland, and its subsequent diffusion throughout the rest of the world. Dugin claims that “excavations in Eastern Siberia and Mongolia prove that exactly here were the most ancient centers of civilization.” Finally, in an added postmodern touch, the symbol of Eurasianism is also a “chaosphere,” a symbol of chaos invented by the British science fiction and fantasy author Michael Moorcock in his 1970 novel The Eternal Champion. This is presumably an allusion to Dugin’s “chaotic logos,” and perhaps also to “right-wing anarchism” and its conception of the sovereign “anarch.”

Each ethnos is a “logos.” As Heidegger famously noted, the Greek word logos (speech) is related to the verb legein, an agrarian term signifying “gathering,” “harvesting” (the ethnos, remember, is a hunter-gatherer or archaic agrarian society). The logos gathers together everything that has been made distinct by being named, including the dead and the gods, into a single space or “place” (Ort). In this sense, language is the “house of Being.” It is an ordering of space and time, inscribing the landscape and the cycle of the seasons into itself by means of a calendar, a map and a taxonomy. Space, time, man, and nature are gathered together in a single, permanent, identical figure: a world. Dugin identifies this figure with the ethnos, which strives to conserve and reproduce itself as a world, but not as a biological entity (although he does not make it clear why biological conservation of the race is not a necessary part of the conservation of the ethnos as world). He also identifies the ethnos with a specific language.

Since each ethnos is a “logos” — in the sense of a structure of language, of thought, and of social relations — this becomes the basis for a kind of cultural and linguistic relativism. There is not just the one, universal Reason of the western Enlightenment. There are many different valid “rationalities” (although “reason,” “rationality,” and “logic” are already deviations from the original meaning of “logos”). The fourth political theory rejects the “epistemological hegemony” of the West. The Western conceptions of Reason, enlightenment, and “emancipation” are not the universal goal that “humanity” is consciously or unconsciously striving towards, with ethnic and cultural differences viewed as mere particularistic obstacles to be overcome on the way. The dominance of the Western form of rationality tends to exclude all other forms of rationality and deny their legitimacy. Dugin, like other postmodernists, wants to relativize the Western logos as only one of many possible logoi, without any legitimate claim to a privileged status. The relationship between these logoi is non-hierarchical, anarchic, and pluralistic. Insofar as a subject is a kind of rationality, there are many different types of subjects — not just the modern, Western, enlightened version of humanity, defined by Western rationality. In other words, Dugin reiterates the postmodern critiques of Western culture, all of which are familiar ad nauseam to anyone who has attended a Western university. The global political hegemony of the West is founded on the hegemony of Western reason. Western rationality (technological rationality) not only allowed western man to subjugate his natural environment, it allowed the West to subjugate the rest of the world. It forced other peoples to choose between adopting the Western model themselves, or remaining colonial subjects of the West.

According to the ideology of the Enlightenment, reason is universal, and is the defining characteristic of universal human nature, of man as animal rationale. Reason is what all human beings have in common, a common norm on the basis of which conflicts can be neutralized and mediated, and the world ultimately harmonized. This is the telos – the goal and end-point – of history, and the path towards it is progressive, universal enlightenment, gradually overcoming the dark demons and specters of myth and irrationality, and in the process, uniting humanity. When this goal and ideal end-point is reached, conflict, and hence politics in any real sense, will cease to exist.

The focus of a multi-polar world-view is not on universal reason, but on the specific world of each ethnos, which is prior to the separation between reason and intuition, logos and myth. Each ethnos identifies itself with the world (the cosmos), or at least sees itself as the center of the world, insofar as it believes itself to be dwelling in the proximity of the “sacred center.” The ethnos is a society rooted in a mythical space-time, a sacred geography.

Outside of the cosmos of the ethnos, there is only an elemental chaos, an abyss, the residue of creation. Chaos cannot be eliminated, only held at bay and circumscribed by a boundary. Chaos cannot manifest itself directly. It can only show itself by taking on a paradoxical figure of form: by masking itself as a “nothingness that is.” It seizes or takes possession of an individual, who then becomes its vessel and personification (as in the case of shamanic possession, or the totemic figure representing the tribe’s founder). There, the nameless forces of the “outside” are socialized and can address the community, taking on the personae (the “masks”) of demons, spirits, or gods. Through this personification, the sacred becomes a “subject” that can engage in symbolic exchange with the community. The shaman or healer is the central figure of tribal or “ethnic” society, who communicates and mediates between the ethnos and the beyond — the sacred realm of the dead, demons, or gods. The shaman is both a liminal and a “conservative” figure, a guardian who works to conserve the cosmic order, waging war on demons and malignant spirits of the chaotic outside. His or her work consists in dealing with the various crises that the ethnos and its members periodically go through. The shaman not only heals individuals in the tribe, but above all heals the tribe itself and the cosmos, making them whole, restoring the cosmic order founded on sacred boundaries. He or she does so by passing from one ontological plane to another by climbing the axis mundi, the sacred pillar, mountain or world-tree.

Eliade believed that shamanism originated in Eurasia. Eliade also views the shaman as a kind of proto-sovereign, in the sense that he is able to magically bind and unbind. He occupies a “liminal” position — managing crises within the normal order of the tribe and cosmos, but doing so only insofar as he communicates with the dangerous, chaotic outside. He possesses traits similar to those that according to Carl Schmitt define sovereignty — the power to suspend or transgress the normative order, not in order to destroy it, but in order to re-affirm it, to preserve it from dissolution and chaos.

The shaman enacts the primordial, permanent struggle or strife, the activity and dynamism that underlies the static structure of the ethnos. The dynamic of the ethnos, however, is opposed to the new. It views all change as a crisis, as entropy, eroding the stability of the cosmos. The ethnos is inherently conservative and anti-historical, in the sense that the sole purpose of its activity is to maintain homeostasis. It works to maintain its identity with itself. Its main concern is self-reproduction (again, this is not in the sense of the biological preservation and self-reproduction of the race). In reproducing itself, the ethnos ritually restores and maintains the order and equilibrium of the cosmos and the flow of its circular economy. Its existence is centered in the cycle of the seasons, of seeding and harvesting, child-birth and death. The time of the ethnos, then, is not linear and irreversible (historical), but recurrent, circular, and reversible. Using Armin Mohler’s terminology, we could also call the unbroken, holistic time-space of the ethnos a “sphere” (“Kugel”). It is a whole that has not yet been split into the dualisms of time and eternity, matter and spirit, man and nature, individual and society, etc.

Since the time of the ethnos is the eternal return of the same, death itself is not an irreversible event. The souls of the ancestors return in their descendants. The individual as a historically unique, mortal being does not exist. Children are assimilated into the tribe through initiation. When they are initiated into adulthood, they become reincarnations of their ancestors. The “person” exists only as a kind of mask, a personification of the dead. Individuality has no positive meaning for the ethnos. In this sense, the ethnos is the reverse of modern society, in which the individual is encouraged to define itself in opposition to the community. Instead of the individual, it is the ethnos as a whole that is the normative unit, “the man.” In other words, it could be viewed as a kind of “subject.”

At this point, however, it becomes unclear what this can have to do with Dasein, since Dasein is defined precisely by its historicity, finitude, and mortality. For Heidegger, men are, in their deepest and most fundamental essence, mortals. Dasein’s mortality is primordial, not the consequence of modern Western man’s loss of faith, materialism or nihilism. In a sense, the essence of man — Dasein — is finitude, and for Heidegger it is crucial that finitude is not simply a human characteristic, but part of the essence of Being itself. Dasein, as finitude, belongs to the structure of Being itself, so that the question of Dasein is a necessary step in approaching the question of Being. Heidegger elaborates his concept of Dasein not as a philosophical anthropology, but as a part of his ontological project. Dugin talks about Dasein, but relativizes the term, reducing it to an anthropological concept and detaching it from the question of Being. In doing this, Dugin effectively empties the term of meaning.

As a consequence, Dugin fails to understand that for Heidegger, the essence of nihilism as the forgetting of Being is also not simply a human error — and much less the error only of Western humanity — but the self-concealing essence of Being itself. The essence of nihilism is not something “created” by human beings at all. Moreover, only the fully realized nihilism that coincides with the end of Western metaphysics and the planetary dominion of modern technology opens up the possibility of a more authentic formulation of the question of Being. Contrary to what Traditionalists believe, nihilism cannot be overcome through a return to metaphysics, since nihilism is itself the final actualization of metaphysics. The essence of metaphysics is the movement of transcendence (Übersteigen) of beings by Being. All metaphysical concepts are structured by the fundamental ontological difference between Being and beings, i.e., the transcendence of beings by Being, through which beings are gathered, grounded, and held in suspense by the withdrawal of Being.

Heidegger made it clear that he did not believe that nihilism could be overcome simply through a recourse to Eastern traditions. He wrote: “I am convinced that a change can only be prepared from the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated. It cannot come about by the adoption of . . . Eastern experiences of the world. The help of the European tradition and a new appropriation of that tradition are needed for a change in thinking. Thinking will only be transformed by a thinking that has the same origin and destiny.” In this sense, Heidegger’s position is considerably more sophisticated than Dugin’s. Dugin instead believes that all we need do to step out of Western, masculine “logocentrism” and nihilism is to “explore other cultures, rather than Western, to try to find different examples of inclusive philosophy, inclusive religions, and so on.”

The historicity (Geschichtlichkeit) of Dasein is founded on the irreversible and unrepeatable event (Geschehnis) that Dasein itself is. Dasein is not only mortal, but also “natal” (gebürtig). Natality is the essence of historicity (Geschichtlichkeit). Birth is an “event” (Geschehnis) in the sense that ontologically, it is an absolute beginning (even though biologically, it is of course a natural event, part of a nexus of causes and effects). Man has a history because man – as Dasein – is himself history, because he is himself an event. Authentic existence is in itself history, in the sense of a crisis, a decision, a discontinuity, a break in time.

Death, for Heidegger, is not simply a natural occurrence, a consequence of the fact that our bodies are part of the natural world and conditioned by its cycles of growth and entropy. On the contrary, man’s mortality separates him (as Dasein) from the natural realm. It has the power to tear Dasein out of the automatisms of inauthentic social relations, the commerce of everyday life and the impostures of false subjectivity. Heidegger calls this sleep-walking, inauthentic existence “das Man.” Das Man is not responsible for its existence. Instead, it observes existence from the outside, as a kind of spectacle. Das Man never feels “addressed” by death, which always concerns “someone else.” In a sense, “the subject” — abstract humanity — is das Man — a free-floating ego detached from concrete, historical, finite existence. Being-towards-death, on the other hand, isolates Dasein, liberates it and awakens it from inauthentic existence. Being-towards-death is freedom in the sense that Dasein’s relation to nothingness is a transcendence, a movement going beyond the totality of everything that exists and can exist. Dasein is free in a fundamentally different way from the “subject” of idealist philosophy, a subject that is free because it unconditioned. Finitude is for Heidegger not just a contingent, naturally given limit to freedom, power, and life. Heidegger’s finitude is ontological, not natural. In this sense, his thinking differs fundamentally from that of traditionalism, which views mortality as characterising only man’s lower, physical and natural existence. The mortality of Dasein is not “natural.” It is entirely different from the mortality of an animal. Dasein’s finitude, being-towards-death, is a freedom and a “transcendence” in the sense “going beyond.” But Dasein’s “transcendence” not the transcendence of a subject suspended above concrete existence, or of an immortal being.

The limit that isolates, opens, and liberates Dasein is not simply negative or privative, but positive and active — active in the sense of a power, a movement of transcendence that is also a decision and a break in time. The limit points beyond itself, to that which transcends, overpowers, or “overcomes.” That is why the individuality of authentic Dasein should not be misunderstood as the arbitrary freedom of existentialism, or the hedonistic egoism of liberal individualism. The finitude of Dasein is given meaning only as a problem, a question, a responsibility. Only as responsibility is human existence meaningful, only as responsibility does transcend itself. The authentic freedom of Dasein is also not an unconditioned freedom from time and history, but is historicity (Geschichtlichkeit) itself as an event (Geschehnis).

Heidegger would view the historicity of primitive, tribal Dasein as only existing as something undeveloped or pre-conscious. Only Western man has a deeper experience of the fundamentally historical essence of Dasein as an event (Geschehnis), which corresponds to Being as an event (Ereignis). However, this experience has remained unthought and philosophically unelaborated, because thinking has remained trapped by the categories of metaphysics, subjectivism, and Christian humanism. Dugin, however, attempts to relativize Heidegger’s notion of Dasein, claiming that it only applies to Western Europeans. In doing so, however, Dugin shows himself to be more a postmodern relativist than a Heideggerian. By giving complete ontological priority to language, he renders the concept of Dasein effectively meaningless. For Heidegger, man does not exist as Dasein because he has a language, but has a language because he exists as Dasein. In other words, man does not have a relation to Being because he has a language, but has a language because man’s essence is Dasein, and Dasein is a relation to (or responsibility for) Being. Dasein is ontologically prior to language and social life. The existential structure of Dasein cannot itself be determined by the structure of language and society. Heidegger’s position is in a sense absolutely opposed to that of relativism, which makes reality — including man himself — entirely a creation of man. It goes without saying that it is also opposed to communism, which interprets humanity’s emancipation as man’s self-production.

Since the ethnos, according to Dugin, does not know irreversible, historical time — only cyclical time, the eternal return of the same — it is inherently opposed not only to everything new, but to all forms of accumulation. The ethnos ritually destroys (sacrifices) accumulated resources that could endanger its homeostasis and symbolic equilibrium. Not only a deficit, but an excess of production is viewed as dangerous and problematic. In this sense, its economy is anti-capitalist. It constantly interrupts the linear time of accumulation. Accumulation is viewed as a kind of “guilt,” as a debt to the gods that must be re-paid. To sacrifice something — to destroy an accumulated excess — means to give it to the gods. The ethnos strives to conserve a social and cosmic equilibrium, as well as an equilibrium between society and nature. Society is naturalized and nature is socialized. Together, they form a sacred whole, a circular economy or “circuit.”

The ethnos, then, is a form of primordial, pre-historic communism in which work is play, and man lives in perfect accord with his natural environment. It is an ecologically sound, harmonious cosmic and social totality, a golden age before man’s fall into history, a paradise in which the entropic, destructive force of time is defeated, or at least held in check. The ethnos does not know the social tension of hierarchy and stratification, and there is no division of labor, except between the genders. The relationship between the genders, however, is also balanced and non-patriarchal. The space-time of the ethnos, as we noted earlier, is reversible, and this goes for its social relations, too. There are no asymmetrical, hierarchical relationships, only a balance maintained through symbolic exchange. In other words, the ethnos is a democratic and egalitarian society (at least on a symbolic level). As an embodiment of the golden age, it represents the primordial perfection of man. The man of the ethnos, in other words, is a sort of noble savage (a modern concept if there ever was one!) that can be opposed to the decadence of Western society since the scientific revolution.

The restoration of this primordial unity, bringing linear history and capitalist accumulation to an end in a revolutionary holocaust, is according to Dugin the unconscious mythical and eschatological dimension of communism. The revolution abolishes linear time, which is identified with entropy, accumulation, and usury. Dugin apparently thinks that the violence of communist revolutions should be interpreted as a kind of sacrificial destruction of accumulated wealth. Capitalist accumulation is an excess that must be sacrificially destroyed through the liquidation of the bourgeoisie as a class.

The modern age is the age of revolutions, but as Jünger observed, the violence of revolutions — including the Terror of the French revolution — could be interpreted as a return of repressed elemental forces under the mask of enlightened modernity. Just as gods, spirits, and demons communicate with the tribe by personifying themselves in the shaman, elemental chaos shows itself under the mask, the “persona” of the modern, supposedly rational, revolutionary subject. This is why for Dugin, the only real problem with communism was that it failed to understand itself. Its self-interpretation, its “hermeneutic circle” must be shattered. Communism made a mistake regarding the political subject. It saw class, rather than the archaic ethnos, as its subject. It wore the mask of a modern, progressive, secular ideology. This is why Marxists could not understand why communist revolutions took place in undeveloped, agrarian societies, and not, as Marx had predicted, in industrially developed societies like Germany.

Authentic communism, Dugin argues, is “national communism” (represented by Stalin, for example) or agrarian communism (represented by Pol Pot). “National communism” (or “national gauchism,” as Dugin also calls it) is interpreted as a revolt against the Western, modern world, a revolt rooted in local, ethnic traditions. National communism is a hybrid of the Western rationality of Marxism and the mobilizing force of non-Western ethnic myths. Dugin points to the “National Communistic character of successful Marxist revolutions, recognizing nationalistic elements as a driving factor and virtue, providing these revolutions with success and stability via archaic national stories of the mobilization of Marxism as nationally interpreted eschatological myth” (The Fourth Political Theory, p. 128). “National Communism,” Dugin tells us, “ruled in the USSR, Communist China, North Korea, Vietnam, Albania, Cambodia, and also in many Communist movements of the Third World, from the Mexican Chiapas and Peruvian Sendero Luminoso to the Kurdish Workers’ Party and Islamic socialism (p. 128). In national communism/gauchism, Marxism functions as a universal philosophical framework that allows national movements — local by their nature — to communicate with each other and “even claim universality and planetary breadth; transforming, thanks to socialist rationality warmed up by nationalism, into a messianic project” (p. 130). In his opinion, “National Gauchism could certainly have a global future, insofar as among many segments of humanity archaic, ethnic and religious energies are far from being spent, whatever can be said of the citizens of the modern, enlightened and rational West” (p. 131). In reality, mass non-white immigration to the West, attracted by its earthly “paradise” or “golden age” of material wealth, religious tolerance, modernity, and generous welfare systems, has long since made it obvious that non-white peoples are not the subjects of a revolt against the global domination of subversive forces, but simply one of the instruments of a globalist, collectivist, and ethnocidal anthropological revolution.

Dugin appears to equate the white West with the bourgeoisie, and non-white peoples (or Russians insofar as they are “not fully white”) with the revolutionary subject. He believes that the first successful communist revolution took place in Russia because the “ethnos” had retained more of its primitive vitality there than in the modern West (remember, Dugin views Russians as non-white, a mixture of Slavic, Turkic, and Mongol blood). His concept of the ethnos allows him to interpret Russia’s backwardness as a positive trait, rather than as a source of shame. It becomes obvious that Dugin’s Russian chauvinism is an overcompensation for what is really a collective inferiority complex. Russia’s backwardness is interpreted as the proof that it has successfully warded off infection by the “evils” of Western modernity. The communist revolution was in its essence a revolt of the Eurasian Russian ethnos against Western-oriented elites. Bolshevism was a re-Asianisation of Russia. Rather than taking the modern West as a norm, which can only lead to devaluing the history of Russia and other non-Western nations as marginal and backward, Dugin wants to reverse the relationship, restoring Eurasia to the dignity of the “sacred center” and marginalizing the West as its “profane periphery.”

Dugin assigns a central, messianic role to Russia analogous to the messianic role the German conservative revolutionaries assigned to Germany as the sacred center or axis of Europe. Eurasia is not only a locus of the great geopolitical decisions of our time, it is a sacred center also in the sense of a crossing, a crucial point, an intersection and mediator between East and West, Europe and Asia. A similar role is assigned to Iran, Hungary, and Turkey as Eurasian mediators between the East and Europe. Eurasianists declare themselves to be close to the leftist Turkish Workers’ Party, and Turkey is viewed by Eurasianists as part of Europe for purely geopolitical reasons.

One of Dugin’s Italian associates, Claudio Mutti, himself a convert to Islam, argues that the massive occupation of German territory by Turkish immigrants will be a positive factor in favoring the integration of Turkey and Germany into a common Eurasian empire. This may be connected with the idea that the Russians are a blend of Slavic and Turkic blood. Or it may be that here, as seems to be the rule for Eurasianists, geographical and geopolitical considerations take complete precedence over racial factors, to the point of completely denying the latter.

We see the implications of Dugin’s conception of the ethnos as constituted not by race or by history, but by a space. Here, for some reason, Dugin is suddenly no longer a social constructivist. Geopolitical determinism is substituted for racial or historical materialist determinism. Geopolitical factors are seen as being more decisive than both racial and economic factors. Racial nationalism is rejected as either “utopian” or “reactionary.” The issue of race is not viewed as being of critical, decisive importance — what is decisive for the Eurasianists — what determines the distinction between friend and enemy — is the fight against the West.

This complete precedence given to soil at the expense of blood makes the relevance of Eurasianism for European nationalists today — for whom immigration is the existentially decisive question — very dubious. The massive occupation of European soil by African and Middle Eastern immigrants does not make them Europeans and never will. This is not just because they lack a deep relationship to European soil and traditions, but also because they are racially alien. Blacks and Arabs in Europe may be “westernized,” but that only means globalized, that is, Americanized. Homo americanus is the normative “human” type of the postmodern age. Evola’s discussion of America at the end of Revolt Against the Modern World remains valid: American individualism, deprived of any transcendent reference point, fatally leads to a collectivism and racial promiscuity that are a spontaneous equivalent to Soviet collectivism.

Dugin tries to interpret Marxism’s profane, linear vision of history in terms of cyclical, mythic time, making the communist political revolution into a cyclical cosmic revolution, a return to a utopian golden age. Just as he tries to translate historical time into mythical time, he tries to translate geopolitical space into sacred geography. In the Manichean and tiresomely propagandistic narrative of the Eurasianists, the East is paradise (Eden) and the West is hell.

Sacred geography on the basis of ‘space symbolism’ traditionally considers the East as ‘the land of Spirit’, the paradise land, the land of a completeness, abundance, the Sacred ‘native land’ in its fullest and most perfect kind. . . . The West has the opposite symbolical meaning. It is the ‘country of death’, the ‘lifeless world’ . . . . West is ‘the empire of exile’, ‘the pit of the rejected’, according to the expression of Islamic mystics. West is “anti-east,” the country of . . . decay, degradation, transition from the manifest to the non-manifest, from life to death, from completeness to need, etc.

Moreover, the West is a pole of attraction magnetically drawing towards itself decadent elements.

Along the East-West axis were drawn peoples and civilizations, possessing hierarchical characters — closer to the East were those closer to Sacral, to Tradition, to spiritual wealth. Closer to West, those of a more decayed, degraded and dying Spirit. . . .

[S]acred geography univocally affirms the law of ‘qualitative space’, in which the East represents the symbolic ‘ontological plus’, and the West the ‘ontological minus’. According to the Chinese tradition, the East is Yang, the male, bright, solar principle, and the West is Yin, the female, dark, lunar principle.” “Geopolitical East represents in itself the straight opposition to geopolitical West. . . . Instead of ‘democracy’ and ‘human right’ the East gravitates around totalitarianism, socialism and authoritarianism, i.e. around various types of social regimes, whose only common feature is that the center of their systems there is not the ‘individual’, ‘man’ with his ‘rights’ and his peculiar ‘individual values’, but something supra-individual, supra-human — be it ‘society’, ‘nation’, ‘people’, ‘idea’, ‘weltanschauung’, ‘religion’, ‘cult of the leader’ etc. The East opposed to western liberal democracy the most various types of non-liberal, non-individualistic the societies — from authoritarian monarchy up to theocracy or socialism. Moreover, from a pure typological, geopolitical point of view, the political specificity of this or that regime was secondary in comparison with the qualitative dividing between ‘western’ (= ‘individualist — mercantile’) order and ‘eastern’ (= ‘supra-individualist – based on force’) order. Representative forms of such anti-western civilization were the USSR, communist China, Japan about 1945 or Khomeini’s Iran. (“From Sacred Geography to Geopolitics”)

Here, Dugin deviates completely from traditionalism in confusing brute force with supra-individual authority, in what amounts to the inversion of the traditional doctrine of authority in a kind of worship of material force (‘might makes right’). He also deviates completely from traditionalism in interpreting communist forms of totalitarianism and collectivism, as well as the unstratified, non-hierarchical collectivism of primitive societies, as “supra-individual” and transcendent. Evola, who never advocated totalitarianism (which he regarded as a terminal phenomenon), viewed both totalitarianism and collectivism as the opposite of supra-individual and transcendent — as sub-personal and undifferentiated (see Revolt Against the Modern World, chapter 37).

Ernst Jünger, in his National Bolshevik/national revolutionary period, believed that not only bourgeois individualism, but also the flip side of the same coin, the formless collectivism of the masses would be overcome by the emergence of a new “type” of man, which he called “the Worker,” who would be capable of mastering the forces mobilized by modern technology. But Dugin simply adopts, reversing it, Popper’s liberal reduction of fascism and communism to the single term “totalitarianism,” reducing radically heterogeneous movements to the same, simply because they reject liberalism. In this sense, he actually interprets fascism not so much from the point of view of the left, as from the point of view of liberalism.

From a traditionalist point of view, moreover, nationalism, fascism and national socialism are negative phenomena insofar as long as they are collectivist, that is, insofar as the elemental forces of race remain on a purely material and human level, and are not purified through their integration with a spiritual dimension. Analogously, the traditionalist rejection of bourgeois individualism is not a rejection of the value of the individual as such, but only of its detachment from a transcendent reference point and its reduction to a purely human and material plane.

The ethnos, then, is not what traditionalists like Evola call a solar traditional society. Moreover, given that the ethnos is in its essence ahistorical and lacks a relation to the other, Dugin has not sufficiently clarified how it can be a political and historical subject. It is also unclear how Dugin proposes to unite Heidegger’s concept of Dasein as historicity with the anti-historical position of traditionalism. He has, however, proposed another possible political and historical subject: civilization.