Traditionalism and Sociology/The Figure of the Radical Subject

Primary tabs

View(active tab) What links here

Alexander Dugin

Traditionalism and Sociology/The Figure of the Radical Subject

(the lecture in Curitiba, Brazil - Colloquium on Evola, september 2012)

Ladies and gentlemen!

I want to thank the group of Curitiba who organized this conference with lectures as interesting as rich. Thank you for the invitation to speak here about Tradition. I apologize for my terrible and so imperfect Portuguese.

Part 1. Traditionalism and Sociology - The Modern and the Eternal

The first part is devoted to traditionalism and sociology, and also to the importance of Plato.

Traditionalism emphasizes the dualism that exists between two worlds: the world of tradition and the modern world. This dualism corresponds to two sociological categories: pre-modernity and modernity. This parallelism between traditionalism and sociology is very important and it is necessary to develop this affinity in the future.

In Paris, in 2011 I gave a lecture under the title: "René Guénon as a sociologist." René Guénon in his book "The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times" used the traditional and sacred symbol of the Egg of the World. In Guénon’s perspective, the pre-modern world corresponds to the Egg of the World open on the top and closed on the bottom. The spiritual rays enter the world and so the cosmic and material things receive the sacred qualities.

Modern society corresponds to the Egg of the World closed on the top and on the bottom. It is the materialistic, atheistic, consumerist civilization. That is, the scientific, mechanical and atomistic worldview. Postmodern society corresponds to the Egg of the World open on the bottom and closed on the top. It is the demonic post-human and post-social civilization. The reality in which we live. But for now let us put aside momentarily postmodernity, despite the great interest with which we could develop this correspondence.

The difference between traditionalism and sociology lies in the fact that sociology starts from modernity and judges Tradition from the point of view of modernity. Traditionalists do the opposite: they see modernity from the standpoint of Tradition. Modernity puts all reality in time, in history. Tradition considers things in light of eternity. So sociologists think pre-modernity diachronically as something past. Traditionalists regard modernity as an aspect of eternity, ie, as something eternal.

This, therefore, is not so easy to understand. Being totally ephemeral the illusion, the modern world as the world of radical perversion also, in a paradoxical way, belongs to eternity.

Traditionalists are neighbors of the structuralists. Tradition and modernity can both be seen as structures.

Important case: the sociologist Louis Dumont talked about two types of society - the holistic society and the individualistic society. Modernity is essentially individualistic. According to him, Marx was also partly individualistic, sharing with liberals the value of the individual man.

It is clear and evident that the tradition can survive in the modern world - by inertia. How can modernity exist in the traditional world?

Guénon spoke of Atlantis the disappeared ancient continent and made an allusion that the modern world, as a great parody, is the continuation of a certain decadent and very old perverted Tradition. The serpent already appears in paradise in the first era of human history.

The Neoplatonist Proclus in his commentary on the dialogue "Critias" of Plato, where we find the matter of Atlantis, described the war between the Greeks and the prehistoric people of Atlantis as the paradigmatic war between two orders of being: one perfect and the other degraded.

It is very interesting that Proclus said that the Greeks were connected to the earth and the Atlanteans to the sea. The Greeks were alongside the Olympian gods and the people of Atlantis alongside Titans. The maritime geopolitics of the Titans against the telluric geopolitics of the Gods.

Proclus is an ancient geopolitician. It is important that both worlds - Greek and Atlantean - are thought by Proclus as something synchronistic.

The second way to see this synchronism is with two philosophical traditions.

The first is the philosophy of Plato, Platonism. Platonism is a philosophy essentially vertical. Platonism is built around the vertical axis. Above are the Ideas. Below are the things, the phenomena. The Platonic world is the hierarchical, vertically organized world.

Another philosophy is the atomism of Democritus, Epicurus, Lucretius. This philosophy is democratic, it begins from below, by the material particles. It is the atomistic world. It doesn’t know the ideas, the platonic lights. It doesn’t know hierarchy. It goes against verticality.

Democritus was a pre-Socratic. He can be understood as a representative of the counter-initiation in the world of Tradition. Democritus is the representative of modernity in the pre-modern world.

There is a legend that Plato set the writings of Democritus on fire in his Academy. The platonics regarded atomism as "the world upside down," the impossible world, the world contrary to the natural order of things.

In Islam Atomism is the doctrine of the asharitas and of the aggressively anti-Sufi, anti-esoteric theologian, Ibn Taymiyyah, father of contemporary Wahhabism and Salafism.

Also: the Islamic tradition is pre-modern. Once more: we see in traditional society something "modern". After arriving at modernity atomism began to be the only scientific orthodoxy. Modernity is built on the atomism of Democritus. It is the scientific paradigm of modernity. After Galileo, Newton, Gassendi, atomism is the dogma.

The Platonic philosophy is further marginalized. It is very significant that Karl Popper criticized Plato aggressively, calling Platonism "the greatest enemy of liberal open society."

Hence we can identify traditionalism and Platonism.

Modernity and tradition can be understood as two paradigms. Progressists insist on the fact that Tradition belongs in the past. Understood as paradigms everything changes: from this moment you can represent modernity and Tradition as the option to choose.

Why is this so important?

Modernity structurally understood is no longer destiny, something objective and inevitable, but the question of free choice. So we can choose to be modern - atomists, materialists, liberal democrats. But we can choose not to be modern. And we can be platonic, and stand alongside eternity. Eternity platonically understood isn’t the past. Eternity is eternal. And therefore it is present.

The only thing left is to turn toward eternity. As in the verses of Arthur Rimbaud:

Elle est retrouvée. Quoi? Éternité.

C'est la mer avec le soleil allée.

It’s found again. What? Eternity.

It is the sea gone off with the sun.

Part 2. The Figure of the Radical Subject and the Traditionalist without Tradition

There is the concept of Gottesnacht, "the night of God." It’s the Iron Age, the modern world.

The Tradition is out. Modernity arrived. The organized world is replaced by the chaotic world. The sacred disappeared. Initiation as well. The man is in a vacuum.

This is a starting point of the traditionalists. They deny the modern world. They seek Tradition. The traditionalist awakens at the night of God (Gottesnacht).

Hölderlin asked - "Why poets in dark times?"

It is important this "why".

The Platonics thought that in the ages of gold are born the souls of gold - aristocrats, hence the ideal of kalakogathia. In the ages of iron are born the poor souls, insignificant, worthless. This is important: the poor souls do not realize they are in the Gottesnacht, in the night of God. For them the night is not the night. They no longer know what is light.

Poets possess pain. Others do not. Thus, the traditionalists, for possessing pain, they deny the modern world.

The question arises: why traditionalists in dark times?

We can build a hypothesis: the soul of gold was born in the age of iron. This explains the pain, tragedy, suffering. This explains why there is pain and suffering.

But why was she born? Was it a cosmic mistake? Or something else? And even more important why?

I think it is something else. It is not an error. It's the eschatological destiny, the mission. It is important: the pure case isn’t the traditionalist by inertia, but the traditionalist by inability to accept the modern world, living without God, without the sacred. And this impossibility should be without direct or immanent reason. Only in this case the experiment is pure.

The extreme case: the traditionalist without Tradition. The differentiated man. Why the differentiated man? Here comes the figure of the Radical Subject.

The Radical Subject is the soul of gold in the Age of Iron. For the soul of gold is easy to be in the world of gold. But it is impossible to judge a priori: is man good because he lives in a traditional society, or because his soul is golden?

It’s only possible to give an answer by putting the soul in the world of iron.

Radical Subject

The Radical Subject is in the night of God (Gottesnacht) to prove radically the quality of his soul.

This is the case of Julius Evola - above all in the first and last stages.

Is that all? It can be. Being traditionalist is the end per se and para se. But there is something very important, even decisive - he must die a traditionalist too, not abandoning or betraying his ideals.

Still, why the traditionalist in dark times: to put an end to the modern world.

This is not the ultimate goal, but it is the logical consequence. The struggle against modernity is essential ethical Subject Radical. You can’t do otherwise. The Radical Subject is at the center of the night - between past and future. It is in the present. Eugene Golovin, the Russian traditionalist, said: "wherever we are, there is the center of hell."

It is necessary to understand modernity and postmodernity non-dually. The Radical Subject is advaitista. He is in the modern world and wants to be here, not beyond this world.

The Radical Subject is not afraid of modernity. The Radical Subject is the descent - Untergehende.

History is decay, is Untergang, descent.

There are four types of men, according to Martin Heidegger:

The simple and ignorant people, who can’t choose anything. They change with the world and society.

Conservatives. They are afraid of the night of God, of decadence. They want to conserve what exists against the time which devours everything.

Progressives. They want to go in the direction of decay faster and faster still. They are the ones who are responsible for the current situation. The liberals, the world government, they together can be called "The Antichrist Collective".

There is also a fourth type: the new philosophers. They descend on the center of the night and are not afraid. That's where the danger is the greatest. Heidegger said about them: these philosophers are faced with the "hard knowledge of nihilism," schwere Wissen des Nihilismus.

The Radical Subject goes with the world without being of this world. It is itself a paradoxical manifestation of the end. I call it the "eurasist zen."

Thank you!