Eliade on Evola’s Revolt

Posted on 2012-05-30 by Cologero

I don’t believe Mircea Eliade’s review of Julius Evola’s Revolt against the Modern World is available in English. It was originally published in the Romanian journal Vremea, VIII, n. 382, Bucarest, 31 March 1935. Eliade would go on to become a world-renowned historian of religion from his position at the University of Chicago. His books are essential reading, although they are not written from the Traditional point of view, but rather intended for a general audience. Nevertheless, he corresponded with Evola and was involved with Tradition and what is now called “far right” politics. This should be obvious from the authors he recommends in this review. As we have pointed out, his position is what well-bred men considered sane and normal prior to the French Revolution. As Galileo insisted about the earth, “yet it moves”, what used to be the far left is now considered sane and normal. Humanity has “evolved”, except for what remains of well-bred men.

Eliade’s review follows. We see he overrated Rosenberg, who is now forgotten, and underrated Evola, who was ahead of his time.

This [Revolt against the Modern World] is the title of Julius Evola’s latest book. Julius Evola is an author too little known beyond the Italian border. In Germany, a short time ago, another of his books, Heidnischer Imperialismus, was translated, a modified and, above all, politicized, version of his work Pagan Imperialism. In France, I don’t believe that there is anyone besides Rene Guenon who cites or reviews his books. Nevertheless, Evola is one of the most interesting minds of the war [WW I] generation. Revolt can be compared—for its historical vision and courageous interpretation—to books like Spengler’s Decline of the West or Rosenberg’s Myth of the 20th Century, even if it will not have by far the same echo of those two books. Everything contributes to Evola’s isolation in the field of thought and modern culture: the rigour of his philosophical analysis, his critical spirit, and the courage that he has in supporting a “traditional” science that is opposed to fragmented, atomized, secular science.

Evola is ignored by specialists because he goes beyond their mental schemes. He is inaccessible to dilettantes, because he has recourse to a truly prodigious erudition, and at the same time does not make any concession to the presentation of his ideas (it is a way of saying why Evola has no ideas that are his “own”).

He made his debut with very serious philosophical studies on Idealism. On the other hand, his philosophical formation was recognized even by specialists, and his fundamental work — Theory and Phenomenology of the Absolute Individual — is the most serious book on Magical Idealism that had been written up until now. Moving from philosophy to culture and social criticism, Evola always gave proof of a sense of direction and of a unity of a typically Italian attitude. Evola’s view is simple: in this view, that no ideology has adopted, he affirms and reaffirms “traditional” values. With this term, nevertheless, he means every value created by a civilization that does not make life an end in itself, but considers that human existence is uniquely a means to reach a spiritual, transcendent reality. Evola never exposed more completely and with more fervor what thing this “traditionalism” means as much as in Revolt. We recommend this book to all those who wish, if not to go back to old questions, at least to contemplate an explanation of the world and history of a fascinating greatness.

Similar works can be read in very numerous ways: by people ready to accept everything at their own risk and danger, or to refute everything in the same way; but also by persons ready to receive suggestions from wherever they come from, and who are enthusiastic in being able to verify them in any circumstances.

We can say that Evola’s work is situated in the cultural lines of Gobineau, Chamberlain, Spengler, Rosenberg. With much more “seriousness”, however—as paradoxical that this affirmation can seem — Evola has not forgotten and has not renounced his earlier mentioned studies: he is more “philosopher”, but rather in a totally unusual way. Magical Idealism brought to its extreme limits is a meal difficult to digest. It is not part of our intentions to bring up this book, that is both anti-Christian and anti-political at the same time, as well as opposed to communists and fascists, that denies a great quantity of living things and values that today crush us, affirming only “dead” things and values which no one in our times believes in any longer. Evola does not come under any influence. This is what makes him sympathetic. As to the resonance of his thought in Romania it must be remembered that I published a long article on his work at the end of 1927, while in 1928 I developed a study on his magical philosophy, which remains a manuscript [this is apparently lost]. Later the only one that he mentioned by name, in our country, was, in 1933, our colleague Vasile Lovinescu.

The Valorization of the Middle Ages

Posted on 2012-09-02 by Cologero

Occasionally the question comes up, as it has again this week, as to why we focus so much on the spirituality, symbolism, social structures, and history of the Middle Ages. Although the answer can be pieced together from various posts, it may be good to summarize it in one place. Clearly, the primary authors who have awakened the knowledge of Tradition regarded the Middle Ages as exemplifying the Traditional spirit. Since it is closest to us, at least those of us in the West, in time, language, and culture, it seems to be the most suitable model for demonstrating tradition in action. This, despite the fact that Rene Guenon points out that the contemporary West is as distant from the Middle Ages as it is from the Asian civilization; after all, isn’t to be called “medieval” considered an insult today?

In 1937, Mircea Eliade wrote an essay, “The Valorization of the Middle Ages” in which he mentioned Julius Evola, Rene Guenon, and Ananda K Coomaraswamy among the exponents of those elites who recognize the importance of the symbol and the primacy of transcendence in the Middle Ages. He followed that up with two radio programs on the Secret Language of Dante, the Fedeli d’Amore, and the Holy Graal, themes quite familiar to readers of Evola and Guenon. Hence, those neo-pagans and new rightists who disvalue the Medieval civilization reveal their ignorance, or at least distance, from the intellectual leaders of Traditional understanding.

Beyond its own value, the proper understanding of the Middle Ages is the gateway to understanding other traditions. We can point out three in particular:

The Western pagan tradition was preserved in the Middle Ages, which is made clear in the idea of the two Romes.

Ananda Coomaraswamy mentions several works of the Ancient and Medieval eras that are necessary preparations for any Westerner to understand the teachings of the Vedanta.

Guenon, in his book on Dante, points out that Dante was greatly influenced, directly or indirectly, by Islamic and Sufi sources.

Clearly, those seekers looking at Sufism or Hinduism for an initiation into Tradition, ought to be well-grounded in the practices and literature of the Middle Ages before making that decision.

Addendum: Since this topic has also come up recently, remember that for most of the Middle Ages, the Latin and Eastern churches were united; even after the schism, the theology was similar; hence, anything of traditional value in the East can also be adopted, or recovered if necessary, by the West. The Greek speaking part of the Empire regarded themselves as Roman, as much so as the West. The breach between the two was to a large extent the result of the Nordic influence on the Western Empire, which was the result of Nordic and Roman collaboration as Evola often points out.