

Introduction

JULIUS EVOLA'S POLITICAL ENDEAVORS*

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This essay can be traced back to the fact that as Julius Evola's works have achieved wider recognition, his relations to Fascism and National Socialism have prompted many to dismiss his body of ideas as a whole and without further inquiry. This has also affected his purely esoteric writings, which have nothing to do with political questions. Nevertheless, a portrayal of Evola's political activities unearths new, often unsuspected aspects that can contribute to a greater and better understanding of the complete oeuvre of this cultural philosopher.

In order to facilitate the reader's independent judgment of Evola's political work, it seems most fitting to let Evola speak for himself as much as possible and to be cautious with value judgments and interpretations. In doing this, we have placed special value on documents of the different epochs and the various creative phases. It was also our intention to include extensive quotations from the thinkers who most influenced Evola. However, this method unfortunately leads to a mounting number of references and bibliographical notes that can tire the reader. This road has already been traveled by Philippe Baillet on the occasion of the colloquium on Rene Guenon and Julius Evola at the Section of Religious Sciences at the Sorbonne in 1986 (see *Actes du Ileme colloque de Politica Hermetica: "Metaphysique et Politique: Rene Guenon –Julius Evola,"* Paris, 1987).

Above all, the purpose of our study is to show how Evola arrived at his frequently "scandalous"-seeming statements; what part of them can be attributed

*Translated from the German by Markus Wolff.

to the prevalent *Zeitgeist*; where the parallels to other thinkers can be found; and what part can be traced back to his own "personal equation" (one of Evola's favorite expressions for someone's nature and personality). Therefore, this study aims to hand an additional interpretive tool to the reader of Evola's writings to facilitate a clear judgment.

But from the beginning we want to emphasize a single point: to Evola, the center of all things is not man but rather the Transcendent. Regardless of the question that concerns him, he is always searching for the direct relationship to the Absolute—that is, that domain which lies beyond the merely human, because human affairs are one way today but tomorrow may be quite different. According to the view of Tradition, on the contrary, the principles that form the foundation of our world remain forever the same. He is not interested in what is bound to time, but instead in that which is above time, the "eternal." Therefore, one cannot expect from Evola the now prevalent Western "humanist" values, but must reckon with a total inversion of the standpoints that one is used to. The question of whether such an altered viewpoint can serve to solve today's countless problems cannot be debated in this context. We are exclusively concerned here with the examination of Evolian lines of thought. (This absolute stress on the spiritual realm can also be found in other intellectuals of this time—for example, in Martin Heidegger.)

We will show, in the process, that even Evola, although very seldom found in the "lowly regions" of everyday politics, was subject to a development of his political views that related to different stages of his life, even though his under-lying principles always remained the same. The leap made from his 1928 book *Imperialismo pagano* (Pagan Imperialism; German edition: *Heidnischer Imperialismus*, Leipzig, 1933), written in youthful exuberance, to the "apoliteia," an attitude totally removed from politics that he preached in his old age, is certainly immense.

The immediate occasion that inspired the present essay was the first German edition of Evola's only manual of political doctrine, *Men among the Ruins*, as well as the new edition of *Revolt Against the Modern World* (English edition: Rochester, Vt., 1995), and the anticipated reactions to them. The German reader has already been introduced to Evola's relationship to Fascism and National Socialism through various newspaper and magazine articles, by my earlier introduction to *Revolt Against the Modern World*, and by Eduard Gugenberger's and Roman Schweidlenka's book *Mutter Erde, Magie und Politik* (Vienna, 1987). The latter two authors devote an entire and generally fair chapter to Evola,

although their many quotes from him could be misunderstood without their larger context. However, Umberto Eco has also taken aim at Evola several times, as he did at the Frankfurt Book Fair, and in a surprisingly spiteful manner that would not normally be expected of such an intelligent and humorous author. Does an author who feels the calling to "enlighten" have to resort to slander in order to elevate his own standpoint as the right one?

Every reader will have to judge for himself the amount of distance he wishes to keep from Evola after working through the materials offered here. We will add some comments on the structure of this study. A lot of space has been given to the influences of Evola's youth, because the intellectual foundations of his later far-reaching teachings (twenty-five books, around three hundred long essays, and well over one thousand newspaper and magazine articles) were already in place by the time he was twenty-five. When selecting quotes from his "teachers," we have consulted only those works of which we know, via his own statements, that he did indeed work through them in his youth. The identical tone of these quotes and Evola's core statements (especially in *Men among the Ruins*) will then be obvious to all his readers. This should not cast any doubts regarding Evola's uniqueness, but instead seeks to document a relatively recent intellectual climate that seems to be-long to a whole other world in its incisive questioning of what we regard today see as self-evident "humanism": a different world, whose utterances seem barely publishable today. The difficulties that apparently obstructed the uncensored edition of Nietzsche's *Collected Works* by Colli and Montinari in recent years can be traced to exactly that. Next follows the treatment of the main theme: Evola and Fascism, as well as National Socialism, and then his views on racism and the Jews. Notes about Evola's effect on Italian neofascism as well as a short treatment of the "moral" question will conclude this study.

Decisive Influences on Evola's Thought

Although hesitant to repeat what we have already written in the introduction to the recent English edition of *Revolt Against the Modern World*, we will recapitulate briefly the most important dates of Evola's life.

Giulio Cesare Evola was born into a family of the Sicilian landed gentry in Rome on 19 May 1898, and was raised strictly Catholic. Given his rebellious spirit, this had the effect that Evola soon encountered the then ultraprogressive circles of poets around Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Giovanni Papini, who,

as founders of Futurism, demanded a total break with conventional forms of thought and style. Instead, Futurism wanted modern life to be understood as movement, dynamism, and ever-present speed that supersedes the categories of space and time. Also, Marinetti's famous exclamation of "war, the world's only hygiene" had its effect on Evola, since it was the time of World War I and Evola had enlisted as an artillery officer.

Evola himself writes about Papini in his autobiography *Il cammino del cinabro* (The Path of Cinnabar, named after a symbol in Chinese alchemy; Milan, 1972, p. 15f): "Of course, that nihilism which preserves only the naked individual, that individual who despises any support and takes a stand against any evasions and subterfuge, has to make an impression upon youth." This passage already shows one of Evola's most important character traits, one that continues through his whole work: his unconditional and militant antipathy toward everything bourgeois. The fact that Evola never married, never wanted children, never had a middle-class job, and broke off his engineering studies before the last exam, in spite of his excellent record (so that he wouldn't be, as he writes, a "Doctor" or a "Professor" like the others) can be traced back to this sentiment. Thus, Evola is not even a "dropout," since he never dropped in to begin with. This is perhaps a symptom of his upbringing, about which next to nothing is known, as Evola himself hardly ever mentioned his personal life—not even in his autobiography, which is solely concerned with the development of his ideas. Only the "inner" life counts for him.

Futurism's lack of a truly inward-looking nature and its "loud, ostentatious" side were also the reasons that Evola turned away from the movement. But Papini had left a lasting impression, not only because of his fight against intellectual groveling, so ardently shared by Evola, but especially because he introduced him to many non-Italian streams of thought. Two of these must be emphasized: first Eastern religions, then Western mysticism, specifically Meister Eckhart and Jan van Ruysbroeck. These discoveries laid the groundwork for Evola's lifelong demand for crystalline clarity in all religious and esoteric questions, and for his simultaneous aversion to all sentimentalism and ecstatic fanaticism in this area.

However, before we treat esoteric influences, we should describe Evola's worldly philosophical foundation. Three thinkers exercised a special fascination on him in his youthful years, because he could also totally identify with them, being in the same age group. In addition, all three died at a very young

age—two by suicide and one (Otto Braun) perished in World War I. Evola's own inclination toward suicide and toward death in general, which he called *cupio dissolvi*—the desire for self-disintegration—was mirrored in them. He him-self evaded suicide only by reading a section from the Buddhist Pali Canon (see the introduction to *Revolt Against the Modern World*, p. xv).

First we look at Carlo Michelstaedter (1887-1910), whose influence Evola denoted as more positive and more important than Nietzsche's, that trans-valuator of all values whose sharp polemics added so much to Evola's style. Michelstaedter came from a Jewish family in Gorz, a town on the Isonzo in northern Italy. Initially he had studied mathematics in Vienna (see below as to the significance of Vienna in this context), but later delved into painting and Greek philosophy. After he had finished writing his work *La persuasione e la retorica* (*Conviction and Rhetoric*; the edition used here: Milan, 1982) one evening, he shot himself the next day. His opinion that he had nothing of value to add to this work surely influenced his decision. Evola was an intimate friend of one of Michelstaedter's cousins and thus lived through these events at close range. Soon after, this cousin likewise ended his young life by committing suicide.

The fundamental point of Michelstaedter's book is the demand for *persuasione*—that is, conviction. By conviction, Michelstaedter means much more; he sees it as an absolute sufficiency of the Self, which he holds to be the only real principle in the individual. As long as the Self does not exist in itself, but only in the "other" that conditions its life through things and relationships, and thus retains elements of dependence and need, there is no conviction but rather a lack, which is the true death of value. "Value is found only in that which exists for itself, which demands the principle of inner life from nothing and nobody—autarchy." Thus Evola describes the essence of Michelstaedter's philosophy (in *Saggi sull'Idealismo Magico* [Essays on Magical Idealism], Todi, Rome, 1925, p. 136ff.).

Let us hear Michelstaedter himself in *Persuasione e retorica*: "Fear, which most people believe to be restricted to a certain danger, is in truth the terrible horror in the face of the infinite darkness of him who feels unconscious and powerless in a specific case because he has been carried beyond the realm of his power" (p. 60). "He who fears death is already dead. He who wants for a moment that his life should be his alone, who wants for a moment to be convinced of what he does, must seize the present; he must see everything in the present as final, as if death is certain to follow: and he must create life out of himself in the darkness.

Death can't take anything from him who has his life in the present; because nothing in this man demands continued existence, nothing in him comes from the fear of death.... And death only takes away that which is born. It only takes away that which it already seized on the day one was born, which lives from fear of death for the very fact that it was born" (p. 69). "Because in this final present he must possess everything and give up everything, be convinced and convince, possess himself by possessing the world—and be one, he and the world" (p. 82; emphasis original).

"The path of conviction is not taken by 'omnibus' (all). This path has no road-signs or directions that one can share, study, or repeat. But everyone senses the need to find this path, and the measure of this need is one's own pain; everyone must open this path anew for themselves, because everyone is alone and can expect support only from oneself. There is only one suggestion for this Path of Conviction: do not surrender to contentment with what has been given to you (by others)" (p. 104).

The principle of autarchy, which Evola already knew from mystical and esoteric sources, found its philosophical justification here, and led to the authoritative self of his philosophical period.

As the second thinker should be mentioned Otto Braun, who had already tried to analyze Nietzsche's Zarathustra at the age of thirteen, and who said something that Evola himself could have uttered: "It is very curious that Nietzsche never conveyed to me the principle of enjoying life to the full, but only that of the greatest fulfillment of duty, however, not in the bourgeois sense of the phrase." (Otto Braun, *Aus den Nachgelassenen Schriften eines Fruhvollendeten*, Berlin, 1921, p. 21, from his diary entry of September 14, 1910; English edition: *The Diary of Otto Braun, with Selections from His Letters and Poems*, London, 1924.)

Evola himself quotes the following verbatim in his *Saggi* (p. 144): "But I will endeavor to recreate everything that comes my way to suit my goal; for me, that is free will" (Otto Braun, p. 148).

Further passages likewise reveal the resonance between Evola's and Braun's thought. From a letter to his parents in October 1915 (Braun, p. 150): "Composure, here characterized as well-formed spiritual attitude, glowing inwardly with passion, but outwardly hard as hammered steel, gloriously concealing the measureless, seems necessary to me. When I look at my state, that symbol of infinity and all that is finite, but to me an especially visible symbol for others, which I

always carry in my heart, as the saints carry the name of Christ, then it appears completely strong and great and perfectly formed, yet teeming within with a multitude of movements and the colorful play of forces."

One should keep these words in mind when we deal later with Evola's views of the State. This passage likewise is quoted in *Saggi* (p. 143ff.).

Evola's abhorrence of Bolshevism and Americanism was influenced by his reading of Count Hermann von Keyserling, as well as the following passage from Braun (p. 151): "Should Germany perish, and the world be divided between America and Russia (which would mean the death of everything that we called our Gods), I believe that ... all of us ... who still love the Gods would do better to leave a world that would be so unsuited to us, as Cato did. This time and its events are so terrible in their scope and power that all thought must indeed despair, and only a deed of salvation can rescue us. I still believe that the ocean is again pregnant, as when they cut off Uranus's member with a scythe and threw it into Poseidon's lap, wherefrom sprang Zeus [*sic*] in waves and foam. Perhaps today, we should again wait for a God to arise in this way."

The following passage is a very clear expression of Evola's yearning and striving, and certainly an essential emotional key toward the understanding of what it was that Evola, in spite of his reservations, wanted to see in rising Fascism (Braun, p. 156): "The coming age must be one of unconditional synthesis, positive and constructive in its whole character, creating new forms and continuing to mold old forms in an organic manner. In this nothing is a greater danger and should be avoided more than the comfortable retreat into old existent patterns. The incredible will, the grand impetuosity of this rich, dynamic, urgent age ... would be annihilated. I am deeply convinced that the womb of the coming years will give birth to fabulous things; it would be highly ruinous if we were to be robbed of receptiveness to these newly gestating forces through insipid talk, like that of reawakening religiosity. I hold the assumption to be sacrilegious, even devilish, that a time ... of these immense economic, political, and cultural upheavals ... could ever return to the placid waters of a Christianity consolidated by the state. I am as decidedly non-Christian as ever."

Now to the third of these thinkers who, together with Nietzsche, Evola calls the "holy damned ones," because none of them was equal to the strength of his thoughts. The spiritual current they bore within annihilated them, because they lacked a supra-normal self-realization centered on transcendence, at least in Evola's opinion. The third was Otto Weininger (1880-1903), who

lived in Vienna, was of Jewish ancestry, and influenced Evola the most out of those we have spoken of so far. The culture of the fin-de-siecle—and not just in the German-speaking realm—bore the imprint of his influence. As early as 1912, the first Italian translation of his main work, *Sex and Character*, appeared and caused a furor, especially in Papini's circles. Papini himself had issued excerpts of the book, and spoke out vehemently against Jewry in his own work *God* following Weininger's line of thought, which could not have failed to have had an effect on Evola. In 1956 Evola was commissioned by a major Italian publisher to make a new translation of *Sex and Character*, in order to correct the mistakes of the old edition and to add to Weininger's critical and bibliographical material. Detailed notes on this can be found in Alberto Cavaglioni's interesting book *On Weininger in Italia* (Rome, 1982).

Weininger's influence on Evola ranges from ethics to the attitude toward women, and from his thoughts on statehood to the attitude toward Judaism and racial questions. Evola's late work *The Metaphysics of Sex* (first Italian edition published 1958; later released in the United States as *Eros and the Mystics of Love*, Rochester, Vt., 1983) was originally planned as an introduction to, and correction of, *Sex and Character*, but subsequently grew to such a length that it became a book in its own right.

Here are some passages from Weininger's main work, we quote from the Viennese edition of 1904.

Truth, purity, loyalty, uprightness toward oneself: these are the only imaginable Ethics. (p. 206)

This could be a quote from Evola himself. Add Hebbel's epigram that Weininger quotes (Otto Braun also studied Hebbel intensively):

Which do you pay for more dearly, the lie or the truth?
The first you pay with your Self, the second, at worst, with your happiness.

Further:

Man is ~~alone~~ in the cosmos, in eternal, immense loneliness. He has no purpose except himself, nothing else he lives for—he is far beyond wanting-to-be-slave, ability-to-be-slave, having-to-be-slave: far below him human society has disappeared, social ethics have fallen away; he is alone, ALONE.

But only now is he ~~one~~ and ~~that~~ and that is why he has ~~law~~ within himself, that is why he ~~is~~ law, and not arbitrary desire. And ~~he~~ demands from himself that he follow this law within himself ... Nothing stands above him, the alone,

the all-one. But he must comply with the pitiless categorical imperative within, which tolerates no negotiations with itself. He calls for Salvation ... (p. 210)

We also present a paragraph from the chapter entitled "The Problem of Self and Genius." It deals with a passage from Schelling, which Weininger quotes verbatim. Evola studied German Romanticism especially thoroughly, and Schelling in particular. His definition of Tradition also shows the influence of Schelling, in addition to Guenon (see my introduction to *The Hermetic Tradition*, Rochester, Vt., 1995, p. xii).

We all possess a secret, wonderful ability to retreat from the vicissitudes of time into our innermost self, stripped of all outside influences, and there, in the shape of immutability, to contemplate the eternal in ourselves. This contemplation is the innermost and most unique experience, on which all and everything that we know and believe about a supernatural world depends. Only this contemplation persuades us that something IS, while everything else to which we apply that term only APPEARS to be. It is different from all other sensual contemplation in that it can only be produced by freedom and is alien and foreign to all those whose freedom, overwhelmed by the thronging power of objects, barely suffices to bring forth consciousness.... In this moment of contemplation, time and duration melts away for us: WE are not in time, but rather time, or better yet, pure absolute eternity, is WITHIN US.

Another passage in the same chapter is as follows: "However, the Self-event is the root of all worldviews" (p. 217).

Or: "Moral action can therefore only consist in acting according to an idea" (p. 228, Weininger's emphasis). "The idea is our fatherland," says Evola, to the chagrin of many nationalist circles, as we will see below. Another quote from this chapter: "A man becomes a genius through a supreme act of will, after affirming the whole universe within himself" (p. 236).

The constant recurrence of manliness, as opposed to mere masculinity, as a category in Evola's thought can certainly also be attributed to Weininger. Adriano Romualdi, in his *Julius Evola: L'uomo a l'opera* (Julius Evola: The Man and His Work, Rome, 1979), even called Weininger the "originator of the idea of manliness as a metaphysical essence" (p. 17). It is almost superfluous in this context to mention how closely Evola's attitude toward woman—as a meta-physical opposite of man and in the political sense—is based on Weininger, because this is more than obvious. But Evola was not the only one who thought of Sex and Character as an epochal work. For example, August Strindberg wrote

the following words to Weininger on July 1, 1903: "To finally see the problem of woman solved (!) is a relief for me.... " In another letter, to Arthur Gerber, he says: "What Weininger has written are not opinions, they are discoveries! Weininger was a discoverer!" (quoted in the preface to the second edition of *Sex and Character*, p. vi).

Among the other personalities influenced by Weininger are Alfred Kubin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Georg Trakl, Arnold Schonberg, and Thomas Bernhard.

It would be just as hard to understand Evola's attitudes toward Jews (to be treated in detail later) without Weininger. Two definitive passages from *Sex and Character*, whose essence time and again forms the foundation for Evola's own pronouncements, will illustrate this. However, these do not concern them-selves with the centuries-old prejudices, which both Weininger—despite his ancestry—and Evola fall prey to, but instead deal with "metaphysical categories."

But first I want to define exactly what I mean by Jewishness. One is not dealing with a race or a people, and even less with a legally acknowledged profession. One can only define it as a spiritual attitude, a psychic constitution, which offers an OPPORTUNITY for ALL men and which merely found its most grandiose REALIZATION in historical Jewry. Nothing proves the veracity of this statement more than anti-Semitism. The truest, most Aryan of Aryans, certain of their Aryanness, are no anti-Semites; they cannot even fathom hostile anti-Semitism, ... on the other hand, one can always detect certain Jewish traits in the aggressive anti-Semites ...

It would be impossible for this to be any other way. As one LOVES only those traits in the other which one would wholeheartedly embrace oneself, yet can never fully attain, so one HATES in the other only that which one never wants to be, yet which one partially retains. One does not hate something with which one has nothing in common ... (p. 413f.) And then: Indeed, when I speak of a Jew, I never mean the individual or the whole group, but man in general, as far as he shares the PLATONIC idea of Jewishness. It is my sole intention to define the meaning of this idea. (p. 415; emphasis by Weininger himself)

Evola's racial thought is decisively marked by these views; hence his disapproving attitude toward Vacher de Lapouge, Gobineau, and Chamberlain, the men who are otherwise known as the fathers of modern racism.

The apparently negative characterization in Evola's *Men among the Ruins* of the leader who identifies with his people and who, spurred on by them, strides

toward "great" deeds (like Napoleon, but of course also Mussolini and Hitler) must also be traced back to Weininger. Weininger compares these popular leaders and popular tribunes with his classification of the prostitute. A quote from *Sex and Character* will illustrate this:

For the great politician is not only a speculator and millionaire, but also a pop singer; he is not only a great chess player, but also a great actor; he is not only a despot, but also a toady; he not only prostitutes others, but is himself a great prostitute. The politician, the warleader who never "lowered himself" does not exist. After all, his descents are famous; they are his sexual acts. The proper tribune also belongs in the gutter. The complementary relationship with the mob is a downright part of a politician's constitution. In fact, he can only use the rabble; with the others, the individuals, he makes a quick end, if he is unwise; or, if he is as smart as Napoleon, he pretends to value them, so as to render them harmless.

One feels these sentences slamming down like hammer blows, in a dogmatic manner of which virtually only youth is capable (Weininger wrote this when he was barely twenty years old), and they must have fascinated Evola in his quest for the Absolute.

One element that is finally decisive for Evola's hostile attitude toward Jews (in the ideal sense mentioned above) is the identification of modernity with the Jewish spirit by Weininger and himself (and certainly also by his followers). Weininger writes (p. 451 f.): "The spirit of the modern age Jewish wherever it is found" (emphasis by Weininger). Then he adds:

Our age, which is not only the most Jewish, but also the most effeminate of all ages; the age in which the arts are only a rag for wiping its moods, and which attributes the artistic urge to animal games [Weininger is a opponent of Darwin's theory of evolution, like Evola and Spengler]; the age of the most gullible anarchism; the age without a sense for the state and justice; the age of sexual ethics, the age of the most shallow of all historical methods (historical materialism); the age of capitalism and Marxism; the age in which history, life, and science are reduced to economics and technology.

It is this modernity that Evola assaulted from his youth onward, and which he even metaphorically equated with metaphysical "evil." Himself influenced by the incisive critical method of modernity, he nevertheless fought against it (and the corresponding trait of his own character), and saw in this the justification for his anti-Jewish attitude.

We conclude this section on Weininger with a remark by the great sexologist Wilhelm Stekel. In the magazine *Waage* (1904, 44-45), he writes about Weininger: "Thus one should not pass judgment on genius, even when it shows pathological traits, because we have to prefer morbid genius to healthy inactivity" (quoted in Emil Lucka, *Otto Weininger. Sein Werk und seine Persönlichkeit*, Vienna, 1905).

The influences that originated from Fichte (Evola repeatedly quotes his *Sittenlehre*), Oscar Wilde, and Gabriele d'Annunzio can be mentioned only in passing. Those of Plato, Nietzsche, Spengler, and Gustave Le Bon must be looked at more closely.

First let us turn to Plato, whom Evola mentions in his philosophical works as well as in his "Self-Defense." Plato's dialogue *The Republic* must be counted among the politically most important books of the West. One should note what Plato says there about freedom, education, equality (VIII, 557-565) or about those (IX, 586) who "look down always with their heads bent to the ground like cattle; at the banquet tables they feed, fatten, and fornicate. To get their fill of such things they kick and butt each other with iron horns and hoofs and kill each other. They are insatiable as they do not fill the real and continent part of themselves with true realities" (trans. Grube). The antidemocratic tradition, to which Evola professes to belong, would be unthinkable without Plato (see Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, London, 1957).

Next we turn to Nietzsche, that "earthquake of an era," as Gottfried Benn calls him. Evola's affinity to this thinker cannot be overlooked even in a cursory examination. The fight against Christianity, the bourgeoisie, and the prevalent moral prejudices on the one hand, and on the other the predilection for the grandiose, for that which exceeds man, the pitilessness, without caring about himself, and the caustic language without any concessions are clear signs of this. Again we provide some excerpts to illustrate this, the first being from *Beyond Good and Evil* (part 9: "What Is Noble?" aphorism 257, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, London, 1990):

Every elevation of the type "man" has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic society—and so it will always be: a society which believes in a long scale of orders of rank and differences of worth between man and man.... Without the pathos of distance such as develops from the incarnate differences of classes, from the ruling caste's constant looking out and looking down on subjects and instruments ... that other, more mysterious pathos could not have developed either,

that longing for an ever-increasing widening of distance within the soul itself, the formation of ever higher, rarer, more remote, tenser, more comprehensive states; in short precisely the elevation of the type "man," the continual "self-overcoming of man," to use a moral formula in a supra-moral sense ...

The essential thing in a good and healthy aristocracy is, however, that it does not feel itself to be a function (of the monarchy or of the commonwealth), but as their meaning and supreme justification—that it therefore accepts with a good conscience the sacrifice of innumerable men who for its sake have to be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments. Its fundamental faith must be that society should not exist for the sake of society but only as foundation and scaffolding upon which a select species of being is able to raise itself to its higher task and in general to a higher existence. (aphorism 258)

"In a tour of the many finer and coarser moralities which have ruled or still rule on earth I found certain traits regularly recurring together and bound up with one another: until at length two basic types were revealed and a basic distinction emerged. There is master morality and slave morality—I add at once that in all higher and mixed cultures attempts at mediation between the two are apparent and more frequently confusion and mutual misunderstanding between them, indeed sometimes their harsh juxtaposition—even within the same man, within one soul ... [W]hen it is the rulers who determine the concept "good," it is the exalted, calm states of soul which are considered distinguishing and determine the order of rank. The noble human being separates from himself those natures in which the opposite of such exalted proud states find expression: he despises them. It should be noted at once that in this first type of morality the antithesis "good" and "bad" means the same thing as "noble" and "despicable"—the antithesis "good" and "evil" originates elsewhere. The cowardly, the timid, the petty, and those who think only of narrow utility are despised; as are the mistrustful with their constricted glance, those who abase themselves, the dog-like man who lets himself be mistreated, the fawning flatterer, above all the liar—it is a fundamental belief of all aristocrats that the common people are liars. "We who are truthful"—thus did the nobility of ancient Greece designate them-selves.... The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values, he does not need to be approved of... such a morality is self-glorification. In the foreground stands the feeling of plenitude, of power which seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of a wealth which would like to give away and bestow—the noble human being also aids the unfortunate but not, or almost not, from pity, but more from an urge begotten by the superfluity of power. The noble human being honors in himself the man of power, also the

man who has power over himself, who understands how to speak and how to keep silent, who enjoys practicing severity and harshness upon himself and feels reverence for all that is severe and harsh . . . belief in oneself, pride in oneself, a fundamental hostility and irony toward "selflessness" belong just as definitely to noble morality as does a mild contempt for and caution against sympathy and the "warm heart."—It is the powerful who *understand* how to honor, that is their art, their realm of invention. Deep reverence for age and the traditional . . . belief and prejudice in favor of ancestors and against descendants, is typical of the morality of the powerful; and when, conversely, men of "modern ideas" believe almost instinctively in "progress" and "the future" and show an increasing lack of respect for age, this reveals clearly enough the ignoble origin of these "ideas." (aphorism 260)

We, who have a different faith—we, to whom the democratic movement is not merely a form assumed by political organization in decay but also a form assumed by man in decay, that is to say in diminishment, in process of becoming mediocre and losing his value: whither must we direct our hopes?—Toward *new philosophers*, we have no other choice; toward spirits strong and original enough to make a start on antithetical evaluations and to revalue and reverse "eternal values" . . . so as to make an end to that gruesome dominion of chance and nonsense that has hitherto been called "history"—the nonsense of the "greatest number" is only its latest form—: for that a new kind of philosopher and commander will some time be needed, in the face of whom whatever has existed on earth of hidden, dreadful, and benevolent spirits may well look pale and dwarfed. It is the image of such leaders which hovers before *our* eyes. (Part 5: "On the Natural History of Morals," aphorism 203)

From *Human, All Too Human* (book I, aphorism 451, "Justice as a Party Lure," trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford, 1995):

The *demand* for equality of rights made by socialists of the subjected caste never flows from a sense of justice, but instead from greed.—If someone holds bloody chunks of meat near an animal and then yanks them away until finally it roars: do you think that this roaring signifies justice?

Concerning Evola's disdain of "equal rights for all":

"The inequality of rights is the precondition for the existence of any rights at all. . . There is nothing wrong with unequal rights; only in the claim to equal rights . . . What is evil? . . . Everything arising in weakness, envy, and *revenge*. (*The Antichrist*, aphorism 57, trans. P. R. Stephensen, London, 1929)

Concerning his passionate arguments against Christianity:

There is every reason for comparing the Christian and the anarchist because the impulse of both is toward destruction.... "The Christian and anarchist are both decadents, both are only able to act for the purpose of disintegrating, poisoning, degrading, and blood-sucking. They both have the impulse of mortal hatred toward anything that stands up, and is great, and is lasting and shows promise for the future ... Christianity was the vampire of the Imperium Romanum ... (aphorism 58)

These few passages should give us enough insight. Of course, it must be emphasized that Evola, as much as he valued Nietzsche, always cautioned against his hubris of the "worldview" in the purely natural sense (see the introduction to *Revolt*, pp. 14-17). Nietzsche's influence was strong but should not be over-rated, because he never even mentions the "transcendence" that was so important for Evola.

With that we turn to Oswald Spengler and his work that was so important for cultural history, *The Decline of the West*, which Evola later translated into Italian and for which he wrote a critical introduction. Concerning Evola's criticism of Spengler, especially his bondage to the natural and his lack of transcendent principles, see Evola's essay "Spengler a il "Tramonto dell'Occidente" (Spengler and the Decline of the West, Fondazione Julius Evola, Rome, 1981, *Quaderni di Testi Evoliani*, no. 14). The fundamentally pessimistic outlook, which we have already encountered in Nietzsche and which figures in most of the "philosophers of crisis" up to Ortega y Gasset, found its most eloquent and pronounced expression in Spengler. After reading him, if not before, Evola was finally convinced that Western civilization was doomed to failure. Very important in this is Spengler's view that it is a sure sign of decadence when the economy wins the upper hand in a culture.

Evola's conviction that a new start was necessary—hence his conditional support of Fascism and, later, the transcendence of this world through "Tradition"—was indebted to this philosophy of decline.

But Nietzsche's ideas also appear in Spengler's work, as in the following passage, which defines the difference between the "deed" and "work," which is also decisive for Evola:

And there is the same relation between the ethical passion of the great Baroque masters—Shakespeare, Bach, Kant, Goethe—the manly will to inward mastery of natural things that are felt to be far below oneself, and modern Europe's will

to outwardly clear them out of the way (in the form of state-provisions, humanitarian ideals, world peace, happiness of the majority) because one perceives oneself to be on the same level as they. This also is a manifestation of the will-to-power as opposed to the Classical endurance of the inevitable; it also shows passion and a longing for eternity, but there remains a fundamental difference between the material and metaphysical scale of the achievements. The latter lacks depth, it lacks what men formerly called God. The Faustian universal feeling of the deed, which ... had been active in every great man, was reduced to a philosophy of work. Whether such a philosophy attacks or defends work does not affect its inward value. The cultural concept of the deed and the civilized concept of work stand in similar relation as Aeschylus's Prometheus to Diogenes. The one suffers and endures, the other is lazy. Galileo, Kepler, and Newton performed deeds of science; the modern physicist carries out scientific work. And in spite of all the great words from Schopenhauer to Shaw, it is the plebeian morals of everyday life and "sound human reason" that are the basis for all perceptions and discussions of life. (*The Decline of the West*, New York, 1934, p. 355, translation adapted)

Similarly, concerning the same theme: "What has occurred on the way from Newton to Faraday—or from Berkeley to Mill—is the supplanting of the religious concept of the deed by the irreligious concept of work. In Bruno's, Newton's, and Goethe's view of nature, something divine was active in deeds; in the worldview of modern physics, nature carries out work" (German ed., p. 537).

A few words by Spengler that could also come verbatim from *Men among the Ruins*. "The state is the inner form, the shape of a nation" (p. 179). "But that is exactly what turned Faustian man into the slave of his creation. Ills number and the layout of his standard of living are forced by the machine onto a course of no rest and no return" (vol. II, p. 631).

"But the onslaught of money against this spiritual power has taken the same titanic proportions. Even industry is bound to its place and to its sources of elements, bound to the soil like the peasantry. Only high finance is completely free, completely unsusceptible to attack. Since 1789, the banks and thus the stock exchanges have come into their own as a power, feeding off the credit needs of an industry growing into monstrous proportions. Now they, and money, want to be the sole power in all civilizations" (p. 633). Like Evola, Spengler considers that "Caesarism arises out of democracy" (p. 583). In his other work, *The Hour of Decision* (original title *Jahre der Entscheidung*, Munich, 1933; English edition: New York, 1934), for which Evola again authored an introduction to

its Italian edition, Spengler speaks of the "utilitarian morality of slave-souls" (p. 95), and further of a "Prussian style" to which Evola gives high marks in *Men among the Ruins* and which consists of an "aristocratic ordering of life according to the rank of achievement" and of the "preeminence of high politics over the economy and the latter's disciplining by a strong state" (p. 138).

This brings us to Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) and his work *The Crowd* (London, 1896, seventh ed., 1910), which was valued not only by Pareto, Freud, Mussolini, and de Gaulle, but even by Horkheimer and Adorno. Evola's mistrust of democracy looked for and surely found its final confirmation in Le Bon's work. Properly, a faith in democracy has to be matched by a radical optimism, a belief in the good in man. Politically, Evola was a pessimist—and not just since reading Spengler—and thus was hard to win over to democratic ideas. He is convinced that the masses are incapable of following higher ideals, because they always follow the leader who is temporarily the strongest, no matter what ideas he preaches. He merely has to be able to fascinate. Evola fears what Le Bon likewise called the "feminine character" of the masses. The rejection of Christianity also shows itself in Le Bon, because at least at the time of its inception it was identifiable with the spirit of the masses.

Once again, some quotes to clarify Le Bon's influence:

Crowds exhibit a docile respect for force, and are but slightly impressed by kindness, which for them is scarcely more than a form of weakness. Their sympathies have never been bestowed on easy-going masters, but on tyrants who vigorously oppress them. It is to these latter that they always erect the greatest statues. It is true that they willingly trample on the despot whom they have stripped of his power, but this is because, having lost his strength, he has resumed his place among the weak, who are to be despised and not feared. The type of hero dear to crowds will always have the semblance of a Caesar. His insignia attracts them, his authority overawes them, and his sword instills them with fear.... Should the strength of an authority be intermittent, the crowd, always obedient to its extreme sentiments, passes alternately from anarchy to servitude, and from servitude to anarchy. (*The Crowd*, book I, ch. 2, section 4)

Ideas being only accessible to crowds after having assumed a very simple shape must often undergo the most thoroughgoing transformations to become popular. It is especially when we are dealing with somewhat lofty philosophic or scientific ideas that we see how far-reaching are the modifications they require in order to lower them to the level of the intelligence of crowds. (book I, ch. 3, section 1)

Still, though the wishes of crowds are frenzied they are not durable. Crowds are as incapable of willing as of thinking for any length of time.... Crowds are everywhere distinguished by feminine characteristics, but Latin crowds are the most feminine of all. (book 1, ch. 2, section 1)

Le Bon states "On this point, however, as on many others, democratic ideas are in profound disagreement with the results of psychology and experience." Le Bon then goes on to explain that man cannot be taught by education (book II, ch. 1, section 5). And as a final quote: "In the case of human crowds, the chief ... plays a considerable part. His will is the nucleus around which the opinions of the crowd are grouped and attain to identity.... A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master" (book 11, ch. 3, section 1).

Another name should be mentioned briefly, even though his influence probably took effect later: that of Johann Jakob Bachofen, who has recently gained renewed respect. He certainly counts as the one who popularized in the scientific world the concept of "gynecocracy," the rule of women. Precisely through Bachofen's identification of the age of female rule with the age of earthbound, "chthonic" deities, a model was created that must imply as its opposite pole the solar, the Olympian, and the manly, with which Evola naturally identified. Thus Bachofen can be credited with the creation of that idea of "Olympian manliness" which is one of the foundations of *Revolt Against the Modern World*. Evola later translated a selection of Bachofen's work into Italian, adding an introduction and notes. (Julius Evola, *Le Madri e la virilità olimpica* [The Mothers and Olympian Manliness], Milan, 1949. Apparently, this translation did not have the same precision as Evola's translations of Spengler and W^eininger.)

With that we have dealt with the most important "profane" philosophers to whom Evola is unmistakably indebted. But there is an essential element that is lacking in all these authors: the Transcendent. Everything that these people said might be apposite, but it amounts to nothing in an Evolian and traditionalist worldview if it is not elevated by and grounded in transcendence. These opinions become valid only when they are seen against the backdrop of a higher, timeless realm.

Papini had already introduced Evola to Meister Eckhart, who was probably the first to reveal this deeper knowledge to Evola. Meister Eckhart and Jan van Ruysbroeck are mentioned as early as Evola's *Arte astratta* (Abstract Art, Rome, 1920, p. 14). Concurrently, he was most likely starting to study Buddhism,

Taoism, and Hinduism. As already mentioned, it was a passage from the Buddhist Pali Canon that stopped Evola from committing suicide.

We should therefore investigate the extent to which religious and mystical writings complement the thinkers mentioned thus far, or better, place them in a timeless framework so that many passages that smack of the "worldview" will be spiritualized and given a different background as to their meaning.

First, let us deal with Meister Eckhart. Early on, Evola had mastered several foreign languages: Latin, ancient Greek, and above all French (his poetry, which will be mentioned later, was written in this language) and German. Thus he read Meister Eckhart in German. From his notes we even know that he first used the edition by E. Buttner, *Schriften und Predigten* (Works and Sermons). The important influence of this work cannot be underestimated: he quoted Eckhart with the greatest respect all his life, which is unusual given Evola's critical mind. Evola's concept of freedom, his "act, without looking toward success or failure" and his aforementioned aversion to sentimentality can be largely traced to this theologian and mystic. For example, Evola quotes Meister Eckhart in German in his early work *Saggi sull'Idealismo Magico* (1925, p. 48) as follows: "From this deepest foundation of being [where life exists for its own sake (Evola's note)], you should do all your works, without asking why. I decisively assert: as long as you do your works for the sake of heaven, God, or your salvation, and hence from the outside, you are really not in the right. If one asks a truthful man, one who acts from his own being: 'Why do you do your works' and he answers honestly, he would also say: 'I do for the sake of doing!'"

The closeness of this thought to Taoism and "Zen is self-evident. But more about this later.

Meister Eckhart's thought also already shows the traits that Evola's critics, in their thorough misunderstanding, have seen as selfish excess, total overestimation and obsession with the *Übermensch*: the fact that Evola holds the Self (of course, not the everyday self or "worldly self" in Graf Durckheim's expression) to be absolute. Let us quote Eckhart: "Being is God ... God and existences are identical. Should I be able to recognize God in an immediate way, then I must become he and he must become I, pure and simple ... so completely at one, that this he and this I are one and will become and be one, and exist and act eternally in this way and form of being" (Meister Eckhart, *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate* [German Sermons and Treatises], ed. Josef Quint, Munich, 1978, p. 354). With this and his maxim of "action without questioning

why" Eckhart also anticipates Evola's boundless conception of freedom. For as long as one is acting out of an inner urge, as a reaction to a shortcoming, or because an idea seems attractive, whether it is "material" or "spiritual," one continues to be bound in "slavery." The concept of "power" that is so important to Evola also derives from this precept. An absolute Self wields absolute power, even when it does not utilize it. Naturally, the concept of power leads through cross-references to Tantra, which Evola had already encountered very early on (see below as well as his work *L'uomo come potenza* [Man as Power], Rome, 1926). His main sources for this were the translations by Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon). Evola also knew Woodroffe personally, and thus certain translations of the latter's work first appeared in Italian before they were even published in English (one such example is contained in *Julius Evola and the UR Group*, Introduction to Magic, Rochester, Vt., 2001, p. 64 ff.).

The "arrogance" in spiritual matters that Evola has been accused of again and again also applies to Meister Eckhart—for example, when he writes: "Coarse-natured people must simply believe this, but the enlightened must know it" (Eckhart, p. 267).

Still another quote concerning action without looking for success, approval, or rejection by others: He is just, who gives everybody what is due to him" (p. 182). And then: "... but in a different sense, those are just who take all things from God to be equal, whatever it may be, great or small, dear or not, completely the same, without less or more, the one like the other" (ibid.). Such an outlook presumes a separation from the world and especially from oneself ("All love in this world is built on self-love. If you would only leave that, you would have the whole world left"; p. 185) and must necessarily bring with it a separation from the concept of time and a turning toward the supra-temporal or, in other words, the "eternal." Eternity in this sense is not limitless time, but instead the atemporal, the realm beyond time, where before and after fuse into an absolute present. This timelessness is also the realm in which Tradition, in the Evolian sense, operates. It is the "most intrinsic of all being, the most real of all reality, the most certain of all certainty," which even though we cannot understand it intellectually is an area we can be open to.

A poem by Henry Vaughan (quoted by D.1. Suzuki in *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, New York, 1957, p. 93f.) may open the way on an emotional level:

*I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,*

*All calm, as it was bright,
And round beneath it, Time, in hours, days, years
Driven by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
And all her train were hurled.*

Meister Eckhart writes the following concerning this concept: "For the Now in which God created the first human being, and the Now in which the last human being will perish, and the Now in which I speak, are all identical in God and are nothing but a Now" (Eckhart, p. 162).

Evola's urge toward transcendence and the higher reaches, which was certainly already preconditioned (see the introduction to *Revolt Against the Modern World*, which deals with this quest in more detail), found its deeply-felt confirmation in Meister Eckhart. Other sources, especially Taoism, whose main work (Lao Tse, *Tao te Ching*) he translated into Italian in two different versions in 1923 and 1959, also strengthened and confirmed his notions. A few excerpts from this work will testify to the extent these esoteric truths additionally influenced and strengthened Evola's thought, including his political ideas. (All translations based on Lao Tse, *Tao Teh King*, ed. by K. O. Schmidt, Pfullingen, 1961.)

Tao te Ching (I, ch. 7; Evola mentions this explicitly in *Saggi sull'Idealismo Magico*, p. 100, as a maxim for right action):

*Thus the awakened one,
Because he puts himself behind, he steps in front,
Because he gives away, he gains,
Because he cares not for himself, he is maintained.
That is it.
Because he is selfless,
He achieves self-fulfillment.*

Here we have the famous *wei wu wei*, (subtle) action without acting in the normal sense, which is so prevalent in Taoism. Another quote from I, ch. 10:

*To feed and to preserve, yet not to cling,
To act, yet not to hold back and not to hold forever,
To lead, yet not to lord over,
This is the virtue of a calm spirit.*

From I, ch. 13:

*Honors and disgraces are equally full of suffering
 Attain glory, and you will fear losing it.
 Lose glory, and the shame will terrify you.
 Both are accompanied by fear,
 Both are sources of suffering.*

From I, ch. 26:

*Thus the sage is anchored in inner security and safeguards his weight.
 He remains calm, also when glory and riches tempt.
 For the one who gives up inner security and who sticks to something,
 Becomes weightless and insecure.
 Weightless he becomes thoughtless and restless,
 Insecure he remains defeated and powerless.*

From I, ch. 29 (this passage is especially important politically, in order to understand the attitude of the traditional monarch. Evola has admonished Fascism and National Socialism repeatedly for not comprehending this attitude):

*To win the empire through action and to master it,
 That is the way that leads to failure.
 For the empire is a divine vessel,
 Which cannot be seized and acted upon.
 One who desires to grasp it, does not understand it.
 One who desires to take it, loses it.
 He believes he is getting ahead, but falls behind.
 He believes he is increasing, but he dwindles away.
 He thinks himself strong, and reveals his weakness.
 He thinks himself superior, and is defeated.*

From I, ch. 33 (central to his concept of power):

*One who knows others is clever;
 One who knows himself is enlightened.
 One who conquers others is strong;
 One who conquers himself is power.*

From II, ch. 56, about the nobility of the wise:

*Since he is all-one, he is touched by neither life nor hate, gain nor loss,
exaltation nor humiliation. That is his nobility.*

This inner attitude of the enlightened one as goal is found in all of Evola's creative periods, from the philosophical to the magical, from the political to the cultural-historical. It must be emphasized again and again that Evola's political writings cannot be understood at all without this reference point and that anybody who reads them with the usual values in mind is doomed to misinterpret them.

Finally, we arrive at Hinduism and one of its main writings, namely the Bhagavad Gita, whose pronouncements strengthened Evola's existing warrior (Sanskrit: kshatriya) tendencies and provided them with the necessary meta-physical background. Again, we provide selected quotes (the edition we have utilized is The Bhagavad Gita, trans. Winthrop Sargeant, Albany, 1984):

*He whose delight is only in the self,
And whose satisfaction is in the self,
And who is content only in the self;
For him the need to act does not exist.
He has no purpose at all in action,
Nor any whatever in non-action,
And he has no need of any purpose whatever
in regard to any being.*

(III, 17–18)

*In a sense in relation to an object of that sense,
Passion and hatred are seated.
One should not come under the power of these two;
They are indeed one's two antagonists.*

(III, 34)

*To whom honor and dishonor are equal;
Dispassionate toward the side of friend or foe,
Renouncing all undertakings,
He is said to transcend the gunas [attributes].*

(XIV, 25)

*That action which is controlled and free from attachment,
 Performed without desire or hate,
 With no wish to obtain fruit,
 Is said to be sattvic [filled with being].
 But that action which is performed
 with a wish to obtain desires,
 With selfishness, or, again,
 With much effort,
 Is declared to be rajasic [filled with passion].*
 (XVIII, 23—24)

*Fixed in Yoga, perform actions,
 Having abandoned attachment, Conqueror of Wealth [Arjuna].
 Having become indifferent to success or failure.
 It is said that indifference is Yoga [realization].
 Action is inferior by far
 To the Yoga of intuition, Conqueror of Wealth.
 Seek refuge in intuitive determination!
 Despicable are those whose motives
 are based on the fruit of action.
 He whose intuitive determination is disciplined Casts
 off, here in the world, both good and evil actions.*
 (II, 48—50)

*By relinquishing egotism, force, arrogance,
 Desire, anger and possession of property;
 Unselfish, tranquil,
 One is fit for oneness with Brahman [the divine].*
 (XVIII, 53)

And it is hard to escape the greatness and tragedy of the *Bhagavad Gita* while reading about the warrior Arjuna's horror, when he stands on the battlefield and realizes that the opposing ranks include friends and relatives whom he has to kill.

*My limbs sink down
 And my mouth dries up*

*And my body trembles
 And my hair stands on end. Gandiva (Arjuna's bow) falls from (my) hand,
 And my skin burns,
 And I am unable to remain as I am,
 And my mind seems to ramble ...*
 (I, 29-30)

And he begs Lord Krishna to absolve him from his warrior duties, because he does not want to fight this battle. But what does Krishna answer him:

*Thou hast mourned the not-to-be-mourned
 And yet thou speakest as if with wisdom;
 For the dead and for the not dead
 The pandits [wise ones] do not mourn.*
 (II, 11)

*These bodies inhabited by the eternal,
 The indestructible, the immeasurable embodied one [i.e., the Brahman],
 Are said to come to an end.
 Therefore fight heroically, Descendant of Bharata [Arjuna]!*
 (II, 18)

*He whose state of mind is not egoistic,
 Whose intelligence is not befouled,
 Even though he slays these people,
 Does not slay, and is not bound [by his actions].*
 (XVIII, 17)

*And, perceiving just thine own caste duty,
 Thou shouldst not tremble.
 Indeed, anything superior to righteous battle,
 For the kshatriya [man of the warrior caste], does not exist.
 And if by good fortune they gain
 The open gate of heaven
 Happy are the kshatriyas, Sons of Pritha,
 When they encounter such a fight.*
 (II, 31-32)

Given Evola's predisposition, these words fell on fertile ground—even more so when he realized that the outward battle on the field is used by all wisdom teachings as a symbol for the inner struggle against one's own negative attributes, and can only be justifiably fought in this way; and that such a struggle through self-mastery can even lead to "liberation." Corresponding passages in the Koran and even the Bible must have strengthened his notion (see *Revolt Against the Modern World*, "The Greater and the Lesser Holy War," p. 116).

Of course, such excerpts raise the question of which code of ethics and morals one should follow. That the thoughts quoted above can be incorporated only with much difficulty into today's prevalent worldview is self-evident. It is even harder to see them as "religious" commandments. Only a vision directed exclusively at the eternal, to which our human world is irrelevant, makes their affirmation even possible. The unshakable conviction that this world is in reality *Maya*, a mere illusion, is the prerequisite. In reference to morals and ethics, we include another Taoist saying that Evola often quoted and which we will deal with in more detail further on: "When the Way [the immediate connection to the spiritual] has been lost, virtue [in the sense of manliness and honor] remains. When virtue is lost, ethics remain; when ethics are lost, moralism remains. Moralism is the exteriorization of ethics and defines the principle of decline."

When speaking of Evola's spiritual foundation, the drug experiences of his youth (circa 1917–18) cannot be left unmentioned, because to them he owes his *practical* approach to esotericism, his first personal experience of transcendence. They surely also contributed to the absolute and uncompromising nature of his idea of freedom. Evola never repeated his drug experiences because he had already taken from them all that he could. In describing them, he speaks of a "peremptory, absolute, resounding certainty" (see Iagla, "Experiences: The Law of Beings" in *Introduction to Magic*, p. 167ff.). Evola defines the expansion of consciousness caused by drugs as follows: "When I compare it to my previous and habitual consciousness, only one image comes to my mind: the most lucid, conscious state of wakefulness in comparison to the deepest, most hypnotic and torpid state of sleep."

Extensive experiences with mountain climbing also have their place in the formation of Evola's distinct spiritual worldview, because he preferred to visit the high alpine mountains, the glaciers and impassable regions, where he sensed the force of creation in their solitude and could measure his spirit against this

virtually no controversy to be had about them. Those who react to Evola's text only on an emotional level are, unfortunately, beyond such assistance; it would be better for them to save their blood pressure by not reading him at all.

The value of such reading and debate lies, naturally, in their educative function, but also, in the present case, in the self-knowledge that one gains from the dispassionate handling of explosive material. Evola is a great teacher in this regard. If he were a mere right-wing fanatic, he would be as tiresome as any other person enslaved to an ideology. The difference between him and the fanatics, intelligence aside, is that he writes always with the vertical dimension in mind. Those who do not know his writings on esotericism must take this on trust until they have discovered them. They will then find in works such as *The*

Hermetic Tradition and *The Yoga of Power* one of the keenest minds in the field, whose personal experience—and there is no other explanation for it—gave him the key to the mysteries of self-transformation and self-realization. The challenge to esotericists is that when Evola came down to earth, he was so "incorrect"—by the received standards of our society. He was no fool; and he cannot possibly have been right ... so what is one to make of it? If one can cross the *pons asinorum* represented by these questions, then one has passed the first initiation, and can begin to learn the serious business that Evola has to teach.

force. It was neither sport nor romanticism for him; he saw mountaineering as a path to his Self. Following ancient traditions, Evola speaks of the mountain as the holy mountain, the seat of the gods, the mediator between heaven and earth (Olympus, Meru, Kailash, etc.). Mountain climbing for him is the symbol for the spiritual ascent toward the divine, the ever purer, clearer, and more crystalline realm. Evola speaks of the "transformation of the experience of the mountain into a way of being." And further: "This then is the strength of those who may be said to never return from the peaks to the plains. This is the strength of those for whom there is no longer going out or coming back because the mountain is in their spirit, because the symbol has become reality . . ." And: "The mountain is connected to something that has no beginning and no end and that, having become an inalienable spiritual conquest, has become part of one's nature, something one carries everywhere that bestows a new meaning to every action, every experience, and every struggle in everyday life" (*Meditations on the Peaks*, Rochester, Vt., 1998, p. 22). Or: "The mountain teaches silence... . It promotes simplification and the turning of one's attention inward" (p. 33).

Evola completed some difficult climbs for example, the north wall of the Eastern Lyskam in 1927. He also requested in his will that after his death the urn containing his ashes be deposited in a glacial crevasse on Monte Rosa (see Renato del Ponte's report in Michel Angebert et al., *Julius Evola: le visionnaire foudroyé* [*Julius Evola: The Devastating Visionary*], Paris, 1977, p. 211f.). In Domenico Rudatis—who ranks among the best mountain climbers of this century and who, among other achievements, edited a book (with Reinhold Messner and V. Varale) about the sixth degree of difficulty in mountain climbing Evola found a fellow traveler to write about the mountains for his later magazines.

The Artistic Experiences

Alongside the philosophical influences (of which the essential ones, such as Seneca, Spinoza, Vico, and the French Personalists, especially Hamelin and Lagneau, cannot be treated here), the artistic influences must be briefly mentioned: briefly, because their influence on Evola's political views on which we concentrate here was only a secondary one, noticeable only through their radical nature. On the other hand, their influence is of particular importance because it took effect in his early youth.

Besides Novalis, from whom he borrowed the name for his philosophical orientation, "Magical Idealism," Mereschkowski, Mallarmé, and Rimbaud must

be mentioned: Rimbaud especially, because he fought against all convention and advocated an uncompromising brand of freedom. We have already discussed Futurism and the reasons for Evola's departure from its circles. Even more radical, and for Evola more consequential, was Dadaism ("True Dadaism is against Dadaism ..."), whose cofounder Tristan Tzara he knew personally. Dadaism embodied a worldview in which the desire for total freedom tore down all logical, ethical, and aesthetic categories. The Dadaists spoke of a "strict necessity, without discipline or morals" and of the "identity of order and disorder, of Self and non-Self, of affirmation and negation." They said that the pure individuality could be revealed only after a condition of insanity, and that they looked for the "focused energy; pure, naked, single force; and the void." But on the other hand Tzara said himself: "Dada is not serious. . . ." Everywhere, he strove to introduce "idiocy." Evola was one of the first in Italy to try to write down these theories in his *Arte astratta* (Abstract Art, Rome, 1920). "Art is egoism and freedom," he asserts (p. 8, quoted from the new edition published by the Fondazione Julius Evola) and adds: "I view art as a disinterested creation that originates in the higher consciousness of the individual, and is there-fore able to transcend and be independent of the passions and the crystallizations based on common experience."

We can already discern here Evola's quest for transcendence, for an inner "superiority," a breakthrough of levels, and release from the world. Because Dadaism ultimately could not provide him these things, Evola terminated this phase abruptly and radically, despite his recognition by others. He was able to exhibit his paintings, which were perceived as having strong parallels to Giorgio de Chirico's respected "metaphysical painting," and his poems were published by the leading modern art magazines such as *Dada* and *Bleu*, alongside the writings of Andre Breton, Aragon, and Cocteau. After 1922, his twenty-fourth year, Evola never again wrote a poem, and painted no more pictures for more than forty years. In this, he wanted to follow Rimbaud's example (*Cammino*, p. 23)

At this point we conclude our discussion of the artists and thinkers important to Evola. It becomes immediately apparent that Evola's spiritual and philosophical line of inheritance takes a very different course from that of most intellectuals today, whose path leads from Descartes to Hegel, Marx, Sartre, and the Frankfurt School. Evola's course, on the other hand, would be: Plato, Seneca, Spinoza, Vico, German Idealism, de Bonald, de Maistre (who, like Montesquieu, believed that the feudal regime was the most perfect system of

rule that had ever existed on earth, and who through his writings convinced not only Evola of this, but Guenon as well), Donoso Cones, Nietzsche, Weininger, Spengler, and Michelstaedter.

Naturally we are focusing here only on the development of Evola's political thought; as a result such important thinkers (if not the most important of all in Evola's life) as Arturo Reghini and Rene Guenon have hardly been mentioned. The nucleus of Evola's political views has now been established: the basic attitude toward the leader and the led, toward aristocracy and democracy, toward a spiritually based rule on the one hand and a government geared to general well-being on the other. Out of this, Evola wanted to construct a unified, inter-related, and therefore rigorous worldview that would incorporate all these elements and lead to wholeness. On the grounds of this inner coherence it is hardly possible to remove one element and replace it with a more "agreeable" one. One thing leads logically to the next, forcing one either to accept or to reject this worldview as a whole. It is indivisible.

The Philosophical Period

Evola's "academic" philosophy traces back in general to German Idealism, and thus further back to Plato. Even if originating from the same root, it goes against the Italian court philosophers of the time, Giovanni Gentile and Benedetto Croce. Despite this, the latter valued Evola's thought and even published him through his main imprint, Laterza. The strong voluntaristic streak in Evola, which decisively differentiates him from Croce and Gentile, can be traced back on the one hand to Nietzsche and on the other to French Personalism, whose main proponents Secrétan, Lachelier, Hamelin, and Lagneau he studied closely. Also originating from Lagneau is Evola's motto for his *Saggi sull'Idealismo Magico*, a work that gives a very good overview of Evola's thought development around 1923-1925, and already contains a nucleus of all his later views. The motto already indicates that purely academic philosophy would not suffice for him. What concerns him in this, as in his earlier artistic and his later political activity, is the "breakthrough of levels" to a "totally different" plane. The motto is as follows: "Philosophy is the train of thought that finally sees into its own inadequacy and realizes the need for an *absolute* action that originates from within."

Exoterically, this view is also comparable to the solipsism of the Stirnerian type and Evola does not deny how strongly Stirner's anarchism had moved him but he wants to overcome it by referring to the "totally different" plane,

namely the transcendental. Unbridled freedom and the will-to-rule as essence of the individual are also Evola's code words; only he tries to proceed from the "transcendent" Self (in the sense of idealistic philosophy) to a true super-personality, an impersonality. The Self for him is the "center of *universal* responsibility" (*Teoria del Individuo Assoluto* [Theory of the Absolute Individual], new edition, Rome, 1975, p. 32; first published 1927). For this Self he desires a complete realization that is freedom and power at the same time, and which includes not only body, soul, and spirit, but also the whole cosmos. He wants to overcome any abstract speculation and actuate the knowledge completely within himself. An irresistible urge for self-transcendence and therefore self-salvation becomes apparent here. The identification of *Deus = Homo* and *Homo = Deus* (God is man and man is God) is to become reality for him. It seems only logical that the philosophical period is followed immediately by the magical one (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I of which is available in English; vols. II and III remain untranslated).

Evola's question is one of the primal questions of philosophy, and is also Descartes's question: Where is this point of certainty, which is completely fixed and on which I can build my construct of thought and life? At least at that point in time, for Evola this could only be the Self, but of course not the every-day self but the transcendent, primal foundation of one's own personality. In the philosophical magazine *Logos* (20/1931, p. 404, written at the beginning of the 1920s but first published in German in 1931), he writes: "One can only ascribe reality to those things whose principle and the cause of whose being . . . are found in the Self as the governing function.... Beyond the eternal problem of that which, according to Plato, 'simultaneously is and is not,' there lies only one certainty: the SELF. Only here does the individual find . . . an absolute and self-evident reality. The rest the infinite ocean of forms of the inner and outer world affords no such certainty."

Just a few words regarding Evola's conception of power, which is the source of so much misunderstanding, especially when used in the political realm: this concept, which Evola derived from esotericism, especially from Tantra and Taoism, must be strictly differentiated from "force." On the contrary: "power" loses its essential nature when it has to resort to material means i.e., "force"

and is not acknowledged as self-evident. Power must function as its own "unmoved mover." To Evola, it is a meta-concept intended to overcome both rationalism and irrationalism, since on the one hand it makes use of reason, while

on the other an elevation occurs through power to freedom, realization, and primordial being. In *Saggi* (p. 123), Evola writes: "Here one understands why Lao-Tse ascribes the characteristics of 'emptiness' and 'non-being' to the perfect man, and how he can say, from the depths of the consciousness of perfection, that every being has its primordial basis in non-being . . . and one also understands why the much abused concept of *maya* in Tantra means illusion, but also at the same time stands for creative power; and finally, one understands the meaning of the highest body of the Buddha, *Dharmakaya*, which is defined as the principle of nonexistence, which is the foundation of all reality." Or as he writes in *Imperialismo pagano* (Padua, 1996): "Superiority does not rest on power, but power rests on superiority. To need power is impotence; the one who truly comprehends this will perhaps understand in what sense the path of renunciation (a manly sacrifice that rests on 'not needing,' on 'having enough') can be a condition for the way to the highest power; and he will also grasp the hidden logic according to which (based on traditions that most people hold to be myths, but I certainly do not) ascetics, holy men, and initiates suddenly and naturally manifest suggestive and supernatural powers that are stronger than any powers of men and things... .

"A true ruler, imperial by nature, is he who has access to this higher quantity of being, which automatically also means a different quality of being by which others are inflamed, attracted, overpowered without his even wanting them to be. It is he who imposes himself, so to speak, through his mere presence: like an embracing and threatening gaze that others are unable to resist; akin to that calm and relaxed greatness that magically stops even the armed man and the attacking beast; that immediately commands respect and the desire to obey, to sacrifice oneself, to search for the meaning of one's own truer life within this vaster life.... And so it is he who can say at the zenith: 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' and thus give a unity, meaning, and justification to countless individuals, to that whole system of life's inferior determinisms, that they did not have before. For the inferior person never lives his own life as perfectly as when he is certain that this existence has a center and a goal in something superior" (pp. 49–50; emphasis original).

Concerning this we offer an excerpt from Georg Mehlis, *Italienische Philosophie der Gegenwart* (Philosophische Berichte, no. 12; chapter: "Der magische Idealismus"): "Man as power is in possession of total self-rule: he is content with the absolute possession of his self. He has no longer any 'deficiency' to

compensate for. In his full possession of power, man reaches absolute indifference, so that it makes no sense for him to act any more. The magical man stands beyond good and evil, beyond pain or joy, beyond emotion or passion. Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is actualized within him, who rejects the paltry moral concepts of the bourgeois order, mainly built on utility and advantage, and who celebrates the singular great personality. However, Evola rises even above the *Übermensch*."

It is self-evident that these excerpts merely deal with the partial aspect of Evola's philosophy that is relevant to this inquiry. But they provide a glimpse that is already helpful for the comprehension of his political ideas. Those who are further interested in the philosophical phase of Evola's work may refer to Roberto Melchionda, *Il volto di Dionisio—filosofia e arte in Julius Evola* (The Face of Dionysus Philosophy and Art in Julius Evola, Rome, 1984), which remains the deepest analysis so far of Evola's anything-but-simple philosophy.

The transition from the philosophical to the political world of ideas occurs wholly without constraint in that, according to Evola, on the political plane one replaces the Self in its freedom and power with the State, which rules the people as the Self rules its body.

The First Steps Toward Politics

This chapter is mainly based on the meticulous and excellent articles by the professor Marco Rossi: "L'Interventismo politico-culturale delle riviste tradizionaliste negli anni venti: 'Atanor' (192 4) e 'Ignis' (192 5)" in the respected journal *Storia Contemporanea* XVIII, no. 3, June 1987, and "'Lo Stato Democratico' e l'antifascismo antidemocratico di Julius Evola" in *Storia Contemporanea* XX, no. 1, February 1989. A further important source is Mario Bozzi Sentieri, "La via evoliana allo stato," in *Diorama Letterario*, no. 72, Florence, June 1984.

If Evola had already chosen an antidemocratic and voluntaristic direction after his previous issues, it was Arturo Reghini (1878–1946) who was responsible for the decisive step that finally fixed this position and gave it a spiritual framework. Reghini was a mathematician, linguist, thirty-third-degree Mason (Scottish Rite), and above all a follower of an esoteric "Italic Tradition." This tradition tried to revitalize Pythagoreanism for the modern age and was emphatically anti-Christian. Reghini had introduced the writings of René Guénon to Evola, and thus introduced him to the central idea of "Tradition." Guénon does not understand this to be the taking over of certain rules of behavior and

traditions of the past, but instead holds it to be a *metaphysical* reality standing above time: a totality of principles and transcendental and therefore eternal, unchanging values that are completely anchored in Being i.e., transcendence and which appear in the historical world in a more or less materialized form. This tradition forms an organic whole that is hierarchically structured and which strives to overcome the nature-bound element to form a higher meta-physical principle (concerning this, see *Revolt Against the Modern World*, the entire first part of which is dedicated to explaining this traditional world).

For Reghini and, in his wake, Evola, the classical Roman and Greek religion and imperial conception of the state approached this ideal very closely. A constant decline, owing mainly to Christianity, which contributed to the dissolution of the Roman Empire, had then led the world to its modern state of dismemberment. A last grandiose gesture was the medieval empire of the Hohenstaufen, with its ideals of asceticism, knighthood, and the strict feudal division of society (see Dante, *De Monarchia*).

Reghini and others now hoped that the ancient *Imperium Romanum* could be revived in their lifetime. In his magazine *Atanor*, Reghini writes in 1924 that he has already foreseen and wished for the rise of an Italian regime in the ancient sense. This regime would primarily have the task of rejuvenating spiritual values, by which he meant anti-Christian and antidemocratic ones. It was precisely in this spirit that *Atanor* (for which Evola also wrote, although on other topics) already welcomed Fascism in its first issue (January/February 1924). The Traditionalists believed, as did the "Conservative Revolution" in the case of National Socialism, that Fascism merely had to be "corrected" in order to be steered onto the right path. They tried to initiate this "correction" repeatedly. This was also the reason for Reghini's, and later Evola's, campaign against the effort of the Fascist regime to come to an agreement with the Catholic Church. This was, of course, a hopeless struggle, which ended in 1929 with the ratification of the Lateran Accords between Italy and the Vatican and the defeat of the Traditionalists.

Within the framework of his campaign for a "pagan imperialism" modeled on antiquity, Reghini had sharply attacked Mussolini, who was acting prime minister, in his otherwise purely philosophical and esoteric magazine *Atanor*, which even drew a detailed and surprisingly knowledgeable response in the form of an article by Mussolini himself (writing under a pseudonym). Of course, in the interests of maintaining power, Mussolini could never pursue

an anti-Christian line, but it is still interesting that he even responded to such a marginal opinion. Concerning this, there is some background that has not been completely elucidated and which points to Mussolini's connections to certain esoteric tendencies. Professor Renato del Ponte revealed some of this in his work *Il movimento tradizionalista romano nel novecento* (Scandiano, 1987; see also his preface to Julius Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic*).

A mysterious character named "Ekatlos" writes in the third volume of Julius Evola and the UR Group's *Introduzione alla Magia quale scienza dell'lo* (Rome, 1971, p. 3 81 ff.) that as early as 1913, mysterious rites were being conducted night after night that were intended to hasten the return of the ancient Roman Empire. Thereafter, ancient sacred objects were discovered that harbored the corresponding spiritual power. Finally, when the first *fascio di combattimento* (combat unit) was founded on March 23, 1919, out of which the Fascist party developed in 1921, someone was present who was part of this magical-sacral group and had conducted the rites. This person said to Mussolini then and there: "You will become the Consul of Italy." On May 23, 1923, the very same person gave a fasces to Mussolini, who had been head of the government since 1922. The fasces (Italian *fascio littorio*, hence Fascism) was a symbol of the chief magistrates in ancient Rome. For this fasces that Mussolini received, an ancient Etruscan battle-ax was used, one of the sacred objects mentioned earlier. Also in 1923, the Palatine (one of the sacred hills of Rome in the ancient tradition) witnessed a performance of part of the tragedy *Ruman: Romae sacrae origines* (Ruman: Rome's Sacred Origins), with Mussolini present and cheering approvingly. In a letter dated March 7, 1923, he had written: "*Ruman* must happen under all circumstances. The government supports the initiative most passionately." However, this tragedy was not theater in the usual sense, but rather a real ritual and an act of consecration that showed a deep knowledge of Rome's ancient tradition.

Likewise, rites were conducted within the UR Group (which, as we know, was under Evola's leadership) with the purpose of ensouling Fascism with the spirit of ancient Rome. However, the Christian integralist Silvano Pannunzio writes in his magazine *Metapolitica* (XIII, 3-4, December 1988) that Mussolini was apparently taken aback when he heard that Reghini and Evola—supposedly in an Etruscan coffin had conducted rites with this purpose. In the same breath he adds that Evola had no influence on Fascism at all, or certainly much

less than had been assumed previously. At least the Catholic Church must have seen these rites and the parallel publishing activities as some kind of danger, for it reacted most vehemently. For example, the later Pope Paul VI indicted the magicians assembled around Julius Evola and their "fanatical re-evocations" in the periodical *Studium* (XXIV, 6, June 1928). In any case, the esoteric attempt to ensoul Fascism with ancient sacrality had failed. The later intellectual efforts of Evola as a writer that ran in the same direction likewise brought negative results.

This episode definitely shows one thing: at least in the beginning stages of Fascism, the most manifold political and even esoteric-political movements had a chance to articulate themselves, even though Mussolini soon closed down all Masonic lodges on behalf of the Church, despite the fact that the Masonic element was not only strongly represented at the founding of the Party, but was the majority as well, as Gianni Vannoni writes (*Massoneria, Fascismo e Chiesa Cattolica*, Rome, 1979). Mussolini was continually torn between Modernism (for example, his acceptance of Futurism as the "official" artistic tendency of Fascism) and Traditionalism.

Evola wrote his first real political essay at the behest of his friend Count Giovanni Colonna di Cesare, who was a deeply committed democrat and led his own political paper named *Lo Stato Democratico*, which ran counter to the rule of Fascism in its espousal of democratic ideas. Colonna di Cesare had approached Evola about a contribution for his magazine. Evola immediately let him know that he could only give a devastating indictment of democracy, which was really surprising (excepting his aforementioned studies) as at that time he still moved in Theosophical and Anthroposophical circles (for example, Colonna di Cesare's mother was the Italian publisher of Rudolf Steiner's works) that were known for their democratic convictions. To this Colonna di Cesare answered that free expression was the hallmark of democracy and that Evola could naturally write what he wanted. The latter agreed, and so the essay "*Stato, Potenza e Liberta*" came about (State, Power and Freedom, in *Lo Stato Democratico*, 1/7, May 1925), which consisted of an almost complete transposition of his solipsistic philosophical ideas to the state: "The State as Power," to paraphrase his work *Man as Power*. The foundation of justice and the legitimization of the state can lie only in its power, whereby the concept of power is to be understood in its spiritual meaning as discussed above. In this context, Evola portrayed Fascism as a "mere caricature" and a "grotesque parody, if one

looks at the type of ruler and the state that ought to embody the principle of freedom." (In 1925, it was already the leading party.) He further elaborated that the Fascist movement "in no way possesses a cultural and spiritual root." Only after "purely material strength" had brought success did Fascism turn to the task of creating this root, "just as a newly rich man later tries to buy himself an education and a noble title."

These were not exactly amicable words. The "patriotic mythos" is reprimanded as a simplistic "sentimental complex" that reveals an "inner idealistic weakness" and which might be an "early sign of dangerous compromise." "The so-called Fascist revolution" is merely "an ironic revolution," because it has "formally accepted the existing constitutional, parliamentary, and legal order." Evola then goes even further and asserts that this is not so surprising, for "one can hardly trust" these "pseudo-revolutionaries" to have the power to execute a real coup d'etat."

Evola wrote all this despite the fact that he naturally had his hopes for Fascism. He simply wanted to "correct" it and steer it into aristocratic channels, as we will see him doing during the entire Fascist era. Evola always insisted (perhaps with the exception of his last years) on absolute standpoints and despised compromises because they stemmed from the consideration of advantage and utility. This is also one of the reasons he rejected democracy. This unbending search for a perfect inner coherence is both Evola's highest virtue and his greatest fault.

In this first political essay his special conception of power is also discussed repeatedly. Among other things, Evola criticizes those leaders of the Fascist party who ceaselessly emphasized that they held all the power and therefore possessed the ability to prevail, and opines: "To feel the need to refer to one's own power at every opportunity is already a sign of fear, inner weakness, and insecurity, which leads them in their desperation to resort to brutal violence, since they possess no inner point of real stability and power."

In the same article Evola also strongly condemns violent acts against politically different thinking people, as in the case of the parliamentary deputy Matteotti who was murdered by the Fascists because he wanted to annul the elections of 1924 due to terrorist influence.

This was Evola's not exactly timid entrance into the political debate. *Lo Stato Democratico*, no. 15, of the same year already included his next essay "Note critiche sulla dottrina democratica" (Critical Notes Concerning the Demo-

cratic Doctrine). Colonna di Cesare found it necessary to introduce Evola as a "strict antidemocrat but definitely not a Fascist." Evola himself notes in this article: "Good heavens! To be undemocratic and to be a Fascist: those are surely two totally different things." Evola then expounds the theorem, based on Plato and Taoism, that only a truly spiritual group should hold the reins of power. Then all political and economic problems will be solved. He actually thinks it possible to find such a group in Italy. His later efforts with the UR Group surely followed this direction. Furthermore, he denies in this article that the political arena as such has any value in itself. That is why he has no interest in mere politics. Only the world of ideas has such real value, and therefore has to order the political realm beneath it. He then continues to present "communism, anarchism, and democracy" as different shades of the same thing, a view that he would steadily repeat from then on.

But he did not stop at the political essays for *Lo Stato Democratico*. In 1926 Evola was already published in the important magazine *Critica Fascista*, which was founded and headed by Giuseppe Bottai, later minister of education and governor of Rome. Evola knew Bottai from their time in World War I when they had served in the same artillery regiment. Both had agreed to "stir up the waters" a bit, which Evola accomplished immediately, as *Critica Fascista* was also read by high-ranking officials of the Fascist party.

The tenor was always the same: the fight against the Catholic Church, against the bourgeois element in Fascism, against the administration and its back-scratching toadyism, as well as the accusation that a real cultural revolution based on spirituality had not been achieved. Practical questions of statecraft did not interest Evola, nor did eventual difficulties with the conversion of his theories into reality. Thus he writes in "Idee su uno stato come potenza" (Thoughts about a State as Power; *Critica Fascista*, September 1, 1926): "We have constructed the present concept of the state entirely a priori, independently of any historical reality. But a priori does not mean abstraction. The idea must sit in judgment over reality, and not the other way round. The task of speculation is to ascertain which values must be valid in this insecure human world, not which ones exist. And if this does not correspond to everyday reality, one must nevertheless not call it abstract. Rather, it is the will and strength of those human beings who do not live up to the idea that must be called abstract and sluggish."

With words like these, it could be foreseen that he would not gain any

support within the ruling regime, and even less with functionaries concerned for their careers and families. Finally, even his friend Bottai withdrew his support when the attacks on Evola (and by extension on himself, as the publisher responsible) grew in intensity, the immediate cause being the essay "Il fascismo quale volonta di impero e il Cristianesimo" (Fascism as the Will to Empire and Christianity), which appeared in *Critica Fascista* in 1927 and resulted in such vehement reactions that Bottai did not dare defend Evola any more, even suppressing his replies. The hardest attacks came from the Catholic Church.

These attacks reached a climax with the publication of Evola's highly polemical first political book, *Imperialismo pagano*. A storm of outrage broke loose against Evola in magazines and newspapers, even the *Osservatore Romano*, making the author famous overnight.

In this book, which Evola later characterized as too impetuous and of which he forbade new editions, he attacked not only the Catholic Church, but also Protestantism, lashed out equally against the Soviet Union and America, and above all indicted the faults of the Fascist regime, by then already all-powerful.

One example will illustrate this: "On the other hand, the so-called hierarchies of Fascism almost always consist of mere party leaders, who have often come up from lower strata, without a title or a true spiritual tradition, and who have more the suggestive ability of popular tribunes or condottieri in a secular Renaissance sense than any real aristocratic traits. Caught up in the struggles and worries of concrete politics, Fascism does not seem to be interested in creating a hierarchy in the higher sense, based on purely spiritual values and knowing only disdain for all pollutions due to 'culture' and modern intellectualism, so that the center might again shift to a position that lies beyond secular and religious boundaries alike. The Fascist conjuration of Roman symbols is far from being accompanied by a conjuration of the pagan Roman idea of the Imperium that is sacral, not just militaristic, and that would clearly expose the whole compromising and purely opportunistic side of the union of integral Fascism with any form of the Judeo-Christian religion" (p. 98 in the German edition).

It probably did not help that he immediately followed this by noting that the Fascist regime was "better than nothing."

The following quote elucidates what moved Evola and what he believed in: "In the same way that a living body stays alive only when a soul is present to govern it, so every social organization not rooted in a spiritual reality is out-ward and transitory, unable to remain healthy and retain its identity in the

struggle of the various forces; it is not really an organism, but more aptly something thrown together, an aggregate. The true cause for the decline of the political idea in the West today is to be found in the fact that the spiritual values that once permeated the social order have been lost, without any successful efforts to put something better in their place. The problem has been lowered to the plane of economic, industrial, military, governmental, or even more sentimental factors, without considering that all this is nothing more than matter: necessary if you like, but never enough by itself, and unable to create a healthy and reasonable social order, any more than the mere interplay of mechanical forces can bring forth a living being" (ibid., p. 14). Therefore one thing was essential above all: "The principle and foundation of the new state must be the organic idea" (ibid., p. 26).

What else did Evola want? A resurrection of Rome's ancient greatness. Thus he writes: "Rome was simultaneously a material and a spiritual power: it arose to rule the earth's peoples with authority and discipline, to order peace, to be mild toward the vanquished, and to crush the defiant" [Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 852-854], and at the same time was something sacral ... , in which there existed no expression of life, be it in public or private, in war or peace, that was not strictly accompanied by a ritual or symbol — a cultural formation of mysterious origin that had its demigods, its divine kings . . . " (p. 43f.). The resurgence of Rome should coincide with the formation of a true sacral monarchy. We quote: "Of course, this ideal implies the affirmation not only of the concept and right of the nobility, but also of the monarchy.... It must be renewed, strengthened, and dynamized as an organic, central, absolute function that embodies the might of power and the light of the spirit in a single being; then the monarchy is truly the act of a whole race, and at the same time the point that leads beyond all that is bound by blood and soil. Only then is one justified to speak of an Imperium. When it is awakened into a glorious, holy, metaphysical reality, the pinnacle of a martially ordered political hierarchy, then the monarchy once again occupies the place and fulfils the function that it once had, before being usurped by the priestly caste" (p. 24 f., emphasis original).

Evola believed he would be able to rechannel Fascism with this battle cry and maybe prevent the concordat with the Church at the last moment. But no positive echo within Fascism was forthcoming. The practicalities of daily government and careerism were too far removed from such ideas. However, we know that Antonio Gramsci, a cofounder of the Italian Communist party and

still its leading theoretician (and respected by both left and right), definitely took note of the work.

Even though the book found no positive echo in Italy, it was noticed in Germany, where it was published in 1933 by the Armanen Verlag in an expanded version. It was due to this book that Evola was able to make his first lecture tours in Germany and also make contacts within the "Conservative Revolution." The commentary of SS Brigadeführer Karl Maria Weisthor (real name Wiligut), which will be discussed later, is also interesting. In a report dated August 7, 1938 (R.A. III 2309/6/392) to the Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, after reporting on Evola's *Heidnischer Imperialismus* at the latter's behest, he writes as follows: "It is astounding that a man in today's strongly nationalistic Italy dares to publicly commit such thoughts to writing."

In 1929, Evola's famous essay "Americanismo e Bolscevismo" (American-ism and Bolshevism) appeared in the magazine *Nuova Antologia*. Following the ideas in *Imperialismo pagano*, this piece reveals the danger of a division of the world between America and the Soviet Union, by which Europe would only lose. Both powers strive to enslave man, although with different methods and toward different goals. In either case, the spiritual element is abandoned.

The year 1929 also saw the end of the magical workings of the UR Group, which from 1928 was called KRUR. As he did not have any more true inner or esoteric experiences to add to what he had already published, as he says in the last Krur journal, Evola now felt it his mission to become active in the exoteric realm. And because few publications were willing to accept his contributions, he founded his own magazine with a few friends, which he called *La Torre* (The Tower, new edition: Milan, 1977, published by Marco Tarchi), even though the times were extremely difficult, as he writes at the conclusion of *Krur* (new edition: Rome, 1981, p. 385). But he takes the words of the Indian sage Shankara to heart: "Just as the clouds move back and forth across the sky, so too do the experiences of the individual change. And just as all the dark clouds together cannot cloud its emerald calm, so the pains and passions of the world cannot disturb the detached state of an enlightened soul." It was called "The Tower" not as a "place of refuge, but as a place of resistance, of the struggle of a higher realism for the few, the lonely, the free, and the unbending."

With *La Torre*, Evola finally tested the extent of his influence on the cultural and political currents of his time. Among his contributors he counted the poet Girolamo Comi, the later famous psychoanalyst Emilio Servadio, the well-

known mountain climber Domenico Rudatis, the Roman mystic Guido de Giorgio, and Rene Guenon. Contributions by Julien Benda, Krishnamurti, and even Paul Tillich, and excerpts from Nietzsche and Bachofen also appeared. (How many of these were authorized cannot be determined.)

In the editorial to the first issue of *La Torre*, Evola already writes: "Without weakening and compromise we oppose the lowering of the spiritual level, as it has been elevated into a system by contemporary man. . . . We are reacting against the loss of all higher meaning in life; against the materialization, socialization, and standardization to which everything is subjected. . . . We want to be a danger, a challenge, and an indictment . . . of all that is weak and directed toward compromising solutions, and which stands enslaved by prevailing opinion and small-minded adaptations to the moment.... [With this magazine we express] the unmoving protest against the tyranny of the economic and the social that insolently permeates everything, and against the decline of any higher viewpoint into the most pitiable humanism" (p. 21).

An "identity card" written by Evola for the magazine also appeared in the first issue (p. 43). Herein it says: "Our magazine was not created to 'whisper' and 'insinuate' something to Fascism or to Deputy Mussolini, because neither Fascism nor Deputy Mussolini would know what to do with that. Our magazine was created rather to defend principles that for us are always and absolutely the same, independently of whether we are under a communist, anarchist, or republican regime." Evola mentions his thoughts, as we have heard them, on hierarchy, the anchoring in the transcendental, and the imperial idea. Then he continues: "Up to the point that Fascism follows and defends these principles, up to that point we can consider ourselves Fascists. And that is all."

And further: "We are in open opposition to a certain mythos: the one that wants to turn spirituality and culture into a realm that is dependent on politics. We, on the other hand, claim that it is politics that must be dependent on spirituality and culture." It is thereby unmistakable what Evola's goals were in regard to Fascism, what his convictions were, and what his efforts were aiming for.

Already one month after the launch of the magazine (the publication appeared biweekly), an issue was confiscated because Evola had taken an energetic stance against Mussolini's plan to increase the population ("The father-land needs people").

By the time of issue number five (April 1, 1930), he seems to have found it necessary to write a preamble under the following title: "Things Put in Their

Proper Place, and Some Plain Words." Among other things one can read there: "We are neither 'Fascists' nor 'anti-Fascists.' 'Antifascism' is nothing. But for us as integral advocates of the Imperium, for us as aristocratically inclined, for us as unbending enemies of plebeian politics, of any 'nationalistic' ideology, of any and all party ranks and all forms of party 'spirit,' as well as of any more or less disguised form of socialism or democracy, Fascism is not enough. We would have wanted a more radical, more fearless, a more absolute Fascism that would exist in pure strength and unbending spirit against any compromise, inflamed by a real fire for imperial power. We can never be viewed as 'anti-Fascists,' except to the extent that 'super-Fascism' can be equated with 'antifascism.' And we have no inhibitions that keep us from plainly speaking our minds. On the contrary, it is to our advantage that the censors know from the start: even if in a humble form, with the experiment of La Torre we want to signal to the foreign world the point up to which strict imperial and traditional thought has a chance of survival in Fascist Italy, especially when it remains free of any political indenture and only obeys the pure will to defend an idea."

Evola went even further: when he was reminded that Mussolini thought differently from him (one has to remember the totalitarian character of Fascism at that time), he answered in his paper: "So much the worse for Mussolini!" Especially in the column "L'Arco e la Clava" (The Bow and the Club the title is an ironic expression of how distant opponents would be dealt with by the bow and closer ones with the club), Evola let his polemical and satirical side have free rein. His opponents were almost always functionaries who had climbed to their positions through long service and who had often been from the ranks of the street fighters. Education and culture were not their strong points, and hence Evola had an easy game. Expressions like "cabbage heads" and sentences like "these people should learn how to read before they talk about me" (p. 130) earned him many enemies. Soon the political department of the police warned him and recommended that he be more moderate, because the highest ranks of the Fascist party were already moving against him. He suffered daily attacks and could not move around in Rome without a bodyguard of friends. Consistently with his martial character, Evola did not worry about this, and so orders came down from the highest places to all potential printers of La Torre to refuse any orders placed by Evola. Thus this initiative was choked off after little more than six months. La Torre could no longer appear.

It is interesting to note that a non-Fascist, even anti-Fascist periodical like

Croce's *La Critica* could appear throughout the whole Fascist period, whereas a "super-Fascist" publication like *La Torre* was a victim of censorship. One can see from this who served the regime and its functionaries more, or at least damaged them less.

In his autobiography, Evola wrote about the epoch up to 1930 (Cammino, p. 102) that back then he was acting "with idealistic innocence and little practical and tactical sense." After these experiences it became clear to him that he needed "some kind of base within the castle" if he wanted to continue to be active. This base he soon reached with the help of Giovanni Preziosi, who had become aware of *La Torre* because he himself edited a very combative publication called *La Vita Italiana*. In addition, he was acquainted with Arturo Reghini. Preziosi, who came from a strict Catholic family, had won Mussolini's trust with his uprightness, in spite of some resistance; hence, he enjoyed a kind of immunity, as Evola writes, that gave him a large amount of freedom within his magazine. Thus, Evola was able to continue expressing his opinions in Preziosi's organ, and even had the opportunity to travel abroad for instance, to Germany and Romania at the magazine's expense. But Preziosi did even more for Evola when he introduced him to Roberto Farinacci. Like Preziosi, Farinacci had been on Mussolini's bad side for a time, because he had uncovered the dirty dealings of Mussolini's brother, but on account of his loyalty, honesty, and strength of character he had a direct connection to Mussolini and so was in a nearly unassailable position. Farinacci managed the publication *Il Regime Fascista*, which was then part of the official state media.

Now, Farinacci offered Evola the possibility to fill a special page every two weeks with the very ideas that he had always stood for, in complete freedom. And thus the absurd situation developed in which although *La Torre* could not appear any more, the same ideas continued to be published in a paper of the regime. And as he notes, Evola had found a "patron saint" in Farinacci who defended him to the utmost degree. It did not matter to Farinacci that Evola was not a party member and had no intention of becoming one. Evola had indeed found a "base within the castle itself." Farinacci was conscious of his own lack of learning, but saw this as a deficiency, and at least through this support wanted to bring "culture" into Fascism.

Thus, it was decided to create a philosophical podium to address a spiritual elite. It was called *Diorama Filosofico* (Philosophical Diorama) and subtitled "Problems of the Spirit in Fascist Ethics." (The reprint of a first volume of the

Diorama with the essays from 1934 to 1935 appeared in 1974 in Rome. It was prefaced with a knowledgeable introduction by Marco Tarchi, "Evola e il fenomeno storico del fascismo" [Evola and the Historical Phenomenon of Fascism].) This special page, which appeared almost uninterruptedly for ten years (until 1943), was a veritable anthology of rightist thinkers in which the unorthodox and nonpartisan dominated. In fact, Evola wanted to assemble a European nonconformist Right that would work as a corrective, in Evola's sense, in the Fascist-type regimes that then predominated everywhere. To this end, he visited numerous countries, all the while soliciting contributions for his Diorama Filosofico. This plan is articulated, for example, in the Diorama introduction (of February 2, 1934), where he mentions the need for an elite that will function as the "living soul in the center of the hierarchical totality."

The variety of authors whom Evola was able to win over was surprisingly colorful. This kind of freedom was possible in the first place only because Diorama appeared in one of the organs most loyal to the party, and thus little prone to attack. Among the authors we must mention Franz Altheim, Othmar Spann, Walter Heinrich, Gonzague de Reynold; and famous poets like Gottfried Benn, Karl Wolfskehl (who came from the circle surrounding Stefan George), and Paul Valéry. In addition, there were outstanding monarchists, like Prince Karl Anton Rohan, Edmund Dodsworth, Sir Charles Petrie, and the monarchist delegate A. E. Gunter (not to be confused with H. F. K. Gunther); and no less than Wilhelm Stapel, publisher of *Deutsches Volkstum*. Former collaborators of La Torre, like Guido de Giorgio and Rene Guenon, wrote for it as well. Even a Georgian, Grigol Robakadise, was among the contributors. G. Preziosi and G. A. Fanelli must perhaps be counted among the more official proponents. A submission by Heinrich Himmler also appeared, although only in the form of a summary because, as can be seen in the documents of the German Federal Archives in Koblenz, Himmler or at least his staff was not very happy about this (more details about the National Socialist episode below).

In addition, poetry by Proust, Joyce, and Thomas Mann was reviewed in the Diorama, and there were critiques of Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis, Nietzsche, Bachofen, and Bergson. Beside these contributions, which must have been incomprehensible for many readers, there were discussions of themes connected to the current experiences of Fascism. Among these themes we can include the problems of the corporations, the question of a unique Fascist art and architecture, and ethical questions.

In the meantime, Evola's totally unpolitical but excellent study of alchemy had appeared in 1931 under the title *La tradizione ermetica* (The Hermetic Tradition, English edition: Rochester, Vt., 1995). The book betrays an unbelievable familiarity with hundreds of alchemical texts, and has been laudably mentioned by C. G. Jung and Mircea Eliade. Academie Francaise member Marguerite Yourcenar, at the end of her own *L'Oeuvre au noir*, calls it one of the best studies on alchemy that has ever been published.

In 1934 Evola released his "unofficial masterpiece," *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno*, in which he consolidated his thought on a traditional worldview. The work (which was also released in 1935 by the German Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, under the title *Erhebung wider die moderne Welt*) was revised three times and published in its final form in Rome, 1969. The latter was the foundation for the English translation of 1995 with the title *Revolt Against the Modern World*. Because this book is still available, despite its importance it will be discussed only very briefly here. It is not a political book in the strict sense; rather it could be called metapolitical. Supported by a mass of quotes from ancient philosophical and religious writings, it presents the spiritual foundation on which all politics whatsoever, according to Evola, should be built. Without exaggerating, one can say that none of Evola's other writings, including the political ones, can be understood without prior knowledge of *Revolt*. The only exceptions are the works written before 1925, although even these are already in-fused with some isolated aspects of the traditional worldview.

The book is a merciless reckoning with everything we call modern, and especially with the concept of progress as such. According to Evola (and also according to the ancient world and the religious beliefs of India), the world is not in a state of improvement, but rather in an ongoing decline. The reason for this lies in an increasing desacralization of life and of history. The sacred, which penetrated and uplifted every aspect of life in the traditional world, from the family to the state, has been completely lost, replaced by a purely economic attitude entailing ever stronger mechanization and standardization. This is especially noticeable in the leadership of the state, which should be the domain of a priest-king acting as mediator between Heaven and Earth. And for all this, the traditional world for Evola (and he follows Guenon in this regard) is no nostalgic conjuration of the past, but instead the historical expression of a supra-temporal reality.

In his review of the work in *Die Literatur* (vol. XXXVII, 1934/1935,

pp. 283-287), the famous expressionist poet Gottfried Benn called it: "A work ... whose extraordinary importance . . . will be clearly evident. An 'epochal' book. He who has read it will be changed." And Mircea Eliade, ostensibly the most well-known contemporary scholar of comparative religion, writes in *Vremea* (March 31, 1935, p. 6): "Evola is one of the most interesting spirits of the war generation. He wields a truly astounding amount of knowledge... . We recommend this book to those who want to consider, if not answers to all questions, then at least a fascinatingly broad explanation of the world and of history" (quoted after *Les Deux Etendards*, I/1, Luisant, 1988).

Evola's Relations to Fascism in the Years 1935—1945

We have already become acquainted with Evola's strongly critical yet hopeful attitude toward Fascism. In spite of this, and partly due to his very refusal to compromise, he had friends and protectors in the ranks of ardent Fascists who wanted to help build a better world and who, like Evola, saw their ideals vanishing before their eyes. Thus he enjoyed support, and was always able to publicize, make contacts, and travel. There was only one thing he was never able to do, interestingly enough: to reach the Russian front as a fighter. Evola had long dedicated himself to this venture, as he wanted to do his part in beating back Communism. But his application was delayed again and again, chiefly because as an officer who was not a member of the Fascist party he was regarded as undependable. Even when he declared his willingness to seek party membership to reach his goal, he received a negative reply to his request. He simply had too many enemies in the bureaucracy.

Official Fascism did not think highly of him. In spite of this, he was able to partake in one initiative, if only as a supplier of ideas. This was the *Scuola Mistica del Fascismo* (The Mystical School of Fascism), which had been founded in 1930 under the auspices of Arnaldo Mussolini. In this school Evola saw the realization of one of his favorite plans, which would later surface again and again (for example, in his evaluation of the SS or in *Men among the Ruins*). Its purpose was to form a core with a strongly spiritual worldview, or, as Evola would have rather called it, an Order that would take on the spiritual leadership of Fascism. It was a matter of the much desired "new Fascist type of man," who would correspond to the knightly and ascetic goal of sacrifice for a higher ideal. But it soon became clear that the day-to-day problems of the regime and finally the course of the war would leave no room for "Fascist mysticism."

What, then, were Evola's relations with Mussolini (the head of the government), and how can some authors for example, Werner Gerson (a.k.a. Pierre Mariel) and, even worse, Elisabeth Antebi—describe Evola as Mussolini's "eminence grise"?

Already in 1935 Mussolini had noticed Evola's essay "Razza e Cultura" (Race and Culture) in the magazine *Rassegna Italiana*, which he was in agreement with, whereupon he had let the editors know that he supported such theses. It is unknown whether Mussolini knew of Evola before this, although it is very possible that he had studied *Imperialismo pagano*, just as he had read Reghini's political essays. However, the first personal meeting between Evola and Mussolini came about only in 1942, when the latter arranged a meeting after reading Evola's *Sintesi di dottrina della Razza* (Synthesis of a Doctrine of Race; Evola's racial ideas will be explored in a later chapter). Mussolini praised the book warmly (his personal copy has been preserved, complete with his notes in the margins) really more so than the work deserved, as Evola himself writes (*Cammino*, p. 155). Mussolini even said it was exactly these ideas that he wanted to comprise the official Italian doctrine on race. In the same breath he pro-posed that Evola should call these teachings a "Fascist" (as opposed to "National Socialist") doctrine, as was then done in the title of the German edition, *Grundrisse der faschistischen Rassenlehre* (Berlin, 1942). With this, Mussolini had reached his aim: a racial doctrine of his own, different from Germany's. Il Duce also advised all the important papers and magazines to publish positive reviews of the work.

The next known meeting between Evola and Mussolini followed in September 1943, immediately after Mussolini's liberation by Skorzeny, at Hitler's headquarters in Rastenburg, near the East Prussian border. It came about in the following manner: Evola had excellent relations with Germany (more about this in the next section) and was, if only through his mastery of the German language, an ideal mediator between that country and Italy. Even though both countries were still allied militarily, Mussolini had already been deposed by the Badoglio government, and Germany feared that despite promises to the contrary, Italy would abandon the military front. Because Evola was well known, if not as a Fascist, at least as a friend of the Germans in Italy, he was invited to seek safety in Germany, which he declined. However, at the end of August 1943 he went to Berlin after all, to at least lead some discussions about the situation in Italy.

When he was ready to travel back, the Office of Foreign Affairs told him that his friend Giovanni Preziosi, who had become a minister, was staying incognito in Bad Reichenhall near Munich and wished to see him. Evola immediately went there. At the moment of departure, he and Preziosi received the news of the separate cease-fire that Badoglio had negotiated with the Allies, which, of course, had to be interpreted as treason by the Germans. Preziosi, and with him Evola, who acted as his interpreter, was asked to come to Rastenburg, where Hitler had his headquarters at that point, to discuss the new situation. Indeed, they were immediately received by Ribbentrop, who expressed Hitler's wish that the forces loyal to Mussolini form a counter-government as soon as possible. Naturally, this was barely possible since the fate of Mussolini, now imprisoned at Gran Sasso, was unknown. Then the news of Mussolini's liberation by Skorzeny arrived, and soon after Mussolini himself arrived in Rastenburg. According to Evola's descriptions, in the discussions that followed Mussolini revealed himself to be full of illusions, as he did not know (or did not want to know) what had transpired in Italy. And so the Salò Republic, with the more official title *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI), was proclaimed under German protectorate.

Evola supported this undertaking even though (or maybe because) it was obvious that one was fighting a losing battle at this point there could be no doubt about the outcome of the war. This is all the more astounding since Evola, a monarchist, aristocrat, and "reactionary," was participating in a form of government that according to its name alone was "socialist" and "republican"—both tendencies that Evola had always rejected. This republic, for example, lacked the monarchical superstructure that Mussolini had upheld throughout the whole Fascist period until June 25, 1943. The socialist tendencies of early Fascism also played a larger role, probably as a reaction to the fact that it was King Vittorio Emanuele who had had Mussolini arrested. But Evola did not want to desert something for which he had held such great hopes. His "legionnaire's spirit," the resolve to fight to the bitter end, also left him no choice, although there were great discussions with Mussolini about the monarchy that was so dear to him, and about Vittorio Emanuele. As he writes in his autobiography: "I did not want to follow the 'Salò Fascism' in the ideological arena at all, but had to show my respect for the martial side that was bound to the legionary spirit: the decision of hundreds of thousands of Italians to stay loyal to their ally and to continue the war as the king and Badoglio had falsely

promised right after July 25—although these hundreds of thousands knew they were manning a lost position, so that at least their honor would be upheld. This was unique in the post-Roman history of Italy."

Because the Sale Republic did not meet his expectations, after his return to Rome Evola started to prepare the nucleus of a spiritually based rightist movement for the postwar period, which later might possibly develop into a party. This group, in which an old friend of Evola's, the constitutionalist Carlo Costamagna, also participated, bore the name *Movimento per la Rinascita d'Italia* (Movement for the Rebirth of Italy). But soon the Allies had taken Rome and, as Evola himself puts it, "men from their secret service were so kind as to promptly pay me a visit." While his mother kept the men at bay, Evola was able to get away, and to reach Vienna by way of Verona (the source of this report is J. Evola, *Diario 1943-1944*, Centro Studi Evoliani, Genoa, 1975). Evola's relations with Mussolini had hereby ended, even though another essay of his was circulated widely in magazine form at Mussolini's request: "Considerazioni sui fatti d'Italia" (Thoughts About the Events in Italy; *Politica Nuova*, September 28, 1943).

According to rumor, Mussolini was afraid of Evola's magical powers and formed the well-known gesture against the Evil Eye whenever he was mentioned. It seems that Evola even lost journalistic assignments because of this. It is also certain that Mussolini was superstitious, and that Evola had the reputation of bringing bad luck in the circles then current. This reputation remained intact even in the postwar era. It is supposedly the real reason that Evola could not publish in the very successful magazine *Il Borghese* in the 1960s. However, in 1990 Renzo de Felice published in Bologna the *Taccuini mussoliniani* (Mussolinian Diaries) by Yvon de Begnac. De Begnac had had very close contact with Mussolini and had kept continuous notes about this. Mussolini had mentioned Evola fairly frequently, and always in a positive sense. So at least at that time their relationship does not seem to have been characterized by fear.

Independently of Evola's sharp criticism of Fascism, as we have already discussed, the few direct contacts (not more than three or four times) that Evola had with Il Duce hardly make up the important role that an "*eminence grise*" plays.

An interesting story should be mentioned in this context, although it unfortunately cannot be proved. In the *Zeitschrift für Ganzheitsforschung* (Journal for

Holistic Research, vol. 34, no. I, Vienna, 1990), Dr. Theodor Veiter reports that Evola, through his work as coeditor at the official magazine *Affari Esteri* (Foreign Affairs), came to have strong differences of opinion with Mussolini and had to go underground forthwith. At the beginning of the war he had supposedly moved to Vienna, where he lived, as he told Dr. Veiter personally, as a "U-boat" out of fear of Mussolini's henchmen, who had orders even to "murder" him. Back then, he also had close contact with Professor Walter Heinrich, who beside his academic activities also had esoteric interests (see Walter Heinrich, *Der Sonnenweg* [The Solar Path], Ansata, Interlaken, 1985) and further with Rafael Spann, a son of Othmar Spann. They supposedly founded a sort of think tank called the Kronidenbund, so called in reference to *chronos* (the Greek word for "time") and the god of the same name (Saturnus in Latin) who ruled the Golden Age before Zeus ushered in decadence. At that time, Dr. Veiter had known Evola in person. He also knew Mussolini personally.

Domenico Rudatis has also told us that in Vienna Evola lived under a false name and with a forged passport, as there were efforts to keep him under surveillance. However, he could not ascertain when this had occurred, whether at the beginning of the 1940s or only following the aforementioned escape, after the Allies had captured Rome. Evola's own version of this episode of the forged passport (*Cammino*, p. 163) definitely seems to point to the time after the flight from Rome, even though his account mentions neither an exact time frame nor a motive. Maybe the reason for this is the fact that Evola had at that time been commissioned by certain circles within the SS to write the *Storia segreta delle societ  segrete* (Secret History of Secret Societies). As part of this effort, he had access to the archives of the SS, which had confiscated the documents of various esoteric societies, especially many Masonic lodges. Evola never desired to make more details of this known, but perhaps a false identity was an advantage in this work.

Summary of Evola's Relations to Fascism

Taken as a whole, one can look at Evola's attitude toward the historical phenomenon of Fascism in the following time sequence: first a great hope; then an immediate sobering that is nevertheless supported by the hope of being able to make corrections of a traditional kind; and finally the recognition that everything is lost, which in Evola's case, however, leads him to endure, out of "loyalty" and the "legionnaire's spirit," to the end and beyond. Finally comes *apoliteia*,

the apolitical stance that betrays a total disillusion. We have discussed several times Evola's main point of contention regarding Fascism: its lack of spiritual roots. All his other criticisms are merely consequences of this. In countless essays he mentioned the totalitarian state, the bureaucracy, the populist elements ("Proletarian and Fascist Italy," as one slogan had it) that brought with them demagoguery and a primitive emphasis on outward things, the pedagogic urge of the state, the campaign for population increase, the "virtuous" attitude toward sexual morals, the absurd continuing existence of the party (which, after all, means "part," and thus stands in logical opposition to an autocratic assertion), with its pathetic election spectacles, the politicizing of leisure time, the Fascist corporative concept, the Catholic influence, and so on.

These "degenerations," as Evola termed them, were of course exactly the components that made up the political success of Fascism and National Socialism alike. The emphasis on bourgeois thought-patterns and the subsequent repression of the aristocratic element aroused his decisive opposition. By Evola's definition of aristocracy, it "has nothing in common with Machiavellian or demagogic forms of rule by violent and terrorizing types.... The foundation of every aristocratic type is above all spiritual, 'Olympian,' and refers to an order that is already metaphysical" (*Lo Stato*, April 1941). We are already familiar with his distaste of everything middle class, as well as its roots in Nietzsche, Plato, Le Bon, and so on. Evola's attitude becomes very apparent in the article "Unsere antibürgerliche Front" (Our Antibourgeois Front), which he published in issue no. 27 of the German conservative magazine *Der Ring*. We quote: "The bourgeoisie is identical to the Third Estate, the class of merchants and craftsmen who settled in the medieval cities. Now it is obvious that the 'progress' of history since the Middle Ages can be summarized as the abnormal development of the middle-class element and its unique occupations and interests, while the other, higher elements of the medieval hierarchy were shut out—a development that has the character of a cancerous growth. It is the *Bürger* [bourgeois citizen] who unloads the full curse of ridicule on the ideals of the previous knightly era. It is the *Bürger*, like the 'new men' whom Dante so despised, who is the first to give the signal to the antitraditional outrage by assuming the right to bear arms, by fortifying the centers of corrupt economic power, and so helping his standard to prevail; it is the *Bürger* who makes an anarchical claim of autonomy against imperial authority in the urban communities. It is the *Bürger* who has slowly brought things to the point that today a claim that would

have been deemed an absurd heresy in other, normal times can appear to be the most natural thing in the world: that is, that the economy is our fate and destiny, that profit is our purpose in life, that bargaining and trading is a 'deed,' and that the conversion of every value into the notions of profitability, prosperity, and comfort, into units of speculation and of supply and demand, makes up the essence of our civilization . . . thus, modern civilization and bourgeois civilization have come to be almost identical expressions. It is to the *Burger's* rise to power, who first through the Revolution and then through the democratic constitutions has been freed from the medieval 'residues,' that the Western world owes its illusory greatness, but at the same also its terrible spiritual destruction, whose witnesses we are today."

Evola made Edgardo Sulis's words his own: "The bourgeoisie: enemy number one of the Fascist revolution." For Evola, the bourgeoisie is identical with the destruction of true spiritual values in order to increase one's own profits, as well as the failure to recognize quality and the subsequent introduction of quantity as the sole criterion. Herein lie further roots of Evola's enmity toward democracy: it is not the majority that is, quantity that should decide, but the quality of realization that can be found only in the few. To the same category as the article quoted above belongs the essay "Bureaucracy and the Leading Strata" (in *Lo Stato*, IV, as well as a German version in *Der Vierjahresplan*, 1940), where Evola writes: "After the communist and bolshevist danger had receded, one rightfully saw Fascism's most dangerous opponents in the form of bourgeois culture and the bourgeois spirit. Fascism must be especially prepared for this danger, because it appears in a more refined and cunning form and finds a fertile ground in the natural inclinations of the majority of men, wherever the heroic tension . . . begins to weaken. . . . However, it is curious that one of the most typical forms [of the bourgeois spirit] has hardly received any attention, a form that is all the more dangerous because it flourishes in the center of the state: I mean the phenomenon of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is the typical agent of the 'political bourgeoisie' and embodies the worst misdeeds of the middle-class spirit in its widest sense. In spite of eighteen years of Fascist rule, it must be honestly admitted that Italy is far removed from being able to show a really effective and not just nominal de-bureaucratization.... In this way, a very real kind of bureaucratic feudalism is being formed. . . ."

In his enmity toward the middle-class spirit, Evola could refer to Mussolini himself, who had stressed repeatedly that bourgeois and Fascist spirit, bour-

geois and heroic ethic, are incompatible opposites. The expression "Fascism disdains the comfortable life" also originates from Mussolini.

Thomas Sheehan, in his interesting although strongly anti-Evolian essay "Myth and Violence: The Fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoist" (in *Social Research*, vol. 48, pp. 45-73), in which he sees an absolute "demythologizing" and a veritable ban on the "mythic" as the only means against violence and extremism, quotes Mussolini as exhorting the Italian citizen to "attain that purely spiritual existence in which his value as a man consists." In a 1930 speech about Fascism, Mussolini also says: "This political process is flanked by a philosophical process; if it be true that matter was on the altars for a century, today it is the spirit which takes its place.... By saying that God is returning, we mean that spiritual values are returning" (p. 52).

Utterances of this sort must have surely given Evola new hope time and again; but a deep chasm opened between such words and the reality designed by administrators. It is hard to ascertain whether Evola made a fundamental error with regard to Fascism, by mistakenly identifying his private conceptions of it with the historical phenomenon. But we can hardly believe this, because the divergences were simply too great. Was it not Fascism that, as Philippe Baillet writes ("*Les rapports de Julius Evola avec le Fascisme et le National-Socialisme*" [The Relationships of Julius Evola with Fascism and National Socialism] in *Politica Hermetica*, p. 61f.), brought the people the modernism despised by Evola with its "invasion of radios, that mania of compulsory exercise for everyone, the political song, the cult of film stars, the invasiveness of bureaucracy, and the excessive industrialization"? And the mass marches where a "Caesar" was applauded? We also support the thesis of Baillet (one of the best Evola experts) and assume that Evola simply saw Fascism as the last chance of the West. From his standpoint, the visible alternatives were much worse; there was only liberalism paired with capitalism ("anything goes") and Communism, both of which worshiped a world of machines and limitless materialism. Be-cause Fascism strengthened the state and the hierarchical concept, and, for all its demagoguery, praised honor, bravery, and loyalty, Evola saw in it at least a temporary bastion against the equalizing flood that seemed certain to succeed in liberalism and Communism.

In the same way, Evola's approach to the "much more consequential" National Socialism can be understood as a reaction to his disappointment with Fascism. The disappointment with National Socialism in addition led him to the

even "more consequential" philosophy of the SS. But this is material for another chapter. The last "consequence" was *apoliteia*, the retreat into metaphysics.

Aside from this, Evola possibly believed in the "magical" effectiveness of the traditional ideas in the present. Through their continuous "invocation," the supra-mundane ideas were supposed to act like magnets on this earth, around which the best simply had to gather. But exactly here lies the crux of any concept of the state that is founded in transcendence: How does one translate the metaphysical values into mundane reality? And this poses a second question: Must not man assimilate himself to the supra-mundane world before he can recognize and then realize its values? Is not an inner transformation needed before the outer?

Another aspect that brought Evola into conflict with the ruling Fascism was his disapproval of the nation concept as a creation of the French Revolution, which had led to an impermissible rise of the ethnic concept. For him, nation and folk were concepts rooted in nature, and thus subversive and anti-traditional. Rooted in nature means rooted in life, and thus geared toward one's own survival, which excludes any form of sacrifice for a higher ideal. The whole philosophy of self-interest derives from being rooted in life. By definition, true spirituality stands above life and therefore cannot be concerned with it. That is why overcoming the fear of death is a prerequisite of free spirituality.

In the essay "Processo alla Borghesia" (Indictment of the Bourgeoisie) from March 1940 (reprinted in the anthology *Gli articoli de la Vita Italiana durante il periodo bellico* [The Articles from *Vita Italiana* during the War Period], Treviso, 1988), he says: "For us the word 'people' comes from the jargon of demagogues and agitators, because in reality it is either a passive substance and belongs to him who understands how to possess it, or else it is the end phase of a process of dissolution and of a societal equalization." To Fascism, and even more so to National Socialism, such words amounted to sacrilege—as they would in the con-temporary world as well.

In his summarizing critique of Fascism, *Il fascismo visto dalla Destra* (with an appendix: "Note sul Terzo Reich" (Fascism Viewed from the Right with an Appendix: 'Notes on the Third Reich,' Rome, 1970), which, however, was written after the war—which is why we have focused on the works of the Fascist period—Evola even writes the following: "We are not afraid to invert the thesis of a certain antifascism, and assert that it was not Fascism that had negative effects on the Italian people, but rather the other way round: it was this people, this 'race,' that negatively affected Fascism, i.e., the Fascist experiment, because

it showed that it did not have enough men on the necessary plane of certain higher qualifications and symbols . . . capable of further developing the positive possibilities that could have been contained in this system."

This is not necessarily as malicious as it seems, even though it is of course provocative (provocation being, after all, one of the special inclinations of our author), for the concept of the state that Evola represents presupposes the over-coming of the purely human. That is why Evola strives to form the "new man," only not in the mass but instead in the form of an elite, an Order, which takes up the reins of the state as Plato's wise men did. In this he is different from the leftist utopians, who also want to create a new man, but who want to see him in the people as a whole, and thus mercilessly want to reeducate everyone. As their head there should be a monarch because, as Evola writes in *Fascismo* (p. 45): "A true Right without a monarchy would be lacking its natural gravitational and crystallizing point" (see also the collection of essays published by Renato del Ponte with Evola's relevant articles: *Monarchia, Aristocrazia, Tradizione*, San Remo, 1986, and "Significato e funzione della Monarchia" [Significance and Function of the Monarchy] in the appendix to his translation of Karl Lowenstein, *La Monarchia nello stato moderno*, Rome, 1969).

With this emphasis on a spiritual monarchy ("by the grace of God") and the consequent imperial idea, Evola stood in sharp contrast to the principle of Fascism's and National Socialism's leaders, who both derived their legitimacy from the people: thus the monarchs came from above, the leaders from below. This leadership principle corresponds exactly to the picture of Caesarism that Spengler unfolds in his *Decline of the West*, and which is a sign of a declining civilization. Mussolini seems to have had a clear understanding of these contexts, and tried to cut off the spread of Spenglerian ideas as much as possible. It is interesting that the communist theoretician Antonio Gramsci accused Fascism of "bourgeoisisation" and Caesarism (see Marcello Veneziani, *La Rivoluzione Conservatrice in Italia*, Milan, 1987, p. 51).

On the other hand, Evola did not intend his traditional concepts to remain mere idle plays of thought. In order to at least put something into action, he also had to compromise and, for instance, accept the nominal status of the monarchy in the Fascist epoch. Of course, this led to other unavoidable contradictions. A real solution to these inconsistencies was to come only with Evola's *apoliteia*.

Evola led a special struggle against the "bolshevist" tendencies in Fascism—that is, the opinion of some that communism had to undergo only a few positive developments in order to turn into Fascism. The communist idea, with its

collectivism, was for Evola the most radical negation of his ideal of the personality, which, bound to transcendence, rose above the purely human element. This "antibolshevism," as he often called it, was also the reason for his decisive opposition to all similar tendencies in National Socialism, which also approached communism, in that among other things it wanted to abolish private property and dreamed of the introduction of the Russian That is why he opposed National Bolshevism more and more, even though he also wrote for Ernst Niekisch's journal *Widerstand*.

Evola attacked; however, he was also himself attacked, not only because of his strict theoretical convictions and his often personal attacks on some representatives of Fascism and its culture, but also because he was seen as a "narcissistic magician" who studied Tantrism, Buddhism, Hinduism, alchemy, and so on. One of the accusations from Catholics and Fascists asserted that these occult activities in themselves already proved his "antifascism," because a real Fascist would have totally different ideals. Accusations of this kind must have been frequent, because Evola at least once felt compelled to answer the charges in an essay (see "Oriente non e antifascismo" [Orient Does Not Equal Antifascism]), in *Critica Fascism*, October 10, 1927).

Official Fascism was equally unhappy about Evola's public agreement with the thesis of the "philosophers of crisis"—Spengler, Benda, Massis, Guenon, Keyserling, and Ortega y Gasset—that the world was in the midst of a decline. This amounted to a denunciation of the modern age, whereas to be modern and progressive was the declared goal of Fascism. Especially hard hit by this rejection by the Fascist regime was Oswald Spengler, who was spurned even by such well-known philosophers as Croce and Cantimori.

For the evaluation of Evola's attitude toward Fascism, the following seems to us expressive and telling. In the middle of the war, when the very survival of Fascism was at stake, Evola authored an extensive work on Buddhism, which, truly free of any hint of the desperate times, speaks in an erudite fashion about ascetics, nirvana, karma, and rebirth, unlocking these concepts in true Evolian fashion in a new way, while directly referring to the ancient Buddhist texts, contradicting the then current pseudo-Oriental prejudices: a work that was translated and published by Luzac, one of the most respected English publishers in this field. Even declared enemies of Evola agree about its merits.

After these fairly numerous references, which should allow the reader a differentiated picture of Evola's activities in relation to Fascism, it is surely interesting to read a few opinions and judgments about him.

Renzo de Felice, no doubt the most important expert on Fascism and the well-known Mussolini biographer, writes in *Der Faschismus: Ein Interview* (Stuttgart, 1977, p. 97ff.): "Who is Evola? Throughout the whole Fascist period he was an outsider, and not by accident; he never held any office within the Fascist party . . . and at least many of the Fascists criticized him and viewed him with mistrust. Evola represents a form of Traditionalism that consists of cosmic history on the one hand and prophecies of doom on the other. These are convictions that one finds only in very small fringe groups in Fascism, if at all."

Ernst Nolte opined in his *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (Fascism in Its Epoch, Munich, 1979, p. 589): "Giulio Evola played no political role. Still, he was no 'unpolitical archaist,' because he worked diligently with the racial campaign." (A following chapter examines Evola's racism in detail.)

Mircea Eliade (as a historian of religion no "expert" on the subject, and then still young) declared in his article in *Vremea*: "Evola is not subject to influences. This is exactly why we sympathize with him."

Gottfried Benn had the following to say in his review of *Revolt*: "Because they put their racial-religious axiom into action, Evola sees in the movements of Fascism and National Socialism the possibilities of a relinking of peoples to the world of Tradition, promises for the production of real history, and a new legitimate relationship of spirit and power. Indeed, with Evola's teachings as a background, one can see the epochal depth of these movements very clearly."

Surely, Evola was no Fascist in the historical meaning of the term, but was even less of an "anti-Fascist." One could label him as a critical sympathizer with Fascism, who because of his martial and spiritual archaisms remained without political influence.

A pointed word from Dino Cofrancesco (in Paolo Corsini and Laura Novati, *L'eversione nera*, Milan, 1985, p. 105) concludes this chapter: "To paraphrase the saying of De Felice, Fascism was an illegitimate child of 1789. For Evola, in contrast, Fascism is a degenerate child of Tradition." As is well known, for De Felice, Italian Fascism is part of a revolutionary line of a "leftist" Enlightenment that demands a "new man" in a "new society."

Evola and National Socialism

Early on, Evola had already striven to maintain good relations with Germany. He admired German culture, and we have already noted how strongly his worldview was

influenced by German philosophers and thinkers. He had especially tried to connect with proponents of the so-called Conservative Revolution (to use a term coined by Armin Mohler), such as Edgar Julius Jung (murdered by the National Socialists in 1934), Christoph Steding, Wilhelm Stapel, A. E. Gunter, and Ernst Niekisch. He also contributed writings to their magazines (*Der Ring*, *Europäische Revue*, *Deutsches Volkstum*, *Widerstand*) and popularized their philosophies in Italy (with regard to this, see Marcello Veneziani, *La Rivoluzione Conservatrice in Italia*, Milan, 1987). From the beginning, he also had relations with the Viennese Kulturbund as well as with the group around Othmar Spann (persecuted by the National Socialists) and Prince Karl Anton Rohan, with whom he had especially close contact.

In 1934 Evola embarked on his first series of lectures in Germany and spoke at Berlin University and at the aristocratic, conservative Berliner Herrenklub (Berlin Gentlemen's Club) under Baron Heinrich von Gleichen. Evola can probably be equated with the proponents of the Conservative Revolution—that is, as their Italian counterpart, as his ideological opponent Professor Franco Ferraresi confirms in *La destra radicale* (Milan, 1984, p. 26). Though these circles tried at least initially to collaborate with the National Socialists, they distanced themselves from the "populist, plebeian, and fanatical" aspects of the Hitler regime. They believed they could influence National Socialism, which, of course, turned out to be an illusion in the face of Hitler's great political and also economic success. As a general rule, the more radical element will always triumph over the moderate when their forces are fairly equal.

Evola had developed a sympathy for Germany during World War I that set him at odds with his Futurist friends. Later he developed the idea of the unification of "the two eagles"—the German and the Italian—based on the Ghibelline notion of Empire during the Hohenstaufen period. He pointed out that the two peoples complement each other, and would reap benefits only by moving closer together. With this idea, he invited enmity on both the German and the Italian side, given the ultranationalist climate of the time. Concerning this question, an interesting National Socialist document has been preserved in the Political Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn (file AA Referat DIII, e.o. 9685) that was marked for the internal use of the Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*). It reports on an article entitled "The Contribution of Rome to the New Germany," which Evola published in *Regime Fascista* on November 16, 1941. After discussing the main thesis, the author of the document continues: "This impudent article, which . . . is in no way suited to ad-

vance German-Italian collaboration, cannot remain uncontested...." In this article, Evola, among other things, "spoke of the formidable confusion and spiritual aberrations that can be detected in some circles of the German Reich, and have to be prevented." These circles' view of what really constitutes the Nordic ideal rests on "one-sided and arbitrary interpretations" and "confused and often dilettante authors" who sought the essence of Nordicism in a "naturalistic mysticism" and a "foggy, Nibelungen-like romanticism." Evola further characterized Richard Wagner (for whom Hitler's admiration is notorious) as a "forger and usurper of the old mythology."

We have already mentioned that, aside from his Germanophilia, the main reason for Evola's rapprochement with National Socialism lies in his disillusionment with Fascism. In National Socialism, he saw a much greater inner coherence, a stronger emphasis on the warrior element and the culture of the conservative Right (although the latter was disdained by the actual NS). He was similarly impressed by the motto of the "struggle for the worldview" and welcomed the absence of the marching in line and vying for position that were so common in Italy. As Maria Zucchinali adds (*A destra in Italia oggi*, Milan, 1986), Evola was also closer to National Socialism because its socialist origins were less noticeable; in their place, the link with the First and Second Empires was emphasized_ Tradition seemed more essential there than progress (also because of the prevalence of the Prussian element). National Socialism like-wise strove to breathe new life into ancient Germanic man and to restore the original brilliance of the North (Hermann the Cherusker, for example). Added to this were the notion of the "*Ordensstaat*" (Order-based state) with its accompanying ascetic attitude and readiness for sacrifice, loyalty, honor, discipline, and selflessness. Even the obsession with ancient symbols must have impressed Evola, even though it was clear to him that they were often misused. He knew this manipulation well; as early as 1931, Rene Guenon had indicted the misuse of the swastika in his *Symbolisme de la Croix* (see Evola's essay in *Hochschule und Ausland* 12, 1934, "Das Hakenkreuz als polares Symbol" [The Swastika as a Polar Symbol]), in which he attributes this symbol not to the Indo-Germanic cultures but instead to a Hyperborean primordial race.

In spite of all this, Evola early on had expressed reservations about National Socialism, as in an article in *Vita Nova* with the title "Problemi attuali" (Current Problems), in which he uses an article in the *Europäische Revue* about the Third Reich as a pretext to present his arguments. Beneath the already

challenging subtitle "Counterrevolution or Reaction?" he writes: "The inferiority of National Socialism is obvious from the standpoint of 'doctrine,' compared to the traditional values defended by groups like those around Hugenberg and Dusterberg. Instead of a tradition with clear outlines that is still ensouled by the ethos and spirit of order, hierarchy, aristocracy, and a heritage that stands in a direct line from the greatest imperial cultures of ancient Europe, we see vague demands, compromises, and national concessions even to Marxism and to positions whose content is dictated mainly by the necessities of the moment and who owe their effectiveness solely to that fact."

Even earlier he had polemicized against Alfred Rosenberg, the "Ideologue of National Socialism," whom he also met in person. Here the November 1930 essay "Il 'Mito' del nuovo nazionalismo tedesco" (The "Mythos" of the New German Nationalism) in *Vita Nova* must be mentioned. Evola's dislike was based mostly on the fact that Rosenberg valued modernity so much. Another article against Rosenberg was "Paradossi dei tempi: paganesimo razzista = Illuminismo liberale" (A Current Paradox: Racist Paganism = Liberal Enlightenment) in *Lo Stato*, VI, 7 (July 1935), pp. 530-532. Evola also polemicized against Walther Darre, who was already NSDAP Reichsleiter at this time, in *Lo Stato* ("Il Nazismo sulla via di Mosca" [Nazism on the Same Path as Moscow], March 1935, pp. 186-195). Later in *Cammino* (p. 147), Evola stated about Rosenberg that "he lacked any understanding for the transcendental dimensions of the sacral."

The absence of any transcendent background was, of course, one of Evola's main objections against National Socialism. "One can organize a state in the name of the spirit or in the name of matter," he wrote in 1937 ("Sulle premesse di un'antibolscevismo positivo" [On the Prerequisites for a Positive Anti-bolshevism], in *Lo Stato*. This and a few other quotes we have culled from Alessandro Campis's interesting contribution "Organicismo, Idea Imperiale e Dottrina della Razza" in *Trasgressioni*, I/1, Florence, 1986). This lack of reference to transcendence also leads to the other points criticized by Evola, such as National Socialism's great attachment to nature (the *Volk* as guiding principle); the Führer principle that answers only to the people and has no legitimation from above, and the resulting demagoguery; as well as populism and purely biological racism.

Evola also spoke out against the *Anschluss* of Austria into Germany, because he wanted to see the Austrian monarchy revived (see "Il problema monarchico

in Austria" [The Monarchist Question in Austria], in *Lo Stato*, IV, February 2, 1935, and "Orizzonte Austriaco" [Austrian Horizon], also in *Lo Stato*, 1935, pp. 22-29). In "Orizzonte Austriaco" we even read: "National Socialism has forsworn the ancient, aristocratic tradition of the Empire. Being nothing but a semi-collectivist nationalism and equalizing in its centralism, it has not hesitated to destroy Germany's time-honored division into duchies, counties, and cities that all enjoyed a measure of independence."

Evola did not hesitate to go further. In an essay of November 1940 (that is, after the start of the war, when Evola was repeatedly visiting Berlin and Vienna) he attacked one of the main slogans of National Socialism and declared: "One of the catchphrases that is especially dear to National Socialism and is expressed in the words: '*Fin Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*' [One people, one empire, one leader] is already outdated." ("Il problema dei futuri 'spazi imperiali' e il contributo romano-germanico" [The Problem of the Future "Imperial Regions" and the Romano-Germanic Contribution] in *Vita Italiana*). As late as 1942 there appeared a German version of this article under the heading "Reich und Imperium als Elemente der neuen europäischen Ordnung" (Empire and *Imperium* as Elements of the New European Order, in *Europäische Revue*, no. 18) in which Evola expressed the same sentiment in somewhat milder form.

Two excerpts from Evola's postwar work about Fascism (*Fascismo*, p. 171) should also illustrate his feelings in that period: "For Hitler, the people were *the* principle of legitimacy. No higher principle existed or was tolerated by him (his polemics against the Hapsburgs were often marked by an unparalleled vulgarity)."

And "When one took a look at the masses of 'Aryan' folkish comrades of the KdF and the arrogance of the 'de-proletarianized' modern Berlin worker, one could only shudder with revulsion at the thought of a future Germany that would develop in this direction."

But in spite of all these negative aspects, there was something in National Socialism that attracted Evola: the concept of a state ruled by an Order, which he felt was embodied by the SS. "We are inclined to the opinion that we can see the nucleus of an Order in the higher sense of tradition in the 'Black Corps,'" he wrote in *Vita Italiana* (August 15, 1938). Again in *Vita Italiana* (August 1941, "Per una profonda alleanza italo-germanica" [For a Deep Italian-Germanic Alliance]) he writes: "Beyond the confines of the party and of any political-administrative structure, an elite in the form of a new 'Order'—that is, a kind

of ascetic-military organization that is held together by the principles of 'loyalty' and 'honor,' must form the basis of the new state." As mentioned, Evola held the SS, which Himmler strove to design according to the model of the Teutonic Order, to be this elite. The castles of the SS Order, with their "initiations," the emphasis on transcending the purely human element, the prerequisite of physical valor, as well as the ethical requirements (loyalty, discipline, defiance of death, willingness to sacrifice, unselfishness), strengthened Evola in his conviction. He also was of the opinion that the ethics of the SS were borrowed from the Jesuits.

Conversely, the SS was interested in Evola and began to maintain a file on him. All his lectures after 1937 were attended, summarized, and archived. Through the meritorious work of Hans Werner Neulen, a real expert in the area of recent historical relations between Italy and Germany, these files have been found in the Political Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn (most of them were translated into Italian and published by Nicola Cospito and Hans Werner Neulen as *Julius Evola nei documenti segreti del Terzo Reich* [Julius Evola in the Secret Documents of the Third Reich], Rome, 1986). Nicholas Cospito authored another essay regarding this theme in *Intervento* (no. 80/ 81, Rome, 1987: "Julius Evola e il Nazionalsocialismo"). The first facsimiles of

this material were publicized in Rudolf Mund's work illuminating Himmler's occult side, *Der Rasputin Himmlers* (Vienna, 1982). This book deals with the aforementioned Karl Maria Wiligut (alias Weisthor), who wanted to instill Himmler with a Germanic esoteric foundation.

Especially important to this study is the final report on Evola's June 1938 lectures, kept in the handwritten files of the personal staff of the *Reichsführer*-SS (file AR/126). After a short summary of his life, it says there: "Today Evola—and really only in northern Italy—is regarded as a fanatic and dreamer, mostly misunderstood and merely tolerated by official Fascism." Then the content of the three lectures is summarized and on page 12 comes the conclusion, which must be quoted in full:

The ultimate and secret motivation for Evola's theories and plans must be sought in a *revolt of the old aristocracy* against today's world, which is totally alienated from the upper class. This confirms the initial German impression: that we are dealing with a 'reactionary Roman.' The whole impression is one of an old-fashioned aristocratic feudalism. Thus even his scholarship displays a trait of dilettantism and literary affectation.

In conclusion, there exist no grounds for National Socialism to place itself at the disposal of Baron Evola. His political plans for a Romano-Germanic *Imperium* are of a utopian character and moreover very apt to cause ideological confusions. Since Evola *is* also only tolerated and barely supported by Fascism, *it* is tactically not necessary to accommodate his tendencies from our side. It is therefore recommended to:

1. Not support Evola's current efforts for the establishment of a secret supranational order and the founding of a magazine directed toward this goal.
2. Curb his public activities in Germany after this lecture series, without taking any special measures.
3. Prevent his further penetration into leading offices of the party and the state.
4. Observe his propaganda activity in neighboring countries.

In a short letter (AR/83) dated August 8, 1938, it then says laconically: "The *Reichsfuhrer-SS* has acknowledged the report regarding the lectures of Baron Evola and is in full agreement with the thoughts and recommendations stated in the last paragraph thereof."

According to this, the SS as a whole was not favorably inclined toward him, even though he was apparently unaware of it. His ideas were just too different from official National Socialist thought. The scope of this difference is displayed by a written report from one of Evola's lecture evenings (October 12, 1937 at the Studienkreis, Berlin), which bore the title "Abendlandischer Aufbau aus urarischem Geist" (Western Rebirth Out of the Primordial Aryan Spirit) and is archived in the same file. Because this lecture documents very well Evola's attitude toward National Socialism, some especially telling excerpts will be quoted at length. First, Evola lists some areas in which he thinks National Socialism (which he refers to as "the new views") has made a positive development (the formation of a front against liberalism, rationalism, Bolshevism, "the myth of the economy," for instance). But then he goes on to declare that much work remains to be done. For example, National Socialism should be replaced by a supranationalism in order to fight against the internationalist forces, and an "Olympian elite, so to speak" must take up the task of superseding with spiritual aims, and thus eliminate all modern streams of thought, such as

rationalism, materialism, and collectivism. Then he goes into detail about the points that should be improved, and explains:

In this respect, I want to be totally straightforward with you, since you shouldn't view me as someone whose ideas are conditioned by his ethnicity and who speaks to you as a foreigner, or who follows any other interest but the pure truth. The only important fact is that we have some knowledge concerning these matters and want to contribute to the common cause, on the basis of unconditional loyalty, lack of prejudice, and selflessness.

This said, we note the first principal fault in the new views [i.e., National Socialism], which is that these are composed more of myths than of real ideas. To a great extent, these seem to be unclearly received truths that essentially have turned to crystallization points for irrational and passionate forces of belief, that have their effect not because of their spiritual truthfulness but because of their power of suggestion. Because of this impure makeup, these new myths are prone to all manner of infiltration; they are not equipped to prevent dangerous mixtures and are even in danger of becoming the instruments of an unconscious demagoguery, differing from the myths of our opponents only by their distinguishing symbol. I don't want to be misunderstood; therefore I happily admit that it would be utopian to want to influence the masses without resorting to the realm of myth, the irrational, and the passional. But that which constitutes myth and irrationality for them should be pure knowledge, truth, and reality for the others—for a strongly organized and cohesive elite. Due to a regrettable incompetence and pressure from immediate interests, Nordic thought, pagan-ism, primordial symbols, and so on, today all too often see new life in the distorted form of personal affectations and slogans... .

As they are frequently understood today, Nordic thought, Aryanism, the imperial idea, and the concept of a super-race are burdened with an interpretation entirely foreign to the great free breath of the corresponding primordial traditions. According to the Aryan primordial conception, the Reich is a metaphysical solar reality. The Nordic heritage is not semi-naturalistic, only conceivable on a blood-and-soil basis, but rather constitutes a cultural category, an original transcendent form of the spirit, of which the Nordic type, the Aryan race, and the general Indo-Germanic moral being are only outward manifestations. The concept of race itself, according to its higher traditional significance, cannot have anything in common with the rational idols of modern biology and profane science. Above all, race is a basic attitude, a spiritual power, something primal and creative, whose outer, tangible forms are only a last echo... .

The truly original Nordic essence melts with the Hyperborean; and here we see a primordial culture that is solar and sacral, that possesses the power and irresistibility of the universal, and that encompasses paganism and spirit, Olympian sovereign superiority and will-conditioned originality, in a grand synthesis of the mundane and the supra-mundane. Once one has reached this realization, then one can truly say that Tradition in its higher sense is synonymous with the Hyperborean, or primordial Nordic, tradition, and that the Nordic element has been present wherever a people has had a tradition, and vice versa. That is not all. In this way we can even approach the mystery of prehistory and sense a fateful correspondence between physical circumstances and higher, metaphysical meanings. If the tradition in question indeed had the polar region as its original seat, it must therefore have been geographically polar and so has always embodied the spiritual significance of a pole as an unshakable axis for any ordered movement, as a center point for any normal hierarchy and every true tradition-based Reich... .

Now, can one present such streams of thought in certain circles without being accused of an alien universalism, of Roman notions that are anti-Germanic, or even of having Jewish ideas? And yet all this belongs to the highest Aryan inheritance; this is the true level to which the motifs and symbols that the new Germany has called forth must be elevated if it really wants to stand at the forefront of the resistance and attack against the dark powers of world revolution. We must really return to the origins, and the Nordic essence must be freed from any interpretations that are infected by modern, profane intellectual prejudices and by the superstitious religion of life, becoming, and being bound to nature. We must once again find out how to imbue the Nordic-Aryan symbols and their logical consequence, the Reich, with a spiritual power and a universal gravity, something truly Olympian and transcendental. And this is indeed possible. This must be our task. The new Germany has talented and qualified powers for this and it remains only to give them the right points of orientation, true principles instead of myths and slogans... .

We repeat: race is secondary, spirit and tradition the primary factor, because, in a metaphysical sense, race dwells in the spirit before being expressed in the blood. If it is true that without racial purity, spirit and tradition are deprived of their most precious means of expression, then it is also true that pure race deprived of spirit is condemned to be a biological mechanism and, in the end, doomed to extinction. The proof of this lies in spiritual decay, the ethical stupefaction, and the slow death of many tribes that did not commit any of the sins against the blood that have been discovered by materialistic racial science. . . . It

follows that without the rejuvenation of the higher spiritual power latent in the Nordic symbol, all measures for the biological protection of the race will have a limited and relative effectiveness, as opposed to our superior task of a Western reconstruction of the Nordic-Aryan spirit... .

Leader and followers, organic structure, overcoming of individualism and collectivism through a virile spiritual concept of community—these foundations for an inner rebuilding of the Folk should now be valid above and beyond the individual nations, and should lead the way to an organic conception, to which independence contributes as well as unified higher leadership, ethnic diversity, as well as spiritual, supranational community. That is what Western rebirth fueled by the Aryan spirit means... .

It follows that our front should also take account of all the surviving conservative and traditionalist forces in Europe and even strive toward a new active conservatism on a Nordic foundation, which will have this dual purpose: to rid the world in revolutionary fashion of a culture of decadence and the new materialist and collectivist barbarism and to call forth to new life the primal creative power of the ancient Aryans, in close connection with the values of personality, hierarchy, spiritual virility, and the *Reich* as both worldly and metaphysical reality. The first condition for this is the desecularization of the world and of man, of realization and of action. If this prerequisite is not fulfilled, then all roads toward the understanding of primordial Nordicism remain blocked. The first assumption is that there is a higher world beyond this one. Therefore, we have to abandon any mysticism of this world, any adoration of nature and of life, any pantheism. At the same time we must strongly oppose the curious interpretation of Aryanism invented by the dilettante Chamberlain that relates to a purely rational praise and glorification of profane science and technology for the surmounting of a supposedly un-Aryan supersensible worldview. It is indeed high time that we were done with such foolery... .

1. The supra-mundane realm should mean Doric clarity, cosmos, light in its supra-rational sense, and thus has no concern for feelings, longing, mere faith, or the unconscious. This is the fundamental condition of understanding the true meaning and content and the true awakening power of the primordial symbols of our tradition, and of using them to rediscover the paths to a metaphysical, supra-rational and supra-individual knowledge.

1. Two main attitudes toward the supra-mundane reality are possible. One is solar, virile, affirming; the other is lunar, feminine, religious, passive, corresponding to the priestly ideal. The second attitude is mostly that of the

southern Semitic cultures, whereas the lordly Nordic and Indo-Germanic man has always been solar; the subjugation of the creature and the pathos of its absolute distance from the Almighty were totally unknown to him. He felt the gods to be his equals; he felt himself to be descended from heaven and to be of the same blood as the gods. From this there arises a conception of the heroic that does not end with the physical, soldierly, or tragically choreographed aspects, and a conception of the *Übermensch* that has nothing in common with the Nietzschean-Darwinist caricature of the beautiful blond beast, because this Nordic *Übermensch* also exhibits ascetic, sacral, and supra-natural traits, and culminates in the type of the Olympian ruler, the Aryan *Chakravartin* as wielder of the two powers and King of Kings... .

These excerpts not only are useful in determining Evola's exact attitude toward National Socialism, but also explain what the concepts of "race," "Nordic," and so on, meant to him. All these interpretations must be kept in mind if one wants to do justice to his work, especially that which dates from this period. By using these emotive words, very positively received at the time, he wanted to slowly bend their meaning in his own direction and thereby influence the decisive circles. This was of course a hopeless undertaking for one man who could count on scarcely any support.

How was it possible for Evola to speak his mind so freely and critically in a public lecture? It seems that the Germans initially thought Evola to be the man who would propagate their racial ideas in Italy, since he was introduced by "racists" as a "racist" into the German Foreign Office. When it was realized (especially by the Ahnenerbe) that Evola wanted to spread totally different ideas and that his racism was far removed from the NS version, both interest and support for him waned. In spite of this, as he notes in his autobiography, Evola was long able to say things for which a German would have landed in prison.

Another document from Himmler's personal staff should be mentioned here (archived in the aforementioned file under no. II 2113), because it shows that Himmler personally received and collected information about Evola. It reports that Himmler again ordered a thorough examination of Evola's *Heidnischer Imperialismus*, in which the German translation should even be compared to the original Italian text in order to eliminate errors in translation. At the same time, the opinion of the chief of the Sicherheitshauptamt (main security office) is given:

Evola possesses no understanding of the German folkish (*volkisch*) past, whereby it must be noted that he is a foreigner and probably does not know Germany's

historical conditions enough to really grasp the origins of our folkish history. His results remain a spiritual and speculative impossibility... .

His [Evola's] words about the "superstition of the Fatherland" clearly display that these traditionalist values of his are only theoretical and are not rooted in profound historical views and realizations. The following passage of Evola's shows his basic lack of understanding of National Socialism and Germanic values (p. 98): "If it is true that the swastika, the Aryan pagan symbol of the sun and of the flame burning by its own volition, certainly belongs to those symbols that more than any others might lead the way to a real Germanic rebirth, it nevertheless must be realized that the name of the political party that has taken it as its emblem and that is today revolutionizing Germany in the spirit of Fascism is anything but a fitting choice. Indeed, aside from the association with the working class, both 'Nationalism' and 'Socialism' are elements that have a hard time fitting in with the noble Teutonic tradition, and it should be clear that what Germany urgently needs is a counterrevolution against democratic socialism. The resurrected Harzburg front already showed the right path: an anti-Marxist and anti-democratic movement of revolt that called upon the front of conservative and traditionalist elements as such. One will have to be careful that the 'socialist' element, even if it is a 'National Socialism,' does not get the upper hand *and let everything become a mass phenomenon grouped around the momentary prestige of a Fuhrer*: '" [emphasis original]

During the war, Evola had three main goals:

1. To usher in a spiritual unity between Germany and Italy.
2. To propagate his ideas concerning racism.
3. To provide early on for a new order in Europe after the war.

His ambitions for this "new Europe" are also expounded in *Men among the Ruins*. Essentially, it incorporates a federal ruling system based on the old concept of the Empire. It therefore stands opposed to a rigid centralism, has organic foundations, and rests on a spiritual basis. Churchill and Roosevelt supposedly also discussed the possibility of such a European Empire for the post-war era. A sort of "super-monarchy" was supposed to form a strong dam against Communism. The names of Otto von Hapsburg and Lord Mountbatten were mentioned in this regard. That it was the destruction of the Hapsburg Empire that first made possible the expansion of Communism in all of Eastern Europe is today recognized by many experts, even by liberal historians like Golo Mann.

This should suffice to establish Evola's fundamental attitude within and toward National Socialism. For a complete evaluation of his political beliefs, it remains only to examine his attitude toward racism and the Jews.

Evola and Racism

Evola dealt with the question of race in much detail and in countless newspaper and magazine articles. He also at least touches upon this theme in most of his books, and four are devoted to it exclusively. This wealth can certainly be ascribed partly to the fact that there was no other field in which he received so much attention, both positive and negative. Mussolini's reaction and his proposal to make Evola's racial theories the official "Fascist" doctrine has already been mentioned. If one could ever credit Evola with an "official" character and the resulting influence, it would be here. However, this was the case only after 1938, when under German pressure Italy passed its own racial laws and Mussolini was looking for his own way that would be different from the National Socialist racial views.

But recognition alone was not the motivation. Evola was genuinely interested in the question itself, and had long studied it. He always regretted that people saw him only as the "racist" and did not realize that his position regarding race was a consequence of his entire worldview. He always saw racial themes as one area among many, which had its importance but was hierarchically below the all-important primal principles. In later Fascism and in National Socialism this question dominated everything and, in addition, had been approached from the wrong angle, as Evola saw it. In *Grundrisse der faschistischen Rassenlehre* (p. 8), he writes as follows: "Up until now, mainly the propagandistic and polemical aspect of race has been emphasized, in respect to the anti-Jewish struggle and other practical and preventive tasks aimed against the mixing of white Italians with races of other colors. But Italy has lacked any preparations concerning the positive, truly educative, and finally the spiritual side of racial thought."

Since we already know that Evola views any and all questions in their relation to transcendence (which he calls "spirit" in man, as opposed to "soul"), it comes as no surprise to learn that when it comes to race, he places the emphasis on the spiritual factor.

The following quote gives us a first access to his concept of "race" (*Rassenlehre*, p. 18): "To 'have race' in its perfect and higher meaning is a characteristic that towers above both intellectual values and so-called 'natural'

talents. In normal linguistic usage, the expression 'a man of race' has been around for a long time. In general, this was an aristocratic concept. Out of the mass of common and mediocre beings rise men 'of race' in the sense of higher, 'noble' beings. Of course, this nobility did not necessarily have a heraldic sense to it: characters from the countryside or originating in a true and healthy people could evoke this impression of 'race' to the same extent as the honorable representatives of a true aristocracy."

Here Evola is already introducing a nonquantifiable concept of "quality" that is tied to spiritual values and which is absent in the anthropological view of race. Man can thereby differentiate himself and rise above the shapeless masses. According to Evola's view, this lends to the racial concept "the sense of defending quality against quantity, cosmos against chaos . . . and form against the formless" (ibid., p. 15).

As late as in his postwar work *Fascismo* (p. 106), Evola dares to say the following: "Race alone is and contains an elite, whereas the folk merely remains the folk and the masses."

Of course, Evola does not intend to totally cut off the idea of "race" from its biological background, the fact of belonging to a folk. But he goes somewhat further and assigns to each nation a nonbiological but "spiritual" and "soul" race. Sometimes he uses the word in this fashion; speaking for example of an "Italian race."

Concerning this, he writes in the *Rassenlehre* (p. 15f.): "The racial concept . . . refuses to look at the 'individual in itself' as an atom that somehow has to create everything out of nothing, and which hence acquires value. On the contrary, every man is . . . regarded spatially as a link in a community, and tempo-rally as a being that in its past and future is indivisibly bound to the continuity of a family, a clan, to blood and tradition."

With this he emphasizes the rootedness of man in contrast to the "individualistic" rootlessness, as he calls it, in which all individuals are interchangeable, lacking their own face and "personality." He thereby elevates the racial idea above the strictly naturalistic concept of the folk and the nation. He writes (ibid., p. 37):

In this context, the "race"—as a higher race—certainly has a greater importance than "folk and nation": it is the leading and creative element of a nation and its dominant culture, which is in full agreement with Fascist thought. In-deed, Fascism refuses to think of nation and folk as being outside the state.

According to Fascist doctrine, it is the state that gives form and consciousness to the nation. The state, on the other hand, is no abstract and impersonal object in Fascism; it is rather the tool of a political elite, the most valuable part of a "nation." Fascist racial doctrine even goes one step further: *I his elite is predestined to reassume the heritage of the higher race and tradition that is present in the national makeup.* And when Mussolini said in 1923: "As it will be tomorrow and through the millennia, Rome has been the powerful heart of our race: it is the eternal symbol of our higher existence," he clearly set the direction for an irrevocable decision: *The super-race of the Italian nation is the "Race of Rome," that which we will call the "Aryan-Roman" race.*

Thus the purely biological element is not enough for Evola. This is especially clear in the following quotation (ibid., p. 41): "In a cat or a thoroughbred horse the biological is the deciding element, and thus the racial observation can be restricted to this criterion. This, however, is no longer the case when dealing with humans, or at least with beings that are worthy of that name. Man is indeed a biological being, but also connected to forces and laws of a different kind, that are as real and effective as the biological realm and whose influence on the latter cannot be overlooked. Fascist racial doctrine therefore holds a purely biological view of race to be inadequate."

On p. 43 of the same book he slowly arrives at the central thought that occupies him:

Our racial doctrine is determined by tradition. Thus the traditional view of the human being is our foundation, according to which this being has a tripartite nature; that is, *it consists of three principles: spirit, soul, and body...*

This stated, the Fascist racial doctrine rises above both the attitude of those who see the purely biological race as the deciding element, as well as the attitude of those who profit from the standpoint of a racial science only concerned with anthropological, genetic, and biological problems, and who hold that, while race is a reality, it has nothing to do with the values, problems, and the strictly spiritual and cultural activity of man. Fascist racial doctrine, on the other hand, maintains that race exists in the body but also in the spirit and the soul. Race is a deeply embedded force that reveals itself in the biological and morphological realm (as race of the body), the psychical (as race of the soul), as well as in the spiritual (as race of the spirit).

Then (ibid., p. 47) follows the hierarchy that is to be expected of Evola: it is the spirit that builds its body. He writes: "Fascist racial doctrine understands

the correlations between race and spirit on the basis of the principle already mentioned: *the exterior is a function of the interior, the physical form is symbol, tool, and means of expression of a spiritual form.*"

These thoughts were not newly developed at the beginning of the 1940s, when the *Rassenlehre* was published; they had existed much earlier. Already in *Heidnischer Imperialismus*, from the year 1928, we can read (p. 55):

Thus, according to our view, the teachings of Count Gobineau contain a glimmer of truth, but not much more. The decline of the qualities and factors that make up the greatness of a race is not—as he states—the outcome of the mixing of this race with others, the outcome of its ethnic, biological, and demographic deterioration: the truth is rather that a race deteriorates *when its spirit deteriorates*, when the inner tension relaxes, to which it owes its original form and its spiritual type. *Then* a race degenerates or changes, because its most secret root has been severed! Then it loses that invisible and unconquerable transforming virtue, which, far from infecting them, moves other races even to adopt the form of its culture and to be swept away by it as by a wider stream.

That is why for us the return to the race cannot be merely the return to the blood—especially in these twilight times in which almost irreversible mixtures have taken place. It must mean a return to the spirit of the race, not in a totemistic sense but in an aristocratic sense, relating to the primordial seed of our "form" and our culture.

And in July of 1931, Evola writes in *Vita Nova*: "The error of some extreme 'racists' who believe that the return of a race to its ethnic purity *ipso facto* equals its rebirth as a people consists of exactly this: they treat the human being as if he were a purebred cat, horse, or dog. To an animal, the conservation or restoration of its racial unity (in its narrow definition) can be everything. But it is not so with the human. . . . It would be too convenient if the simple fact that one belongs to a pure race were to bestow, without further ado, a 'quality' in the higher sense."

Or in 1934, in *Rassegna Italiana* (XVII, pp. 11-16, "Razza e Cultura" [Race and Culture]): "This (aristocratic) style is precisely the feature that in a higher sense, i.e., concerning man as man and not as animal . . . can be called 'race.' "

As early as 1933, Evola started to criticize the racial attitudes of the National Socialists ("Osservazioni critiche sul 'razzismo' nazional-socialista," [Critical Observations on the Subject of National Socialist "Racism"] in *Vita Italiana*, XXI, 248, pp. 544—549): "The racial doctrine is of value as far as it represents

the primacy of quality over quantity, the differentiated over the formless, and the organically grown over the mechanical. Above all, when it has as its starting point the ideal of a deep and living unity of spirit and life, of thought and race, of culture and instinct."

In the already mentioned article against Rosenberg ("A Paradox of Our Time . . .") it further states: "Is it the spirit that gives shape to the race (especially to the nation), or is it the race that gives shape to the spirit? Or even

more to the point: Does determination come from above or from below?"

Then in the *Grundrisse* (p. 7), he writes: "In its higher form the racial doctrine has the importance of a culturally and spiritually revolutionary idea. It can even assume the value of a 'mythos' (in Sorel's sense, i.e., that of a power idea), of a crystallizing center for the creative energies and developments of an epoch."

As can be seen upon investigation, Evola's racial teachings reveal that he understands "race" differently from what is generally the case. Primarily, he introduces a tripartite structure and differentiates between the race of the body (which covers the usual concept of race), the race of the soul (the type of character, lifestyle, and the emotional attitude toward environment and society), and the race of the spirit (the kind of religious experience and position regarding the "traditional" values). Thus, as Mussolini expressed it on the occasion of that first meeting with Evola, Evola's categories would correspond to Plato's division of the populace into three groups: the general masses, the warriors, and the wise ones.

Since it is the "race of the spirit" that is the most difficult to grasp, and since Evola himself does not always define it in the same way, another quotation follows ("L'equivoco del razzismo scientifico" [The Mistake of Scientific Racism], in *Vita Italiana*, September 1942. The review in *Diorama Letterario*, no. 138, July 1990, of *Gli Articoli de la Vita Italiana*, to which we owe much inspiration, gives a good overview of Evola's articles in that journal): "We wish to clarify that for us spirit does not signify philosophical games, 'Theosophy,' or mystical-devotional escapism from the world, but simply that which in better times was called *race* by well-born persons: that is, straightforwardness, inner unity, character, dignity, manliness, immediate sensitivity for all values that are at the core of all human greatness and which, since they are situated far above fortuitous reality, govern this same reality. That race which, on the other hand, is a construct of science and a little figurine from the anthropological

museum, we leave to that pseudo-intellectual bourgeoisie that still clings to the nineteenth-century idols of positivism."

The same article later contains one of Evola's strongest attacks against so-called "scientific" racism, which hurt him very much in official circles. One cannot forget that in 1942, because of the war, the racial campaign was seen as very important. He says: "Those who are striving for a 'purely scientific racism' today want to ingratiate themselves with 'the people.' Instead of contributing to the elimination of a leftover myth that is present in the lesser educated strata of society, they believe they can use it as a sure basis, to 'make an impression,' to give authority to half-baked ideas and a dilettante racism, which wants to be as untouchable in its surface assumptions as it is incoherent and contradictory upon closer inspection."

As the above shows, Evola fought vehemently against a purely physical racism because of its superficiality, and he ranted several times against skull measuring and similar practices. Because of his emphasis on the spiritual, his rejection of what Trotsky called "zoological materialism" was only natural. In addition, Evola traced the origin of "racial thought" in his sense back to aristocratic custom, in which the physical counted for nothing: the deciding factor was membership in the same stratum. Thus, the royal dynasties only in the rarest cases originated in the people that they ruled over. And the fact that ruling dynasties always marry across their frontiers (for example, the Hapsburgs even had Mongolian ancestors) also testifies to this same attitude. (Concerning this, see "Sull'essenza e la funzione attuale dello spirito aristocratico" [On the Essence and the Present Function of the Aristocratic Spirit], in *Lo Stato*, XII, 10). This "spiritual racism" is also evident in Evola's saying (which was vehemently opposed by nationalist circles) that the "common ideas are the father-land" and not the region in which one was born, because "all peoples of today are racial mixtures, and in general elements other than the racial count as the foundation of their unity."

Just as Evola's definition of race veers from the customary delineations, so also does his use of the term "Aryan." Of course, Evola is strongly influenced by the *Zeitgeist*, so that the word "Aryan" automatically has a positive meaning for him. (We already know from his speech of December 1937, which we quoted above, the essential aspects of what Evola means by "Aryan" and "Nordic.") In spite of this, one cannot forget his studies of the Buddhist scriptures that continuously mention the *arya*, which generally means the "noble." (One also can-

not overlook that Evola's Buddhist and racial studies stem from the same time period.) In his book about Buddhism (*La dottrina del risveglio*, 1942, p. 231 [English edition: *The Doctrine of Awakening*, Rochester, Vt., 1995]), he deals with this term in detail. In so doing, he mentions that *arya* is very hard to translate because several meanings are hidden in the word. Thus even prominent Orientalists like Rhys Davids and Woodward have left this word untranslated in their translations and writings. *Arya* does indeed mean aristocratic, noble, but with a fourfold meaning:

1. In the spiritual sense, in which *arya* is often equated with the "awakened" in the Buddhist canon.
2. In the aristocratic sense, in order to denote the actual membership in a higher caste.
3. Also in a clearly racial sense, in order to differentiate between the Aryan peoples that had immigrated from the North and the conquered indigenous strata of the population (*varma*, Sanskrit for "caste," originally meant "color," as the Nordic conquerors were of much lighter skin color).
4. In the sense of a special "style" that finds its expression in crystalline clarity, lack of emotion, and an ascetic attitude. Here Evola does not hesitate to compare this "style" with Meister Eckhart's concept of "detachment."

This also sheds a different light on Evola's ideal of the "Aryan-Roman" race. His brand of "Roman character" should be seen in this same sacral, aristocratic sense. And even if Evola himself did not always keep these interpretations clear and constant (especially in his numerous newspaper articles), they certainly resonated in his imagination. One must therefore be careful when reading about the "Aryan-Roman" style or similar subjects in his works. If today, after the excesses of the National Socialist era, one uses such words as "Aryan" and even the neutral "race" with some discomfort, one must consider that this problem did not exist at that time. However, as Giovanni Monasta emphasizes ("Anthropologic aristocraticisme et racisme: Pitineraire de Julius Evola en terre maudite" in *Politica Hermetica*, Paris, 1988), Evola must also have considered that most peoples class themselves as "noble" and look down upon other ethnic groups, in the era of ancient Buddhism just as today.

Later, in 1952, when Evola was standing trial, he stated in his famous *Self-Defense*: "It must be realized that in modern racial studies, 'Aryan' and even 'Nordic' do not in fact mean 'German'; the term is synonymous with 'Indo-European,' and is correctly applied to a primordial, prehistoric race, from which were derived the first creators of the Indian, Persian, Greek, and Roman civilizations, and of which the Germans are only the final adventitious branches."

As one can see from all these citations, Evola's racial views were not taken from Vacher Lapouge, Gobineau, Chamberlain, Rosenberg, and so on; instead, his forefathers were Montaigne, Herder and his *Volkergeist* (spirit of the people), Fichte, Le Bon, and L. F. Clauss, who probably influenced him the most in this direction. It was Clauss, through his *Rassenseelenkunde* (racial soul doctrine) who most likely inspired Evola directly to develop his doctrine of the racial spirit (*Rassengeisteskunde*). Clauss, who was never a member of the NSDAP, also revolted against the purely biological tendencies of German racism. He tried to distinguish between different peoples on the basis of their varying psychological qualities (today this would be called ethnic psychology). But when it was discovered that his most important assistant, a woman who also lived with him, was Jewish, trouble came his way, and in 1942 he lost his teaching position at Berlin University. Evola was in personal contact with Clauss and greatly respected him (see Robert de Herte, "Profil bio-bibliographique de L. E Clauss" in *Etudes et Recherches*, no. 2, 1983, p. 25). Clauss himself seems to have had a precursor in Gustave Le Bon, who developed the thesis that the forms of community in different peoples were expressions of their "race soul." This "race soul" remained in effect even when the physical racial characteristics had changed due to mixing with other races (Gustave Le Bon, *Lois psychologiques du developpement des peuples*, Paris, 1894).

In general, Evola tried to construct a racial theory that combines the history of the spirit with racial history, fusing them together: a view that according to Othmar Spann goes back to Schelling's second phase.

It goes without saying that Evola's racial views did not avoid criticism—if only because of competition, as Mussolini had had such a positive impression of them. Through his polemics he also managed to increase the number of his enemies. For example, after the passage of the Italian race laws in 1938 ("Manifesto della Razza") when he accused the many people who all of a sudden "discover a deep racial calling in themselves that is dictated by the despicable toady-spirit," this could hardly have made him any friends.

Evola's theses were very hotly debated because in the last analysis (due to the difficulty of applying them) they pulled the rug out from under the notion of a factual and "exploitable" racism. In the end, outward physical characteristics did not count exclusively anymore. The important thing was the inner attitude; and who could test that? Even worse, was anyone good enough for this "higher" conception of race?

In order to show how vehemently his opponents fought against Evola, probably in part to demote him from his "privileged" standing with Mussolini, a selection of his critics follows.

We begin with the Jesuit publication *Civiltà Cattolica* (XCII, vol. III, September 1941), which indicted Evola's racism as an "abstruse and unscientific construct." (For this reference, we are indebted to Mario Bernardi Guardì's essay "Julius Evola: Scandalo e Ter" in *Avallon*, X, April 1986, in which Evola is referred to a "cave-explorer of the spirit," among other things.) Today it might seem strange that such a prominent religious organ would deal with these questions. But this merely illustrates that the entire intellectual world of that time was concerned with the racial problem. It was especially the Church publications that later brought Evola's magazine project *Sangue e Spirito* (Blood and Spirit) to an early end. The other quotations are from the *Bollettino del Centro Studi Evoliani*, no. 18, Genoa, 1977, and were compiled by Professor Giovanni Conti.

Giorgio Almirante, later longtime leader of the MSI (Italy's "neofascist" party), says in his article "Che la diritta via era smarrita . . ." (Since the Straight Path Was Lost . . . ; subtitle: "Against the 'Lost' Sheep of Anti-Biological Pseudo-Racism," in *La Difesa della Razza*, V, no. 13, April 5, 1942): "Our racism must be that of the blood that I feel within me and that I can compare to the blood of others. Our racism must be a racism of flesh and muscle . . . otherwise we will ultimately play into the hands of the bastards and Jews. . . . Therefore the 'absolute spiritualists' should convince themselves that this is not the moment to, as they say, 'deepen' our racism."

Ugoberto Alfassio Grimaldi (at the time one of the exemplary personalities in the racial and Fascist areas; after the war, he became a deputy of the Communist party) wrote in his review of Evola's *Grundrisse der Faschistischen Rassenlehre* (*Civiltà Fascista*, IX, no. 4, February 1942, pp. 252–261): "After many efforts, Julius Evola's racism finally ends up in a special form of anti-racism... . As Fascists we must refuse the validity of an 'autonomous' racial teaching,

especially when the concept of race conceals a metaphysical view that did not originate in our cultural sphere. . . . That is why the reader of Evola feels some discomfort that Fascism is dealt with only as something very distant—I might almost say finite and mortal—which is used as an *'instrumentum regni'* for the empowerment of other principles having merely a coincidental connection to politics. Here, Fascism is not the goal, but only the means to an end."

Also in *Civiltà Fascista* (IX, no. 10, August 1942, pp. 647-652), the same Grimaldi writes the following in his article "Ali margini di una polemica sulla validità di un esoterismo razzista" (On the Margins of a Polemic about the Validity of a Racial Esotericism): "The reasons that Fascism is fighting against a certain brand of modern culture that includes the Hebrew element are only in small part identical with the reasons that esotericists like Evola are fighting a culture that does not correspond to the one fought by Fascism, not even in the purely racial area. . . . One can have no doubt that Evola is aware of Fascism's weakness (as he represents it) in comparison to his esoteric world, after re-reading what Evola himself has declared in the biweekly *La Torre* (no. 5, April 1, 1930): 'We are neither "Fascists" nor "anti-Fascists" '."

Even Guido Landra, the extremely important director of the Racial Studies Department in the Ministry for National Culture, coeditor of the official periodical *La Difesa della Razza* (The Defense of the Race), and coauthor of the official 1938 *Manifesto Razzista*, attacks Evola vehemently. In his article "Razzismo biologico e scientismo" (Biological Racism and Scientism), in *La Difesa della Razza*, VI, no. 1, November 1942, pp. 9-11, aptly subtitled "For Science and Against the Melancholic Apostles of a Nebulous Spiritualism," we read: "Those poor racists of the first hour who are guilty merely of having initiated the race campaign in Italy and of having remained loyal to the original as well as the official line, are now being accused of nothing less than Jacobinism and Bolshevism. The accusation—and this is painful to report—originates from a publication that can really be proud of a noble anti-Jewish tradition; and the accuser is the author Evola, who, while claiming to expatiate upon Professor Canella, attacks all those who remain loyal to the notion of biological racism. . . . If the expressions 'biological' and 'scientific' have a negative connotation for the spiritualists, we answer that for us it is a great honor to be called biological and scientific racists."

In *Vita Italiana* (XXXI, no. 359, February 1943, p. 151 ff.) Landra adds: "And this is the weakest point in Evola's teachings: that an Aryan can possess the soul

of a Jew and vice versa. And that a Jew could therefore be discriminated against even though he possesses the soul of an Aryan is for us theoretically untenable. In practice, the assumption of such a principle would have terrifying consequences for racism, and ones that would exclusively benefit the Jews."

Landra, probably the highest official racial theoretician, makes his sharpest attack in his own publication *La Difesa della Razza* (VI, 1, November 5, '1942, p. 20), singling out the following for criticism: "The essays about the problem of race, 'Due razze' [Two Races] by Giulio Evola and 'I nostri nemici' [Our Foes] by Guido Cavallucci, that have appeared in a well-known monthly *Diorama* [Evola's aforementioned *Diorama Filosofico*] and in which every realistic foundation of racism is doubted, even going so far as labeling anti-Semitism as a mere polemical view . . . [and] that article 'The Misunderstanding of Scientific Racism' by Evola, which is the most exemplary document and monument of the present campaign that has been unleashed against racism in Italy ..."

Attacks of this sort and the resulting sanctions from high places were also responsible for the demise of a project that surely was very dear to Evola. He was to have been the editor of a bilingual German-Italian periodical on race. The project had been worked out together with Mussolini, who moreover had already pledged his full support. Even the title of the magazine had been determined: *Sangue e Spirito—Blot and Geist* (Blood and Spirit). The intention was to unify the approaches to the race problem in Germany and Italy, whereby both sides hoped to present their own views to each another. The steady efforts by the Church and orthodox Fascists to influence Mussolini finally succeeded in swaying him toward the "biological" racist position, which also corresponded to the NS ideology. In the end, Mussolini withdrew his approval of the magazine. Since the German Foreign Affairs Office had also noticed that Evola did not intend to champion the racism dear to the Germans, it also withdrew its support. In addition, the dramatically increasing wartime confusion made this and other similar plans seem less important. Thus the project was doomed to certain failure.

Now we turn to another question that logically follows from Evola's racial thought: his anti-Semitism.

Evola's Attitude Toward the Jews

In the above-mentioned polemic, Grimaldi characterized Evola as a "Jew lover." It goes without saying that this misses the mark by a long shot and merely

reflects the anger of the attacker. There are so many comments against the Jews in Evola's work, ranging from simple criticisms to truly painful ones, that there can be no doubt about his basic attitude. Evola himself would have been the last to deny that. But here a distinction has to be made. His writings never spoke out against orthodox religious Judaism. On the contrary; as an example, he writes in his *Tre aspetti del problema Ebraico* (Three Aspects of the Jewish Problem), Rome, 1936, p. 23: "There are elements and symbols in the Old Testament that possess metaphysical and therefore universal value." Or in *Re-volt Against the Modern World* (p. 281): "In contrast to orthodox Judaism, early Christianity can at most claim a mystical character on the same line as the prophets. . . . And whenever a true esotericism was subsequently created in the West, it was essentially found outside of Christianity with the help of non-Christian currents, like the Hebraic Kabbalah...." Evola even names operative Kabbalah as one of the few paths that can still be followed successfully in the West today.

Evola's attacks are more often directed against the Jews as symbol of the rule of economic-materialistic individualism and the hegemony of money. In other words: in the Jews he is fighting materialism. The fact that in doing so he again brings up all the well-known prejudices and generalizations shows that he too was dependent on the preeminent Zeitgeist. Thus, he speaks of the groveling hypocrisy, the Mammonism of the Jews, and their desire to dissolve hierarchical societies, as well as of a "Jewish threat" in general. These are the same accusations that Martin Luther brought up, and which Karl Marx presented in his tract *Zur Judenfrage* (Concerning the Jewish Question), published 1844 in the *Deutsche jinnzösische Jahrbücher* in Paris. The worst passages seem to be those to which Professor Franco Ferraresi of the University of Turin refers in his contribution "Julius Evola et la Droite radicale de l'après-guerre" ("Julius Evola and the Radical Right in the Postwar Era," in *Politica Hermetica*, I, p. 100) and which deal with the death of Corneliu Codreanu.

Codreanu, the charismatic leader of the simultaneously political and mystical Christian "Iron Guard" movement in Romania, which saw itself as a part of the army of the Archangel Michael, was definitely one of the very few indisputable "heroes" and models for Evola. Everything he wrote about him amounted to a panegyric and therefore the pain about Codreanu being "shot while escaping," which he attributed to the Jews seems to have been genuine and to explain the decline of his high standards. (De Felice writes in his *Der Faschismus*:

Ein Interview, p. 98: "Strictly speaking, Codreanu is no Fascist. He fights against middle-class values and institutions. His movement is everything but petit-bourgeois; it is rather a movement of students of the lower classes, a popular peasant movement. Anything but a middle-class movement.")

In general, it is obvious that Evola chose a much more incisive and polemical tone in his newspaper articles than in his books. But we do not believe that Evola aimed at a "gripping journalistic style" (as still practiced today), used for effect; rather, it seems likely that he wrote these articles under the pressure of a deadline, and therefore in a tone that was much too immediate and emotional. In any case, the fact remains as such.

A lot certainly has to be attributed to the *Zeitgeist*, which apparently included certain patterns of thought that were never questioned. It is indeed astonishing that even recognized critical minds like Karl Kraus (a Jew himself) continually spouted the usual anti-Jewish prejudices (regarding this, see the interesting research of Jacques le Rider, *Der Fall Otto Weininger* [The Case of Otto Weininger], Vienna, 1985, and *Das Ende der Illusion* [The End of Illusion], Vienna, 1990). If one adds the amount of slander that was spread about the Jews in the Fascist era by newspapers that are still important to the present day, such as *La Stampa* and *Corriere della Sera*, then the situation becomes a little easier to understand (regarding this, see excerpts in Renzo de Felice's *Storia degli Ebrei Italiani sotto il Fascismo* [The History of the Italian Jews under Fascism], Turin, 1972, p. 260).

In light of all of Evola's well-known anti-Jewish remarks, how could he ever have been called a "Jew lover"? We have already shown a few reasons. Since Evola set supreme importance on the spiritual attitude, a Jew could of course also espouse "Aryan" thought (see "Scienza, razza e scientismo" [Science, Race, and Scientism], in *Vita Italiana*, XXX, no. 357, December 1942, pp. 556–563; there, he writes verbatim: "For example, can an 'Aryan' have a Jewish soul or inner race and vice versa? Yes, it is possible. . . ."). And Evola had surely noticed that especially in Germany some Jews felt more "Aryan" than many Germans, and this was not only in intellectual circles. In exactly this sense one must assume that Evola did not at all regard the Jews Weininger and Michelstaedter, to whom he owed so much, as "Jews," independently of their heritage. That an opinion like this was a danger to mass propaganda could not go unnoticed by the political observers of the day. Basically, Evola did not indict the Jewish people (although naturally there were exceptions), for

he did not even acknowledge them as a "biological" race, due to the miscegenation that they themselves admitted; it was Jewry as an idea and "spiritual race" that had been forged together by a common, strictly preserved body of thought (Old Testament, Torah, Talmud, for example). If one rereads (see above) what Otto Weininger said about Jewry as "spiritual direction," "psychic constitution," and "Platonic idea," one will understand what Evola really meant. Contemporary quotations from his own hand will underscore this view.

Thus he writes in the aforementioned *Tre aspetti del problema Ebraico* (p. 42):

Are "rationalism" and "calculation" purely Jewish phenomena? If one wanted to answer "yes," one would also be forced to believe that the first antitraditional, critical, antireligious, and "scientific" upheavals of ancient Greece had also been introduced and supported by Jews; that therefore Socrates was a Jew, and that not only the medieval nominalists, but also Descartes, Galileo, Bacon, etc., were Jews.... Even if the passion for the lifeless number and abstract reason is an outstanding characteristic of the Semites . . . , it nevertheless seems clear that one can speak of a Jewish spirit in this regard only if it destroys everything through rationalism and calculation, if it leads to a world that consists only of machines, objects, and money instead of persons, traditions, and fatherlands, and if one uses the expression "Jewish" in a symbolic sense, without necessarily referring to the race.... In the concrete development of modern civilization, the Jew can be seen as a force that worked together with others for the proliferation of the "civilized," rationalized, scientific, mechanistic, modern decadence. But he certainly cannot be singled out as the single, far-seeing cause. It would be nonsense to believe anything of the kind. The actual truth is that one would rather fight against personalized forces than against abstract principles and general phenomena, because the former can also be attacked in a practical manner. And so people have turned against the Jew to the degree that he seems to embody a type that is also present in other areas, and even in nations that have been virtually unaffected by Jewish immigration.

Even in his introduction to the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which we will deal with later, he writes on page xix: "We want to mention right away that we personally cannot follow a certain fanatical anti-Semitism that sees the Jews everywhere as *dens ex machina* and finally ends in a kind of ambush itself. Guenon himself has referred to the fact that one of the means used by the masked forces to defend themselves consists of directing the entire attention of their enemies in a tendentious way toward those who are only partially the real cause

of certain upheavals. Once they have created a scapegoat in this manner, which suffers the full brunt of reaction, they themselves are free to continue with their intrigues. In a certain way, this is also true of the Jewish question....

In "Inquadramento del problema ebraico" (Categorization of the Jewish Question; in *Bibliografia Fascism*, XIV, no. 8/9, 1939, pp. 717-728), he writes concerning the same question: "A serious formulation of the Jewish problem cannot overlook that which concerns the 'Aryan' peoples themselves: the Jew must be prevented from becoming a kind of scapegoat for everything that in reality the non Jews also have to answer for."

In 1942, Evola writes in his above-mentioned essay "The Misunderstanding of Scientific Racism": "Because it is useless to try to hide it from oneself, people today are often wondering if the Jew isn't ultimately a kind of scapegoat. The cases are so frequent in which the characteristics that our doctrine attributes to the Jews are fully and brazenly exhibited by 'Aryan' speculators, profiteers, upstarts, and—why not—even by journalists, who do not hesitate to use the most twisted and disloyal means for polemical ends."

Even in a publication such as *La Difesa della Razza*, which was remarkable for its viciousness concerning the Jewish question and sometimes included despicable articles of the *Stirrner* variety, Evola expounded his views (for example, in the article "Razza, eredita, personalita" [Race, Heredity, Personality], April 5, 1942).

Evola also confirms his values in his book *Il Fascismo* (p. 180), although this was not written until 1970: "One must realize that with Hitler anti-Semitism had the role of a veritable obsession, whereby it is not possible to fully explain the causes of this anti-Semitism in its almost paranoid aspect, which had such tragic consequences." Then Evola adds: "Hitler's anti-Semitism had a forced, fanatical character and points to a lack of inner control. This has led to a stain of infamy on the Third Reich that will be very hard to wash away."

We have already discussed the difficulties that Evola had to deal with during the Fascist era on account to his opinions, which may well stand as evidence for the integrity of his attitude. Despite her understandable condemnation of Evola's views, even Adriana Goldstaub admits that Evola did not deem all Jews, nor the Jews exclusively, responsible for the decline of the modern world (see her contribution to the debate at the symposium at Cuneo in 1982: "Fascismo Oggi: Nuova destra e Cultura reazionaria negli anni ottanta," Istituto storico Bella Resistenza in Cuneo, p. 175).

The oft-quoted and knowledgeable expert Renzo de Felice confirms in his *History of the Italian Jews under Fascism* (p. 465):

... we are forced to admit that among the creative and cultured ones—as among the politicians—seen from a certain standpoint, the most respectable ones were the convinced racists. With this we do not mean a Landra or a Cogni, those pale and submissive "vestal virgins" of Nazi racism, but an Evola and an Acerbo, who both created their own path that they followed to the end with dignity and seriousness. And this in contrast to many who chose the way of the lie, of slander, and the total obscuration of every cultural and moral value. . . . Evola himself also very decidedly discounted any theory of pure biological racism, going so far that he attracted the attacks and sarcasm of the *Lancras* upon himself. I do not mean by this that the "spiritual" theory of races is acceptable, but it at least had the advantage of not completely discounting certain values. It also renounced the German and German-derived contusions and tried . . . to confine racism to the plane of a cultural problem worthy of the name.

The attitude of Evola toward the Jews that we have sketched here—that is, to see "Jewishness" as a certain "spiritual attitude," an idea derived from Weininger was anything but singular or rare. As Jacques le Rider shows in his book *The End of Illusion*, this attitude characterized a whole epoch: the era of fin-de-siecle Vienna, which Weininger was a part of. And perhaps we should not underestimate the influence of Michelstaedter, who studied in Vienna at this time and was surely much affected by the intellectual life that flourished there. Because not only "anti-Jewishness" characterizes the Viennese modern era (even though the Jews were the essential proponents of that modernism); it was marked also by "anti-democratism," "antifeminism," and "anti-intellectualism," which are all found in Evola's work in modified form. Even the passion for Meister Eckhart was especially pronounced during this time and, for example, influenced the philosopher Fritz Mauthner, who was also interested in Buddhism.

In his study, Jacques le Rider introduces many examples and an interesting analysis of this negative attitude toward the Jews. We have mentioned Karl Kraus and his famous publication *Fackel* (Torch). Even the intellectual poet Hermann Bahr, copublisher of *Die Zeit*, who is above suspicion, speaks of the "judaicized Viennese" whereby he obviously means the intellectual attitude and not the biological heredity. According to him, the Viennese were already judaicized "even before the first Jew arrived" (quoted after Jacques le Rider, *Das Ende der Illusion*, p. 239). Le Rider shows further that Sigmund Freud him-

dei protocolli provata dalla tradizione ebraica" [The Authenticity of the Protocols as Proved by the Jewish Tradition]) in which he included a mass of quotations allegedly from the Talmud and other Jewish religious writings. However, these quotes were taken not from the original writings but from second-or thirdhand sources, such as Rohling's *Talmudjuden* and Theodor Fritsch's *Handbuch der Judenfrage*, whose dubious scholarship and zealous bias should have been obvious to Evola. In making such a serious accusation it would have been his duty either to look up the primary sources himself or to consult knowledgeable and unbiased experts. Evola certainly did this in other areas: his studies of the ancient scriptures of Buddhism and Tantrism, Zen and alchemy were marked by an all-encompassing meticulousness. As Professor di Vona of the University of Naples confirms (*Hermeneutica*, 6, p. 84), Evola's esoteric studies were far more important and their research methods more strict than his comparable political works, which were characterized by an emotionality rooted in the times.

Carlo Mattogno, who is probably more partial toward Evola, in a series of articles for *Orion* examined the aforementioned quotes allegedly stemming from old Hebrew sources, and proved that they were either falsified (though long before Evola), taken out of context, or in some cases freely invented. Barely a single quote was reproduced correctly! (See Carlo Mattogno's articles in *Orion*, no. 22, July 1986, p. 169; vol. IV no. 12, December 1987, p. 94; vol. VI, no. 3, March 1989, p. 232.)

Even if some things announced in the *Protocols*, although already easy to recognize at the time of their publication, such as Liberalism and Rationalism and the dissolution of family ties, have come to pass, there are scores of contradictions and absurdities in them that destroy their "authenticity." In his preface, Evola himself described certain parts of the *Protocols*, especially toward the end, as "fantasy." A list of these contradictions is presented in Pierre Charles's *Les Protocoles des sages de Sion* (Paris: Tournai, 1938). A condensed Italian version of (his book also appeared in *Orion* (no. 46, July 1988, a National-Bolshevik magazine that even partially subscribes to these conspiracy theories, and therefore can hardly be classified as pro Jewish). Further details regarding the *Protocols* can be found in the works listed in the bibliography [see page 104]. The thirteenth chapter of *Men among the Ruins* contains Evola's detailed views regarding this subject.

In spite of these factual and intellectual derailments, we do not wish to

ascribe any malice, dishonesty, or egotism to Evola in this matter—just sheer carelessness, a lack of serious research, and the reckless assimilation of prejudices that happened to coincide with his own views. But here it also applies that it is easier to recognize the prejudices of others in the past than our own current ones. Without wanting to belittle them, because these questions can rightly unleash incredible emotional currents (and, of course, quite apart from the much greater personal suffering of those who were affected) there seems to be a certain psychological analogy between the past persecution of the "Jew" and today's hunt for the "multinational." In this century, mechanization, technological advance, dehumanization, and the dire dependence of large parts of the world have grown to such an extent that one simply longs for clear, simple, monocausal explanations for the misery. And "proof" for the "guilt" of the Jews yesterday and the "multinationals" today can be found or constructed again and again, which does not necessarily imply malice, but can be an expression of mere overzealousness. As is so often, here too the road to Hell can be paved with good intentions. After all, the real direction of both attacks is essentially the same. One is aiming for "free capital" that according to our economic laws is always invested where the highest returns are expected, without caring much for the resulting human consequences. But the much despised "capitalists," or rather the "managers" who actually wield the power today, are, in the present as in the past, the expression of a materialist worldview to which we all contribute our support. Only a different order of values, in which the material values are important but do not occupy the highest position, can change this situation. The mere search for scapegoats certainly will not solve anything, for he who seeks will always find. And those somewhat familiar with the shadow problem of psychology will know that the "scapegoat" thus discovered is nothing but a rejected, suppressed part of our personality that is forcibly projected to the outside.

To conclude this chapter on Evola's racism, we want to mention Robert Melchionda's thesis that views Evola as "antiracist" par excellence (*Il volto di Dionisio*, p. 208). The reasoning behind this thesis, which seems strange after all the foregoing arguments, is as follows: since someone's race, in the usual sense of the word, is connected to the corresponding physical characteristics that cannot be changed at will, the word "race" really expresses the "unchangeable," the "immutable." In contrast, to Evola it is the spirit and not the body that contains the primary racial characteristics. But according to Evola, the

spirit above all represents "absolute freedom" and rules the physical body. However, this "absolute freedom" also makes a change in the "spiritual race" possible and thus race has ceased to be the deciding, unchangeable factor. The reality is a "freedom of race" of a scope not even postulated by the "antiracists."

In summarizing, we will let Giovanni Monastra have the final word (*Anthropologie aristocratique et Racisme*): "Evola's ambition was to apply the traditional worldview as he understood it to a specific aspect of reality: the differences that can be found in humans, both collectively and individually."

Evola and Neofascism

As we have already reported, at least in the later war years Evola lived in Vienna while probably going through the archives of various secret societies. His exact intentions are not known, since he never wanted to talk about them. During this time Vienna was bombarded heavily, but Evola had adopted the habit of working instead of fleeing into the bunker. He did this "because I did not want to evade danger; I sought it out, in the spirit of a silent questioning of fate" (*Cammino*, p. 177). Then it happened, a few days before the Russians marched into Vienna: Evola was seriously wounded during an air strike. His spinal cord was damaged, and in spite of numerous operations he remained paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of his life. (Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn informed us that this bomb attack occurred on March 12, 1945, the anniversary of the *Anschluss* of Austria to the Third Reich.) For a year and a half, he lay in a hospital in Bad Ischl in upper Austria, until the Red Cross brought him first to Varese and then to a Bologna hospital. A cure was no longer possible and so Evola returned to Rome in 1948, where he lived the rest of his life (except for the time he was imprisoned on remand) in his apartment in the Via Vittorio Emmanuele II.

By 1949 he was already writing in new rightist publications and had soon assembled a small band of mostly young followers (regarding this, see Fausto Gianfreschi, "L'influenza di Evola sulla generazione che non ha fatto in tempo a perdere la guerra" [Evola's Influence on the Generation That Did Not Make It in Time to Lose the War], in AA. W, *Testimonianze su Evola* [Testimonies about Evola], Rome, 1985, p. 130). They urged him to write an "orientation" for them, a compendium that would set down the most important core values of a traditional rightist group. The result was Evola's pamphlet *Orientamenti* (Orientations), which was published in 1950 in the periodical *Imperium* and

which has since seen countless authorized and unauthorized editions in Italian and other languages.

In turn, this pamphlet led to the writing of Evola's main political work, *Men among the Ruins*. During his hospital stay in Bad Ischl, Evola had already written to the poet Girolamo Comi: "However, in contrast to your opinion, I see nothing but a world of ruins, where a kind of front line is possible only in the catacombs" (letter of April 20, 1948; quoted in *Lettere di Julius Evola a Girolamo Comi 1934-1962*, Rome, 1987). *Men among the Ruins* was written in the hope of being able to change something about the postwar order. Even though it probably was and has remained the only "practical" handbook for a truly traditional right wing, no reaction was forthcoming from the circles in question. Evola was visibly disillusioned by this, and so this work has remained his only book with an actual "political" doctrine. A few parts of the book may have become outdated because of the ongoing events of history, but since nothing comparable has ever been written, it has been reprinted again and again, the last edition being issued 1990 in Rome by Gianfranco de Turreis. Therefore, it was Evola's only book that was somewhat of a commercial success (in total, it probably sold about 10,000 copies). There were also two editions in France (1972 and 1984), even though the work was originally intended only for Italy. But the underlying principles are so universal that the references to the Italian situation do not detract from them. This was also the reason for the German edition [and for the present English edition—Editor's note].

Almost concurrently with *Men among the Ruins*, Evola authored a complementary work, even though this appeared only in 1961 in Milan. This work is *Cavalcare la tigre* (Riding the Tiger). These books belong together and cannot really be judged apart from each other. *Men among the Ruins* shows the universal standpoint of ideal politics; *Riding the Tiger* deals with the practical "existential" perspective for the individual who wants to preserve his "*hegemonikon*," his inner sovereignty. In *Riding the Tiger*, Evola advocated, as already reported, the teaching of "*apoliteia*" as the only proper attitude for the traditional person. One must have the freedom to go along with the follies of the world on the outside while, on the inside, being detached and able to let go whenever one wants to. Because of its inherent inner contradictions and ever-increasing tensions, modern civilization (the tiger) will drive itself to death. One just has to remain on the tiger's back and not fall off in order to evade its claws and fangs. If one just waits long enough, its ceaseless running will make it weaker and

tired until it finally collapses from exhaustion. Then one can strangle it with one's bare hands. Concerning this, Evola says: "Today there is no idea, no object, and no goal that is worth sacrificing one's own true interest for" (*Cavalcare la tigre*, p. 174) and: "'Apoliteia' must be the principle of the differentiated [i.e., traditional] man [*Uomo differenziato*] (*Cavalcare la tigre*, p. 202). With this he admitted that his book *Men among the Ruins* was really a failure.

Interesting in this regard is the opinion of Evola's declared enemy Furio Jesi (*Cultura di Destra*, Milan, 1979, p. 89), according to whom the later Evola considered that all worldly action was senseless and meaningless, but that those who did not dare to take the step over to "apoliteia" (i.e., the "non initiates" that have not reached the "other shore") should still be encouraged to action by the truly "wise ones," because this was the only way they could learn their lesson. If Evola was indeed of this opinion, then it must have originated in his own life experience.

After *The Metaphysics of Sex* (1958) and *L'Operaio nel pensiero di Ernst Junger* (The "Worker" in the Thought of Ernst Junger; Rome, 1960), his already cited analysis of Fascism was issued in 1964. In 1970, an enlarged edition was published with the addition of the appendix *Note sul Terzo Reich* (Notes on the Third Reich). The themes contained therein have already been discussed. Evola's last complete book was his spiritual autobiography, *Il cammino del cinabro*, which appeared in 1972.

In his final years Evola suffered from constant and severe pain and was probably quite embittered. Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn has also confirmed this during a conversation with the author. At this point, Evola wrote only for a few magazines from the rightist spectrum and gave a few interviews, notably for the sex magazine *Playmen* ("Gesprach ohne Komplexe," no. 2, 1970). His two wishes—to put out a new magazine with the provocative title *The Reactionary* and to write a book about Stoicism, for which he had already collected the material—were not fulfilled, for he died on June 11, 1974, in the early after-noon. He had asked to be led from his desk to the window from which one could see the Janiculum (the holy hill sacred to Janus, the two-faced god who gazes into this and the other world). There he tried to die "upright," as far as was possible with his paralysis—upright because, according to mythical tradition, many heroes died in this manner (Roland, for example, who passed away leaning against a tree after being mortally wounded).

In his testament, Evola had decreed that his corpse be cremated and that

there be no funeral procession or Catholic funeral rite. He also forbade an obituary. As chance would have it, the crematorium both in Rome and in Naples was out of order, while the next one, in Pisa, was out of business. After some time, Evola's body was finally cremated in Spoleto. The urn with his ashes was then, as reported elsewhere, lowered into a glacial crevasse on Monte Rosa in accordance with his last wishes.

After this short historical overview, we now turn to Evola's influence on the Italian postwar neofascist scene. It is not very easy to determine this influence, for the only ostensibly right-wing party known to its enemies as "neofascists," and officially as the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano), always left Evola out of the picture, despite the fact that a number of its leading members (for example, Pino Rauti) had been influenced in their youth by Evola's thought. The name Evola is not even mentioned in the official history of the MSI (Gianni Roberti, *Opposizione di Destra in Italia, 1946-1979*, Naples, 1988). Only the long-standing party chairman Giorgio Almirante once, maybe ironically, called Evola "the Marcuse of the Right, only better" but otherwise he was smilingly referred to as the "*magico barone*" (magic Baron). Nevertheless, one cannot understand the history of Italy's right wing without Evola. Especially the young, and among them the more "radical" elements (derived from the Latin *radix*—"root, origin"), have repeatedly made use of Evola's thought in their ideologies, even though he himself had lost his faith in "practical" politics at least since the mid-1950s.

So it came to Evola's arrest in April 1951, which led to six months of detention. The charge was the "glorification of Fascism." He was also accused of being the "intellectual instigator" of secret combat groups. The police really believed in a far-reaching conspiracy of rightist elements, but the trial ended with Evola being proved innocent and his acquittal. Apart from a few quotes from publicly accessible writings, there had been no evidence against him. All his life Evola had never owned anything (he constantly gave away even his books and pictures). The prominent attorney Francesco Carnelutti defended him free of charge, not because of his political beliefs, for, as Carnelutti emphasized, he understood nothing of those, but because he wanted to rid the world of an injustice. [For more details on the accusations that were leveled against him, and Evola's own response, see his *Autodifesa* (self-defense testimony) which is included as an appendix to this book—Editor's note.]

How then is Evola's attitude toward the postwar rightist groups in Italy to be classified? And where, if at all, is his influence to be found? One thing is certain: Evola certainly was no "*nostalgico*," who looked back with longing to the historical Fascist era. On the contrary, he rather despised such people. This could be one explanation for his lack of popularity within the MSI. He also had little good to say about the right National-Bolsheviks and the right-wing Maoists (yes, they also have these in Italy), since they combined traditional ideas with "leftist" efforts aimed at the masses. He gave his most avid support to "rightist anarchism," as this was closest to his *apoliteia* and reminded him of his youthful dadaist ambitions (see Julius Evola, *L'arco e la clava*, p. 208, where he discusses this type). His positive attitude toward the Beatnik movement and people such as Jack Kerouac and Henry Miller must be viewed in the same light. So he says: ". . . we are of the same opinion as some Beatniks . . . , that in today's culture and society, especially in America, the healthy person can be generally recognized in the rebel and the asocial type that does not fit in" (ibid., p. 210). But Evola warned the Beatniks that their attitude can only be sustained if one possesses a strong inner center. Here, perhaps to the surprise of many, the proximity to Herbert Marcuse becomes obvious. But in contrast to Marcuse, he says: "One must know *in whose name* one says no to a whole civilization." Here Evola is referring to the necessary transcendental foundations that are totally missing in Marcuse. Giorgio Galli even writes (*La crisi italiana e la Destra internazionale*, Milan, 1974, p. 20): "The analogies between Evola and the Frankfurt School (Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno) doubtless exist, especially concerning the critique of mass society and its manipulated democracy. Evola can even claim the fame of being the first." In spite of Evola's approval of the 1968 Revolution (when excerpts from *Riding the Tiger* were read publicly at Roman universities), he felt that the revolt of '68 had only superficially attacked the terror of consumerism, and that the revolution in the 1930s (the "Fascist revolution") had gone much deeper, because it had aimed at reforming the whole person and the corresponding institutions, even if that had failed.

Italo Mancini and Massimo Cacciari, one a university professor and the other a delegate of the Italian Communist Party, have also confirmed the parallels between Evola and Marcuse. Their radical critique of rationalism, the unmasking of modern middle-class society and the revolt against the same, the lack of faith in progress, and the recognition of the alienated direction of man are certainly present in both, and probably go back to a common root in Nietzsche.

But if one wants to speak of Evola's actual political influence, one must keep this in mind: Evola's traditionalism cannot be used by modern political movements. Even Evola himself saw this: his teachings are too aristocratic, too demanding, and too much directed against progress and modernity. It is unimaginable how these thought patterns could be successful in the industrialized democracies of the West. Evola's ideas did not even have any hope of being realized during the time of Fascism, which certainly was fertile ground. His antimodernism is simply too radical. Italy's New Right under Marco Tarchi (which received major impetus from the French New Right under Alain de Benoist) even regards the Evolian philosophy as a "*mito incapacitante*," an incapacitating myth. Indeed, reading Evola has kept many young people from pursuing political activities, because he speaks of a past that is too remote and of which nothing is left, as well as of ideals that are too lofty. He leaves no hope for contemporary man (thus the adoption of *apoliteia* as the last consequence). But a "tragic" attitude toward life is not enough for political activism. And since according to Evola we cannot change the cosmic, metaphysical course of history, any political engagement becomes meaningless. Thus the myth of the eternally vanquished hero is born. But, interestingly enough, there are other inconsistencies. Evola writes in *Orientamenti* (p. 15): "It is senseless to harbor illusions: we are at the end of a cycle." And (p. 28): "History, that mysterious entity beginning with a capital letter, does not exist. It is humans, as far as they are *truly* human, that make history or tear it down." (Concerning this, see "Julius Evola: Tra mito e attualita," in *Diorama Letterario*, no. 72, June 1984.)

Marcello Veneziani also writes that Evola's teachings lead "to a traditional-ism without tradition, since it lacks real continuity" and to a frustrating immobility (*ibid.*, p. 212; Veneziani was himself one of the "affected"). The only allowable engagement is one that is totally detached from all that is political and historical today, as Veneziani continues. In Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World*, we read the following (pp. xxix–xxx): "The only thing that matters today is the activity of those who can 'ride the wave' and remain firm in their principles, unmoved by any concessions and indifferent to the fevers, the convulsions, the superstitions, and the prostitutions that characterize modern generations. The only thing that matters is the silent endurance of the few, whose impassible presence as 'stone guests' helps to create new relationships, new distances, new values, and helps to construct a pole that, although it will certainly not prevent this world inhabited by the distracted and restless from

being what it is, will still help to transmit to someone the sensation of truth—sensation that could become for them the principle of a liberating crisis."

The abyss between the world of facts and the world of Tradition is too great. The construction of a bridge no longer seems possible. Traditionalists must hold onto ideas and principles, not institutions (*Men among the Ruins*), or in other words: "The idea and only the idea can be the true fatherland for them. Not the fact that they are of the same nationality, that they speak the same language, and that they are of the same blood but the fact that they belong to the same idea, should be the deciding factor that unites or divides them" (*Revolt*, first chapter).

In his interesting essay "Evola e la generazione che non ha fatto in tempo a perdersi nel Sessantotto" (Evola and the Generation That Did Not Make It in Time to Lose '68) in *Testimonianze su Evola*, Rome, 1985, p. 324, the same Veneziani says, perhaps hitting the mark: "Evola's doctrine remains a teaching about the roots and not about the fruits. An unpolitical thought, then. Daring, noble, but desperately nonpolitical. Further: "The mistakes that have been made by those who have tried to transfer Evola onto the earthquake-fraught terrain of politics must be blamed on those who committed them, and not on Evola himself."

Other rightists accused Evola of "sterility" and "retrograde utopias." In spite of this Evola was doubtlessly a model, even if only for very small groups that did not intend to break into competitive politics. But why? Antonio Lombardo, one of the young people who looked to Evola for "orientation" right after the war, writes in "La funzione delle minoranze e l'opera di Evola" (The Function of the Minorities and Evola's Work), in *Ordine Nuovo*, vol. X, no. 5/6, 1964, p. 30: "Evola offered a system of principles and correspondences that was organic and closed within itself, an interpretation of history and a systematic analysis of the ruling ideologies in the modern world." In this way Evola offered the more intellectual elements a "meaning" for life and history that could be used to combat the all-powerful Frankfurt School. And Marco Tarchi (also one of those immediately "affected") wrote in "La Rivolta contro l'uomo qualunque" (Revolt Against Anybody), in *Civiltà*, vol. II, 8/9, 1974, p. 41: "He gave the consciousness of being *different* in a world that tends to be shapeless and colorless: the consciousness of realizing something on the inside that the others, in their superficiality, could not even approach, the certainty of having foundations on which one can build while everything is collapsing around one-

self." Obviously, Evola was compensating for the difficult role in the outside world that rightists had to play after the war.

Is it completely impossible that Evola's thought will ever be transformed into political action? Evola would probably have answered that his ideas (i.e., traditional ones) should serve as centers, like poles or bridge piers, around which something slowly builds itself up that will then make the transition from the spiritual into the material realm. Not Voluntarism (as in Ernst Junger, for instance) but the "magical effect" of fascination could usher in change. Not causality, but analogy. In *Orientamenti* (p. 21), Evola formulates it thus: "a silent revolution that reaches the depths, so that first inside and in the individual the prerequisites to that order are met that will dominate on the outside at the right moment, by replacing in a flash the form and forces of a ruined and corrupt world."

Of course, one could call Evola the "spiritual father" of a group of radical "neofascists" (in the broadest sense of the word), just as Nietzsche has been called the father of National Socialism, Stirner the father of terrorist anarchism, and Hegel the father of Stalinism. But it is questionable that this leads to better understanding. Even though he himself would have strictly denied this characterization (see his "Superamento del Romanticismo" [Overcoming Romanticism] in *II Progresso Religioso*, Rome, 1928, no. 3, p. 97), one could instead see him, in spite of his "Olympian clarity," as a "romantic" latecomer.

Some Concluding Thoughts

A few of the more controversial aspects of Evola's thought must be raised before proceeding with this characterization.

Especially since his "doctrine" runs counter to our usual conceptions, misjudgments can be avoided only by a certain thoroughness. But despite the wealth of facts offered here, many other important questions have had to be bracketed out. Above all, those concern Evola's esoteric side, the supra-rational and spiritual, with which the majority of his books deal. At this point it must be stressed that *supra-rational* does not in any way equal *irrational*. On the contrary: irrational means under or before the *ratio* (reason); supra-rational, on the other hand, goes beyond the rational but still includes reason itself. The triumph of reason alone first began with Nominalism. Before that, there was hardly a doubt that the spiritual (in a pure, elevated sense; the *nous* in the ancient meaning in which Plato and Plotinus used it) ranks above mere reason, just as "intellectual

intuition" (the "vision" connected to the supra-rational, the so-called "intellectual contemplation," of Dante and Thomas Aquinas) lies above discursive knowledge and thus rules over it. Apart from Guenon and Evola, this view is also found in incomparably more famous philosophers, from Spinoza, Fichte, and Schelling up to Schopenhauer and Heidegger (albeit in a different form).

It should be stressed again that Evola's experiences with the supra-rational are the foundation of his political doctrine. We have tried to prove this point repeatedly throughout this introduction, because it seems that this presents the greatest difficulty in the political analysis of Evola. For "modern" man, the foundations are now totally different. That is why we have so many difficulties in understanding the fundamental currents of Islam and Christianity that are primarily connected to transcendence. However, in these cases there are many other aspects at work as well, so that they often result in a narrowing and restriction of the spiritual standpoint, instead of in the expansion and universality demanded by Tradition.

The fundamental question Evola asks is the same fundamental question of all philosophy: Where can I find the point of absolute certainty on which I can build my cosmic system? At first Evola found this point in the "Self," which in its "might" and "freedom" merged with the absolute "I am who I am." Various traditional esoteric teachings pointed the way to this conclusion, teachings whose prerequisite was always a stepping out of the purely human condition. And this overcoming of the "human" that leads to the a-human (lying beyond the conception of the human; not to be confused with inhuman) is what is so hard for today's Western mind to comprehend. In the Tradition, "turning toward God" also means turning away from purely human concerns, not in the sense of despising them but because God is more "important." Even Jesus Christ demanded of his apostles that they leave behind their parents and brethren, if they wanted to follow him.

Two excerpts from *Imperialismo pagano* (p. 80 in the German edition) elucidate this attitude: "This 'human' feeling for life that is so typical of the West merely betrays its very plebeian and inferior aspect. That which is an object of shame to some—the 'human'—is praised by others. Antiquity elevated the individual to godhood, strove to free him from the passions in order to raise him to the transcendental sphere, that liberating air of the peaks, be it in contemplation or in deed; they knew of traditions of nonhuman heroes and men of divine blood." And: "The 'human' is to be overcome absolutely, without re-

morse. But to achieve this it is necessary for the individual to attain the feeling *of inner liberation*. One must know that this feeling cannot be the object *of* thirst, *of* the hungry search *of* the captive whose path to this state is blocked. Either it is a simple matter, which is neither proclaimed nor discussed—something that does not need a second glance, like a natural, elemental, unmanifested presence *of* the elect—or it is nothing at all. The more it is seen and desired, the more distant it becomes, because desire is fatal to it."

Such an attitude totally contradicts our contemporary view *of* life. Today, whether in philosophy or in politics and science, moral and ethical views pre-dominate that are directed only toward the human or social spheres. That is why there is constant talk *of* "human rights," and surprise when these values are not followed in other cultures (as in the fundamentalist ones, for example), where "divine" commandments remain at the center. Jean-Paul Sartre was certainly one *of* those who contributed the most to our increasing emphasis on purely moral values; but he was also an Atheist.

One could also formulate it in this admittedly provocative way: the more "humane" man becomes, the less he contemplates the "divine"—unless he considers "man" and "God" to be equal, which a mystic, a Mahayana Buddhist, or a Sufi would accept, at least in the spiritual sense. But in today's practice, this usually results in a "denial of God," which again leaves only the "human." The purely linguistic problems in defining what is "human" and "divine" to each individual must, *of* course, be omitted here. These thoughts should also by no means prevent anyone from treating his fellow men humanely, without which no ordered coexistence is possible; they are intended only to provoke thought.

The following excerpt from an already cited magazine article may help to clear up Evola's attitude toward the "moral" question ("Our Antibourgeois Front"):

In the text of a document that was written two thousand years before Nietzsche we read: "When the path (i.e., the immediate connection to the pure spiritual state) is lost, virtue remains; when virtue is lost, ethics remain; when ethics are lost, moralism remains. Moralism is only an exteriorization of ethics and denotes the principle of decline." This saying clearly differentiates the stages of the decline that has led down to the bourgeois idol: moralism. Such an idol remained wholly unknown to the great traditional cultures: they had never known a system of egalitarianism and training built on convention, compromise, hypocrisy, and cowardice, a system founded on an inferior, societized utilitarianism—

that is, a system of taboos for the protection of undisturbed gluttony, pleasure, and commercial dealings. Moralism has developed in parallel with the parasitic degeneration of Western bourgeois civilization, so its attitude is not hard to connect with the characteristic statements of the most important ideological exponents of this civilization.

Incidentally, it must be mentioned that when before the rise of the bourgeois spirit ethics are mentioned instead of morals, these ethics are really nothing more than a secular spirituality and a laicized religion. That which today has the value of a conventional morality and yesterday had the value of an inner ethos possessed a "sacral" justification in the Tradition. This can already be seen in symbolic guise from the fact that in ancient times every system of law was "supernaturally" revealed or of divine origin, or else decreed by lawgivers of not quite human origin: Manes, Minos, Manu, Numa, and so on. This fact follows from the real essence of every traditional culture, which is always striving to connect man with an energy from above, an energy of such intensity that it is able to tear away, subjugate, and tame everything lowly (i.e., the purely human element) and thus create possibilities for superhuman ascent, instead of damming up and canalizing every rise, every manifestation of power and audacity, in order to reach the goal of creating petty beings and petty lives running on identical tracks. Even when this energy from above is no longer present, its traces remained for a time in ethics, in the classical sense: an ethos as inner character and tradition-bound lifestyle, imbued with a spontaneous love for self-control, discipline, daring, loyalty, or for authority. When even this ethos had run dry, it was replaced by morals and the constant worry about propriety—that is, moralism. The center of gravity shifted to the Philistine in his various disguises, from the fanatical Puritan to Candide and Babbitt.

Especially because morals present something purely human, they differ from culture to culture. Transpositions of moral positions into other cultural circles are therefore not permissible if one is not to become guilty of a new form of colonialism. Concerning this, Oswald Spengler, one of the fathers of Evolian thought, writes in *The Decline of the West* (German ed., vol. I, p. 434)

Western mankind, without exception, is under the influence here of an immense optical illusion. Everyone *demand*s something of the rest. We say "thou shalt" in the conviction that so-and-so iii fact will, can, and must be changed, fashioned, and arranged conformably to the order, with unshakable belief both in the efficacy of such orders and in our right to issue them. That is what we call morality. In the ethics of the West everything is direction, claim to power, will to action at a distance. Here Luther is completely at one with Nietzsche, the

popes with the Darwinians, the Socialists with the Jesuits; for one and all, the beginning of morality is a claim to general and permanent validity. This is one of the necessities of the Faustian soul. He who thinks or teaches otherwise is

sinful, a backslider, an enemy, and he is fought without mercy. "Thou shalt," the State shall, society shall—this form of morality is self-evident; it represents the only real meaning that we can attach to the word. But it was not so either in the Classical world, in India, or in China. Buddha, for instance, gave an example to take or to leave; Epicurus offered good advice. These are also forms of high morality, and neither contains the will element.

But if Evola falls back on an a-human viewpoint, this should not be taken to mean that he was against humane and "social" programs, as his support of the social laws as part of the RSI proves. He merely fought vehemently against the demagoguery that is usually connected with such initiatives.

This supra-moral attitude kept many thinkers away from Evola who might otherwise have stood closer to him, as, for example, Count Hermann Keyserling. Hermann Hesse also seems to have gone in this direction, when he says of Evola in a letter to Peter Suhrkamp dated April 27, 1935: "This dazzling and interesting, but very dangerous author . . .". Hesse then goes on to accuse Evola of dilettantism in esoteric matters, which seems unjustified considering the many competent and distinguished positive voices, such as C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, Giuseppe Tucci, and Marguerite Yourcenar. His works about Tantrism and Buddhism were even published in India, which is very rare for Western authors.

Amusingly enough, Hesse adds the following remark: "In Italy, almost no one will fall for him, but it will be different in Germany."

As with Rene Guenon, it is difficult to classify Julius Evola within the intellectual history of the twentieth century: the innermost conviction of both that modernity equals decadence led them to break with this world. Guenon went to Cairo, after he had already converted to Islam, and joined a traditional Sufi group. Evola completely withdrew in Rome, did not leave his apartment, and received only a few visitors. Only his combative nature (in contrast to Guenon's Brahmanic nature) encouraged him to publish an article here and there.

Evola may be studied at various Italian universities (Turin, Genoa, Florence, Rome, Naples, and Pisa) and be the subject of an increasing number of dissertations, but his radically antimodern, antidemocratic (though not at all anti-liberty!), reactionary aristocratic, even theocratic statements will always remain

a stumbling block. Incidentally, Evola was also a "practicing" antidemocrat. He never voted in elections, and party politics were always thoroughly alien to him.

With Evola's traditional worldview and the modern one, we actually have two possible solutions to a fundamental problem of man: the problem of his weakness in the face of the immense universe, or in other words the problem of his "being thrown" into this world (as Sartre says). Should we in answer to this inferiority complex try to *soar up* to the universe, or must we, when we sense a discrepancy with something "higher" and more "spiritual" (that is, we feel in-side that we cannot meet its standards), *bring it down* to our human plane? Should we—and here we again connect with the moral question _____ transcend ourselves and turn man into a "divine" man, or must we strip the "divine" of its attributes and feel merely human? Should we acknowledge an aristocratic, hierarchical order whose ranks are impulses to higher realms, or do we unite according to our most common denominator "down here," and are all equally high or low? Should we strive to fulfill "eternal" values, or do even temporal ones exceed our abilities and possibilities? Basically, is the direction "up" or "down"? (the "inner" being very much feels the difference). Here we have two opposing value systems: which one do we follow? Does the purely pragmatic answer apply here: right is that which leads to the happiness and satisfaction of the majority of people? So do we try, in Popperian manner, to "falsify" these two value systems? Or are there perhaps some archetypes that tower above the individual, fascinating primal images in the collective unconscious, that down-right force us to strive for "higher" things? Or is the human substance some-how conditioned from the beginning so that "liberation" from the earthly bur-den is possible only through physical well-being? Questions upon questions, which we each have to answer according to our inclinations.

This is what makes Evola's thought so interesting, because he leaps ahead of us in his radicality and paints a powerful total picture of his version of an upwardly-directed traditional guidance. In this we are able to search for our likeness and see whether we can find ourselves there.

Evola's critique of today's world is among the most embittered and fundamental that have ever been heard. Thomas Sheehan writes in his aforementioned essay "Myth and Violence" (p. 61): "In no other contemporary European thinker that I know of is the rejection of history—and, *a fortiori*, of the modern world—so absolute and so violent." Incidentally, Sheehan characterizes Evola, whom he holds *intellectually* responsible for some terrorist acts, as

"perhaps the most original and creative—and, intellectually, the most nonconformist—of the Italian Fascist philosophers" (p. 50).

But even this can be understood as originating from Evola. His principles are "eternal" and thus one cannot negotiate about them. They are not a compromise between the individual efforts of various people in order to arrive at a *contrat social* (social contract). For Evola, they are truths carried over from transcendence, and there is no room for compromise in truth.

Therefore, the motto throughout his life remained: "Act, without heeding the fruits, without letting the prospects of success or failure, victory or loss influence you, nor even joy or pain, or the approval and rejection of others." Or expressed in other words: "Be whole, even in fragments; be upright even when bent." In a time when the marketing techniques devised by business are used in every arena, especially in politics, these sentences will most likely not be understood. Only shortly before his death he is supposed to have uttered: "One must rescue that which can be rescued, choose the lesser evil, and ally oneself with the moderate in order to fight the subversion." A step in the right direction or a sign of weakness?

Today one hears such radical sentiments mainly among the fundamentalist Greens. While their critique of progress, technology, and the hegemony of science is outwardly identical, when measured against Evola it remains superficial. The fact that quality, the immeasurable, is always coming up short against quantity, the measurable, is, however, a thorn in the sides of both.

Evola "engaged" himself and for almost sixty years fought for the same principles, albeit in various interpretations. Part of these was what he always called a cardinal attribute of traditional man: the "legionary spirit" (in reference to Codreanu?). In *Orientamenti* (p. 20), Evola defines this term: "The attitude of him who can choose the hardest life, who is able to continue fighting even when he knows that the battle is materially lost, who holds to the ancient precept that 'loyalty is mightier than fire,' and who carries the traditional idea of honor and dishonor within. This attitude creates a substantial, even existential difference between men, almost as though between one race and another...."

Compare to this (and to other ideas of Evola's that we know) the ideas of Toni Negri, the Italian theoretician of radical neo-Marxism living in French exile, when he speaks of the conviction that true Marxists are a "different race," descended from a "virgin mother," and are engaged in a "struggle between

truth and falsehood," all the while being led by the party that is compared to a "martial religious order" (Antonio Negri, *Il donrinio e il sabotaggio: Sul metodo marxista della trasformazione sociale* [Rule and Sabotage: On the Marxist Method of Societal Change], Milan, 1978).

"The `style' that must assert itself is the style of one who remains strong in his position of loyalty to himself and to an idea, a strength marked by concentrated intensity, resistance to any compromise, as well as a total engagement that shows in every phase of existence." And further, as an explanation: "Tradition as we understand it is that which is most revolutionary in the face of today's prevailing values" (interview with Evola in *Pianeta*, no. 44, January 1972, quoted from R. del Ponte's introduction to Evola's *Saggi sull'Idealismo Magico*, Genoa, 1981).

In any case, a certain desire of Evola's to shock with his pronouncements cannot be denied. Again and again he uses terms with a meaning totally different from the publicly accepted one, and in so doing almost deliberately invites misunderstanding.

Related to this is his perfect ability to continually "fall between two stools," even where he could have enjoyed sympathies. Domenico Rudatis once said in a personal conversation about Evola: "His greatest obstacle was his intellectual brilliance." He was certainly no easy character, as is confirmed by some episodes from his youth, and was easily insulted and hurt. Such natures (combative because of their very fragility) with the corresponding verbal excesses seem to have been more common in the first half of the twentieth century than today. Would National Socialism and Fascism have been as successful with their methods otherwise?

But it is also obvious to Evola that he is not really fighting against Bolshevism, Americanism, and consumer culture, but rather against contemporary man. All these currents would have had no chance if we were not already "inner" "Bolshevists," "Americans," or "consumers." A term like "Americanism" is only a symbol for something that is found deep inside us. "The "outer enemy" has chances of winning only because an "inner enemy" inside of ourselves collaborates with him. This also explains Evola's esoteric efforts, intended to counteract this, because he who can control the inner can also control the outer domain. The outward fight, as we have said, is regarded as an "existential moment" or "inner experience" (E. Junger), as metaphor for a spiritual or intellectual conflict. Apart from Junger, this insight can also be found in Gottfried

Benn, Knut Hamsun, Ezra Pound, and Ferdinand Céline, all of whom, interestingly enough, sympathized for a longer or shorter time with Fascism or National Socialism. Even Luigi Pirandello, one of the most important dramatists of the twentieth century and, like Hamsun and Pound, a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, said as he signed a manifesto of Fascist intellectuals: "I have always struggled against words" (quoted by Sheehan, p. 53).

In Evola, this martial, warrior element (his "Kshatriya" essence) led to a special conflict. How can one be simultaneously active in this world and detached from it? And how can one feel oneself to be part of Tradition and yet act in the "factual" world? The necessary "active indifference" is a problem already encountered in Plato's philosopher. In reality, his goal is spiritual self-realization, and yet he has the task of ruling a state. Evola finally saw "*apoliteia*" as a way out and thus ended the dilemma.

To see Evola as a thinker (in the philosophical, esoteric, and metapolitical sense of Gramsci), as we have done in this study, is one approach. Pierre-Andre Taguieff uncovers another possibility. He views Evola above all as an artist for whom the "aesthetic" side of his ideas lies closest to his heart. Taguieff even calls Evola's metaphysics those of an artist. If one agrees with this assessment, then many doors might open for Evola, because an artist has more freedom in our

society than is allotted to a philosopher or even a political thinker. Above all, the artist can claim freedom from the usual moral norms: *he is* allowed to stand *beyond*, while also changing society on this side.

Henry de Montherlant sees the Evola phenomenon in yet another light: "I have read Julius Evola and I continue to read him. . . . He is what he is. *But, he sees*" (quoted in Pierre Pascal, "Lux evoliana," in *Julius Evola, Le philosophe foudroyé*). The same article quotes Rene Guenon, who despite his differences was one of the closest fellow travelers of Evola. He says of Evola: "Fire in ice and ice in fire . . . the eagle's cry ... the demon of action."

And Gerd-Klaus Kaltenbrunner opines about this "pilgrim of the absolute":

"For many, reading Evola might be an offense, in the exact biblical sense... .

But this at least one cannot take away from the author: his consistency, a universal education, and the courage to make a daring, sovereign formulation"

("Das letzte Licht kam vom Gral. Anmerkungen zu Julius Evolas Traktat: *Revolte gegen die Moderne Welt*" [The Last Light Emanated from the Grail: Notes on Julius Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World*], in *Die Welt*, December 28, 1982).

Jay Kinney, publisher of *Gnosis* magazine, writes the following in issue 14

("Who's Afraid of the Bogeyman? The Phantasm of Esoteric Terrorism," San Francisco, 1990): "It remains to be seen whether his Hermetic virtues can be disentangled from his political sins. Meanwhile, he serves as a persuasive argument for the separation of esoteric 'Church and State.' "

To conclude this study, we will mention a characterization that Joseph Roth gave of the Austrian poet Franz Grillparzer that seems to me both amusing and appropriate for it suits Evola just as well: Roth called Grillparzer an "anarchist individualist reactionary."

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