



Nae Ionescu's 1938 Legionary Phenomenon: A "Missing Link" between Evola and Dugin

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Abstract

Little has been written about the recently translated Legionary Phenomenon (Italian, 1998; English, 2022) by Romanian Legionary ideologue Nae Ionescu. Almost nothing exists in English. The present article demonstrates that the text is consciously patterned after Julius Evola's Revolt Against the Modern World (1934) and thus constitutes an as yet unrecognized part of the corpus of fascist Integral Traditionalism. When the text was published in 1940 and republished in 1963, it was proposed as the basis for a "Legionary doctrine." Yet its late appearance relative to important Legionary texts like Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's Nest Leader's Manual and For My Legionaries makes it uncertain how much influence the text might have had on the Legionary movement during the interwar period. Ultimately, the text may be most significant for its impact not on the interwar Legionary movement, but on subsequent and contemporary fascist ideologies, such as Aleksandr Dugin's neo-Eurasianism. This article places Legionary Phenomenon in an intellectual history between Evola and Dugin, disrupting many analyses of Dugin's neo-Eurasianism with evidence that certain ideological innovations attributed to him in fact belong to Ionescu and revealing the similarities of Dugin's ideological output to Legionary Romanian fascism. Although these topics are not explored here, it likewise impacts the study of Ionescu's philosophical and theological corpus, and has implications for the theory of religion of Ionescu's student and friend, Mircea Eliade.

Keywords: Dugin, Evola, Ionescu, neo-Eurasianism, Traditionalism, Fascism

Over¹ the course of several days in May 1938,² in a makeshift detention center about ten kilometers outside of Miercurea Ciuc in central Romania, Legionary ideologue Nae Ionescu³ delivered a series of impromptu “conferences” to prominent members of the fascist Legionary Movement who were detained for the better part of eight months (April 16–November 29).⁴ Ionescu himself arrived at the camp a few weeks later than most on May 7. The leaders of the movement had been arrested as part of King Carol II’s crackdown on the Iron Guard. Ionescu, who was a journalist as well as a professor and philosopher, was interned with them for his newspaper’s public opposition to the king’s recently declared royal dictatorship.⁵ One of Ionescu’s fellow detainees, Romanian Orthodox priest and Legionary, Ștefan Palaghiță, transcribed four of the conferences.⁶ Collectively, they comprise a metaphysical rationalization of the Iron Guard’s ethno-religious fascism and a theological justification for its violence. Palaghiță’s transcriptions were first published just over two years later, following Ionescu’s death from a heart attack on March 15, 1940.⁷ They appeared serially, beginning August 11, 1940, as *Fenomenul Legionar* (*The Legionary Phenomenon*) in *Buletinul Informativ pentru Legionarii Refugiați* (*The Informative Bulletin for Refugee Legionaries*) in exile in Berlin.⁸

Despite its precarious origin (or perhaps because of it), the text gained significance within at least part of the Legionary movement. Although Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899–1938) had founded the Legion of the Archangel Michael more than a decade earlier in 1927, and, as such, the movement had already accumulated a certain ideological canon, including Codreanu’s *Nest Leader’s Manual* (1933) and his autobiographical *For My Legionaries* (1936), when the first of Ionescu’s four conferences was published in the Berlin *Bulletin*, it appeared prominently under the heading “Legionary Doctrine.”⁹ Furthermore, when Constantin Papanace—a former Legionary who was largely responsible for the *Bulletin*—republished the conferences

1 I would like to express my gratitude to the students who participated in our Zoom reading group on Dugin’s Traditionalism during the most isolated (and isolating) period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their curiosity drove my discovery, and their insights are mingled here with my own. I offer special thanks to D. Sergio Glăjar for first bringing Nae Ionescu to my attention.

2 Papanace’s preface to the 1963 edition of *Fenomenul Legionar* gives May 17, 19, and 21 as the dates of conferences 1–3, but no date for the fourth. See Constantin Papanace, preface to Nae Ionescu, *Fenomenul Legionar* (Rome: Editura Armatolii, 1963), 19, 23, 27.

3 Despite the fact that Ionescu was apparently not an official member of the Iron Guard, his status as a Legionary ideologue is well established. See, for example, Mircea Eliade, *Autobiography*, vol. 2, 1937–1960: *Exile’s Odyssey* (Chicago, 1988), 10.

4 Ionescu himself was arrested about three weeks later, during the night of May 7, 1938, and released for health reasons on condition of signing a disavowal of the Iron Guard and a commitment to refrain from any further instigation against the new state order. See Tatiana Niculescu, *Seducătorul Domn Nae: Viața lui Nae Ionescu* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2020), 228–31.

5 Ionescu was the owner and editor of the newspaper *Cuvântul*. Eliade’s account of Ionescu’s arrest suggests that he was probably arrested as the acknowledged ideologue of the Legionary movement, despite not officially being a member. See Mircea Eliade, *Autobiography* vol. 2, 10 and 11.

6 Papanace, *Fenomenul Legionar*, 1. Thus far, there is no specific record of Ionescu’s having delivered any additional conferences. However, in the preface to the 1963 edition, Papanace writes, “We must mention that Professor Nae Ionescu held several conferences in connection with *Fenomenul Legionar*. In the *Informative Bulletin*, however, only these four were published, which we reproduce, because, with No. 7 of September 13, 1940, when the repatriation of the refugee legionnaires took place, the *Bulletin* ceased to appear.” Papanace, *Fenomenul*, 2. Conversely, Ornea seems convinced that Ionescu delivered only the four recorded conferences. See Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1999), 217.

7 In addition to the official report that Ionescu suffered a heart attack, various rumors also circulated that he had been poisoned, etc. Mutti has gathered some of them. See Claudio Mutti, *Mircea Eliade und die Eiserne Garde rumänische Intellektuelle im Umfeld der Legion Erzengel Michael*, 2nd ed. of trans. (Kiel: Regim-Verlag, 2012), 92.

8 Nae Ionescu, “Fenomenul Legionar,” *Buletin Informativ pentru Legionarii Refugiați* 2 (August 11, 1940), 3.

9 Ionescu, *Buletin Informativ*, 3.

as *The Legionary Phenomenon* in Rome in 1963, he reiterated in his lengthy preface that “the ideas expounded in the pages that follow could serve, in large part, as the basis for a systematized Legionary doctrine.”¹⁰ Papanace, for his part, seemed to think of the conferences as a *de facto* manifesto of a Legionary party that would inevitably (re)emerge.¹¹

As dramatic as it may be that the text was transcribed (allegedly on toilet paper);¹² smuggled out of the country; published by exiled Legionaries in Nazi Germany not long before the rise of the short-lived Legionary Romanian State (September 14, 1940–February 14, 1941); and then republished 25 years later as dissident literature in Italy, that story is not the focus of this article. Rather, its concern is the striking resemblance that the text itself bears to the *Revolt Against the Modern World* (1934) of the Italian occultist and philosopher of Integral Traditionalism and fascism Julius Evola (1898–1974). I argue here that the number and quality of the similarities between the texts is such that Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon* must be considered, in large part, a deliberate repackaging of Evola's *Revolt*, presented as Ionescu's own ideas. However, I also identify two important differences between the texts: the framing of Orthodoxy as a Traditionalist religion and the incorporation of geographical determinism as “sacred geography.”¹³ Ionescu's two Legionary adaptations of Evola's pagan Traditionalism are especially notable because they represent the same departures that Russian ideologue and fascist philosopher Aleksandr Dugin is erroneously credited with innovating in his neo-Eurasianist Traditionalism.

My claim necessarily raises questions about the importance of Ionescu's text, which remains virtually unknown to non-Romanian-speaking scholars.¹⁴ It also raises questions about the significance of its similarities to Evola's *Revolt*, as well as questions about how—or, in fact, *whether*—the similarities have thus far escaped detection.¹⁵ I argue that while the two texts' mutual resemblance seems to have eluded much of liberal academia, it has not been lost on certain influential contemporary fascist thinkers. In fact, the identities and ideologies of those who seem to have already recognized the relationship between *Legionary Phenomenon* and *Revolt* may constitute the chief significance of Ionescu's text. Indeed, *The Legionary Phenomenon* may have more influence on contemporary fascism than it did on Legionary fascism. Thus, before proceeding to my comparison, I will make

10 Papanace, preface to *Fenomenul Legionar*, 2. “...ideile expuse în paginile [sic] ce urmează ar putea servi în mare parte, ca bază pentru o doctrină legionară sistematizată.”

11 The 1963 edition of *The Legionary Phenomenon* appeared as the ninth of a total of 26 volumes published in the “Biblioteca Verde” collection, which was founded by Papanace with the help of Nicolae Bujin and published by Editura “Armatolii” in Rome, Italy, in exile. The “Green Library” collection—a reference to the color of Romanian fascism—was devoted entirely to the dissemination of Legionary ideology.

12 Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu: Așa Cum L-Am Cunoscut* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992), 98.

13 In Dugin's essay, “From Sacred Geography to Geopolitics,” he distinguishes between geopolitics and sacred geography, yet he allows that what he means by traditional sacred geography is more consistent with Russian Eurasianists, Islamic fundamentalists, and “the German followers of Haushofer.” Karl Haushofer was the German general, professor, geographer, and politician whose conception of Geopolitik—including *Lebensraum*, a term which he coined—were used by Hitler to motivate global Nazi expansionism and genocide. See Aleksandr Dugin, “From Sacred Geography to Geopolitics,” *Geopolitica.RU*, 29 Oct. 2019, <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/sacred-geography-geopolitics>.

14 A small portion of the fourth conference appeared in English translation in 1999. See Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, 218f.

15 Thus far, the only direct comparison I have found appears in Stanca's introductory essay in Mutti's 1998 translation of *The Legionary Phenomenon*. He writes: “For the Italian reader, the figure of the Romanian Nae Ionescu can very easily be compared to that of Julius Evola...” See Dan Stanca, “Nae Ionescu: Ovvero il Demone Perfetto,” in *Il Fenomeno Legionario* by Nae Ionescu, trans. Claudio Mutti, (Parma: Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, 1998), 8.

the case that Dugin learned about *Legionary Phenomenon* during or before 1997 from the Italian essayist, editor, publisher, and fascist philosopher Claudio Mutti (b. 1946), who published the first translation of *The Legionary Phenomenon* in 1998.

Dugin in Praise of Ionescu

In 1997, Aleksandr Dugin hosted “Finis Mundi,” a weekly radio program about far-right and Traditionalist philosophers that lasted for only 16 episodes.¹⁶ In the fifth episode, dedicated to the influential historian of religions Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), Dugin states:

Some years ago, our dear friend Claudio Mutti met with the widow of the great Codreanu in Bucharest. That woman—beautiful even at that age and with memories of those events completely intact—shared with him this detail: the one who introduced Julius Evola to the Captain [Codreanu] was none other than Mircea Eliade, the leader of the Bucharest nest [*cuib*] “Axa” and greatest student and closest associate of Nae Ionescu, official ideologue of the Iron Guard and *greatest intellectual of our time*.¹⁷

The significance of Dugin’s surprising remarks for the study of Eliade and his thought, while obviously related, must remain outside the scope of the present inquiry. Yet his interest in Ionescu, the chief ideologue of the Romanian Iron Guard, is perhaps even more surprising. As of 1997, there were no published translations of Ionescu’s works in any language. Thus, since there is no indication that Dugin reads Romanian, let alone that he could do so in 1997, his superlative assessment of Ionescu is especially curious. That Dugin was already so enamored of Ionescu the same year he published *Geopolitics* and the year after he published *Metaphysics of the Gospel: Orthodox Esotericism* is especially interesting. Certainly, there is more than one possible explanation for Dugin’s familiarity with Ionescu, but the simplest and most likely is that Mutti—who does speak Romanian and published his own Italian translation of Ionescu’s *Legionary Phenomenon* the following year (1998)¹⁸—shared that translation with his “dear friend” Dugin before publication. Dugin, who speaks Italian, could have read Mutti’s translation.

Yet the question remains: is there more than the convenience of Dugin’s friendship with Mutti, whom he had known since around 1990,¹⁹ to tie his estimation of Ionescu to *The Legionary Phenomenon* specifically?²⁰ Still more perplexing is the question of what about Ionescu’s thought inspired Dugin to refer to him as “the greatest

16 Stephen Shenfield, *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 193. See also Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 233.

17 Emphasis added. Elena Ilinoiu Codreanu (December 2, 1902–September 5, 1994). For a transcript of the episode, see Aleksandr Dugin, “Mircha Eliade: Vechnoe Vozvrashchenie (Aleksandr Dugin, Finis Mundi),” *Paideuma.tv*, November 27, 2020, <https://paideuma.tv/video/mircha-eliade-vechnoe-vozhvrashchenie-aleksandr-dugin-finis-mundi#/?playlistId=0&videoId=0>.

18 Nae Ionescu, *Il Fenomeno Legionario*, trans. Claudio Mutti (Parma: Edizioni all’insegna del Veltro, 1998).

19 Mutti was on the editorial board of Dugin’s journal *Milyi Angel* in 1991. See: Shekhovtsov, “Alexander Dugin and the West European New Right, 1989-1994,” in *Eurasianism and the European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship*, ed. Marlene Laruelle (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015), 36, 38.

20 Other works by Ionescu are also certainly fodder for contemporary fascist philosophy. For example, the far-right Russian press Totenburg Verlag recently published a Russian translation of excerpts of some of Ionescu’s most notable works: *Filosofia Religiei* (1925), *Curs de Metafizică* (1928-1930), and *Roza Vânturilor* (1937). See Nae Ionescu, *Iskushchenie Metafizikoi* (Moscow: Totenburg, 2021).

intellectual of our time,” particularly if *The Legionary Phenomenon* is merely a kind of paraphrase of Evola's *Revolt*. To answer these questions, I refer once again to Papanace's preface to the 1963 edition of *The Legionary Phenomenon*. Immediately after suggesting that Ionescu's ideas could serve as the basis for a systematized doctrine of the then-exiled Romanian fascist movement, he adds this caveat: “We must admit, however, that there are some ideas that would not be in keeping with the line of the Captain. One of these we would like to address in particular, because *the imperialist spirit is exalted*.”²¹ Papanace's assessment is definitely borne out in Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*. Indeed, according to Ionescu,

the imperialism of a nation is justified insofar as it realizes a new cultural formula, a new spiritual formula. In other words, imperialism is justified to the degree that it wills to realize God, that is to represent a new spiritual formula of life, not to realize the Devil: Mongolians, Russians, Turks, Austro-Hungarians, Jews, for the ideal of all other peoples contrary to ours, is contrary to our God.²²

I suggest that what impressed Dugin so much about Ionescu's thought is that it proposes a solution to a major obstacle to imperialist aggression—the obstacle of Christianity.

Dugin was well acquainted with Evola's thoughts on the problem of Christianity from the latter's *Pagan Imperialism* (1927), which introduces many of the themes to which Evola returns in *Revolt*. Dugin had translated the text into Russian in 1981, albeit from an early German edition.²³ Evola's position is clear:

An Empire is such only when an immanent spirituality permeates it; but it is obvious that a real Empire of this sort cannot recognise any organisation which claims a prerogative regarding things of the spirit. It will deauthorise and supplant every Church, putting itself in its place purely and simply as true and sole Church.²⁴

For Evola (as well as Ionescu), a true empire is defined by the exercise of absolute sovereignty, of which war and conquest are the only real measure.²⁵ It is thus especially irksome for Evola that the Christian Church should be the one to bar his imperial project by “claiming prerogative regarding things of the spirit.” Because of its pretensions to universality, the Christian Church restricts the exercise of such absolute sovereignty to the extent that it condemns war between Christian nations merely for the sake of such conquest. “Christianity as such,” Evola continues, “in its primitive Semitic and revolutionary aspect, is the mystical analogue of the French

21 Papanace, *Fenomenul*, 2. “Trebuie să relevăm însă, că sunt și câteva idei care n'ar concorda cu linia Căpitanului. Pe una din acestea am vrea să o relevăm în mod deosebit, fiindcă se exaltă spiritul imperialist” [emphasis original].

22 Jason Roberts and Sergio Glăjar, “The Legionary Phenomenon: A Romanian Fascist Manifesto,” *IERES Occasional Papers*, “Transnational History of the Far Right” Series, no. 13 (February 2022): 22, <https://www.illiberalism.org/the-legionary-phenomenon-a-romanian-fascist-manifesto>.

23 Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 222.

24 Julius Evola and Cologero Salvo, *Pagan Imperialism* (Gornahoor Press, 2017), 33.

25 In Ionescu, for example, “The character of the nation: *offensive* and *imperialist* par excellence, that is an organism that cannot live besides in expansion, life, dynamism.” Roberts & Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 35. This theme is found throughout Evola's work. See, for example, Julius Evola, *Metaphysics of War: Battle Victory & Death in the World of Tradition* (United Kingdom: Arktos Media, 2011).

Revolution of yesterday, and the communism and socialism of today.”²⁶ Although he cites medieval Catholicism as an exception by dint of its alleged admixture of Roman paganism, Evola resolves that Christianity is inherently anti-hierarchical and thus anti-aristocratic.²⁷

Like Evola, Dugin sought a way to “deauthorize and supplant” the transnational (imperial) authority of Christianity regarding the permissibility of war, particularly among Christian nations. Evola’s solution is to call for “a decisive, unconditional, integral return to the Nordic pagan tradition.” He continues, “We are finished with every compromise, with every weakness, and with every indulgence toward everything that, derived from its Semitic-Christian root, has infected our mind.”²⁸ Evola’s attempt to ground his imperial fascism in mythic tribal paganism is thus logically consistent but ultimately impracticable, as it would require mass apostasy. By contrast, Ionescu’s solution maintains the operative features of Evola’s “Traditional” pagan civilization but does not require a mass reversion to paganism, merely a tribal understanding of Christianity. Ionescu explains, “I have but a single tribute to pay in life in the face of God: through the nation. If God is not only my God, if He is not a singular God, but is also the God of the Hungarians, French, etc., then I would no longer be Romanian and I would not be able to pay my tribute to God through my nation.”²⁹ Thus, when Ionescu refers to “the Orthodox,” he means only the Romanian Orthodox. His idea of Church is national (or imperial), not universal. As it turns out, it is not paganism that is the salient feature of “Traditional” pagan imperialism, but rather (crypto)polytheism.³⁰ Ionescu’s “Christian” imperialism is possible because the Christianity he describes is not actually monotheistic. By aligning “all other peoples” with the Devil, in a kind of Manichaean dualism, or with their own “national” god, Ionescu can justify the conquest of any other nation—including other Christian nations—as a holy war.³¹ This is what interested Dugin.

What Evola bemoans in the potential of Christian universalism is the same thing that preoccupies Dugin concerning the spread of liberalism in his *Fourth Political Theory*: a Fukuyama-style “end of history” that results from “unipolarity.”³² What

26 Evola, *Pagan Imperialism*, 31.

27 *Ibid.*, 29-35, passim.

28 *Ibid.*, 26.

29 Roberts and Glăjar, “The Legionary Phenomenon,” 36.

30 Concerning what I am calling (crypto)polytheism, see Dan Dana, “Occultations de Zalmoxis et occultation de l’histoire. Un aspect du dossier Mircea Eliade,” *Anabases* 5 (2007): 11-25. Dana writes: “The 1930s marked a period of gradual ‘spiritualization’ of the Romanian intellectual spectrum; the quest for the native and the autochthonous sometimes leads to manifest Dacism and excessive autochthonism. Cioran recounts a 1934 interview with C.Z. Codreanu, the charismatic leader of the Legion, during which the ‘Captain’ had ‘explained his views on how to revive the Dacian virtues.’ It was therefore necessary to de-paganize (or Christianize) the Getae religion: Zalmoxis becomes the reformer of a monotheistic, ascetic religion, dominated by elites, in an organic unity with the people, a religion which promised immortality and thanks to which the ancestors did not fear death. Praising the spirit of sacrifice of the Dacians and their ‘death for the Fatherland’ thus prefigured the legionary vulgate: its members, Christians and fanatical Romanians, love death and go to meet it, against the enemies of the Nation and of God (capitalists, Democrats, Jews, Bolsheviks, Freemasons or Atheists). The mystique of death and martyrdom are the most displayed convictions of the Legionaries, unfortunately transposed into reality.” Dana cites Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco: L’oubli Du Fascisme: Trois Intellectuels Roumains Dans La Tourmente Du Siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), 149-150.

31 See, for example, Roberts and Glăjar, “The Legionary Phenomenon,” 36: “If the nation realizes God on the Earth, then I am only interested in the God that I live, not [the one lived by] Hungarians, French, etc. In Naples, almost every street has its own Madonna, something belonging to the street; this points to the necessity of localizing, individualizing, nationalizing God.”

32 Dugin discusses Fukuyama’s idea of an “end of history” no less than 13 times throughout his *Fourth Political Theory*, including the bizarre assertion that “some people believe Fukuyama is already a robot.” See Aleksandr Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, English ed. (London: Arktos Media, 2012), 132, <https://archive.org/details/TheFourthPoliticalTheory/page/n131/mode/2up>.

Dugin gains from Ionescu, then, is a strategy for adapting Evola's "multipolar" Traditionalist pagan imperialism to the existing beliefs (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) of Eurasia. His concept of imperial Eurasian Civilization is thus comparable to Ionescu's imperial "Orthodox" nation. Whereas Ionescu (re)shaped Romanian Orthodoxy into a national identity for the then recently unified Wallachians, Moldavians, and Transylvanians to share, Dugin seeks to (re)unite the peoples of the former Soviet Union under a narrative of a shared "Eurasian" identity that would, in Evola's terms "deauthorize and supplant every Church, putting itself in its place purely and simply as true and sole Church." Both pagan and Orthodox Traditionalism create sovereign "nations" that are free to wage empire-building holy wars with whomever they choose.

Yet for Dugin to acknowledge *The Legionary Phenomenon* as a major source of inspiration would associate him with the very real atrocities of the Romanian Iron Guard rather than the more obscure and theoretical ideals of Evola's Traditionalism or the comparatively benign Traditionalism of René Guénon, whose writings inspired Evola. For Dugin, then, it is preferable to claim credit for "baptizing" Evola's (and Guénon's) Traditionalism than to admit he took the idea from the Legionary Christofascist ideologue Nae Ionescu, who had not—and still has not—been recognized as a Traditionalist philosopher. Unfortunately, a deeper comparison of Ionescu's philosophy of ethno-religious empire with that of Dugin is both beyond the scope of the present article and logically subsequent to the comparison I will make between *The Legionary Phenomenon* and *Revolt*. I have raised the issue of similarity and difference between Dugin's ideas and those of Evola to indicate where *The Legionary Phenomenon* interrupts the familiar narrative about Evola's influence on Dugin. I proceed, therefore, to my comparison of Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World* and Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*.

Variation on a Traditionalist Theme

Scholars recognize many similarities between Evola and Dugin, yet they have also pointed to significant differences. Given Evola's disparaging thoughts about Christianity, Dugin's Christian departure from Evola's pagan model is of interest, particularly since Dugin has made much of the place of Orthodoxy in his neo-Eurasianist Traditionalism. Dugin has also been credited with introducing a kind of geographical determinism (i.e., "sacred geography") into his neo-Eurasianist Traditionalism. In brief, where both Evola and Guénon argue that the civilizational decline of the West could theoretically also have happened in the East, Dugin connects geography and fate in a way that makes the decline of the West and the rise of the East geographically determined. As mentioned above, both of these departures from Evola's Traditionalism, which scholars currently discuss as hallmarks of Dugin's Eurasianism, are already present in Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*.

By laying out the many parallels between Evola's *Revolt* and Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*, I demonstrate that Ionescu's text is also Traditionalist. That is, if Ionescu has recreated the argument of Evola's *Revolt* using the same logic and *Revolt* represents a definitive example of Traditionalism, then Ionescu's text must also be Traditionalist. By revealing specific differences in *Legionary Phenomenon*, including the roles of Orthodox Christianity and geographical determinism, I show that Dugin's neo-Eurasianism departs from Evola in the same ways that Ionescu does. This in itself cannot confirm that Dugin is drawing from *Legionary Phenomenon*, but it does offer an explanation for his curiously superlative assessment of Ionescu in 1997. Establishing Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon* as a Traditionalist source

of inspiration for Dugin also informs the debate over how central Traditionalism is to his thought. The correlative metaphysics that Ionescu shares with Evola also connects Dugin to both of them, thereby providing insight into his broader method. Furthermore, it informs the debate over Dugin's political ideology because Ionescu's application of those ideas is not only unambiguously Traditionalist, but also unambiguously fascist. Finally, it reveals that alterations and adaptations to Evola's Traditionalism that have been credited to Dugin in fact belong to Nae Ionescu.

Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon* relates to Evola's *Revolt* as a sort of deliberate and truncated variation on an uncredited theme. It is not plagiarized *in sensu stricto*, but nor is it original. I suggest that the relationship is not immediately apparent because it has been intentionally obscured. While Ionescu reproduces the major argument of Evola's *Revolt*, he picks and chooses among the minor ones. Where Evola takes his copious examples from a variety of ancient and medieval sources, Ionescu argues the same points with specifically Romanian illustrations and the folksy anecdotes that were characteristic of his impromptu lecture style. The effect is a Legionary fascist manifesto that attempts to articulate the main tenets of Evola's universal "Tradition" in national terms—to locate transcendental universals in Romanian particulars. It is a variation on the theme of Evola's pagan *Revolt* "in the Romanian Orthodox style" some 60 years before the appearance of Dugin's Orthodox Traditionalism.

Such a relationship can be difficult to prove. As a musical convention, theme and variation is a showcase not of similarity, but of difference. A composer may demonstrate their skill by withdrawing further and further from the original theme in each successive variation. Yet since Ionescu fails to acknowledge the source of his chosen theme, the relationship cannot be assumed as the starting point of my argument, but only approached as a conclusion. The question thus arises of how much similarity—and of what kind—is sufficient? The answer must be the familiar, if somewhat subjective, standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt." Certainly, there are those who would be convinced by nothing less than a direct admission on the part of Ionescu. Yet a central claim of Evola's argument, which I show that Ionescu replicates, is that transcendental truths can be discerned by someone with the requisite skill. Thus, devotees of either philosopher might respond that Evola and Ionescu have simply uncovered the same eternal verities (i.e., "Tradition"). For obvious reasons, it is a convenient argument.

Despite the surface-level differences, there are at least three different categories of similarities between the texts that lend themselves to meaningful comparison and that, I believe, amount to proof beyond a reasonable doubt. First, the argument of both texts is essentially the same: it is a rejection of Western modernity in favor of an absolute (as opposed to constitutional) monarchy.³³ Second, the specific aspects of modernity to be rejected and the prescribed alternatives are conspicuously similar.

33 Evola discusses the topic of divine kingship throughout *Revolt*. Chapter 2, "Regality," deals with it explicitly. See Evola, *Revolt*, 7-15. The subject is not equally apparent in Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*, though this should not come as a surprise. Ionescu delivered the conferences in a prison camp where he was interned for public opposition to King Carol II's recently declared royal dictatorship. In that case, it was the particular king he objected to, not the idea of divine kingship. See Roberts and Glajar, "Legionary Phenomenon," 26. "The king realizes that the country wants an authoritarian principle. Yet, the authoritarian principle from the time of Charlemagne is different from that of today. The authoritarian principle of our king is not that of Charlemagne. And, namely, the authoritarian principle of today is different." The theme of divine right—if not divine kingship *per se*—in Ionescu's thought has also been explored by Surugiu: "Nae Ionescu proposes two political solutions: i) the reign of *droit divin*; ii) the providential leader, ('căpetenia' in original) who is part of the nation, and stands for the collectivity. ... After supporting without hesitation Carol II, in 1935, Nae Ionescu equals [sic] the royalty with the political leader, representative of the national will." See Romina Surugiu, "Nae Ionescu on Democracy, Individuality, Leadership and Nation Philosophical (Re)sources for a Right-Wing Ideology," *SACRI: Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 8 (23) (Summer 2009): 75.

Finally, the very logic of both arguments is unusual, particularly for its time. Neither deductive nor inductive reasoning, it represents a correlative logic associated with Hermeticism and early modern magic.³⁴ Evola was one of the first repopularizers of Hermeticism after the Renaissance.³⁵ In 1931, three years before the appearance of *Revolt*, he published *The Hermetic Tradition*. At that time, Evola was the unquestionable center of far-right Hermeticism and thus the most likely model for the unusual argument in Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*. It is unlikely that Ionescu, whose university appointment was in the department of epistemology and logic,³⁶ would have crafted a correlative argument out of carelessness. It is far more likely that he was throwing his own weight as a philosopher behind the revival and weaponization of Hermetic metaphysics.

Regarding the plausibility of my hypothesis, it is not only possible but entirely likely that Ionescu read *Revolt* before delivering *Legionary Phenomenon*. Whether or not Ionescu could have read the Italian original (1934), he certainly could have read the German translation, which appeared the following year (1935). Ionescu received his PhD in Germany and wrote his dissertation in German.³⁷ Moreover, he would almost certainly have learned about *Revolt* when his then-assistant, Mircea Eliade, reviewed it for the journal *Vremea* in 1935.³⁸ In any case, he would definitely have been aware of it by the spring of 1938, when he hosted a luncheon at his villa outside Bucharest attended by both Eliade and Evola.³⁹ Then, as now, it was Evola's most well-known work; he would have been introduced as its author.

Finally, it is one thing to accuse a man with no history of malfeasance of taking credit for someone else's ideas; it is another thing entirely when that man is a known plagiarist. Ionescu's proclivity for cribbing from other philosophers and passing off their insights as his own was already known during his lifetime. In 1935, his then-student, the Romanian-Jewish novelist Mihail Sebastian, recorded in his journal that Ionescu presented entire sections of Oswald Spengler's *The Hour of Decision* (1934) as his own ideas during a class lecture.⁴⁰ More recently, Alexandru George demonstrated that the first lecture of Ionescu's 1919 university course, "The Epistemological Function of Love," was an uncredited paraphrase of Max Scheler's essay *Liebe und Weltanschauungslehre*.⁴¹ Likewise, historian of philosophy Marta Petreu has identified a dozen parallel arguments from *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (1911) by the Anglo-Catholic English mystic Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) and Ionescu's university

34 For a brief orientation to the academic discussion of esotericism (including Hermeticism), see Karen-Claire Voss and Antoine Faivre, "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions," *Numen* 42, no. 1 (1995): 60-62, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568527952598756>.

35 Evola was preceded by René Guénon (1886-1951), but their philosophical projects are sufficiently distinct to rule out Guénon as Ionescu's primary source of inspiration. This is addressed below.

36 Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 112.

37 *Ibid.*, 106.

38 Mircea Eliade, *Vremea*, VIII, n. 382, Bucharest, March 31, 1935. He also mentions *Pagan Imperialism* (1928) and *Phenomenology of the Absolute Individual* (1930). For an English translation of Eliade's review, see Cologero Salvo, "Eliade on Evola's *Revolt*," *Gornahoor*, May 30, 2022, <https://www.gornahoor.net/?p=4303>.

39 Eliade, *Autobiography Vol. II*, 152. The exact date of the meeting does not seem to have been recorded. However, an article Evola published on March 22, 1938, in *Il Regime Fascista* about his interview of Codreanu, which was allegedly the same day as his meeting with Ionescu, provides a *terminus ante quem*. See Julius Evola, "Legionarismo ascetico. Colloquio col capo delle 'Guardie di Ferro,'" *Il Regime Fascista* 13 (March 22, 1938).

40 Mihail Sebastian, *Journal, 1935-1944*, (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 2000), 49.

41 Ornea, *Romanian Extreme Right*, 202. Ornea cites Alexandru George, "Nae Ionescu și Max Scheler," *România literară* 25, no. 36 (November 1992), 10.

course on *Metaphysics* (delivered 1936-37).⁴² Thus, my claim that Ionescu recreated the arguments of Evola's *Revolt* in his *Legionary Phenomenon* three months after meeting its author is far from specious. On the contrary, it provides a more likely explanation for similarities between Evola's *Revolt* and *Legionary Phenomenon* than would some suggestion of confluent innovation in Ionescu and Evola's thinking.

Method: Three Points of Comparison

Rhetorically, both Evola and Ionescu arrive at their rejections of modernity and the West as logical conclusions to their arguments. Practically, however, those arguments are the products of their objections rather than the sources of them. Both men sought to undermine Marxism and liberal democracy and to uphold an absolute—as opposed to constitutional—monarchy with their fascist ideologies, yet it is neither modernity nor the West *per se* that they reject. Rather, they “revolt” against the materialist theories of causation and coercive authority that form the basis of both liberal democracy and Marxism—the scientific method, dialectical materialism, evolution, historicism, and so on. In characteristically purple prose, Evola illustrates,

By way of introduction I will argue that no idea is as absurd as the idea of progress, which, together with its corollary notion of the superiority of modern civilization, has created its own “positive” alibis by falsifying history, by insinuating harmful myths in people's minds, and by proclaiming itself sovereign at the crossroads of the plebeian ideology from which it originated.⁴³

Evola and Ionescu each blame the humanism, individualism, and rationality that they associate with the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment and by which they define modernity. Yet Evola primarily associates this civilizational decline with modernity, while Ionescu mostly attributes it to Westernization. Both of them respond with a non-causal philosophy of history and an *a priori* assumption of cycles of civilizational decline and rebirth. Consequently, both *Revolt* and *Legionary Phenomenon* amount to arguments for a transcendently ordained feudal social order that cannot be improved through material intervention in history, only worsened by transgression against an inherent social hierarchy. My comparison of the texts follows the structure of their shared argument. I begin with their unusual logic, proceed to their respective characterizations and rejections of “modernity,” and conclude with their prescribed alternatives. Following the comparison, I address the two significant differences between *Legionary Phenomenon* and *Revolt* mentioned in the introduction: Ionescu's Christianization of Evola's Traditionalism and his geographical determinism, which ties modernity to the West in ways that Evola's *Revolt* does not. These differences between Ionescu and Evola, which simultaneously represent similarities between Ionescu and Dugin, are revisited in the conclusion.

Point 1: Correlation Implies Ontology

The shared logic of the two texts is the most significant point of comparison. Both Evola and Ionescu presuppose transcendental ideal forms of civilization that

⁴² Marta Petreu, “Istoria unui plagiat: Nae Ionescu—Evelyn Underhill,” *România literară* 27/50 (1994): 16–17. See also Marta Petreu, “Modelul și oglinda: Evelyn Underhill—Nae Ionescu,” *Momentul Adevărului*, ed. Iordan Chimet (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1996), 337–382. She explains: “I mention from the very beginning that [Ionescu's] ‘borrowing’ is as much on the level of ideas, problems, typology as it is on the level of explanatory examples, and sometimes even expressions.”

⁴³ Evola, *Revolt*, xxx.

“emerge” successively, but non-causally, within “time and space.” This mental model of transcendent-immanent pairs relies upon the correlative logic of Hermeticism: “as above; so below.”⁴⁴ The logic is relational rather than causal, like an object and its reflection in a mirror. Much as a reflection implies the existence of the object outside the mirror but is itself an effect of the mirror rather than the object, physico-temporal forms are said to imply the existence of transcendental forms but are themselves an effect of time and space. In Evola’s words, “Inherent to the idea of ‘traditional civilization’ is the idea of an equivalence or homology of its various forms realized in time and space.”⁴⁵ He is thus able to “induce” (correlate)⁴⁶ the existence of his ideal form from similar physico-temporal instantiations in varying stages of decadence. For its part, decadence is an inevitable effect of time and space, like distortions of the reflection in a mirror that has become cloudy and scratched with use.

Working from the same principle, Ionescu “deduces” (correlates)⁴⁷ the imminent emergence of a new Legionary civilization from the extreme decadence of interwar Romania. He states:

the legionary vision of reality is a formula that contains the entire manifestation of life, as it fits into history. Legionary Romania will be a political, economic, spiritual form of life different than that of today. The point of departure is history. Everything that happens happens in time and space, that is in history, in eternity.⁴⁸

Again, what Evola calls civilizations and Ionescu calls “historical forms” emerge “in history” as a consequence—property—of their correlation to a transcendent reality, but not as the effect of a physico-temporal cause. Rhetorically, then, if not in fact, neither Evola nor Ionescu derives an “ought from an is.” Rather, within the correlative frame of their respective projects, each merely proposes to uncover the nature of the transcendent and inevitable “is.”

Another important point of comparison within their shared logic is Evola’s and Ionescu’s method for divining/dictating their ideal forms of civilization. Evola explains:

What I call “traditional method” is usually characterized by a double principle: ontologically and objectively, by the principle of correspondence, which ensures an essential and functional correlation between analogous elements, presenting them as simple homologous forms of the appearance of a central and unitary meaning; and epistemologically and subjectively by the generalized use of the principle of induction, which is here understood as a discursive approximation of a spiritual intuition, in which what is realized is the integration and the

44 For a brief introduction to the topic of Hermeticism, see Wouter J Hanegraaff, “Hermes Trismegistus and Hermetism,” in *Hermes Explains: Thirty Questions about Western Esotericism: Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Centre for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam*, ed. Wouter J Hanegraaff, Peter J Forshaw, and Marco Pasi (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 1-10.

45 Evola, *Revolt*, xxxv.

46 Evola describes his method as inductive. It is not.

47 Ionescu’s logic, like Evola’s, is correlative. However, just as Evola presents his argument as inductive, Ionescu suggests his is deductive.

48 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 25.

unification of the diverse elements encountered in the same meaning and in the same one principle.⁴⁹

Beneath the gilded prose, Evola's "traditional method" and "spiritual intuition" are nothing more than a version of the *cum hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy guided by confirmation bias.

What Evola refers to in the above quote as the "central and unitary meaning," he elsewhere simply calls "normality."⁵⁰ Notably, in Ionescu's explanation of method, he adopts Evola's concept of "normality" just as he does Evola's use of "relativity":

There is thus a criterion of appraising, of measuring facts, even in this relativity of history: normality. [...] Normality is itself approximate. The concepts with which we measure normality are approximate instruments. In order for us to be able to say that a fact is normal or abnormal it must first exist as fact. Historical facts group themselves in a particular place and time—they have a kind of common air; a kind of family. There are multiple facts, and this also gives the collective character.⁵¹

By asserting the necessary preexistence of the fact of normality, Ionescu also "induces" (correlates) his transcendental ideal—the second part of Evola's "double principle." He even replicates Evola's concept of spiritual intuition, explaining, "The appreciation of the defining elements is a matter of personal art."⁵²

Perhaps the most conspicuous similarity between their methods is the isolation of a single element by which the "Traditional" or Legionary civilization may be identified. According to Evola,

The caste system is one of the main expressions of the traditional sociopolitical order, a "form" victorious over chaos and the embodiment of the metaphysical ideas of stability and justice. The division of individuals into castes or into equivalent groups according to their nature and to the different rank of activities they exercise with regard to pure spirituality is found with the same traits in all higher forms of traditional civilizations, and it constitutes the essence of the primordial legislation and of the social order according to "justice."⁵³

Similarly, Ionescu explains that "a historical epoch can be identified from a constitutive element, that is the whole through the part, with the condition, though, that the historical epoch be well defined and have reached normality."⁵⁴ For Evola,

49 Evola, *Revolt*, xxv.

50 Note, for example, his use of (ab)normal on pp. xxix, 38, 67, 68, 82, 90, 157, 159, 221, 222, and 358 of *Revolt*.

51 Roberts and Glăjar, "Legionary Phenomenon," 25.

52 *Ibid.*, 26.

53 Evola, *Revolt*, 89.

54 Roberts and Glăjar, "Legionary Phenomenon," 26.

that element is the inequality of individuals: a caste system;⁵⁵ for Ionescu, it is the inequality of races.⁵⁶

The combination of “traditional” (i.e., correlative) method and “spiritual intuition” or “personal art” by which Evola and Ionescu claim to discern their ideal forms of civilization implies a specialist role—yet another point of comparison in their logic.⁵⁷ It requires a prophet-augurer to read the signs and predict the dissolution of one civilization and the emergence of another.⁵⁸ Each of them assumes this role by enumerating and interpreting signs of civilizational decadence. Though their terms sometimes vary, the themes are shared: materialism, “evolutionism,” the scientific method, democracy, and pluralism. As shared portents of the end of a civilizational cycle, they constitute the next category of comparison of the two texts.

Point 2: Harbingers of Modernity

The core of both arguments is a rejection of materialism in favor of idealism. For example, according to Evola, “In traditional societies the ‘invisible’ was an element as real, if not *more* real, than data provided by the physical senses.”⁵⁹ For his part, Ionescu disguises his preference for idealism with a misrepresentation of the “statistical method.” “In the statistical method,” he claims, “a collective imposes the law on the individual. This was known also to Plato, who said that a thing from the sensible world does not exist except insofar as it participates in the idea, which was, per Plato, an existence with true reality, while the objects, the facts, that we live were of lesser reality.”⁶⁰ Like Evola’s “traditional method,” Ionescu’s logic is actually correlative. Thus, unsurprisingly, neither Evola nor Ionescu has any use for the scientific method. Evola is clear: “I consider the so-called scientific and positive perspective, with all its empty claims of competence and monopoly, as a display of ignorance in the best of cases.”⁶¹ For his part, Ionescu simply dismisses inductive empirical science as outdated and irrelevant: “Since around the end of the nineteenth century, the experimental method is no longer worked with, only the statistical one.”⁶²

Related as it is to the inductive reasoning of the scientific method, “evolutionism” is likewise offensive to both of them. Evola makes the connection between evolution and dialectical materialism, writing, “These phenomena [Marxist revolutions] clearly illustrate that beliefs that were once taken for granted today no longer are, and that

55 For Evola’s thoughts on the inequality of individuals, see his many references to “differentiation” of individuals: Evola, *Revolt*, 24, 34, 36, 45, 56, 70, 327, 338, 339; and of the sexes: 158, 159, 164, 169.

56 “God made the races, each with a single duty, to realize the natural law that God placed in them. The parable of the talents—for this is how God is realized, in history, in the eternity of now, not in that of the future—when there will be a flock and a shepherd, realizing the natural law placed by God, like any existence issued by God. Thus, a nation must realize itself in its own natural laws.” See Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 34.

57 Roger Griffin theorizes this function as that of the “propheta.” He writes, “Characteristic of cultural regeneration is the emergence of a propheta (a charismatic leader) who embodies the vision of a new nomos (a new sect, new religion, new principle for making sense of and re-ordering society) as the basis of a new society (communitas).” See Roger Griffin, “The Legitimizing Role of Palingenetic Myth in Ideocracies,” in *Ideocracies in Comparison: Legitimation—Cooptation—Repression*, ed. Uwe Backes and Steffen Kailitz (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 277.

58 For Evola’s own thoughts on this, see his comments on the figure of the “seer” in Evola, *Revolt*, 243: “The figure of the ‘seer’ (*roeh*) was replaced by the figure of the one obsessed by the spirit of God. Other features of prophetism were the paths of the ‘servants of the Eternal,’ which replaced the proud and fanatical self-confidence of being ‘God’s people,’ and also an equivocal mysticism with apocalyptic overtones.”

59 Evola, *Revolt*, 4.

60 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 31.

61 Evola, *Revolt*, xxxiii.

62 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 30.

the idyllic perspectives of ‘evolutionism’ have come of age.”⁶³ For Ionescu, evolution is simply anathema: “History does not organize itself evolutionarily (evolution is a non-Christian idea—not an anti-Christian one—introduced to our thinking in the nineteenth century).”⁶⁴

The scientific method and theories of evolution not only contradict Traditionalist claims about material existence, but also offer a model for realizing a new social order—a model in which change may represent progress rather than decline. Predictably, then, both Evola and Ionescu reject democracy—the very notion that authority to govern is derived from the consent of the governed—as an unacceptably inductive and materialist metaphysics of coercive authority.⁶⁵ According to Evola, “The idea that the power to govern is conferred on the chief by those whom he rules and that his authority is the expression of the community and therefore subject to its decrees, was foreign to Tradition.”⁶⁶ Similarly, according to Ionescu:

At the basis of the [democratic] understanding of the world is the individual will and not the will of the nation, in the sense of collectivity, entity, synthesis, sum. Democracy did not speak about the will of the nation, for the nation is a collective being. Democracy spoke about the people, in the understanding of a majority of votes, which does not mean the will of the nation.⁶⁷

As mentioned previously, both Evola and Ionescu accept only absolute (divine) kingship as a legitimate expression of authority.

Evola and Ionescu’s mutual “revolt,” which began with a rejection of materialism, is bookended by an attack on pluralism. According to Evola, it is once again a question of the transcendent—of metaphysics. He explains:

When a race has lost contact with the only thing that has and can provide stability, namely, with the world of ‘Being’; and when in a race that which forms its most subtle yet most essential element has been lost, namely, the inner race of the spirit—compared to which the race of the body and of the soul are only external manifestations and means of expression—then the collective organisms that the race has generated ... are destined to descend into the world of contingency.⁶⁸

Working from the same principle, Ionescu explains how ascendancy is also possible: “When a people achieves consciousness of itself, it ceases to be a people and becomes a nation, that is a spiritual reality, a self-consciousness hitherto unknown.” And then, echoing Evola’s reference to a descent into the world of contingency, Ionescu adds, “There does not exist [...] obedience and defensiveness in nationalism, for the races [*neamuri*] that put themselves in that kind of position fall into serfdom.”⁶⁹

63 Evola, *Revolt*, xxviii. “These phenomena” refers to the previous sentence, in which Evola condemns, “violent and chaotic expressions typical of a ‘protest’ that wishes to be global, though it is inspired only by the contingent and terminal forms of the latest civilization.”

64 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 25.

65 For Evola, liberalism and communism represent the same plebeian anti-hierarchical self governance.

66 Evola, *Revolt*, 8.

67 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 36.

68 Evola, *Revolt*, 56.

69 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 35.

Point 3: Traditionalist/Legionary Correctives to Modern/Western Decadence

It is not only their definition and negation of the modern West that reveals the similarities between Evola's *Revolt* and Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*, but also the "Traditional" or "Legionary" alternatives they prescribe. The final category of comparison demonstrates how both thinkers replace materialism, the scientific method, evolution, democracy, and pluralism with correspondence, relativity, normality, divine authority, and empire. Because the previous sections have already incorporated some of this information, I take this opportunity to augment those points of comparison rather than repeat them.

For both Evola and Ionescu, "relativity," "correlation," and "correspondence" refer to the logic of Hermeticism—the non-causal relationship between the transcendent and the immanent, which I have previously described as akin to that of an object and its reflection in a mirror. The claim of correspondence (between the transcendent and the immanent) allows Evola to pick and choose the individual features of his transcendental truth from a (dubious) multiplicity of immanent "reflections."

The correspondences may not be noticeable from the outside; one may be taken aback by the diversity of several possible and yet equivalent expressions; in some cases the correspondences are respected in the spirit, in other cases only formally and nominally; in some cases there may be more complete applications of principles, in others, more fragmentary ones; in some there are legendary expressions, in others historical expressions—and yet there is always something constant and central that characterizes the same world and the same man and determine an identical opposition vis-à-vis everything that is modern.⁷⁰

In Ionescu, we see how this transcendental truth—once adduced—is presented as prescriptive:

Historical facts organize themselves in time, they group themselves into certain unities inside which different constitutive elements exist in a tight correlation. For every constitutive element and every individual that makes up part of a historical form, this is obligatory, while historical forms succeed one another, but do not condition one another, there does not exist causality and direction in history.⁷¹

Their claim of correspondence between the transcendent and the immanent seeks to undermine all causal logic.

Stressing his ontological point, Evola insists, "There is no objectivity and scientific causality the way modern men understand them. All these notions are unreal; all these notions are outside Tradition."⁷² Likewise, for Ionescu, "everything that happens in history—that is in time and space—is relative. Events, then, are also relative, in the understanding that they do not represent a meaning in themselves, they are

⁷⁰ Evola, *Revolt*, xxxv.

⁷¹ Roberts and Glajar, "Legionary Phenomenon," 27.

⁷² Evola, *Revolt*, xxxiv.

not produced per a particular law.”⁷³ Thus, “relativity” represents ontology without causation and replaces inductive reasoning as well as both the scientific method and evolution. Evola and Ionescu each fill the void left by the loss of the dynamic trajectory of cause and effect with the transcendental fixed point of “normality,” which represents conformity to an imagined ideal—the absence of decadence, but no possibility of progress.

Evola illustrates how this understanding of “normality” functions within his theory of knowledge, lamenting, “These causes [of the West’s decline within time and space] have not only taken away from most people the possibility of revolt and the return to normalcy and health, they have taken away the ability to understand what true normalcy and health really mean.”⁷⁴ Ionescu’s explanation likewise pertains to epistemology—what is knowable and how:

The Christian [Legionary] mentality is a realist mentality, insofar as it accepts everything as it normally appears. The world that exists, exists how it is normally, not how we want it to be. There is thus a criterion of appraising, of measuring facts, even in this relativity of history: normality.⁷⁵

At last, we arrive at Evola and Ionescu’s assertions of transcendental authority and empire (i.e., hierarchy) over democracy and pluralism. Yet it is here that Ionescu diverges from Evola in his Christianization and geographical determinism—the adaptations erroneously credited to Dugin. Regarding coercive authority, Evola distinguishes between divine and mundane authority, writing, “It is Zeus who bestows θεμιστες [*themistes*] on kings of divine origin, whereby θεμις [*themis*] or, ‘law from above,’ is very different from what constitutes νόμος [*nomos*], which is the political law of the community.”⁷⁶ In another especially conspicuous parallel, Ionescu recapitulates Evola’s parsing of the Greek *themis* and *nomos* with Romanian analogues. He explains, “The liberal state has justice. At its base is the idea of right [*drept*], which is an abstract idea. For us, people did not take heed of the justice system, but rather of moral right [*dreptate*].”⁷⁷

Both Evola and Ionescu use their arguments for a transcendental source of authority to force an imperial paradigm. The flow of authority from the transcendent to the immanent defines king and subjects alike as mutual prerequisites of national/imperial sovereignty; a people with no king, like a king with no people, can claim no transcendental substantiation. In Evola’s terms, they must “fall into contingency.” Thus, it is the shared ontology (i.e., religious belief) of the people that upholds “divine” kingship and the imperial paradigm. As Evola explains, “an empire is such only by virtue of higher values that have been attained by a given race...; only then will a race become the bearer of a principle that is also present in other peoples endowed with a traditional organization...”⁷⁸ Ironically, the “higher values” to which Evola refers represent the homogenous *belief*—if not the *consent*—of the governed in an ethnic religion (*vide*, “a given race”). The plurality that he rejects is thus primarily epistemological and secondarily biological.

73 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 25.

74 Evola, *Revolt*, xxix.

75 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 25.

76 Evola, *Revolt*, 8.

77 Roberts and Glăjar, “Legionary Phenomenon,” 28.

78 Evola, *Revolt*, 75.

Here, once again, the theme-and-variation relationship between Ionescu's Legionary Romania and Evola's "Traditional Civilization" is on display. According to Ionescu,

The word of Christ is one in the heavens, on the line of perfection. Yet we humans, who live in history, understand it differently—so, relatively—according to the nation we are a part of ... Therefore, each individual lives the word of God in his own way, in conformity with the absolute supreme collectivity in history, which is the nation.⁷⁹

Since it can only be lived out through the nation as the "absolute supreme collectivity in history," Ionescu's perfect "word of Christ," which is one in the heavens, represents the Christianization of Evola's Traditional pagan imperialism. Yet, as explained above, it remains in fact a tribal and crypto-polytheist Christianity. For both Evola and Ionescu, then, pluralism is impossible because within their shared paradigm, difference is inherently hierarchical. Evola leaves no doubt: "Nationality is a natural factor that encompasses a certain group of common elementary characteristics that are retained both in the hierarchical differentiation and in the hierarchical participation, which they do not oppose."⁸⁰ Different races may coexist within a Traditionalist empire. Indeed, they are necessary because the subjugation of the other is the only test and proof of transcendently ordained sovereignty. Yet difference without hierarchical distinction—epistemological pluralism—is anathema; it is the very nature—the singular hallmark—of the decadence of the West in the modern age.

Ionescu also diverges from Evola on the relationship of race to civilization or empire. For Ionescu (as well as Dugin), the geography of a race's "emergence"—and therefore also its self-realization as empire—is deterministic. In Traditionalist terms, this geographic determinism is referred to as "sacred geography." While Evola argues that a race can achieve empire only when it has "overcome itself and its naturalistic particularities," Ionescu insists that ascendance to empire results from embracing—rather than overcoming—certain "naturalistic particularities." He explains, "A nation, as an organic and spiritual collective, has certain natural laws. These need to be realized in the optimum form, for one cannot descend to transaction in their realization."⁸¹ For Ionescu, many of these natural laws are geographically determined. As he explains, a nation is a historical form, and "there exist historical forms that are pure and impure. The pure ones are born where the historical conditions are superimposed on the geographical."⁸² Elsewhere, Ionescu adds,

God made the races, each with a single duty, to realize the natural law that God placed in them. The parable of the talents—for this is how God is realized, in history, in the eternity of now, not in that of the future—when there will be a flock and a shepherd, realizing the natural law placed by God, like any existence issued by God. Thus, a nation must realize itself in its own natural laws.⁸³

The difference between Evola's "higher values" and Ionescu's "natural laws" is that Evola's ideal represents a singular transcendental truth that is not necessarily—or

79 Roberts and Glăjar, "Legionary Phenomenon," 36.

80 Evola, *Revolt*, 338f.

81 Roberts and Glăjar, "Legionary Phenomenon," 34.

82 *Ibid.*, 27.

83 *Ibid.*, 34.

not significantly—conditioned by location, whereas Ionescu’s ideal represents the same transcendental truth necessarily and significantly conditioned by its emergence in historical time and *geographic* space.

The “phenomenon” to which Ionescu refers in the title of his fascist manifesto should be understood as his particularization of Evola’s Traditionalist description of ascendance from race to empire through the alignment of belief and action. While it is presented as Orthodox Traditionalism, any substantive universality has been removed from its Christianity, rendering it effectively polytheist and thus able to accommodate Evola’s paradigm of “multipolar” pagan imperialism. Its most significant departure from Evola’s Tradition lies in connecting the realization of Evola’s ethnic Traditionalist empire to the geographic locus of its “emergence” in time and space. In the conclusion below, I address the fact that these two departures from Evola’s Traditionalism have been widely but erroneously credited to Dugin and discuss what this means for scholarship on Dugin.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that Ionescu’s *Legionary Phenomenon* constitutes a long-neglected but important part of the development of integral Traditionalism, one with significant bearing on contemporary far-right and fascist ideologies. I have also indicated that further research into Ionescu and the *Legionary Phenomenon*, specifically, should inform and disrupt important and ongoing scholarly debates about the relationship of Dugin’s ideological output to both integral Traditionalism and historical fascism. I conclude, therefore, with a review of some of the analyses most affected by the findings of this article and an indication of where existing arguments are impacted. Scholarship on other thinkers (e.g., Nae Ionescu himself, Mircea Eliade, etc.) will be similarly affected, yet such discussion must remain suspended for the time being; I focus here only on scholarly debates concerning Dugin.

Aleksandr Dugin’s interest in Traditionalism is well established and uncontested, yet there is some dispute over which—if any—aspects of his own thought can legitimately be considered Traditionalist. This debate is perhaps best understood in terms of what is perceived to be at stake, namely the mutual compatibility or exclusivity of Traditionalism and fascism. If the two are mutually exclusive, Dugin is either fascist and therefore not really Traditionalist or he is Traditionalist and therefore not really fascist. (The former position is notably represented in the scholarship of Andreas Umland and Anton Shekhovtsov, and the latter by the arguments of A. James Gregor. I address them both below.) On the other hand, if Traditionalism and fascism are in fact mutually compatible, the question can be raised as to whether Dugin’s Traditionalism is merely incidental to his ideology or whether it is somehow inextricable from his thought as a whole. For scholars like Mark Sedgwick and Marlène Laruelle, this question is important insofar as it pertains to the intellectual history of Traditionalism and because it sheds light on the development of Dugin’s political thought. However, for Dugin himself and apologists such as Jafe Arnold,⁸⁴ Dugin’s “legitimate” use of a Traditionalist paradigm would dictate that

84 Arnold is a contributor to Geopolitica.ru. See “Jafe Arnold,” Geopolitica.ru, March 7, 2016, <https://www.geopolitika.ru/en/person/jafe-arnold>. The site bears the compass rose symbol of Dugin’s Fourth Political Theory and explicitly states: “In the field of ideology, we reject all three political theories of the European Modern: 1) Liberalism, 2) Communism and 3) Fascism, considering them to be completely unsuitable for understanding the essence of those processes that develop [sic] around us in the contemporary world, and following [sic] the principles of the Fourth Political Theory.” Arnold is also a contributor to Katehon, a pro-“multi-polar” thinktank whose president is Konstantin Malofeev. See “Jafe Arnold,” Katehon, March 7, 2016, <https://katehon.com/en/person/jafe-arnold>.

any evaluation or critique accept the correlative logic of his arguments if it is to be “unbiased.” (I address these positions below as well.) All of these arguments—which I have separated into “incompatibility” and “integralist” debates—are affected to the extent that Dugin draws inspiration from Ionescu.

The Incompatibility Debate

The conversation about Dugin's status as a Traditionalist seems to have begun in earnest in 2004, when Mark Sedgwick, a leading scholar on the subject of Traditionalism, referred to Dugin as a “centrally important Traditionalist” and credited him with developing “an unusual variety of Traditionalism: Neo-Eurasianism.”⁸⁵ Over the next few years, political scientists Andreas Umland and Anton Shekhovtsov responded to Sedgwick's assessment, warning against associating Dugin with Traditionalism because it risked “providing Dugin with a pseudo-conservative veil that obscures the revolutionary-ultranationalist—that is, fascist—agenda underlying his publishing activities.”⁸⁶ They point out that Dugin's thought more closely resembles that of Julius Evola than it does the teachings of René Guénon (1886-1951), who effectively founded the Traditionalist doctrine.⁸⁷ Shekhovtsov and Umland argue for a firm distinction between Traditionalism, defined as the teachings of Guénon, on the one hand, and Evola, as a sort of corrupter of Guénon's legacy, on the other hand. They rightly distinguish between “Evola's peculiar (re)interpretation of Traditionalism” and Guénon's “original version of the doctrine,” but their argument that Evola is not a “legitimate successor”⁸⁸ to the teachings of Guénon and therefore not a Traditionalist is complicated by the fact that Guénon's “doctrine” consists *both* of an assertion of the real existence of a body of eternal and unchanging transcendental truths *and* an elaboration of its content. Although Evola breaks with Guénon over some of the content, he relies on Guénon's model of the real existence of a body of absolute truths as well as his method for divining/dictating them.⁸⁹

Exactly which part of Guénon's formula should comprise the *sine qua non* of Traditionalism is contested, so arguments over Evola's status as a Traditionalist are unsurprisingly thorny and ongoing. While the distinction between Guénon and Evola is both valid and significant, the question as to whether their differences delegitimize Evola as a Traditionalist or merely distinguish one school of Traditionalism from another amounts to an emic distinction between orthodoxy and heresy *within* Traditionalism. It requires one to decide whether to define Traditionalism as the *validity* of a sort of revelation, the *content*, the *method*, or some combination thereof. Guénon and Evola unquestionably share their rejection of the modern materialist, causal metaphysical paradigm that allows for deriving an “ought from an is” in favor of the correlative Hermetic metaphysics that support divining a transcendental

85 Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 221.

86 Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, “Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist? ‘Neo-Eurasianism’ and Perennial Philosophy,” *The Russian Review* 68, no. 4 (October 2009): 662-678, 676, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2009.00544.x>.

87 “Traditionalism,” as it is discussed here, is a modern instantiation of *philosophia perennis*. Guénon's “founding” of the doctrine of Traditionalism might thus also accurately be described as a revival of *philosophia perennis*. Sedgwick notes, “The term *philosophia perennis* (Perennial Philosophy) was coined in 1540 by a Catholic scholar to describe one of the central insights of Marsilio Ficino, an important figure in the origins of Traditionalism.” See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 193.

88 Shekhovtsov and Umland, “Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist?” 665.

89 See, for example, Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World*, 53: “Moreover, because of the correspondence that exists between all the orders of reality, the truths of a lower order can be taken as symbols of those of higher orders, and can therefore serve as ‘supports’ by which one may arrive at an understanding of these; and this fact makes it possible for any science to become a sacred science, giving it a higher ‘anagogical’ meaning deeper than that which it possesses in itself.”

and eternal “is”—the rejection of cause and effect in favor of “normality” discussed above.⁹⁰

Both Guénon and Evola are anti-modern and both propose palingenetic cycles of decline and rebirth. The differences between them pertain to the *content* of the transcendental “is.” As Shekhovtsov and Umland recognize, Guénon valued contemplation over action, whereas Evola (as well as Dugin)⁹¹ “subordinated reflection and knowledge (the ‘sacerdotal,’ Brahmanic principle) to action (the ‘royal,’ Kshatria principle).”⁹² In brief, where Guénon is descriptive and noninterventionist, Evola is prescriptive and interventionist. Thus, in the Guénonian paradigm, the palingenesis of epochal cycles occurs inevitably, but in its own time, whereas in the Evolan paradigm, it can be accelerated by means of ideals and actions—such as the enforcement of caste systems and racial hierarchies—that political scientists recognize as ultranationalism. This is exemplified by the positive function attributed to war by both Evola and Ionescu. The significance of the difference in much of the scholarship is that while Evola’s Traditionalism meets Roger Griffin’s minimal definition of fascism as both palingenetic and ultranationalist,⁹³ Guenon’s does not.

The corresponding debate over the question of Dugin’s fascism also began in 2004, with an open back-and-forth between political scientists Andreas Umland and the late A. James Gregor (1929-2019). With Griffin, Umland had concluded that Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism was fascist.⁹⁴ However, Gregor countered that Dugin’s thought had more in common with the ideas of Julius Evola than with fascism.⁹⁵ Indeed, Gregor pointed out that Dugin’s “rejection of ‘narrow nationalism’ and his call to ‘Eurasian Empire,’ together with his appeal to the creation of a ‘traditional state’ are,” according to Dugin himself, “all inspired by Evola.”⁹⁶ He also noted that “Dugin’s convictions that world history is shaped by ‘suprarational forces’ and a ‘transcendental Idea,’ are all borrowed from Evola.”⁹⁷ In fact, Gregor asserted that Dugin’s thought, “all of it, ultimately reduces to the ‘sacral geography’ and the ‘spiritual racism’ of the occult and mystical musings of Julius Evola.”⁹⁸ For Umland, as for most scholars, Gregor’s argument that Dugin could not be fascist because of his similarity to Evola was rather self-defeating: most scholars consider Evola to be fascist even though he was generally rejected by the Fascist and Nazi parties during the interwar period and afterwards. Thus, Gregor unwittingly strengthened the argument for a reading of Evola’s thought as “generic fascism” through his careful analysis of it. In the end, Gregor convinced Umland of Evola’s influence on Dugin but continued to reject the premise of Evola’s fascism and, thus, Umland’s conclusion that Evola’s influence in fact supports a reading of Dugin as fascist.

Gregor’s claim that Evola should not be considered fascist is very much a minority opinion among political scientists, and his objections are best understood in light of his

90 See above: Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World*, 53. “Moreover...”

91 Aleksandr Dugin, *Filosofia Traditsionalizma* (Moscow: Arktogeia, 2002), 403-58.

92 Shekhovtsov and Umland, “Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist?” 668.

93 Specifically, Griffin defines fascism as “a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.” See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 26.

94 Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman, “The Nature of Fascism,” in *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004), 339-340.

95 A. James Gregor and Andreas Umland, “Dugin Not a Fascist? A Debate with A. James Gregor (6 Texts),” *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* 16 (2005): 426-9.

96 *Ibid.*, 427.

97 *Ibid.*, 427.

98 *Ibid.*, 428.

restrictive approach. Gregor measures Evola not against “generic fascism,” but rather against “Mussolini’s Fascism” (NB: the uppercase F), which he defines as “a form of reactive, antidemocratic, developmental nationalism that serves as a paradigmatic instance of revolution in the twentieth century” and which “featured a coherent, manifestly relevant political ideology committed to the redemption of a humiliated and retrograde people.”⁹⁹ Even so, his reasoning that Dugin’s extensive reliance on Evola likewise precludes the possibility of the former’s fascism is not only tenuous, but also complicated by Dugin’s incorporation of Ionescu’s adaptations. Moreover, the fact that *Legionary Phenomenon*—a fascist manifesto by the chief ideologue of the Iron Guard—is largely based on Evola’s *Revolt* also means that Gregor has misjudged Evola’s influence among fascist intellectuals during the interwar period. And while Ionescu’s premises are no less “suprarational” and “transcendental” than Evola’s, few scholars today would argue that Ionescu’s *Legionary Phenomenon* is anything other than fascist. Consequently, Gregor’s argument seems to be primarily a proxy battle for his own narrow definition of fascism.

The Integralist Debate

I turn now to the implications of mutual compatibility—though not necessarily affinity—between Traditionalism and fascism. Whereas the above debate revolves around what I have called the “content” of Traditionalist teachings, this one is focused on the metaphysical epistemology of Traditionalism. In other words, it pertains not so much to *what* is held to be true as it does to *how* truth itself is demonstrated. Though each for different reasons, the scholars involved in this debate are concerned with when and to what extent Dugin has genuinely argued like a Traditionalist as opposed to merely borrowing particular details and conclusions piecemeal from Traditionalist thinkers. Here I examine the positions of Mark Sedgwick, an intellectual historian and scholar of esotericism; Marlène Laruelle, a historian and political philosopher; and Jafe Arnold, a translator and publisher of Eurasianist literature and a scholar of esotericism. In their respective analyses, these scholars—like those above—represent not only themselves, but also currents in the larger debate.

For two of the three the scholars considered here (Laruelle and Sedgwick), Dugin’s status as a Traditionalist cannot decide the question of his fascism because they do not consider the two to be mutually exclusive. Laruelle has identified Dugin’s ideology as fascist independently of the question of his Traditionalism; her interest in Dugin’s use of Traditionalism is in how it relates to his ideological program. As she explains, “several intellectual tendencies manifest themselves in his thought: a political theory inspired by Traditionalism, Orthodox religious philosophy, Aryanist and occultist theories, and geopolitical and Eurasianist conceptions.”¹⁰⁰ Laruelle sees Dugin’s interest in Traditionalism as one of many influences and/or dictions within an ideological bricolage. “Above all,” she stresses, “he is striving to cover every niche in the current ideological ‘marketplace.’”¹⁰¹ Sedgwick’s view on Dugin’s Traditionalism is not dissimilar, though he clearly positions Traditionalism at the center of Dugin’s ideological project: “a form of Traditionalism that is both distinctively Soviet and distinctively Russian [...] lies at the heart of Dugin’s politics.”¹⁰² For both Sedgwick

99 A. James Gregor, *Phoenix: Fascism in Our Time* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 20.

100 Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: And Ideology of Empire* (Washington D.C., Baltimore MD: Woodrow Wilson Center Press: Johns Hopkins University Press), 108.

101 *Ibid.*, 107.

102 Mark J. Sedgwick, “Occult Dissident Culture: The Case of Aleksandr Dugin,” in *The New Age of Russia: Occult and Esoteric Dimensions*, ed. Birgit Menzel, Michael Hagemester, and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Munich: Otto Sagner, 2011), 273.

and Laruelle, Dugin's thought is more Traditionalist at some times than at others, but unambiguously Traditionalist at least some of the time. Unlike Laruelle, however, Sedgwick, who is not a political scientist, avoids weighing in on the question of Dugin's fascism.

Arnold's preoccupation is markedly different. Like Sedgwick and Laruelle, he is concerned with Traditionalism as a metaphysical epistemology. However, he argues that Dugin has been fundamentally and consistently Traditionalist since his publication of *Philosophy of Traditionalism* (2001), if not before.¹⁰³ Arnold has criticized existing scholarship for "problematically dismissing Dugin's self-proclaimed Traditionalism as a political motive rather than a coherent worldview whose structure and context are worth studying."¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, and critically, he argues that Traditionalism is so central to Dugin's thought that it should determine the framework in which Dugin's work can be evaluated. He insists that the prevalence of attention from political scientists has "manifested itself in numerous instances of the employment of preconceived models of reified political spectra which render further scholarship on Dugin at best frivolous and at worst politically suspect."¹⁰⁵ Arnold's repudiation of "reified political spectra," along with his complaint of "a distinct lack of an adequate and unbiased conceptual framework which can hermeneutically address Dugin's intellectual corpus,"¹⁰⁶ exemplify his push for different evaluative criteria.

Rather than denying that Dugin's thought meets the criteria for multiple definitions of fascism within the "reified political spectra," Arnold attempts to rule out the possibility of Dugin's fascism by implication. In so doing, he recapitulates both Evola's and Ionescu's (as well as Dugin's own) efforts to reorient not only the criteria by which political ideologies are identified, but also those by which facts themselves are understood. He does this not by arguing that Traditionalism is incompatible with fascism within a single epistemological paradigm—as do Shekhovtsov, Umland, and Gregor—but rather by arguing that Traditionalism-as-paradigm is incompatible with the accepted causal material (i.e., "scientific") paradigm in which fascism is a meaningful construct. By way of analogy, for the same reason that a given chemical compound that is highly flammable in an oxygen-rich atmosphere may accurately be said to be incombustible in a vacuum, Arnold advocates reading Dugin "in a vacuum" (i.e., assuming a Traditionalist epistemology). To do so renders the constituent elements of Dugin's ideology "inert" without needing to deny their presence. His calls for an "unbiased" reading thus represent a covert attempt—like those of Evola, Ionescu, and Dugin himself—to hijack the epistemological paradigm with correlative Hermetic logic.

For Dugin and his apologists, the ramifications of the "integralist" debate thus concern whether existing theories of fascism can be applied legitimately—or even logically—to Dugin's philosophico-religious output. If his engagement with Traditionalism is merely allusive, opportunistic, or perhaps even just inconsistent, then the question of fascism in his thought might reasonably be left to familiar debates about fascism and their attendant definitions. In scholarship on Dugin, as previously mentioned, this often involves Roger Griffin's familiar minimal definition of paligenetic myth

103 Jafe Arnold, "Alexander Dugin and Western Esotericism: The Challenge of the Language of Tradition," *MONDI: Movimenti Simbolici e Sociali dell'Uomo* 2, no. 1 (April 2019). See especially "3. The Tradition of Language and the Language of Tradition," 41-53.

104 Arnold, "Alexander Dugin and Western Esotericism," 33.

105 *Ibid.*, 34.

106 *Ibid.*, 34.

and ultranationalism. If, however, Dugin's ideology can only be "appreciated" from an emic Traditionalist perspective—if it can be "properly understood" only once one embraces the metaphysical assumptions of Traditionalism—then a case should presumably be made to relitigate Dugin's neo-Eurasianism and "Fourth Political Theory," acquitting them of the charge (and stigma) of fascism and labeling them instead something else, something new. From the apologist perspective, then, what matters is not so much whether Dugin is, in fact, a "legitimate" Traditionalist as that he be *read* as one. Dugin and his apologists, like Evola and Ionescu before them, argue for the absolute necessity of their metaphysical assumptions (i.e., the epistemological paradigm) because they propose not to derive "an ought from an is," but rather to uncover the truth of a transcendental and eternal "is"—something only conceivable absent the possibility of "progress," which Evola, Ionescu, and Dugin all explicitly reject.¹⁰⁷ Significantly, an insistence upon the correlative logic of Hermetic metaphysics is something that Evola, Ionescu, and Dugin all share with Guénon. For this reason, I would argue (*vis-a-vis* Shekhovtsov and Umland) that defining Traditionalism by its unusual fundamental ontological assumptions rather than the specific teachings of any given Traditionalist offers the most useful etic organizational heuristic.

The strength of Laruelle's analysis is that she recognizes the difference in epistemological frameworks *without acceding* to Traditionalist calls for an epistemological paradigm shift. As she notes, Dugin "does not limit himself to a spiritual or intellectual understanding of Traditionalism. He asserts that it is in itself 'an ideology or meta ideology that is in many ways totalitarian and requires that those who adopt it accept its stringent requirements.'"¹⁰⁸ Dugin's appreciation of Traditionalism as a totalitarian meta-ideology is reflected in his paraphrase of Guénon, which Laruelle cites in her analysis:

Tradition, according to René Guénon's definition, is the totality of divinely revealed non-human Knowledge, which determined the make-up of all sacral civilizations—from the paradisiacal empires of the Golden Age which disappeared many millennia ago, to the Medieval Civilization which, in its various forms (Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, Confucian, etc.) largely reproduced the parameters of the Sacred Order.¹⁰⁹

Absent from Dugin's (borrowed) definition is any identifiable ideological content. Rather, his focus is on the validity and the authority of revelation within the paradigm. Just as it is for Evola and Ionescu, the utility of Traditionalism is much more the correlative metaphysics of "truth" and the method for discerning/producing it than the specific content of that revelation in a Guénonian school of Traditionalism.

In seizing upon Dugin's reference to "meta ideology," Laruelle has left space for the possibility that even if Dugin does not always use Traditionalist sources, he may consistently use his disparate sources *in a Traditionalist way*. Her analysis has thus, I believe, held up even as Dugin has turned his attention to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger in recent years. For example, although Heidegger is not considered a Traditionalist philosopher, it may be argued that Dugin's incorporation of Heidegger's philosophy as a correlative confirmation of his "totalitarian meta ideology" is in fact

¹⁰⁷ For Dugin's rejection of the idea of "progress," see especially the third chapter of his *Fourth Political Theory*, "The Critique of Monotonic Processes."

¹⁰⁸ Laruelle, *Eurasianism*, 125.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 122-3.

Traditionalist. Indeed, Dugin's discussion of Heidegger's *Seynsgeschichte* hardly seems different from his paraphrase of Guénon on Tradition:

Seynsgeschichte is not just an area of thought or a branch of science. It is an intense effort to recognize the *message of Being* (*Seyn*) embedded in the historical process by deciphering the profound philosophical intention of those thinkers who have raised ontological questions, spoken about it indirectly, or have been silent about it (which is no less important).¹¹⁰

Whether or not Dugin has understood Heidegger, he positions himself as prophet-augurer of the transcendental authority of *Seynsgeschichte* no less than Evola does for Tradition and Ionescu does for "the Legionary phenomenon." Thus, while Laruelle is not wrong when she explains, "Dugin is never [...] a simple ideological 'reproducer.' He hopes to 'Russify' the doctrines that inspire him and to adapt them to what he calls the traditional concepts of the Russian world,"¹¹¹ I am inclined to amend her observation with the caveat that Dugin is both presenting his project in targeted diction and—like Ionescu does with Evola—disguising some of his sources in the process.

Laruelle is not the only one to see a Russification of existing ideas in Dugin's thought. Sedgwick, too, sees a certain Russianness in Dugin's Traditionalism. Of Dugin's identification as an Old Believer, he writes:

This detail makes no sense in Guénonian or Traditionalist terms, but makes a lot of sense in Russian terms, since it allows Dugin to have excellent relations with the mainstream Orthodox Church. Such a strategy gives Dugin the opportunity to take part in the political life of the Russian Federation—an activity that would have been more difficult, if not impossible, had Dugin followed Guénon's example and become a Muslim.¹¹²

How much more so had Dugin followed Evola's example and become a pagan! Elsewhere, Sedgwick explains, "According to Dugin, Orthodoxy, unlike Catholicism, had never lost its initiatic validity and so remained a valid tradition to which a Traditionalist might turn. Dugin then proceeded to translate much of the Traditionalist philosophy into Orthodox terms."¹¹³ Though Sedgwick can hardly be faulted for being unaware of Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*, his analysis is also disrupted by the recognition that Ionescu's Christofascist Traditionalism is one of Dugin's inspirations. Dugin did not translate Traditionalism into Orthodox terms, Ionescu did.

Arnold, too, sees Dugin as Russifying where he has, in fact, merely borrowed liberally from Ionescu's *Legionary Phenomenon*. Yet to his credit, Arnold has identified Vasile Lovinescu's *Hyperborean Dacia* (1936-37) as the earliest substantive source text of "sacred geography" (i.e., geographic determinism):

110 Aleksandr Dugin, *Martin Heidegger: The Philosophy of Another Beginning* (Arlington, VA: Raddix/Washington Summit, 2014), 70.

111 Laruelle, *Eurasianism*, 123.

112 Mark Sedgwick, "Alexander Dugin's Apocalyptic Traditionalism" (American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, November 19, 2006), 9-10.

113 Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 226.

Guénon insisted that such a “traditional initiatic science” and conceptualization of “qualitative space” existed in antiquity, but only broached the topic in passing in a few texts; Evola also briefly described “sacred geography” as an integral part of the Traditionalist worldview, but his formulation of such has yet to be reconstructed out of his numerous works; and, to my knowledge, Guénon’s Romanian correspondent known as “Geticus” (Lovinescu) was the only Traditionalist to have authored a whole substantive work on sacred geography. Dugin’s formulation and application of “sacred geography” is thus in many ways one of his original contributions to Traditionalism...¹¹⁴

It would most certainly be of interest to examine Dugin’s geographic determinism in light of Lovinescu’s *Hyperborean Dacia*, which has yet to be done. And while it is all but certain that Ionescu read Lovinescu’s contributions to the Romanian journal *Études Traditionelles*, in which *Hyperborean Dacia* was published in three parts between 1936 and 1937 (a year before Evola’s visit to Bucharest), it does not necessarily follow that Lovinescu is the source of inspiration for Dugin’s geographic determinism. It is, after all, Ionescu and not Lovinescu whom Dugin credits with being “the greatest intellectual of our time” in his *Finis Mundi* broadcast.

The restoration of Ionescu’s *Legionary Phenomenon* to its proper place in the intellectual history of Traditionalism must change the way we think about Dugin’s engagement with Traditionalism. First, current estimates of Dugin’s originality as a Traditionalist obviously have to be revisited. His presentation of Traditionalism in Orthodox terms can hardly be argued to be original, nor can his incorporation of geographic determinism (i.e., “sacred geography”). Second, since both of these aspects of Dugin’s Traditionalism have demonstrable antecedents in Romanian Legionary ideology, it is now incumbent upon scholars to reexamine his use of them in light of their originary fascist context. How much of what has been described as Dugin’s Russifying or personalizing in fact represents deliberate fascistifying?

Third, inspired in part by Umland and Shekhovtsov’s warning about the potential legitimizing effect of “Traditionalism” on evaluations of Dugin’s thought, it is worth considering whether it might be possible to distinguish between accelerationist and non-accelerationist (i.e., fascist and nonfascist) Traditionalism and address—even as non-political scientists—the relationship between certain metaphysical assumptions and ultranationalist conclusions. Indeed, it may no longer be responsible to avoid the topic of fascism within the scholarly discussion of Traditionalism. This approach would allow us to distinguish critically between Dugin’s and Guénon’s thought while still recognizing their fundamental epistemological similarity. Finally, the issue raised by Arnold regarding the centrality of Traditionalism to Dugin’s thought is also impacted. If we can agree on a core definition of Traditionalism as a correlative Hermetic epistemology, then I believe Dugin’s broader project may be as consistently Traditionalist as Arnold suggests, though I reject Arnold’s claim that one must embrace the emic correlative logic of Traditionalism in order to comprehend or evaluate it. In such a case, the various appeals to transcendental premises, along with the proxy arguments to accept them, become conspicuous as signs of this type of reasoning, as well as a valuable tool for scholarly and political analysis.

¹¹⁴ Luca Siniscalco and Jafe Arnold, “‘The Most Dangerous Philosopher in the World’: Luca Siniscalco Interviews Jafe Arnold on the ‘Esoteric’ Alexander Dugin,” *La Rosa di Paracelso: Rivista di studi sull’Esoterismo occidentale* 2 (2019): 100.