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# Julius Evola and the UR Group

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## Abstract

Die Gruppe von UR, die von 1927–1929 bestand, wurde im Wesentlichen vom italienischen Mathematiker, Neu-Pythagoreer und Hochgradfreimaurer Arturo Reghini sowie von Julius Evola begründet, der damals bereits seine dadaistische und philosophische Periode beendete und sich intensiv mit fernöstlicher Spiritualität beschäftigte hatte. Auf Grund ihres umfangreichen Lehrmaterials und wegen der hoch qualifizierten Mitglieder (darunter Anthropologen, der Begründer der Freudischen Psychoanalyse in Italien, Literaten, erfahrene Mitglieder anderer magischer Gruppierungen sowie die Spitze der Anthroposophie in Italien) muss die Gruppe von UR zu den interessantesten magischen Bünden des 20. Jahrhunderts gerechnet werden. UR veröffentlichte zur Zeit ihres Bestehens regelmäßig Monatshefte, die insgesamt auf über eintausendzweihundert Seiten konzentriertes praktisches Material aus allen Epochen und Weltgegenden vorlegte. Das Ziel der Gruppe war nicht Mystik oder schöngesteigte Philosophie, sondern einen tatsächlichen Zugang zu transzendenten Bereichen aufzuzeigen. Dazu wurde ein nachvollziehbarer Stufenweg vorgezeichnet und in möglichst klaren Worten erläutert. Praktische Texte aus der Alchimie, dem Tantraismus, Buddhismus, der antiken Theurgie und der Sexualmagie wurden zusätzlich beigezogen. Der Stufenweg sollte zu einer echten Gottwerdung (nicht Gottähnlichkeit) führen nach dem Satz Meister Eckharts: "Soll ich Gott unmittelbar erkennen, so muss ich schlechthin *Er* und *Er* muss ich werden." Die Möglichkeit dazu bot der Aufbau eines unzerstörbaren "Diamantkörpers", der auch den physischen Tod überstehen sollte. Die Gruppe von UR war in zwei Fraktionen aufgeteilt. Die eine, die praktisch verwertbare Texte übersetzte und kommentierte und eine zweite innere, die diesen Weg praktisch verfolgte und die dabei gemachten Einzel- und Gruppenerfahrungen in unmissverständlicher Sprache beschrieb.

## Keywords

Julius Evola; the UR Group; magic; deification; Italian occultism; Arturo Reghini; UR; KRRR; immortality; alchemy; theurgy

Although the central focus of this essay is the magical UR Group, it will also be necessary to provide an introduction to the philosophy of Julius Evola (1898–1974) in this context. While it is very probable that Evola founded the group



with cooperation from, and even at the instigation of Arturo Reghini (1878-1946),<sup>1</sup> a scholar of hermeticism highly esteemed by Evola, the group was nevertheless clearly formed according to Evola's own philosophy and esoteric beliefs at that time. In addition, by the second year of their collaboration he and Reghini had parted ways, and Evola assumed the sole responsibility for leadership. In this role he reformulated many of the essays from other UR members, and very likely revised some of them according to his own ideas. This revision is particularly conspicuous in the three-volume editions of 1955-1956 and 1971, in which the original essays from the monthly issues were partly rewritten by Evola, or even replaced with other material. These two different revised editions are the basis for all the available versions of the texts in recent decades.<sup>2</sup>

As to Evola's influence, it is impossible to understand the beginnings of the UR Group without a more detailed knowledge of his spiritual development up to that point.<sup>3</sup> Particularly important is the connection between his philosophical endeavors and the magical conceptions that are present at the outset of UR.

### Julius Evola's Youth and His Artistic Phase

Born in 1898 in Rome,<sup>4</sup> Evola was raised a Catholic but struggled against this and was drawn to writers such as Oscar Wilde, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Arthur Rimbaud. At university he pursued technical and mathematical studies. The writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Otto Weininger were a great source of influence, as was Evola's personal acquaintance with the young philosopher Carlo Michelstaedter.

The impact of these three thinkers cannot be overestimated, as Evola often thoroughly identified with them and based his fundamental convictions upon them. Even later in life they still remained of paramount importance. From

Nietzsche he adopted a refusal toward compromise, a combative attitude, the rejection of 'humility' and of the 'petty bourgeois morality' of Christianity, as well as his resistance to 'egalitarianism, democratization, and conformism'.<sup>5</sup> But he rejected Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*—later on, at least—as lacking the transcendent element.

Otto Weininger's (1880-1903)<sup>6</sup> bearing on Evola may be even more significant. This seems to concern not only Evola's attitudes toward the female sex or toward the Jews, but also includes ethical precepts ("truth, purity, loyalty, honesty toward oneself; that is the only conceivable ethic")<sup>7</sup> and even political views (the rejection of populism in the broadest sense). Above all, it is Evola's characteristic emphasis on virility that essentially derives from Weininger.

Carlo Michelstaedter (1887-1910) came from a Jewish family in the border region between Friuli and present-day Slovenia.<sup>8</sup> Michelstaedter studied mathematics in Vienna, but took his own life at the age of twenty-three, the day after completing his book *La persuasione e la retorica* (Persuasion and Rhetoric). It appears that he felt he could add nothing more to his philosophical insights. Michelstaedter's term *persuasione* ('persuasion') refers to an absolute self-sufficiency of the I. Evola explains: "As long as the I is not exclusively based upon itself, but is dependent upon an 'other' it is subordinate to 'necessity' and as a result there is no freedom and "no true persuasion, only deficiency" and 'rhetoric'. And these will never represent an inner 'value', for

Value is found only in that which exists for itself, which demands the principle of inner life and personal power from nothing and nobody—in autarchy."<sup>9</sup>

This is how Evola describes the core of Michelstaedter's philosophy. It is a view that remained of central importance for his entire life.

Evola called these three thinkers the 'holy damned' because, despite their brilliance, not one of them was psychologically strong enough to endure the strength and force of his own ideas. Two had committed suicide when they were still young and the third had gone insane. Evola was convinced that they had been destroyed by their own heightened internal tension, because they lacked the immovable, unshakable, and therefore superior spiritual element:

<sup>1</sup> Evola, *Il cammino del cinabro*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview on Weininger consult Abrahamson, *The Mind and Death of a Genius and Sengoopta*, Otto Weininger: Sex, Science, and Self in Imperial Vienna.

<sup>3</sup> Weininger, *Geschehen und Charakter*, 206.

<sup>4</sup> A concise reference work is Michelis, *Carlo Michelstaedter*.

<sup>5</sup> Evola, *Saggi sull'idealismo magico*, 136.

<sup>1</sup> The two most important works about Reghini are Roberto Sestito, *Il figlio del sole* and Natalc Mario di Luca, *Arturo Reghini*.

<sup>2</sup> The description of the magic of UR in this essay is based on the original texts of 1927-1929. In order to present a historically accurate picture, later revisions by Evola have not been taken into account.

<sup>3</sup> A concise biography of Evola can be found under the entry 'Evola, Giulio Cesare' in Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, 345-350. A more detailed portrait appears in H.T. Hansen (a.k.a. Hans Thomas Hakl), 'Julius Evola's Political Endeavors'.

<sup>4</sup> His origins among the landed gentry of Sicily may be fictitious.



the connection to transcendence. It was exactly this decisive impulse toward transcendence that Evola thought had “manifested itself” in him “from his earliest years”<sup>10</sup> and which he uncompromisingly strove after.

After his return from the First World War, in which he had served as an artillery officer, Evola had similarly fallen into an existential crisis and was prepared to commit suicide. He only lost his ‘*cupio dissolvi*’,<sup>11</sup> as he called it, his desire for dissolution, when he profoundly understood a passage in the Buddhist Pali canon. It states that the person who believes that the extinction of life is truly extinction, who then views this extinction as true extinction, who ruminates on this extinction, who indeed believes the extinction is *his* and rejoices about extinction, has not understood true extinction at all.<sup>12</sup>

It was through mental and meditative experiments, fortified by the inhalation of ether, that Evola finally achieved a transcendent experience of the Self which changed his life and provided him with the firm grounding that would henceforth remain unshaken. Evola described the expansion of consciousness he experienced at this moment as a final, shattering, absolute certainty and added:

In order to clarify the difference [between this and] my previous and usual consciousness, I can only employ an image: The clearest and most crystalline vigilance in contrast to the state of the deepest, most hypnotic, duldest sleep which brings the greatest possible loss of awareness.<sup>13</sup>

Evola’s extensive hiking and mountaineering experiences in the Alps, and especially in the glacier regions, were all that was needed to deepen this spiritual attitude. Scaling the peaks was for him a symbol of the spiritual ascent to the divine, toward what is ever purer, clearer, and more crystalline. Evola speaks of the mountain as a holy mountain, a seat of the gods, a medium between heaven and earth. Climbing mountains as mere sport, on the other hand, signified for him a degradation of the divine.

Evola soon came into contact with the artistic circle surrounding the Futurists Giovanni Papini (1881–1956) and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944).<sup>14</sup> Papini introduced him to Eastern wisdom teachings and, most impor-

<sup>10</sup> Evola, *Il cammino*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> This expression goes back to Tertullian, *De patientia* 9, 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Mañjima Nikaya* I, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Iagla (i.e., Evola), ‘Esperienze: La legge degli enti’, 171.

<sup>14</sup> Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*; Crispolti, *Futurismo 1909–1944*, and Godoli, *Il dizionario del Futurismo*.

tantly, to Meister Eckhart. Eckhart is one of the very few Christian mystics whom Evola continued to hold in high esteem until the end of his life. In his *Saggi sull’idealismo magico* (Essays on Magical Idealism, 1925) he quotes, for example, the following passage:

Based on this innermost foundation you should perform your works, *without a reason why*. I state decisively: so long as you perform your work for the realm of Heaven, for the sake of God or for your own blessedness, in other words *from the outside*, you are not truly proceeding from what is right.<sup>15</sup>

This statement could be called the leitmotif for Evola’s entire life—action without concern for success or for the acceptance or rejection of others—and it is also a key to Evola’s magic, which is oriented toward achieving a transcendent state of being.

Eckhart is also the source for the following quote, here taken from the edition that Evola himself studied:

Being is God ... God and Being are identical. If I am to recognize God in an immediate way, then *I* must become *He* and *He* must become *I* ... so completely at one, that this *He* and this *I* are one, and will become and be one, and exist and act eternally in this way and form of being.<sup>16</sup>

This is the path to deification, a central concept for the UR Group. That which some commentators criticize as hubris on Evola’s part and as a doctrine of ‘superhumans’ thus also finds expression in Meister Eckhart. Plotinus expressed it even more pointedly with his saying “It is for the Gods to come to me and not for me to go to them”, a phrase that was repeatedly quoted by Evola, and also in contexts relating to UR.<sup>17</sup>

Evola soon broke with Futurism, a movement whose iconoclastic, revolutionary, and polemical assaults on the bourgeoisie had been so attractive to him. He had come to recognize Futurism as little more than intellectualism combined with exhibitionist outrage; it lacked a genuinely spiritual, transcendent basis. As a result he turned his attention to Dadaism, which was just emerging. A friendship with its main founder, Tristan Tzara (born Samuel

<sup>15</sup> Evola, *Saggi*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, 354. Italics from Evola.

<sup>17</sup> Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus*, 10. Quoted here anonymously (probably by Julius Evola) in ‘Plotino/Massime di saggezza pagana’, 129.



Rosenstock, 1896–1963), is documented by thirty surviving letters from Evola to the artist.<sup>18</sup>

The main reason for his new engagement lay in the radicalism of the Dada movement. This represented a worldview in which the drive for total freedom sought to topple all logical, ethical, and aesthetic categories. The Dadaists demanded a total abolition of discipline as well as morals. And similarly to teachings from the Far East, they even asserted that the I and the not-I were identical, as were affirmation and negation. In the brochure *Arte Astratta* (Abstract Art), written by Evola in 1920, he expresses it in this way:

I see art as an interest-free creation that comes from an individual's higher consciousness and is therefore capable of transcending the passions and the crystallizations that are based upon common experiences, and which is independent of them.<sup>19</sup>

These words again indicate Evola's striving toward transcendent experience.

Evola's Dadaist poetry and paintings, as well as his theoretical essays, make him the primary representative of Italian Dadaism today. Yet Dadaism could not quench his metaphysical thirst, and as a result by 1922 he ceased not only his Dadaist activities but also his artistic career (poetry and painting) in general. The break was as abrupt as it was final.<sup>20</sup> He was twenty-four years old. His urge for transcendence drove him to philosophy and metaphysics.

### Magical Idealism and Influences from the Far East

According to Evola himself, his 'philosophical' phase dates from the period of 1923 to 1927, although due to a lack of publishing opportunities his two primary philosophical works appeared between 1927 and 1930.<sup>21</sup> His philosophy can be traced to German Idealism (mainly Fichte and Schelling) and further back to Plato. From the very beginning only an idealistic philosophy was possible for Evola. In contrast to philosophical realism, this only recognized a world and nature which are dependent on consciousness, on the I, on the spirit; a philosophy according to which everything that we externally perceive represents a

creation of our own spirit, our own I. For Evola, the establishment of the world through the I (Fichte) is therefore evident and fundamental fact. Of course, for him this does not concern the mundane I, but the transcendent primordial foundation of one's own personality. This primordial foundation—which Evola described as the "absolute individual" and equals the Indian concept of the *ātman*—is not only "the center point of universal responsibility"<sup>22</sup> but the expression of a complete and abundant power that inevitably grows out of the total realization, as well as the actual *lived experience* of this 'Absolute I'. At the same time the 'Absolute I' comprises an unlimited freedom, for it is based upon itself alone and does not depend upon any external factor.

This insight arose from the extremely unsatisfying realization that the philosophical idealists simply divided the I into two parts: a powerful, creative, transcendental I that could only be understood as purely abstract and speculative; and a different, real I that stands impotent in the face of the mundane world and can act upon very little that is external to it. In contrast to this, Evola placed them both in a single category, a realization that was made possible for him through his *experience* of the Absolute I while under the influence of drugs. At that moment he had directly experienced the complete, abundant power and freedom of the Absolute I, needing only to break through the barrier of the illusion of an I that was separate from the cosmos.<sup>23</sup> Here we find the source of his 'magical' ability of imagination and power—an ability that was not just the product of philosophical postulations, but one that was actually feared and admired.

In the writings of the French 'personalist' philosopher Jules Lagneau (1851–1894),<sup>24</sup> Evola found a sentence which he placed at the beginning of his book *Saggi sull'idealismo magico*:

Philosophy is the train of thought which, in the end, realizes its own inadequacy and recognizes the need for an absolute action that has its starting point from within.<sup>25</sup>

With this he hoped, through active and consequential effort, to forge a bridge to the Absolute.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Evola, *Lettere di Julius Evola a Tristan Tzara*. On Tzara see Richter, *Dada*. On Evola and Dada see Schnapp, 'Bad Dada'.

<sup>19</sup> Evola, *Arte astratta*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> In his later years Evola repainted some of his earlier works, but this seems to have mainly been at the instigation of a gallery owner.

<sup>21</sup> Evola, *Teoria dell'individuo assoluto* and Evola, *Fenomenologia dell'individuo assoluto*.

<sup>22</sup> Evola, *Teoria dell'individuo Assoluto*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Lagla, 'Esperienze: La legge degli enti', 171.

<sup>24</sup> Letellier, 'Jules Lagneau'.

<sup>25</sup> Lagneau, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, March 1898, 127; here quoted by Evola in *Saggi*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> See Evola, *Saggi*, 161f.



This same impulse toward the overcoming of the *conditio humana* appears again and again in Evola's writings. Taken as a whole, Evola's philosophy thus presents itself as a propaedeutic for transcendent 'initiator' realms that are, however, not accessible to everyone but demand a certain qualification.

Evola had borrowed the term 'magical idealism' for his philosophy from Novalis's writings. There he had found not only this term, but also a further strengthening of his thesis regarding the central position of the I. That which for Fichte and Schelling is the principle of all philosophy becomes for Novalis the principle of magic.<sup>27</sup> Among the latter's fragments one can read: "Magic is = art to utilize arbitrarily the sensory world",<sup>28</sup> "Magic: madness based on rules and in complete consciousness",<sup>29</sup> and finally, "will is nothing but the magical, powerful ability to think".<sup>30</sup> Novalis's magical idealist is someone who is able to turn ideas into external things, as well as to turn external things into thoughts. These considerations and experiences fit completely into Evola's conception of magic.

During this phase Evola was also delving into the wisdom teachings of the Far East, which accordingly exerted a strong influence on his philosophical work. Evola's *Saggi sull'idealismo magico* already shows how important the Chinese *Tao Te Ching* was for him.<sup>31</sup> He cites the following lines from chapter I, 7 as a maxim for right action:

Thus the awakened one, because he puts himself behind, steps in front; because he gives away, he gains; because he cares not for himself, he is maintained. That is it: because he is selfless, he achieves self-fulfillment.<sup>32</sup>

From this brief quote one can see that Evola's philosophy goes beyond the usual academic perimeters of the field and reaches deep into spiritual traditions.

Equally important were his studies of the Hindu *Bhagavad-Gītā*, whose declarations fortified Evola's natural predisposition toward the warrior type

<sup>27</sup> Birven, *Novalis*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Novalis, *Schriften*, vol. II, 546.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 547.

<sup>30</sup> Novalis, *Schriften*, vol. III, 466.

<sup>31</sup> Evola also published two very different translations or rather Italian adaptations of the *Tao Te Ching* strongly based on a German translation by Alexander Ullar, *Die Bahn und der rechte Weg des Lao-Tse*; Evola, *Il libro della via e della virtù di Lao-Tse* and Lao-Tse, *Il libro del principio e della sua azione*. The first text was interpreted according to the philosophy of German idealism, the second according to guidelines based on the Tradition in a Guenonian sense.

<sup>32</sup> Evola, *Saggi*, 100.

(Sanskrit *kṣhatriya*). Evola was aware that external warfare was simultaneously a symbol of internal warfare, that is, the battle against one's own personal weaknesses and negative characteristics.<sup>33</sup> In connection with Meister Eckhart the lines of *Bhagavad-Gītā* II, 48 became the prime model of his thinking: "Perform your actions loyally, abandon any worldly attachment and become indifferent to success or failure. Keep your equanimity".<sup>34</sup>

Evola was particularly drawn to Indian tantra. In 1924, as a result of his engagement with Taoism Evola became acquainted with Decio Calvari, the leader of an independent theosophical organization in Rome.<sup>35</sup> Among others in this lodge he met the Sanskrit scholar Carlo Formichi and most prominently Giuseppe Tucci, who would later be recognized as the greatest Asian scholar in Italy. Calvari was the first person to inform him about tantra. Shortly afterward Evola made contact with Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon), one of the leading experts. Woodroffe's translations of the original tantric texts along with his own commentaries supplied the basic material for Evola's book *L'Uomo come Potenza* (Man as Power) which appeared in 1925.<sup>36</sup> This was, incidentally, the first Italian work on the subject of tantra.

This particular book forms the link between Evola's philosophical period and the one that followed, which could be called his 'magical' period. Mere theory would no longer suffice: he was already striving toward an active and practical breakthrough to transcendence. *L'Uomo come Potenza* is still strongly influenced by his philosophy of magical idealism and its aim of a fully autonomous, all-encompassing, and all-powerful 'absolute individual'. Up until this point, Evola had only been able to formulate this aim in a theoretical sense. Now, by providing the tantric texts that contained precise courses of exercise, Woodroffe had given him the 'technical means' for a breakthrough to transcendence that was practical as well. The emphasis on the *power* (shakti) aspect and on the tantric exercises was just what Evola, with his inclination toward action rather than contemplation, had been seeking. And it was exactly in this sense that Evola spoke of a 'magical self-realization' in the subtitle of his book.

<sup>33</sup> In this regard see Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World*, 116f.

<sup>34</sup> These lines are rendered here in the sense that Evola used them.

<sup>35</sup> The important role of this lodge is discussed in Pasi, 'Teosofia e antroposofia nell'Italia del primo novecento'.

<sup>36</sup> In his work *Imperialismo Pagano* p. 131 Evola spoke about his personal relationship with Sir John Woodroffe. Kathleen Taylor mentions Evola in her standard biography *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal* on p. 243.



As is now apparent, Evola's conception of magic was the product of many sources.<sup>37</sup> Its foundation was rooted in his existential and spiritual experiences, although his artistic experiences had played a part as well. It was through his studies in philosophy, however, that his conception of magic first achieved its true form. It was only when this structure had been erected, and when Evola realized—despite his bold speculation regarding an 'absolute individual'—the inadequacy of even the most daring philosophical constructs in his drive toward the active overcoming of human limitations, that he turned to a 'technique' understood as magic. Only this sort of technique seemed suited for conferring 'power' and for attaining the transcendent realm that lies beyond the mundane human one.

A few words are necessary here concerning Evola's central issue of 'magical power', since this also characterizes the theoretical conception of magic in the writings of the UR Group.<sup>38</sup> For him, power was something that did not merely derive from the earthly plane, but which had a higher reference point. As a result, in the practical sense it can also be seen as a 'divine' or 'demonic' attribute with which one can identify. Power operates 'as if by its own accord'. Power is a necessary characteristic of someone who is truly (spiritually) strong, who is unshakable, who need not even be concerned with it (power). It is bound to such a person by necessity, just as the power of water surges around a strong bridge pylon in a river, without the pylon itself doing anything. True power is unquestionable and operates on its own, it is the unity of subject and object. This is exactly what is meant by the 'magical imagination' which will be discussed below.

Evola employed the same concept of power in his political writings.<sup>39</sup> He interpreted it in the sense of tantra and Tao and disassociated it very strictly from 'violence'. For Evola, power and violence rather represent opposites. 'Power' loses its proper essence when it is forced to take refuge in material means, in other words, in violence. When this occurs it is no longer fully acting 'magically' from its own basis, from its own inner superiority. In his first political book, *Heidnischer Imperialismus* (Pagan Imperialism, 1933), Evola therefore emphasized that

<sup>37</sup> Regarding this transitional phase between philosophy and magic, see Haki, 'Die Magic bei Julius Evola und ihre philosophischen Voraussetzungen'.

<sup>38</sup> This does not necessarily mean that all members of the UR Group held the same ideas, but it is a fact that the known UR texts that deal theoretically with magic were mostly written by Evola.

<sup>39</sup> Mainly Evola, *Imperialismo Pagano* and Evola, *Gli uomini e le rovine*.

superiority is not based on power, but rather power is based on superiority. To use power is impotence, and he who understands this will perhaps understand in which sense the path to a certain renunciation (a 'masculine' renunciation based on 'not needing anything' and on 'being satisfied')<sup>40</sup> can be a condition for the path to the highest power, and he can also comprehend the concealed logic, according to which ... ascetics, saints, and initiates suddenly and naturally develop suggestive and supra-sensual powers which are stronger than any power of human beings and things.<sup>41</sup>

Power is simply the *pure* strength of a spiritual act in which spiritual vision and action meld into one. Whereas the 'power' of modern technology merely uses the existing laws of nature (anyone can flick a switch and the light will come on), action that emanates from the power of magic presupposes an inner change of being for the person acting. This change has already elevated him to a higher level, from which he 'stands above [material] things' and has command over them from the realm of the spiritual.

In order to attain such a power, in order to *attract*<sup>42</sup> such a power, the spirit and the I must strive toward perfection, toward unification with the 'gods'. According to Evola, the following Buddhist formula applies here: "In this body, eight measures high is the world; [it] contains the origins of the world, the dissolution of the world, and the path to the dissolution of the world".<sup>43</sup> And, in a passage that is crucial for understanding Evola's view of magic, he writes: "it thus depends upon *achieving the direct consciousness that one is the bearer of cosmic, immaterial forces—forces of which Nature represents only the sensualization and petrification*".<sup>44</sup>

Evola seems to have actually achieved some 'magical power' in the above sense, for in his younger years he had the reputation of being a 'born magician', a situation which caused Mussolini to take precautionary measures against him.<sup>45</sup> One of Evola's temporary magical and intellectual companions on the path was Massimo Scaligero (pseudonym of Antonio Massimo Sgabelloni, 1906–1980), a figure who even today attracts a considerable number of

<sup>40</sup> The strong influence of Carlo Michelsacker is unmistakable here.

<sup>41</sup> Evola, *Heidnischer Imperialismus*, 32 f. *Imperialismo Pagano*, the earlier Italian version of the book from 1928, differs from this expanded German version.

<sup>42</sup> Evola takes the idea from tantra that power = *shakti* and is something 'feminine' which is drawn to the 'masculine' unmoved mover, just as eddies in a river form around the bridge pylons.

<sup>43</sup> Evola, 'Die drei Epochen des Gewißheitsproblems'. This is the revised German version of a lecture from 1925.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>45</sup> Evola, *Il cammino*, 88.



followers, Scaligero remarked in his *esoteric personal history* *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce* that Evola already possessed, right from the start as a natural gift, the “original inner quality, the imaginative magic that is the final goal for the modern seeker”.<sup>46</sup> He further explained that since the “imaginative consciousness is the precondition for magical consciousness, the art of the student consists in rediscovering this original imaginative light behind the reflected thoughts”. In contrast to most human beings who are fixed and ‘materialized’ in reflexive (i.e., reflected and not original) and therefore ‘powerless’ thinking that sees the world dualistically as something lying *outside* of the individual person, Evola was already capable of moving on the imaginative plane where the subject and object are one. For Evola, (operative) ‘power’ therefore precedes knowledge, as Scaligero describes it. In other words, Evola did not need to know: he was able to operate before knowing.

Count Pio Filippini-Ronconi (1920–2010),<sup>47</sup> discussed Evola’s magic and corroborated the statements of Massimo Scaligero in his 1998 presentation at a Milan symposium on the occasion of Evola’s hundredth birthday.<sup>48</sup> Filippini-Ronconi became acquainted with Evola and other members of the UR Group in 1934 when he was only 15 years old,<sup>49</sup> and at his request Evola showed him a path to inner realization. This was primarily characterized by constant reference to ‘direct experience’, the Indian concept of *anubhava* (‘becoming the mediated-upon object’). The aim of these exercises was “to liberate habitual thinking from the power of the senses and the power of logical and discursive abstractions”.<sup>50</sup>

Evola’s continually recurring admonition to release oneself from reality and go beyond it might give the false impression of irrationality. But as even the critical Thomas Sheehan notes, “Evola’s assertion of the supra-rational over the rational is emphatically not a flight to a supra-sensible Beyond, but always remains inner-worldly”<sup>51</sup> because the origins of the supra-rational lie within

<sup>46</sup> Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 32f.

<sup>47</sup> Filippini-Ronconi was Ordinarius for Indian Religion and Philosophy in Naples and the author of numerous scholarly works dealing with religious and philosophical topics in connection with the Near East, Persia, and China. See also Piscitelli, ‘Suggerimenti esoteriche nelle SS italiane’. For a relevant interview with Filippini-Ronconi, see ‘Inervista al prof Pio Filippini Ronconi’.

<sup>48</sup> Filippini-Ronconi, ‘Julius Evola: per una impersonalità attiva’.

<sup>49</sup> Filippini-Ronconi, ‘Massimo Scaligero e l’interpretazione dell’India’, 51.

<sup>50</sup> See the prospectus for the conference on Julius Evola sponsored by the Cultural Bureau of the Lombardy Region which took place November 27–28, 1998.

<sup>51</sup> Sheehan, ‘*Diventare Dio*: Julius Evola and the Metaphysics of Fascism’, 285.

human beings themselves. Evola indeed points out that it is only *from* life that one can achieve superiority *over* life. Therefore the human being does not have to take leave of this world: it must simply be extended. Sheehan concludes his discussion with a sentence from one of Evola’s later books: “The other world ... is not another reality; it is only another dimension of reality”.<sup>52</sup>

### The UR Group

When discussing the UR Group one should not imagine a ‘magical’ order with a hierarchical grade system which regularly met for rituals. More likely it was a loose organization in which everyone made individual contributions that Evola then attempted to pull together. The group also had two different facets. On the one hand there was the UR Group that supplied articles for the journals *UR* and *KRU*. Non-members contributed to these journals, which also featured translations of texts from various wisdom traditions. I will initially deal with this facet of the UR Group, as there is more historically solid material that relates to it. On the other hand there was the magically active UR Group, which involved a smaller number collectively (as well as individually) engaged in esoteric exercises and rituals on a regular basis in order to actively pursue initiatory goals. Naturally there was some overlap between these two groups, with members involved with both facets, the most important such being Evola himself and Arturo Reghini.

Reghini has already been mentioned. Without question he was one of the most important Italian esotericists of the twentieth century, and without him Evola’s rapid spiritual development would probably not have even been possible. Reghini was highly educated in esoteric studies; he was a mathematician and a neo-Pythagorean. At the same time he was active in the vanguard of Italian Freemasonry. In 1908, together with Edoardo Frosini and others, he had founded the Rito Filosofico Italiano, which had the primary intention of restoring the original initiatic function to the Freemasonry of his time, which was mostly engaged in political and cultural activities, and orienting it toward spiritual values.<sup>53</sup> Evola had Reghini to thank for his introduction to alchemy and above all for contact with René Guénon (1886–1951), who led Evola to the Integral Tradition. As Evola himself wrote, he owed Reghini a debt

<sup>52</sup> Evola, *Cavalcare la tigre*, 59.

<sup>53</sup> Sestito, *Storia del rito Filosofico Italiano e dell’Ordine Orientale Antico e Primitivo di Memphis e Mizraim*.



first of all [for] the final liberation from my own chains that ... stemmed from occult groups and secondly [for] the definitive realization of the transcendence of initiatory wisdom and its completely different nature in comparison with profane culture.<sup>54</sup>

The Reghini expert Gennaro d'Uva recently revealed documentation that Reghini was also a leading member of a magical group inspired by a little known master with apparently powerful healing abilities called Amedeo Armentano (1886–1966). This group, which definitely predated the UR Group, probably took part in the founding of UR's practical magical work and strongly influenced some of its rituals. It is certain in any case that it survived the unfortunate breakup of UR in 1928, and may have continued active until 1939.<sup>55</sup>

Reghini began publishing the journal *Atanor* in 1924 and the journal *Ignis* in 1925. These two publications dealt with esoteric topics in a rigorous and almost scientific manner that was unusual for its day. They also published writings by René Guénon, sometimes even before they appeared in French. Evola also wrote for them and even served as one of the editors of *Atanor*. Without the precedent set by these journals, the appearance of the publications *UR* and *KRUR* would scarcely have been possible.

Evola met Reghini, a man twenty years his senior, in Decio Calvari's independent theosophical lodge in Rome. Benito Mussolini had taken power in Italy in 1922. Although many freemasons had been involved in the early years of the Fascist movement, a law was passed in November 1925 forbidding secret societies, and the freemasons consequently came under attack. Because Reghini's involvement in freemasonry was well known, it was impossible for him to continue working as the director of *Ignis*. As a result he had to cease publication of the journal, but did not want to relinquish the spiritual influence that had gone along with it. So Reghini and his younger but highly gifted student Giulio Parise (1902–1970), joined forces with Evola to establish a new esoteric journal, and in January 1927 the premier issue of *UR* appeared.<sup>56</sup> Despite the fact that he was only twenty-eight years old, Evola became the journal's editor and was solely legally responsible for its content; his was also the only

name to appear on the cover. Parise assisted with financing and wrote articles while Reghini worked in the background and also wrote articles.<sup>57</sup> Since the contributors had chosen to publish their work under pseudonyms—following the example of the Pythagoreans, Rosicrucians, and Hermeticists, in order to preclude personal judgments and vanities—Reghini was able to write for the journal without problems.

In its first year *UR* carried the subtitle "Journal with Directions for a Science of the I". From this it is evident that Evola was still attempting to uphold remnants of his philosophical belief in the 'absolute individual'.<sup>58</sup> This was a concept that neither of his partners, interested as they were in purely esoteric studies, were inclined toward, because they saw Evola as being in danger of falling prey to 'I-mania'. They felt that Evola's philosophy, despite its references to ancient wisdom traditions, was profane, whereas they viewed their own efforts as being based in the sacred. By the second year the publication's subtitle had been changed to "Journal for Esoteric Sciences under the Direction of J. Evola, P. Negri, G. Parise". P. Negri was the pseudonym of Arturo Reghini. Additionally, the character of the journal was unmistakably described in an editorial remark as "initiate, hierarchic, traditional, Western, and elitist", and consequently based on a rejection of purely philosophical theories.<sup>59</sup> The discord between Reghini and Parise on the one hand and Evola on the other escalated when Evola published his *Imperialismo Pagano* in the second half of 1928. Reghini had already published an essay of the same title in 1913 and then republished it in *Atanor* in 1925. The basic premise of this essay corresponded to that of Evola's book. Reghini was understandably incensed and felt that Evola had undermined him.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Roberto Sestito, who represents an anti-Evolian viewpoint (see Sestito, *Il figlio*, 215), described the original allocation of work as follows: Reghini was to take charge of the spiritual leadership, Evola was in charge of the political and administrative aspects, and Parise had the function of secretary and treasurer.

<sup>58</sup> In the original version of Evola's 1927 essay 'Sulla visione magica della vita', he writes: "We affirm the *Individual*. For us the individual stands at the center point, as a reality, as a value, as a goal, and nothing stands beyond it and nothing is a condition for it". In later editions Evola deleted such passages.

<sup>59</sup> In *Il figlio*, 214–227, Sestito makes use of unpublished correspondence to inform about this tense relationship between Evola and Reghini.

<sup>60</sup> This book met with great resistance from Christian circles. It spoke out vehemently against Christianity and condemned the negotiations between the Fascist regime and the Vatican which ultimately resulted in the Lateran Accords of 1929.

<sup>54</sup> Evola, *Il cammino*, 75.

<sup>55</sup> d'Uva, 'Il pitagorismo iniziatico e magico di Arturo Reghini'.

<sup>56</sup> Evola traced the word 'UR' back to an archaic root which had a connection to 'fire' [i.e., Hebrew], tying in well, then, with *Ignis* and the alchemical word *Atanor*. Along with this there is the meaning of 'primordial' that the prefix *ur-* has in the Germanic languages. Evola, *Il cammino*, 83.



There were further grounds for their disension. Evola found the pro-freemasonic stance of Reghini and Parise too provocative in light of the legal situation, and for this reason bowdlerized some of their texts, which in turn enraged them. Roberto Sestito even accuses Evola of having removed Reghini and Parise from the editorial board under some pretense. But Gianfranco de Turris, the director of the Julius Evola Foundation in Rome, also reports an attempt to oust Evola from the editorial directorship by bringing a man into the equation who was allegedly willing to finance the publication. This even-tuality would have cost Evola his position as editor.<sup>61</sup> From the start, though, Evola had been appointed as the editor and proprietor responsible for *UR*. A compromise was therefore arrived at whereby Evola was allowed to continue publishing the journal but was obligated to change its name. Evola chose the new name *KRU/R*, which he created from the Sumerian root *k-r*, *k-u-r* with the meaning of 'dwelling place, house' together with the added phonetic element 'ur'.

So as not to be entirely left without a mouthpiece, Parise and Reghini revived the journal *Ignis* in 1929,<sup>62</sup> but were only able to publish a single issue which was mostly filled with polemics against Evola. Evola in turn reported in his autobiography *Il cammino del cinabro* (The Path of Cinabar),<sup>63</sup> that those on the "side of freemasonry"<sup>64</sup> had attempted to depose him and, when this was unsuccessful, to force him to cease the publication of *UR*. The arguments finally led to mutual legal complaints from both parties, with allegations of plagiarism on the one side and slander on the other. A reconciliation was no longer possible. But this was not all, for the conflict also meant the demise of the actively cooperating magical group in which Reghini, Parise, and Evola were the primary participants. Evola himself confirms this in his autobiography at the location cited above.

Although *KRU/R* retained its magical character with numerous essays that touched on practical magic and personal experiences, it developed into more of a philosophical and cultural magazine. Its aim was to lay the spiritual foundation for a national renewal in Italy, and in this regard it reflected Evola's new interests. At the end of 1929, a year after the publication began, there

<sup>61</sup> de Turris, 'Il Gruppo di UR tra magia e super fascismo', 20.

<sup>62</sup> This was officially published under the direction of Parise, so as not to endanger Reghini.

<sup>63</sup> Evola, *Il cammino*, 85.

<sup>64</sup> In his well-documented essay 'Neopaganesimo e arti magiche nel periodo fascista', 617, Marco Rossi reports that Italo Balbo, one of the highest leaders in the Fascist hierarchy, might even have been involved in this attempt.

was a final note from the editor: "*KRU/R* is transforming". Having fulfilled the "tasks relative to the technical mastery of esotericism", there was now a desire to dedicate oneself with renewed vigor to Western culture and to the problems "that, in this moment of crisis, afflict both individual and mass consciousness". The political had now been introduced, and out of *KRU/R* emerged *La Torre* (The Tower), a "combat journal" published every fourteen days which aimed "to erect an unbreachable bulwark against the general decline of every value in life"<sup>65</sup> and to reach a broader audience.<sup>66</sup> However, on Mussolini's orders this 'combat journal' was shut down after the tenth issue.

### The Members of the UR Group

It should be clearly established from the outset that only men could become active members of the UR Group.<sup>67</sup> The reasoning behind this was simple: esoterically, only men are bound with the 'sky' and thus with transcendence, whereas women are bound with the earth. Just as a man is responsible for spiritual 'fertility', a woman is responsible for earthly fertility. A man is no more in a position to bear a child than a woman is to 'storm heaven'. Both sexes have their assignments and these should never be intermingled. There was no further discussion about this.

As mentioned earlier, the members of the UR Group exclusively used pseudonyms or symbolic names so that only the inherent value of the individual contributions would receive consideration and not the author per se. Additionally, the teachings presented should not be the product of fantasy or the subjective notions of the individual authors, but derive from an ancient fount of common wisdom. The identities of some of the anonymous authors soon came to be known, while others remain cloaked in obscurity up to today. In his book *Julius Evola e il magico "Gruppo di UR"*,<sup>68</sup> Renato del Ponte, the founder and

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in del Ponte, 'Julius Evola and the UR Group', xxi.

<sup>66</sup> *UR* had a print run of about 2,000, whereas *La Torre* was published in an edition of 5,000 copies (del Ponte, *Julius Evola e il magico "Gruppo di UR"*, 42).

<sup>67</sup> Maria de Nagłowska (1883-1936), the notorious Russian sex magician (and probably one of Julius Evola's former lovers), was not in fact a member of the UR Group, although she wrote one small contribution in one of the issues of *UR*.

<sup>68</sup> This book collects the most important historical knowledge about the UR Group and includes the 'Communications to the Readers' which were printed either as an insert or on the inside panels of the original journal covers. Since Evola did not include these texts in the revised edition, and the original version is nearly impossible to come by, del Ponte's book



director of the Centro Studi Evollanti in Genoa, first shed light on these matters for a wider audience.<sup>69</sup> Evola signed his own texts with various pseudonyms. The most important of these is 'EA', but he also wrote under the names 'Arvo', 'Agarda', and 'Iagla'. In most instances the unsigned inserts to the journals, the introductions, and the glosses were also written by Evola or collectively authored under his direction.

In general, del Ponte divides the most significant UR members into three different esoteric 'schools'. Alongside these schools there were naturally some autonomous authors as well. The Pythagorean school, which was also sympathetic to Freemasonry, was primarily represented by Arturo Reghini (pseudonym 'Pietro Negri') and Giulio Parise (pseudonym 'Luce'). Both were exceptionally well trained in magic and wrote correspondingly interesting articles. Also part of this current was Aniceto del Massa (1878–1976), an art critic and author who contributed an essay to *KRUR* under the pseudonym 'Sagittarius'.

The most prominent school—and maybe surprisingly so—was that of Anthroposophy, whose primary representative was the physician Giovanni Colazza (1877–1953) ('Leo'). He was one of the founders of the Anthroposophical Society in Italy as well as a close confidant of Rudolf Steiner and one of his few personal students.<sup>70</sup> Because he allegedly did not wish to personally write out the teachings that had been handed down to him, thereby disseminating them to the laity, Evola transcribed his essays according to the information Colazza provided. Above all Colazza emphasized the necessity of discarding the outer husk of general materialistic petrification and opening oneself up to the energies of nature and the cosmos— notions which seem to have considerably influenced Evola.<sup>71</sup> The Anthroposophical school also included Count Giovanni Colonna di Cesaro (1878–1940), a democratic politician in whose journal *L'idea democratica* Evola had published his first political article. His

has made some important historical research material available. Renato del Ponte's essay 'Julius Evola and the UR Group', which appears as the foreword to *Introduction to Magic* (the English edition of the first volume of UR texts), is a revised and abridged translation of his *Julius Evola e il magico "Gruppo di UR"* but does not include the documentary material.<sup>69</sup> There are, however, objections to del Ponte's attributions. These mainly come from Aurelio Perenne (probably a pseudonym of Piero Fenili, one of the most knowledgeable critics of Evola in the political sphere), who made a number of corrections in his review entitled 'Renato del Ponte, Evola e il magico "gruppo di UR"'.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> von Plado, (ed.), *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 133.  
<sup>71</sup> Arcella, 'Julius Evola e la riscoperta dei Misteri di Mithra fra influenze esoteriche e letteratura storico-religiosa'.

pseudonyms may have been 'KRUR' and 'Breno'.<sup>72</sup> Two further Anthroposophical colleagues were Arturo Onofri (1885–1928), one of the most important metaphysical poets of the last century in Italy, who used the name 'Oso', and Girolamo Comi (1890–1968), who was also a poet and later drew closer to Catholicism. He wrote under the name 'Gic'. There were probably other Anthroposophical authors in the group who have not yet been identified (e.g., 'Alba').

One of the most important colleagues of UR and the author of numerous revealing and praxis-oriented articles was the classicist Ercole Quadrelli, who called himself 'Abraxa'. He also provided material that Evola then transcribed. Unfortunately we know very little about Quadrelli, except that he belonged to 'Myriam', an important initiatory school which was founded and led by Giuliano Kremmerz (pseudonym of Ciro Formisano) (1861–1930). Of particular importance are Quadrelli's two texts relating to sex magic.<sup>73</sup> Under the pseudonym 'Tikaipos' he also published a number of excellent translations of ancient texts and alchemical writings in *UR* and *KRUR*.

A person who exerted a great personal influence on Evola was Guido de Giorgio ('Havismat') (1890–1957).<sup>74</sup> After receiving his doctorate he emigrated to Tunisia, where he came into contact with a local Muslim group. In Paris he met René Guénon, who liked him very much as is evident from the many letters which Guénon wrote to him.<sup>75</sup> Guido de Giorgio was a rare exception in being someone whose criticisms Evola accepted unconditionally. The reason for this was his immensely strong but at the same time instable personality.<sup>76</sup> After returning to Italy he lived mainly in solitude in the mountains. Along with Nicola Moscardelli (1894–1943) ('Sirio' and 'Sirius'), a Catholic author and philosopher, Guido de Giorgio was the only other member of UR who leaned toward Catholicism, albeit in his own way.

In the scholarly arena Emilio Servadio ('ES' and perhaps 'APRO') (1904–1995) is by far the most well-known member of UR. He is considered the

<sup>72</sup> Perenne, 'Renato del Ponte, Evola e il magico "gruppo di UR"', 142.

<sup>73</sup> The first essay has been translated into English under the title 'Magical Operations with "Two Vessels"—Reduplication', in: Evola & the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic*, 218–227. The second essay is titled 'Magia dei congiungimenti'; it has not yet been translated into English.

<sup>74</sup> Iacovella, 'Guido De Giorgio e il "Fascismo Sacro"'.  
<sup>75</sup> Twenty-three letters appear in the appendix to Guido de Giorgio, *L'Instant et L'Eternité et autres textes sur la Tradition*.

<sup>76</sup> Evola, *Il cammino* 92.



founder of psychoanalysis in Italy and for decades was the president and honorary president of the Psychoanalytical Society there. He was equally well known for his advocacy of scientific recognition for parapsychology. In order to escape racial persecution during the Fascist period, he chose India as a place of exile. He was led there by his search for enlightenment and his interest in the Orient. As he revealed in an interview, he was not involved in the magical activities of UR but wanted to write articles for the journals.<sup>77</sup> He came into contact with the group because he had known and admired Evola for a long time.<sup>78</sup> Servadio also worked on Evola's journal *La Torre*, which came in the wake of UR and KRUR.

Another collaborator still to be mentioned, although only in the context of the journal KRUR, is the alpinist Domenico Rudatis ('Rud') (1898–1994), the man who introduced the sixth grade (of difficulty) in mountain climbing. Rudatis was a co-author, friend, and also teacher of the world-famous extreme mountain climber Reinhold Messner. Corallo Reginelli ('Taurulus') (1905–1996) is the last UR member to be mentioned here. For a time he was involved in the Anthroposophical circles under the leadership of Giovanni Colazza. A question that still remains is how the names of other contributors such as 'Arom', 'Nilius', and 'Zam' should be treated. Are they real people who have not yet been identified or are they "purely symbolic names that simply embody certain specific spiritual directions", as Evola wrote?<sup>79</sup>

In 1955–1956 and in 1971 new editions were published of the essays from UR and KRUR which Evola had thoroughly revised and assembled into three volumes. They appeared collectively under the title *Introduzione alla magia, quale scienza dell'io* (Introduction to Magic as a Science of the I) and with no mention of Evola by name.<sup>80</sup> In revising this edition Evola deleted material he thought was no longer relevant or which had already been published in book form. In its place there were new contributions, such as Evola's severely critical essay about psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. Also included was a new essay about Aleister Crowley in which Evola quoted from Crowley's

<sup>77</sup> Errera, *Emilio Servadio*, 47f.

<sup>78</sup> All signs would seem to indicate that Evola was an enthusiastic Freudian in his younger years.

<sup>79</sup> Evola, *Il cammino*, 83.

<sup>80</sup> The currently available English and German translations of the UR texts both correspond to Evola's 1971 revised edition. To study the original material one must either refer to the original journals themselves or to a facsimile reprint from the Tiloa publishing company in Rome.

*Liber Aleph*, although the latter work had not yet been published in English<sup>81</sup> and only existed at the time in manuscript form.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the fact that Evola and René Guénon were in correspondence in the late 1920s, it is conspicuous that Guénon contributed no essays to the first editions of the journal, nor did he apparently have any desire to do so.<sup>83</sup> In a letter of June 28, 1928, to Guido de Giorgio, Guénon described the articles from UR as being "clearly weak".<sup>84</sup> For Guénon, such material, along with anything that had to do with magic, belonged to the lowest traditional sphere because it could so easily lead to aberrations and degenerate forms.<sup>85</sup> Evola addressed this issue in KRUR<sup>86</sup> and openly argued against Guénon's statement that the priestly Brahmanic ruling class stood hierarchically above the royal-heroic-magical class (kshatriya). However, in the new revised edition of 1955–1956, and therefore after Guénon's death, in the third volume of the collection there surprisingly appeared an article by Guénon under the pseudonym 'Agnostus'; this article, though, dealt merely with symbolism.<sup>87</sup> In the same volume Evola also published a sharp reply to Guénon's book *Aperçus sur l'initiation*. Here he questioned the chain of initiatory transmission from master to master which Guénon believed necessary, and suggested "self-initiation" as a possibility in extraordinary circumstances.<sup>88</sup>

Another important author is the aforementioned Massimo Scaligero (Massimo), whose work did not appear until the revised edition of 1955–1956. At the time the UR Group actually existed he had been too young and did not even know Evola, though he later became one of his best friends and even part of the security that protected Evola from the fascist *squadristi*. Later Scaligero gravitated toward Anthroposophy under the influence of Giovanni Colazza, whose acquaintance he had made through Evola.

<sup>81</sup> The book did not appear until 1961.

<sup>82</sup> The relationship between Evola and Crowley is examined in Hakl, 'Einige zusätzliche Bemerkungen zum Fragenkomplex Julius Evola und Aleister Crowley'.

<sup>83</sup> In this regard see also Sestito, *Il figlio*, 214f.

<sup>84</sup> Letter reprinted in de Giorgio, *L'insimile*, 281.

<sup>85</sup> Guénon, *Aperçus sur l'initiation*, 257.

<sup>86</sup> EA, 'Autorità spirituale e potere temporale', 333–343.

<sup>87</sup> Agnostus, 'Su due simboli iperborici', 358–365.

<sup>88</sup> EA, 'Sui limiti della regolarità iniziatica', 174–190.



## The Essence of the Magic of UR

As we have seen, the UR Group—both those who participated only as writers, and those active in practical magic—consisted of outstanding intellectuals, each with his own pronounced spiritual disposition. Natale Mario de Luca, who represents an anti-Evolian, pro-Guénonian, and pro-Masonic viewpoint, went so far as to say that with UR, “the overall picture that results from a first reading, and unfortunately a second reading as well, is that of a hodgepodge collection, where heterogeneous and in the end terribly disparate views and efforts which cannot be reduced to any common ground are found side by side and to which is added some practical information in fragmentary fashion”.<sup>89</sup> This is a harsh judgment that cannot be taken at face value. To be sure, a collection of material from independent intellectuals and esotericists of the caliber found in UR inevitably yields very heterogeneous results. For example, if we were to transpose this situation to a cultural-philosophical plane, an anthology that dealt with the decisive questions of human existence and included contributions by theologians, sociologists, philosophers, literary figures, and psychologists would result in similarly disparate views.

Nevertheless, the collaborators in UR harbored common goals and their strivings stemmed from a shared feeling of the *experienced* inadequacy resulting from a merely cultural, philosophical, and bourgeois religious position. As a result, the first volume began with a truly stirring analysis of the existential situation facing a human being who seeks meaning in the modern world: someone for whom all spiritual certainties are gone, since all extant religious and philosophical theories have shown themselves as flawed human productions, and who is cast back in despair to his own naked I and forced to ask the terrifying question: *What am I?*

This analysis, simply titled “To the Readers” and probably composed by Evola himself, already reveals the essential characteristics that led to the resounding success of the UR anthologies.<sup>90</sup> When the first volume was published in an English translation, Joscelyn Godwin remarked: “This is a powerful

<sup>89</sup> Luca, *Arturo Reghini*, 103 f.

<sup>90</sup> Following the publication of the original journals and the two revised editions by Evola, there have been numerous Italian reprints of the final edition from 1971. There has also been a reprint of the original journals and a reprint of the edition from 1955–1956. These often quite difficult texts have also appeared in a French translation, as well as in German and English. Unfortunately only partial editions of the latter two translations have been published until now: vol. 1 in English and vols. 1 and 2 in German.

and disturbing work, and a classic. One can be quite certain that it will still have readers centuries from now”.<sup>91</sup>

The justification for such an assessment is simple: the individual monographs are all written by authors who had actually experienced with their own bodies the things they describe—by enduring, practicing, and then simply and truthfully reporting about it. The approach is a ‘no-nonsense’ one which ruled out any ‘esoteric’ games from the start: it is simply based on the author’s own practical experience which is then immediately to be put into practice again. No one spoke of an invented tradition of ancient masters as precursors, nor with the pretention of having been personally initiated by such fictional figures. Also absent were any embarrassing posturings of ‘infinite love’ as a motive for the transmission of ‘higher realizations’ to a needy flock. Instead one finds maximum clarity and an often masterful choice of magical terminology, allowing the readers to place themselves imaginatively (and also emotionally) in the spiritual situation being discussed. There was no heavy-handed attempt to overwhelm the readers or to forcefully persuade them of anything. The persuasion had to arise solely from the inner strength of the essays themselves, which can be astonishingly effective even today.

To ensure such a standard also meant a certain lack of compromise. Often the reader must make an accommodation to the texts, and initial effort is also necessary to comprehend the pictorially configured language, which in many cases was based on the example of hermeticism. This was, however, continually illuminated in a methodologically adroit way through mutually complementary articles. Suitable words and terms are for the most part lacking or misleading when describing a progressive spiritual path. Precisely because of their polyvalence (multitude of meanings), images and symbols are often ‘more clear’ and ‘on target’ than any allegedly clear-cut, and therefore strictly delimited, logical terms. The human spirit also operates far beyond logic; for examples of this one need only consider its expressions through poetry or music. Renato del Ponte sums up his assessment as follows: “In conclusion we would emphasize that the treatises found in *Introduction to Magic* are definitely not designed for the general public, but for a few qualified people ...”.<sup>92</sup> Weaker contributions can also of course be found among the texts, but these were very few. There seem to have been sufficiently capable authors available to contribute to the journals every month.

<sup>91</sup> Statement from the back cover of the English edition of vol. 1. Joscelyn Godwin also contributed considerably to the English translations in this edition.

<sup>92</sup> del Ponte, ‘Julius Evola and the UR Group’, xxxviii.



In the following passages I will attempt to delineate the common esoteric thread from the approximately 1,100 pages of texts from the UR Group. This thread was something to which everyone concerned could connect, and it must have been so auspicious that they were all willing to make the effort of writing long essays for publication in this common forum. Many of these decidedly autonomous people also consented to work together in the magical circles, which they called 'chains', for higher goals.

In principle UR wanted to enlist people who did not retreat from the previously described existential crisis, who did not evade it, and who would not accept false solutions to it. For such people the 'alternative'—what they saw as dying a slow spiritual death—was just as unacceptable. In the end this required those who were firm of purpose "to dissipate the fog and blaze a trail", <sup>93</sup> "without trembling before the darkness". Their radically formulated common goal was: "the realization of oneself, in itself, and of existence. That or nothing". This goal, kept clearly in sight, was understood as a transcendent *experience*—not something dependent upon divine grace, but a state which had to be achieved on one's own. To achieve this entailed struggle, a battle against one's own weaknesses, as well as asceticism in the Greek sense of hard 'practice', and not at all in a Christian-moralistic sense.

As in modern science, moral and ethical questions do not play a role in UR. The path was goal-oriented and presented without moral value judgments. <sup>94</sup> In this sense it was not immoral, but amoral. This attitude had nothing whatever in common with the ones held by modern so-called satanic groups. The latter primarily base themselves on the ego, as well as overtly on the judgments and desires of the individual, whereas the path of UR (at least in theory) was supposed to proceed in a way that was transpersonal and 'ego-free', as well as being 'ascetic' in the sense described above.

The transcendental *experience* and knowledge being striven after in turn presupposes a transcendent spiritual 'change of one's inner being', a prior *opus transformationis*. This requires nothing less than a merciless transformation of one's own instinctual nature, for according to UR it is only such a fundamental 'mutation' that makes it possible for the human being to gain access to higher transcendent realizations and experiences. Abstract-philosophical or emotional considerations were no more relevant than were 'good' or 'evil'. Spiritual attitudes based on a faith or philosophy could only scratch the surface. The trans-

formation had to come on a much deeper level. "You must transform yourself. You must overcome yourself. You must make yourself whole and lift yourself up to a higher honor". <sup>95</sup> The demand was not merely for self-awareness, but for *self-creation*. Only in this way could the personality ascend toward transcendence.

For UR, this magical process of self-creation was no mere 'myth' or 'pleasant fantasy', nor was it a dry intellectual goal. It was bursting with life and experience. Underlying this was the conviction that such a path had existed since primordial times, even if it repeatedly fell into obscurity and was trodden only by solitary and often unknown 'initiates'. Numerous testimonies and references from wisdom literature around the world were believed to corroborate this.

A process of 'clarification' or 'cleansing' was seen as paramount for this 'self-creation'. This entailed the gradual shedding of mundane traits—similar to the path through the planetary spheres as described in antiquity—until one was finally able 'purely' and with open eyes to confront the 'divine' (the sphere of the 'fixed stars'). <sup>96</sup> It was a straight and thoroughly practical path.

The task of the UR Group, then, was to make this path viable again in the modern era. To this end they thoroughly scrutinized the mysteries of antiquity, ancient theurgical texts, as well as the hermetical and alchemical works of the Middle Ages and the early modern era. The teachings of yoga, tantra, Taoism, and Buddhism were likewise studied. The realizations and 'signposts' they discovered were compared with one another and brought together in order to reformulate them into a *science*—allegedly in line with an ancient tradition. "A science—a precise, strict, and methodical science, that was passed on from flame to flame, from initiate to initiate in an unbroken chain, even if it became only rarely manifest to the outside world". Just as profane science arrives at its knowledge on an experimental path and only by taking objective and impersonal criteria into account, so too should this spiritual path advance in the same manner. Opinions were of no consequence on this path; all that mattered were verifiable results and knowledge based upon personal experience. This surely is a realistic and modern attitude, and one which can be traced back with some certainty to the influence of Arturo Reghini and Giuliano Kremmerz. <sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> This and the following quotations come from the aforementioned editorial in the first issue of UR entitled 'To the Readers'.

<sup>96</sup> Evola later described this spiritual clarification process very precisely in the light of original Buddhist teachings and terminology in his book *The Doctrine of Awakening*.

<sup>97</sup> Contrary to a number of opinions, Evola himself can also be basically characterized

<sup>93</sup> This and the quotations that follow come from the introduction in the first issue of UR entitled 'To the Readers'.

<sup>94</sup> See also EA, 'L'esoterismo e il superamento della morale'.



And yet it was a *magical science*: one that did not focus on external phenomena or results, but concentrated on the inner human being and on awakening spiritual energies necessary to navigate the path. And it was an initiatic science because it opened the 'gateway' to transcendence, to the 'divine', and even did so by necessity, because the person who was ultimately 'initiated' had grown upward toward the divine and had become one with it.

The path of UR did not entail 'ceremonial magic' in the sense of the Order of the Golden Dawn or what might be found in medieval grimoires. That was viewed as 'lower' magic. UR strove toward 'High Magic' which can be defined as a 'practical metaphysics' with the goal of self-deification. It is characterized by a sovereign, *dominating* attitude with regard to the spiritual realm. A humble, passive, or personality-effacing demeanor, such as might be necessary for spiritistic<sup>98</sup> or shamanic practices, was therefore ruled out. To be awake was everything.

In other words, the 'ultimate goal' of UR was to elevate man to such a level that he transformed himself into a god. Here one might recall the statements from Meister Eckhart and Plotinus which were quoted above in connection with Evola's philosophical studies. Taken together it was an *opus contra naturam*, an operation against one's own inner human and dependent, passive nature, a work of liberating the body, soul, and spirit from their 'natural' material characteristics. It is a goal that in Christianity might well correspond to the only unpardonable sin, the 'sin against the Holy Spirit'. And only few people are probably capable of seeing it as anything other than a terrible act of 'hubris' against God.<sup>99</sup>

as a modern thinker. Modernity is a necessary prerequisite to his anti-modernism. See also in this regard the very instructive article by Gianni Ferracuti, 'Modernità di Evola.' Concerning Evola's modern methodology, which is present in nearly all of his books, it should be emphasized that it is conjoined with a particularly fine intuition when he is investigating ancient or foreign religious language and symbolism. This is clearly pointed out by Stefano Arcella in 'Julius Evola e la riscoperta dei Misteri di Mithra fra influenze esoteriche e letteratura storica-religiosa', 15.

<sup>98</sup> Emilio Servadio has, however, pointed out that the *KRU/R* article 'Esperienze di catena' showed the existence of spiritistic-psychic phenomena. In this regard see also Giulio J. Evola e le polemiche sull'esoterismo'. In an anonymous article (but most probably written by Evola himself) 'Fenomeni magici e fenomeni psichici' in *KRU/R*, the author counters Servadio's arguments stressing the 'intentionality' of the UR group as opposed to the psychic automatism reigning during séances.

<sup>99</sup> Also to be kept in mind here is the 'daimon' in the ancient Socratic sense or the conversation with the 'Holy Guardian Angel' in the teachings of Aleister Crowley, both

Particular attention was paid by UR to the doctrine of 'conditional immortality'. A belief that an immortal soul existed in every human being or a belief in reincarnation were both considered exoteric illusions. Instead, a person had to create an absolutely stable core of consciousness for himself by his own strength, a core that was invulnerable and capable of withstanding even the trauma of 'physical' death. Around this core a 'diamond body' was then to be constructed which would replace the deceased fleshly body as a new vehicle in more subtle realms of existence.<sup>100</sup> It is only under these circumstances that immortality is possible. A parallel notion is evident in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (X, 25): "Therefore we must dare to say that the human on earth is a mortal god but that god in heaven is an immortal human."<sup>101</sup>

The path to this goal corresponded exactly to the aforementioned cleansing process and began with the liberation of the self from its 'earthly chains'. Initially this concerned one's own emotions, in particular fear and especially the fear of death. This was described in ancient hermetic style as the struggle against the 'waters' which primordially and powerfully surge against us, tearing the ground from under our feet and carrying us away if we do not develop the characteristics of 'centeredness' and 'stability'. We must be bridge pylons in the violent stream of life, then the waters cannot harm us. One must bear these up with the powers—in alchemical language—of 'our steel': hard, tough, and yet flexible.<sup>102</sup>

A further step was the liberation of the self from its usual limited self-image. Only in this way could the view be opened to higher realms. The goal of the entire cleansing process—expressed in hermetic language—was to separate the 'dense' from the 'subtle', until the 'inner sun', the 'gold', the 'divine spark' or the 'incorruptible core' was liberated and formed the center of an absolute stable consciousness.

One of the key exercises to clear the way through the initial darkness was the sun exercise. Before falling asleep the practitioner imagined an inner sun

of which concern a communication between the everyday I and the 'higher self'. A modern psychologist would probably speak of a direct access of the I to the unconscious. The initiate in the sense of UR has, however, totally integrated his I into the 'higher self'.

<sup>100</sup> Here, too, the influence of Kremmerz's teachings is evident. See d'Uva, 'Sapienza Ermetica e Magia in Giuliano Kremmerz', 40. This influence is certainly present, although Kremmerz—in contrast to the official stance of the UR Group and especially of Evola—was disposed toward the theory of reincarnation and the 'progressive'.

<sup>101</sup> Copenhaver (trans.), *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English Translation*, 36.

<sup>102</sup> Luce, 'Opus Magicum: La concentrazione—il silenzio', 16.



that arose to illuminate the dark of night upon awakening this sun was then allowed to set again, because now the physical light could illuminate the world. The goal was to achieve a continuity of consciousness so that one was constantly 'awake', also in an increasingly higher sense of the word. Ultimately a point was reached at which this 'divine' core of consciousness could lead the candidate, completely 'awake' in the 'diamond body', to 'immortality'.<sup>103</sup>

Exercises utilizing the imagination and the creation of inner images<sup>104</sup> accompanied the entire magical path. But the development of the 'magical' imagination had (and has) nothing to do with arduous efforts or a 'strong will', for it comes about by itself. It is at once both 'visionary gaze' and 'action'. It is the unity of subject and imagined image. The imagination fixates the image, unifies itself with it, grasps it fully, and can do nothing else but take the magus to where the imagined image indicates. For according to magical belief, as soon as the image is imagined in the right way, the spiritual-'supernatural' presupposition for the attainment of the imagined content is already set. At this point it 'only' needs to crystallize in the earthly 'realm'.<sup>105</sup>

'Magical' knowledge arises in exactly the same manner. Here, too, the presupposition is an identification with the object to be known. For only then, when one is unified with it, can one truly 'know' it—in other words, know it from the inside out. Evola describes this as 'active identification'.<sup>106</sup> The highest 'object' for active identification was the 'divine spark', the Self that must assume the place of the everyday I. At this stage one has 'finally' reached the transcendent 'divine' realm. Immanence and transcendence have then become one.

Image magic, mirror magic, breathing techniques, astral travel, the experience of the 'subtle bodies'—all these things would be taught on the path, although not for their own sake, but always in subordination to the higher goal of 'becoming divine'. This is likewise the case with the sex magic of UR which had been introduced by 'Abraxa' and derived from the teachings of Giuliano Kremmerz.<sup>107</sup> Its ultimate purpose was the overcoming of sexuality per

se, so that one could, in terms of the cleansing process, dedicate oneself entirely and freely to the actual goal of one's own 'divinity'.

One highly relevant and specific point only appeared in symbolic form<sup>108</sup> in the original publications of UR and KRUR, although it surely represented an essential, albeit hidden, premise for UR—or at least for Evola himself. The group's magical path of illumination was predicated on an absolute certainty that admitted no doubts whatsoever regarding the existence of an incorruptible 'divine' core of consciousness in the human being. And Evola had arrived at this certainty through the all-eclipsing drug experience of his youth. This fact is pointed out by Franco Landiscina in an informative essay where he also emphasizes the sobriety and clarity that are evident in Evola's description of this experience. As Landiscina notes, only decades later would writings about drug experiences begin to show these qualities.<sup>109</sup>

There are two notable texts which would be ill received or even seen as bizarre by the majority of people today. Both of them were written by Evola personally. The first of these is an essay in which Evola takes a firm position against the theory of evolution, for he always conversely upheld a 'theory of involution'. The second essay, which affirmed Evola's theory of an Aryan-Nordic primordial homeland, was inspired by the symbology of Herman Wirth, the matriarchy researcher and co-founder of the 'Ahnenerbe' department administered by the SS.<sup>110</sup>

In general, however, the issues of UR and KRUR comprised a collection of reports on magical experiences along with practical exercises and background material, the likes of which can scarcely be found elsewhere with the same degree of precision and clarity. Those who engage with the texts will likely find in them the outline of a path that others (probably) have trodden before and which is claimed to have the potential to lead serious seekers and practitioners out of the 'earthly' realm and into the 'transcendent' one.

A unitary 'integral' Tradition was postulated as the fundamental presupposition for the path. Although this Tradition might well have assumed different

<sup>103</sup> EA, 'La dottrina del 'corpo immortale'', 202.

<sup>104</sup> A very interesting comparison of the work with the inner images by UR and in autogenic training appears in Cardinale, 'Il Training Autogeno di J. Schultz e le tecniche psico-fisiologiche del Gruppo di UR'.

<sup>105</sup> The parallels here with Evola's philosophical period are unmistakable.

<sup>106</sup> EA, 'Come poniamo il problema della conoscenza?', 22.

<sup>107</sup> See also the section on the UR Group in Haki, 'The Theory and Practice of Sexual Magic, Exemplified by Four Magical Groups in the Early Twentieth Century', 460–465.

<sup>108</sup> Taglia (probably Julius Evola), 'Sulle Acque corrosive'. Only in the third revised edition of 1971 did the anonymous author (probably Evola himself) of the article entitled 'Sulle droghe' speak in clear language and analyze in detail the use of drugs in the initiatic realm.

<sup>109</sup> Landiscina, 'Il Gruppo di UR e la via iniziatica alla psichedelia'.

<sup>110</sup> Arvo, 'L'origine delle specie secondo l'esoterismo' and EA, 'Sul simbolismo nordico-atlantico dell'anno'.



outer manifestations, in its essence it allegedly always expressed the same thing.<sup>111</sup> It is said to recur among all peoples and may manifest among the martial, royal, or priestly elites. It can be found in ancient symbols, myths, and rites, the origins of which stretch back into prehistoric times. The ideas of René Guénon are clearly in evidence here—ideas which Evola continued to adopt and later expand upon. And there are also *UR* essays which contain the central theses for two of Evola's books, namely *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno*,<sup>112</sup> which is inconceivable without the influence of Guénon, and *La tradizione ermetica*.<sup>113</sup>

All in all, the journals of *UR* and *KRRUR* sought to present the 'science' they offered through articles that organically built upon and complemented one another, thereby laying the foundation for a systematic form of higher development. In stark contrast to the equally impressive journals *Atanor* and *Ignis*, *UR* and *KRRUR* did not only deal with metaphysical questions, historical explanations, and symbology. The members of the *UR* Group had already been intellectually educated and committed to esoteric knowledge for a long time. What was important for *UR* was to show the path of direct personal and experiential knowledge. Rather than writing about "dusty scholarship" they strove "to awaken inner powers, to clarify, and to guide".<sup>114</sup>

A characteristic of the journals was to follow the individual essays with the so-called 'glosses' in which difficult aspects in the articles are worked through, so as to avoid obscurity as much as possible. As proof of intellectual honesty, some essays were also included which recounted failed experiments, so that lessons might be learned from them.

A further distinctive feature of the journals came in the form of the numerous and often quite lengthy texts from a wide range of esoteric and religious traditions. These were not presented for the sake of cultural education, but chosen primarily on the basis of their utility in conveying information about the initiatic path. To this end, qualified contributors provided commentaries that

<sup>111</sup> Without this basic assumption it would not have been possible always to deduce the same meaning and practical instructions from the most varied traditions ranging from Buddhism to alchemy.

<sup>112</sup> First edition: *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (Milan: Hoepli, 1934). First English edition: *Revolt against the Modern World* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1995).

<sup>113</sup> First edition: *La tradizione ermetica, nei suoi simboli, nella sua dottrina e nella sua arte "regia"* (Bari: Gius. Laterza, 1931). First English edition: *The Hermetic Tradition* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1995).

<sup>114</sup> Anonymous, 'Ai lettori', v.

explicitated and summarized the hidden and practical meaning of those texts, sometimes at greater length than the texts themselves.

For all the practical and esoteric nature of *UR* and *KRRUR*, their scholarly aspect should not be overlooked. Here, for example, many Italian translations of sacred texts were published for the first time. Already starting in the first volume these included an excerpt from the *Kularnava Tantra* based on the translation by Arthur Avalon (John Woodroffe), even before this had appeared in English, as well as excerpts from the Buddhist *Majjhima Nikāya* (the so-called Middle-length Discourses of the Buddha) and from the Tibetan *Shri Chakra Sambhara*. Of particular importance was a philologically flawless translation of the only completely preserved magical ritual of antiquity, namely the Mithras Liturgy from the "Great Magical Papyrus of Paris". There were also excerpts published from *De Mysteriis* by Iamblichus as well as translations of alchemical texts. Even though the scholarly aspect of these presentations was not emphasized, they were nevertheless in accord with the academic standards of the day.

In the second year of *UR* notable translations that were published included the Pythagorean *Golden Verses*, texts by Milarepa, and the famous *Turba Philosophorum*. In *KRRUR*, excerpts appeared from Plotinus, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and Gerhard Dorn's *Clavis Philosophiae Chemicarum*. Other texts were published from a range of contemporary writers including Gustav Meyrink, the esteemed specialist in Middle Eastern and Oriental studies Paul Masson-Oursel,<sup>115</sup> and the Czech symbolist poet Otokar Brézina.

### The Inner Core, or the Magically Active Group

Unfortunately there is very scant information available about the inner core of the *UR* Group. Besides the main group in Rome, there was at least one branch in Genoa which existed until 1929 and was comprised of five members whose identities remain unknown.<sup>116</sup> The main Roman group may have at least consisted of Evola, Reghini, Parise, Quadrelli, and Colazza. Whether or not there were others who participated will probably remain forever uncertain.<sup>117</sup> While

<sup>115</sup> Masson-Oursel was in contact with René Guénon (see the letter dated June 9, 1928, from Guénon to Guido de Giorgio reprinted in de Giorgio, *L'Instant et l'éternité*, 272 f.) which in turn could have paved the way for Evola.

<sup>116</sup> Gruppo di Genova, 'Esperienze di catenà', 143 f., and del Ponte, *Evola e il magico 'Gruppo di UR'*, 30 f.

<sup>117</sup> del Ponte, 'E come esoterismo', 84.



some members were satisfied with simply reading the journals, others undertook the individual exercises described in them and supplemented these with group work. They came together in groups called '*catene*' ('chains'), in which the 'links' were not supposed to fuse but to continue working as individuals.<sup>118</sup>

The meetings began with the members concentrating on 'silence' or inner tranquility. After this a state of 'sympathy' with the other 'links in the chain' was invoked and finally, in a dynamic magical working, they collectively drew a great pentagram in the room. The members themselves then sat well protected in the center of the pentagram.

The actual purpose of the gathering was the creation and vivification of a 'fluidic stream' that could then be used for magical purposes. This stream was mainly to serve the individual development of each participant. But there was also a further goal of creating a collective 'psychic' entity, a so-called *egregore*, which would be formed in such a way that it could actually attract 'higher' energies to itself. With the help of this egregore the group hoped to exert a 'behind-the-scenes' influence on the political situation of the day.

We know about this plan because Evola himself spoke of it,<sup>119</sup> and there is also a strange case history published in *KRUR*. The enigmatic 'Ekatos'<sup>120</sup> who signs this is shrouded in considerable mystery. Some have speculated that 'Ekatos' might have been Count Leone Caetani (1869–1935), a socialist politician (Mussolini was also originally a socialist) and renowned Orientalist scholar.<sup>121</sup> It now seems probable, however, that this essay was written by a woman who came from the Kremmerzian milieu.<sup>122</sup>

And what does this report from 'Ekatos' say? In the period around December 25, 1913, a group of esotericists was said to have found ritual objects, together with instructions for a rite, in an ancient grave near Rome. This rite was then performed every night for months until—probably clairvoyantly—"martial powers promising victory" allegedly made themselves manifest,

<sup>118</sup> Anon., 'Istruzioni di catena'.

<sup>119</sup> Evola, *Il cammino*, 88.

<sup>120</sup> Ekatos, 'La 'Grande Orna': La scena e le quinte'.

<sup>121</sup> See, e.g., G.M., 'Guénon, de Giorgio et la "réorientation" de Julius Evola', 33 f.

<sup>122</sup> There are a number of investigations into this question. The most important of these are probably Arcella, 'L'enigma della grande orna'; Capiferro and Guzzo, 'Le Quinte, la scena, la grande orna'; and last but not least del Ponte, 'Quando il Gruppo di Ur cercò d'influenzare il Fascismo'.

powers possessing knowledge of a prophetic nature about the political future of Italy. This esoteric group was said to have then informed the future dictator Benito Mussolini that he was destined to be "consul of Italy". This was in 1919 and therefore three years before Mussolini's actual takeover. In 1922, when Mussolini became Prime Minister, this same group presented him with a fasces containing an ancient Etruscan axe.<sup>123</sup> According to this report by 'Ekatos', then, forces "from beyond" had designated Mussolini as the leader years beforehand.

The active core of the UR Group now wanted to support these forces with rituals. The goal was to influence Mussolini to resurrect the ancient pagan *Imperium Romanum* and to sharply curtail the Catholic Church. The successful signing of Lateran Accords between the Fascist Italian state and the Vatican in February 1929 completely destroyed this attempt, and could only be seen as a sign of the abject failure of the magical endeavor. This was probably one reason why Evola created the social and political paper *La Torre* out of the esoteric journal *KRUR*.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that at the end of the 1960s a 'Gruppo dei Dioscuri' (Dioscuri Group) formed in Rome, the members of which dedicated themselves to performing magical exercises and rites in emulation of the UR Group. In addition to developing the magical abilities of its members, this group also strove for the resurrection of ancient Roman glory and greatness. But this endeavor also went awry, and there were even members who ended up committing suicide. The magical currents set in motion seem to have become too powerful—even uncontrollable—for them. Years later, a Dioscuri member named Luigi Moretti revealed details about the group's practices and expressly warned against such exercises.<sup>124</sup> Another known member was Dr. Placido Procesi, Evola's personal physician for many years.<sup>125</sup>

There are, however, individual filiations of the UR Group whose efforts can be seen in a positive light. One of these existed in Messina under Salvatore Ruta, who created the Centro Studi Tradizionali Arx out of this group. Together with his fellow comrades-in-arms Ruta then established the Movimento Tradizionalista Romano, which continues up to the present under the

<sup>123</sup> The fasces, an ancient Roman imperial symbol consisting of a bundle of rods and an axe, was carried by the so-called lictors (civil servants) in front of the highest dignitaries.

<sup>124</sup> Moretti, 'La dinamica del respiro'.

<sup>125</sup> On the Dioscuri Group further information can be found in Fenili, 'Il Gruppo dei Dioscuri come tentativo di ripresa dell'esperienza del Gruppo di Ur'.



direction of Renato del Ponte.<sup>126</sup> The group performs ancient Roman rites, but nothing more detailed is known about their magical exercises and rituals.

Allegedly there have been further, more marginal attempts to revive the UR Group, but since these completely lacked any great personalities like the original members of the 1920s, they have failed miserably. According to the latest rumors, two or three small groups may still exist. They are said to be led by former members of the Dioscuri Group and to operate in complete secrecy in the vicinity of Rome and in Sicily.

But now as ever, the fundamental ideas and key exercises of the UR Group are still available via the collective volumes that Evola edited and which have had a broad distribution. As a result, there is nothing—save individual incompetence—that stands in the way of new attempts to tread the path laid by the UR Group.

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<sup>126</sup> Regarding this history see Hahl, 'Das Neuheidendum der römisch-italischen Tradition: von der Antike in die Gegenwart'.

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## The Seeds of Satan: Conceptions of Magic in Contemporary Satanism\*

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### Abstract

*Die Saat des Satans: Vorstellungen von Magie im zeitgenössischen Satanismus*  
Aufbauend auf einer Unterscheidung zwischen "Esoterisierung" und Säkularisierung, behandelt der Artikel Theorien und Praktiken der Magie im modernen religiösen Satanismus. Was wir heute unter selbsternannten Satanisten finden, ist nicht das absolute Böse, sondern Weltanschauungen, die auf eklektischen Aneignungen einer breiten Palette kulturellen Materials gründen, und auf dieser Basis durch Inversion, Säuberung und Kombination positive Identitäten zu errichten und zu verstärken suchen. Diese Identitäten und Weltanschauungen werden wiederum vor allem praktiziert: Durch Magie, schaffen Satanisten Umgebungen zur Selbstverwirklichung, in Form von magischen Rollen, magischen Ritualen, neuen Umwelten, ästhetischen Darbietungen und Kunstwerken. Ich beginne mit einer Untersuchung der dualen Natur magischer Praktiken: Magie wird sowohl als utilitaristisches Werkzeug und als ein Ausdruck des Selbst verstanden, und aus dem Blickwinkel von "Esoterisierung" und Säkularisierung analysiert. Im Anschluss daran gebe ich in diesem Rahmen einen Überblick über typische anleitende Handbücher, Skripte und magische Praktiken innerhalb des "Satanischen Milieus". Es soll gezeigt werden, wie die Versöhnung, das Zelebrieren oder Transzendieren der Gegensätze zwischen "wissenschaftlich" und "esoterisch", authentisch und künstlich, sowie zwischen Selbst und Umwelt, Kernpunkte des gegenwärtigen satanischen Diskurses sind.

### Keywords

Satanism; satanic magic; Anton S. LaVey; Michael Aquino; Left-Hand Path groups; secularized esotericism; "esotericized" secularism; sanitization

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