Fra le componenti più stimolanti all’interno dello studio dell’esoterismo vanno certamente considerate la trasversalità temporale che lo caratterizza e la pluralità delle sue “gemmazioni” interne: l’incrocio fra questi elementi ne permette uno studio tanto diacronico, sulla base della scansione cronologica, quanto sincronico, attraverso la comparazione e l’approfondimento di idee, temi, archetipi, figure. Incrociare le due metodologie non è impresa semplice, ma può condurre a risultati inediti, anche riguardo alla stretta contemporaneità. È quanto ci siamo proposti con la presente intervista, volta ad approfondire le peculiarità della ricerca esoterica del noto intellettuale russo Alexander Dugin.

Bastano una rapida lettura dei titoli delle sue opere e un’occhiata fugace alle fonti bibliografiche delle stesse per comprendere come la sua produzione attraversi scenari e discipline molteplici – dalla filosofia contemporanea a quella antica, dalla geopolitica alla sociologia, dall’antropologia alla storia delle religioni, dalle relazioni internazionali all’esoterismo – e come la natura complessa e protetiforme della sua produzione intellettuale non possa essere ridotta alla vulgata giornalistica occidentale che ne ha sinora tematizzato – spesso, peraltro, con toni farsesti – la sola riflessione sull’attualità politica. A un’analisi più approfondita risulta peraltro evidente come pure il Dugin polemista politico ed eurasiatista antimo-derno si alimenti, nella sua argomentazione, di strutture concettuali, linguistiche e simboliche intrinsecamente esoteriche. Non soltanto, cioè, Dugin ha dedicato la maggior parte dei propri sforzi alla pubblicazione di opere di carattere metafisico, storico-religioso ed esoterico (poche delle quali, purtroppo, tradotte in lingue europee, quasi nessuna nota ai soloni del mainstream), ma anche quando parla e scrive di questioni distinte – di politica, attualità, persino di cultura pop – le categorie interpretative da lui adottate sempre riflettono un’ermeneutica mitico-simbolica pregna di esoterismo.

Risulta quindi fondamentale, per comprendere a fondo la fisionomia intellettuale dell’autore russo, indagare le radici esoteriche della sua formazione intellettuale e biografica (secondo una traiettoria diacronica) e, al contempo, considerare i nuclei concettuali di tipo metafisico che costituiscono il cuore pulsante del suo sistema di pensiero (seconda una traiettoria sincronica).

Per procedere nella discussione di queste complesse tematiche ci siamo rivolti a Jafe Arnold, giovane traduttore, studioso di esoterismo ed eurasiatismo,
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nonché Direttore dell’Eurasianist Internet Archive (archivio online di materiali eurasiatisti inediti in lingua inglese) e della casa editrice, di recente fondazione, PRAV Publishing. A Dugin Arnold ha dedicato la sua tesi magistrale, discussa nel 2019 all’Università di Amsterdam, come elaborato finale del Research Masters Degree in Western Esotericism, intitolata *Mysteries of Eurasia: The Esoteric Sources of Alexander Dugin and the Yuzhinsky Circle*. Supervisionato dal Prof. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Arnold ha approfondito con rigore scientifico, avvalendosi delle fonti russe originali, le radici esoteriche dell’opera di Dugin, concentrando principalmente sulla sua esperienza all’interno del Circolo Yuzhinsky e sui saggi pubblicati negli anni Novanta. Il dialogo che segue intende presentare gli sviluppi fondamentali della ricerca di Arnold ed estendere la riflessione ad altri domini, più recenti ma altrettanto fondamentali, della produzione intellettuale di Dugin, fra cui il progetto di *Noomachia* e l’Eurasiatismo da lui promosso alla luce di una originale geografia sacra.

In ultima istanza, se la “dialettica ierofanica” individuata da Mircea Eliade caratterizza sostanzialmente il *Dasein* umano, il suo “essere al mondo”, l’opera di Dugin offre spunti fondamentali per rintracciare la dialettica di sacro e profano nel nuovo millennio postmoderno. Persino in esso, infatti, “colui che parla con immagini primordiali, è come se parlasse con mille voci; egli afferra e domina, e al tempo stesso eleva, ciò che ha disegnato, dallo stato di precarietà e di caducità alla sfera delle cose etere; egli innalza il destino personale a destino dell’umanità e al tempo stesso libera in noi tutte quelle forze soccorritrici, che sempre hanno reso possibile all’umanità di sfuggire ad ogni pericolo” (Carl Gustav Jung, *Psicologia e poesia*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1988, 47-48).

Luca Siniscalco

1) Mr. Arnold, could you give us a general, introductory picture of the famous, controversial Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin? It would be interesting to start from the fact that you mentioned at the beginning of your thesis, “Mysteries of Eurasia: The Esoteric Sources of Alexander Dugin and the Yuzhinsky Circle”, that Dugin has been called ‘The Most Dangerous Philosopher in the World’ and has many diverging reputations, including in academia. How can Dugin’s different associations be integrated?

Thank you, Professor Siniscalco and the editors of *La Rosa di Paracelso*, for the opportunity to have this conversation and for such a challenging leading question, one for which, I think, no one has a complete answer – and that just might be the point.

“The most dangerous philosopher in the world” is perhaps one of the most respectful titles which Alexander Gelyevich Dugin has been granted in Western media, compared to many more accusatory and negative epithets, and, in my opinion, it might just be quite appropriate. One reason for this is that Dugin’s thought, condensed in a genuinely overwhelmingly immense corpus, cuts across
so many subjects, fields, disciplines, and schools of thought that attaching to Dugin any one particular “field” poses radical questions to any one and all of them. To start with the academic realm as you mentioned, Dugin’s candidate and doctoral degrees are in philosophy, political science, and sociology, and from 2008-2014 Dugin was the head of the Department of Sociology of International Relations at the Faculty of Sociology of Moscow State University. Since then, Dugin has lectured on International Relations and Geopolitics at China’s Fudan University, and he is currently lecturing on the “Ontology and Anthropology of Theater” and other topics at Moscow’s Gorky Academic Arts Theatre and the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts. Back in the 1990s, Dugin lectured at the Russian Military Academy, the culmination of which in 1997 was a tome which is now widely seen (and this might be one of the only points on which “Duginologists” agree) as the founding “textbook” of contemporary Russian geopolitics. So, could Dugin be classified as primarily belonging or relevant to Sociology? To International Relations and Geopolitics? To Political Science more broadly, or Philosophy in all of the breadth and colors of the term? Or to Theatre Studies? Dugin has also authored the volume *Conspirology: The Science of Conspiracies, Secret societies, and Occult War* – so should he, as some recent articles claim, therefore be seen as a “conspiracy theorist”, with all the ambiguities and polemical dimensions of the term? Even a cursory glance at Dugin reveals that no single “label” or “field” will do. A slightly deeper examination, in my opinion, reveals that such attempts at monodisciplinary or uni-ideological classification fundamentally misunderstand and reduce Dugin’s thought, corpus, and trajectory which, moreover, Dugin’s academic engagements do not even begin to exhaust.

The matter is no less complicated even if one turns to the terms and titles of Dugin’s own works. On the one hand, Dugin has consistently identified himself with and drawn much attention as a thinker in the currents of Traditionalism and Eurasianism. On the other hand, Dugin’s deep engagement with Heideggerian philosophy is well-established and is evermore being addressed by serious scholarship. Still further, Dugin has been widely associated with his concept of the “Fourth Political Theory” and his theory of multipolarity, and now Dugin’s English-language bibliography has recently come to feature his textbooks on Ethnosociology. This is still not even beginning to mention Dugin’s many past associations with diverse political movements, parties, and institutions in Russia and abroad. Overall, over the past three decades, Dugin’s Russian-language oeuvre has grown to number more than 60 books, fewer than 10 of which have been translated into any one foreign language – not to mention Dugin’s thousands of articles and hundreds of episodes of radio and television “talk shows.” In other words, the increasingly belabored question “Who is Alexander Dugin?” has had and will continue to have many “answers” across different media and fields – most of them sensationalistic and superficial, some of them fruitful and stimulating, all of them to some degree and for one reason or another controversial. Dugin’s reception – in different countries, languages, fields, etc. – is still an open, ongoing question, and his many works leave open many avenues for exploration.
Another reason why “the most dangerous philosopher in the world” is appropriate, if one had to choose among existing headlines, is that Dugin’s positions, expressions, and aims are never moderate. In fact, the title of what I would call one of Dugin’s most “personal” and free-flowing works is *The Radical Subject and its Double* – or, as Dugin has once proposed such might be better translated, *The Radical Self*. If one wants to understand Dugin’s thought and modes of expression, then it is indispensable to recognize that, as a Traditionalist in the line of René Guénon and Julius Evola, and with his own original emphases and theses within this current of thought, Dugin sees the present period as none other than the Hindu Kali-Yuga, Hesiod’s Iron Age, the Christian End Times, the Norse Wolf Age or Ragnarök, the Islamic time of Dajjal, which is to say in the Traditionalist view the final, most degraded and debased, eschatological age in the intellectual and spiritual cycle of human history. The climactic thesis of Dugin’s first published book, the metaphysical treatise *The Ways of the Absolute*, was none other than what Dugin called “Eschatological Gnosis.” In turn, Dugin’s works are concentrated on conceptualizing a radical (in the Latin sense of *radix*, “root”) critique and overcoming of all Modern and Postmodern paradigms and discourses, with hardly any exceptions. The emphases, representations, and lines of thought in which Dugin’s philosophy has developed have, of course, changed over the decades, but this essential, underpinning apperception remains central.

I’ll take the risk and suggest one possible introductory hermeneutical perspective: Dugin’s philosophy as it has unfolded over the years, in all of the fields, ideas, and subjects which it engages, is fundamentally about deconstructing unipolar, unilinear notions of one Paradigm, one Philosophy, one World, one Civilization, one History, one Sociology, etc., arguing instead that there is in fact a plurality of paradigms, cultures, ideologies, etc., and thereby making the case that the fate of the Modern-cum-Postmodern paradigm of the West, which Dugin sees as the End, the Kali-Yuga, is neither universal nor obligatory. Dugin is committed to Martin Heidegger’s pursuit of a “New” or “Another Beginning” of philosophy and, inseparable from this, Dugin is convinced that the hitherto cycle of Western thought and culture has led itself to the point of utter crisis, hence the need for radical perspectives which transcend hitherto frameworks. And hence the sense of “danger” to these paradigms themselves. It is worth adding that one might also discern in both some of Dugin’s earliest and most recent writings that a sense of fate and “pessimism” by all means has a place in his thought, as it does in the Traditionalism of Guénon and Evola and the very traditional eschatologies engaged by them. Looking at the sheer prolificness of Dugin’s oeuvre, the impression could be had that Dugin is fiercely philosophizing for the End with the hope that some of his works will supply and survive to the New Beginning. For Dugin, it is all or nothing.

I hope I have not said too much, but then again, we are talking about Dugin.

2) Beyond this general introduction, I noted that your brilliant study does not aspire at all to engage the most common political and ideological discussions of Dugin. Your thesis instead “proposes to shift to an historiographical, diachronic
approach and to, perhaps more fruitfully, concretely identify the major sources in the history of ideas which Dugin encountered in the Soviet underground and early post-Soviet environment, which consistently manifest themselves throughout Dugin’s early, formative publications and activities.” Western esotericism emerges as the core of your research. Could you summarise how important esotericism is to Dugin’s early activities? Does it embody the same role nowadays in his current intellectual projects?

The point of departure of my thesis was that in Western scholarship and media Dugin has been called many things, associated with many different “-isms”, and assigned vastly differing appraisals. No small part of the still relatively scarce pool of Western academic literature on Dugin (with the exception of Mark Sedgwick’s pioneering scholarship) has fixated on naming, debating, and disputing “Duginism” in terms of preconceived markers, with little attention paid at all to Dugin’s actual corpus. Moreover, some academic authors have even discouraged the study of Dugin, either by explicitly claiming that such “legitimizes” what they claim to be Dugin’s “pseudo-intellectual, skewed instrumentalizations”, or in the form of insinuations that Dugin is too eclectic, “chameleon”, or disingenuous to deserve any serious intellectual analysis. In my thesis, in line with the history of ideas approach established in the academic study of Western Esotericism, I sought to, as expressed in the passage you’ve quoted, go “back to the beginning” or zu den Sachen selbst, to reconstruct the historical-ideational grammar out of which Dugin emerged, to really examine his early works, and to identify the major currents of thought with which Dugin was originally educated and debuted.

In this sense, my thesis was an attempt at an “intellectual history of the early Dugin”. And this biography/bibliography, it turns out, is inextricably tied to the modern history of Western Esotericism – so much so that, I’ll dare to claim, it would be difficult to coherently understand and identify Dugin in his early period from the 1980s up until the mid-1990s as any other generic “-ist” above “esotericist.” The point is that Dugin’s intellectual origins lie in the Soviet dissident milieu which would come to be known as the “Yuzhinsky Circle”, into which Dugin was initiated c. 1980. The Yuzhinsky Circle, established by the famous founding author of the genre of “grotesque metaphysical realism”, Yuri Mamleev (1931-2015) was centered around reading, discussing, theorizing, and practically experimenting with primarily Western esoteric and occult sources. For the Yuzhinsky Circle, and in turn for Dugin, esotericism was “discovered” as a pool of “lost” and “rejected knowledge” (vis-a-vis official Soviet ideology) synonymous with a radical spiritual anti-Modernity. Among other esoteric groupings in the Soviet “occult underground”, the Yuzhinsky Circle was distinct for its radical spirit: its main figures and works expressed (1) an anti-worldly “gnostic spirituality” which saw the surrounding Modern world to be metaphysical evil and/or an impossible, unsustainable “non-reality”, (2) an extravagant thrust toward syncretism in the pursuit of what was called “mad gnosis”, (3)
and the deep conviction that the alternative to the present “hell on earth” could be found in the forgotten depths of religious traditions and esoteric and occult doctrines. Most significantly along this line, in the early 1960s the circle’s then emerging charismatic leader whom Dugin has expressed he admired the most, Evgeny Golovin (1938-2010), discovered two pivotal threads in the orbit of Western esotericism: the pioneering 1960 book of “fantastic realism” by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, *Le Matin des Magiciens* (in English: *The Morning of the Magicians: Secret Societies, Conspiracies, and Vanished Civilizations*), and the Traditionalism of René Guénon and Julius Evola. In my thesis, I showed on the basis of an intellectual-biographical and historiographical analysis that virtually all of Dugin’s early works from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s were written (frequently most explicitly) “in dialogue” with these major ideational sources and their offshoots, that Dugin’s early thought is saturated with, reflective and developmental of the colorful legacy of “Yuzhinsky esotericism”, which, it turns out, was admitted by Dugin himself in the first editions of his first works, only for these references to later be removed as Dugin further developed along his own philosophical, political, academic, more “mainstream” trajectory.

The question of “how important is esotericism to Dugin’s early activities” is, as I hope to have demonstrated in my thesis, one that can be confidently answered and in turn posed in new ways for further research. As a legacy of ideas, practices, and currents, esotericism was not merely important to the early Dugin; it was Dugin’s central matrix of sources, thought, and language. The questions which Dugin raised and addressed in his early works and the ideas, authors, and sources which he referenced in so doing were none other than those whose attestation and coherence is structured in the historically-evolved referential corpus of Western esotericism – first discovered and “worked through” in the Yuzhinsky Circle and then developed further by Dugin. Dugin’s cultivation, elaboration, and original development of some of the esoteric themes and trains of thought which he inherited from or discovered alongside the Yuzhinsky Circle, as well as his combination of these with other fields of thought, constitute not only a chapter in the history of esotericism that is ripe for new examinations and perspectives, but also restores the first “piece of the puzzle” of understanding Dugin.

Now, as a substantive, by contrast, Dugin’s conceptualization of esotericism – the historico-theoretical definition of which has been one of the main pursuits of the academic field that bears the name – is not very inventive, or in the very least runs parallel to established precedents. Dugin mostly abides by the etymology and connotations of the ancient Greek *esōterikós* and the Traditionalist current’s inheritance of the “perennialist” notion in his understanding of “esotericism” and “the esoteric” as referring to an “inner” or “hidden” dimension of doctrines or organizations into one must be initiated, as opposed to the “exoteric”, or “outer” side. In my thesis and my translations of Dugin’s works, I’ve more than once been faced with the question of rendering the Russian term *ezoterizm* as “esoterism” following some of the precedents established for translating Guenon’s use of the term. However, in some of his early texts Dugin also
comes close to classifying *ezoterizm* under what he terms “manifestationist metaphysics”, which might bridge his understanding somewhat with Antoine Faivre’s pioneering definition of esotericism as a “form of thought” characterized by, as in Faivre’s first “intrinsic characteristic”, “cosmic correspondences.” It is worth noting in connection with this that Dugin’s more recent works have increasingly treated – positively, although not uncritically – the 20th century Eratos school of scholarship on religion, myth, and esotericism. At the same time, Dugin’s very approach to esoteric currents as a reservoir of (T)raditional(ist) knowledge that stands in relation to the paradigm and discourses of Modernity is – of course, with completely different motivations and conclusions – resonant with Wouter Hanegraaff’s thesis that esotericism refers to the “rejected knowledge of Western culture”, whose rejection is, without a doubt, for Dugin part of the greater tragedy and machinations of Modernity which must be overcome.

As for the second part of your question, the point of my thesis was not to suggest that all of Dugin’s thought and works can be reduced to his original “esoteric sources” out of the Yuzhinsky Circle, nor even to argue that Dugin should be seen now as primarily an “esotericist” in at once all the broadness and particularities of this term. Rather, I would say that my thesis aimed to clarify some of the complications and nuances and fill some of the gaps of the history and hermeneutics of Dugin’s corpus by going back to the very beginning, which in many ways has been the most misunderstood and, on the other side of the same coin, the most controversial. To what extent and in which ways the early “esoteric Dugin” has evolved and may be alive and at work in Dugin’s contemporary works is a question for which my thesis has only (I hope) laid the “prologue.”

3) As you touched upon, a significant section of your research is devoted to analysing the “Yuzhinsky Circle”. This part is really fascinating and especially fruitful for European scholars, because you tap into rare Russian sources that are not easily accessible to non-Russian readers. Could you offer a brief introduction to the genesis of the esoteric circle, its main members, and its role in Dugin’s education and intellectual development?

A Russian associate of mine recently remarked that it is “impossible” to justly present the Yuzhinsky Circle in an English-language study because, in his words, it is a “peculiarly Russian phenomenon, with all the entailed contradictions and paradoxes unknown to the West.” I admit that I still lose sleep over this comment! Be that as it may, it emerged in my thesis that Western esotericism is an especially relevant, defining link by which to grasp the preoccupations of the Yuzhinsky Circle out of which Dugin emerged.

The Yuzhinsky Circle as “semi-formalized” by Mamleev c. 1958 was what we can now in historical perspective call one of the most significant nodes in the “occult renaissance” or “Soviet-Russian occulture” that emerged in the late 1950s and early ’60s. In this period, the slight relaxation of Soviet censorship facilitated a new boom of interest in esoteric, occult, mystical, and religious doctrines, prac-
tices, and currents – a cultural sphere that had obviously been, to put it mildly, “shaken up” by the intense years of the “Stalin Revolution” and the Second World War, but could now be somewhat more easily accessed by those dissatisfied with the realities of post-war Soviet “stability” (or “stagnation”). The Yuzhinsky Circle was one of many underground milieux which emerged in Soviet Russia’s cities in parallel to the “counter-cultural turn” in the West, and which were, perhaps in terms of the lowest common denominator, interested in the mysteries of “consciousness” and “spirituality” in contrast to the rigid “atheist-rationalist-materialist religion” of Khrushchev’s USSR. The circle first took shape as a reading group in the smoking room of Moscow’s Lenin Library, where, under circumstances which still peak curiosity today, esoteric and occult works increasingly slipped past the scrutiny of censors and became somewhat more easily accessible – one famous anecdote tells of Julius Evola’s *Pagan Imperialism* making it past the censors onto the library’s bookshelves thanks to the latter word. The reader and author who emerged at the forefront of this “crowd” and who would eventually move the meetings to his apartment on Yuzhinsky street, was Yuri Mamleev. At this point one might remark that “the rest is history”, except this history is only beginning to be reconstructed and understood in all of its significance.

Mamleev was the pioneer of a genre of literature known as “metaphysical realism”, and here it would be appropriate to recall the often-quoted saying that Russian philosophy is most frequently and intensely to be found in Russian literature. In his literature and later philosophical treatises, Mamleev presented a worldview in which modern “social reality” is contrasted to the “metaphysical reality” that truly defines human nature and the world. “Social reality” is a falsehood, a material prison of illusions out of which humans must break free, through intense existential experiences that deconstruct consciousness, to strive towards the divine element within them, the true “I”, which connects them to the real reality of the metaphysical, divine realm, cosmic cycles and energies, and true knowledge and being. Mamleev believed that the Soviet underground, and Russia in general, was the site of a rebirth of “metaphysical selfhood” and “gnostic-spiritual awakening” against Modernity. In founding the Yuzhinsky Circle, Mamleev was effectively assembling what he saw as the “spiritual elite” which, through the pursuit of alterations of consciousness and the reassembling of metaphysical knowledge out of diverse esoteric, occult, and religious sources, could affect the whole cosmic environment. For Mamleev, this metaphysical rebirth was destined to come from Russia and the East, in which Mamleev saw great value in Hindu and Buddhist doctrines, on which he would later establish himself as an authority, lecturing at the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales in Paris and later at Moscow State University. It could be summed that Mamleev, as its founder, set the “tone” and “agenda” of the circle, and although he would later identify himself as a Traditionalist, Mamleev’s initial readings for the circle were the primers of modern Western occultism and esotericism, ranging from the classics of French occultism to Theosophy and Anthroposophy, Gurdjieff, and others.
In 1962, Mamleev was joined by Evgeny Golovin, who would take over the leadership of the circle following Mamleev’s emigration and become perhaps its most iconic figure – so much so that Mark Sedgwick’s pioneering study spoke of the “Golovin Circle.” If Mamleev is at least somewhat known outside of Russia then Golovin remains the “great unknown” mystery of the Yuzhinsky Circle and, more broadly, esotericism and Traditionalism in Russia. In many ways, although founded by Mamleev, the legacy of the Yuzhinsky Circle is inseparable from the role, ideas, and practices of Golovin. As I mentioned, it was Golovin who “discovered” *Morning of the Magicians* and Traditionalism which, as I argued in my thesis, are among the main inspirational source-bases for much of Dugin’s early thought and works. If Mamleev looked Eastward, then Golovin looked Westward: his primary interests were alchemy, ancient, medieval, and Renaissance magic, and French symbolist literature. His God was Dionysus and his “Vedas” were the world of Greek myth. And he saw Traditionalism as the framework through which to integrate different esoteric and occult “sciences” into a comprehensive worldview. That being said, however, Golovin’s philosophy is highly idiosyncratic and original – I would love to talk about his philosophy beyond these most basic parameters and the common themes of the Yuzhinsky context, but the fact of the matter is that Golovin’s thought has yet to be reconstructed in its entirety out of the post-Soviet-era texts which he left behind and the anecdotes of Yuzhinsky adepts. If there is any one aspect of the Yuzhinsky Circle and esotericism in Russia which is in desperate need of reconstruction and research today, it is Golovin and his philosophy.

Another key personality of the circle, the one who would initiate Dugin as his pupil, was the Russian-Azerbaijani thinker Geydar Dzhemal. Although Dzhemal would be the one to move furthest away from the circle and develop his own ideology of “Islamic radicalism”, in the Yuzhinsky Circle Dzhemal played the crucial role of, on the one hand, procuring and disseminating literature, particularly the works of Guénon, and, on the other, setting the precedent of synthesizing a comprehensive metaphysical-theological system out of so many diverse works and committing to a strict “choice of tradition.”

Mamleev, Golovin, and Dzhemal were the key figures of the Yuzhinsky Circle who most directly and impactfully influenced Dugin’s early philosophy. Of course, there were others who deserve attention in the history of this circle who were left out of my thesis, such as Sergey Zhigalkin and Igor Dudinsky, but it is Mamleev, Golovin, and Dzhemal whom Dugin would pay homage to in his early works as his “spiritual guides”, and it is their derivations of “Yuzhinsky esotericism” which Dugin’s early works are saturated with, reflective of, and aimed to take in new directions.

Again, however, I’d like to emphasize that this history and legacy is far from recovered. In my thesis I compiled existing research, presented my own original findings, and analyzed such in the context of the emergence of Dugin’s philosophy and its core currents, whereas there were clearly many other esoteric currents in the Yuzhinsky matrix which deserve examination. More broadly, the
Yuzhinsky Circle remains an understudied, unique phenomenon in the history of esotericism and Soviet and Russian culture, and in many senses its legacy is still being borne out today, by Dugin and others.

4) Could you explain how Dugin’s “choice of tradition” led him to Russian Orthodox Christianity – at least from the publication of *Metaphysics of the Gospel* – and especially to the Old Believers, whom, as you note in your thesis, Dugin calls “the heroes of the ecclesiological Resistance, the last loyalists of Holy Rus, defenders of ‘imperial ontology’, the ones who have refused to compromise with the spirit of this world”?

It is crucial to understand that Dugin’s path to Orthodoxy, and more specifically the Old Believers Rite, was through the approach and imperatives of Traditionalist thought and his own unique revision of this current’s perspective on Christianity. And the “choice of tradition” is none other than one of the most belabored, intense, and sensitive questions in the history of Traditionalist thought, related as it is to the even greater dilemma of Traditionalist conceptualizations of “initiation.” Allow me to attempt to briefly explain:

A crucial cornerstone of Traditionalism as Guénon conceived it was the emphasis that the very notion of tradition is, in accordance with the original Latin *tradere*, meaning “to hand down”, hinged upon transmission. A genuine sacred tradition, as opposed to an arbitrarily invented or idiosyncratically syncretized doctrine, is one that has been passed down, vertically from the metaphysical, spiritual realm to humans, and horizontally, historically from human to human. Therefore, a genuine representative of traditional doctrines is not one who simply decides to agree with or profess a tradition, but someone who has been initiated into a tradition. Guénon took the strict, adamant stance that this necessarily means being initiated into a populated structure, whether a particular religious institution, organization, society, circle, lodge, etc., whose doctrines and historical heritage have sufficient “traditional”, “initiatic” credentials.

This is one of the key points on which Guénon attempted (not always consistently) to distance himself and Traditionalism from the myriad other esoteric, occult, and “new religious” currents of the late 19th and early 20th century, in which Guénon himself had been extensively involved: Traditionalists were supposed to follow the spirit of tradition not by developing their own organized incarnation of tradition, but by seeking initiation into established ones and pursuing the esoteric (“inner”) therein, thusly, unlike contemporary occultist practices, keeping traditions “whole” and “separate” while recognizing and seeking to conceptually integrate their perennial “esotericism” originating in the Primordial Tradition. This was substantiated, on the one hand, by the assessment that in the Kali-Yuga there are few genuine traditions left compared to evermore numerous “pseudo-traditions” or, even worse, “counter-initiatic” ones; and, on the other hand, by Guénon’s conviction, expressed in his programmatic *The Crisis of the Modern World*, that organized Traditionalist intellectuals could face
the imminent, catastrophic end of the cycle and protect and prepare traditions for palingenesis. But, practically, what traditions were there to be initiated into? Guénon’s various “assessments” on just which extant entities were sufficiently “traditional” and “initiatic” were both harshly particular and, in more than a few cases, highly ambiguous. Although Guénon profoundly valued Hinduism as perhaps closest of all to the Primordial Tradition and saw its doctrines as much-needed inspiration for the West, he realized that the varna system barred Europeans; on the same matter, Guénon initially rejected Buddhism, and in his first book he also deemed Islam to be “inaccessible” to Europeans for “historical and sociological reasons.” At the same time, while Guénon considered Christianity, or rather Catholicism, to be the closest candidate for a “European tradition”, he still considered Christian doctrine and rites to have already degenerated and lost initiatic, esoteric value. Having participated in many of them, Guénon rejected the overwhelming bulk of contemporary esoteric and occult currents, although at times saw some potential in some schools of Masonry. At one point, Guénon supposedly recommended correspondents to join the Traditionalist Frithjof Schuon’s Sufi Alawiyya. Guénon himself, as is well known, “settled” into Sufism in Cairo, in whose tarīqa and Shadhili he saw a particularly pristine, organized chain of initiations. This established a distinctly Islamic trajectory which many Traditionalists would follow, including Dugin’s mentor, Dzhemal.

The question of the “choice of tradition” and “initiation” was taken up by other Traditionalists in diverse ways. Most relevant to the Yuzhinsky Circle and Dugin would be the perspectives of Evola. On the one hand, Evola adamantly rejected Christianity, saw the most value in European pagan traditions but doubted the authenticity of neo-pagan reconstructions, and even dedicated a whole book to arguing for the value of Buddhist doctrines to European Traditionalists. Well-known are also Evola’s works on the traditional and initiatic values of magical practices, Tantra, alchemy, etc. On the other hand, in covering such diverse traditions, Evola did not restrict himself or advocate conformity to one, but instead argued that the Traditionalist cause could be “detached” from the question of the “choice of tradition” and strictly organizational initiation. Alternatively, Evola sought to derive those fundamental principles of the Traditional worldview out of many traditions with which, in tandem with the existential experience which Evola referred to as “la rottura del livello”, a most powerful form of “self-initiation” could be accomplished and orient the “men among the modern world’s ruins.”

As a committed Traditionalist emerging out of a circle whose major thinkers had affinities for different traditions – e.g., Mamleev’s interest in Hinduism and Buddhism, Golovin’s in magic and alchemy, Dzhemal’s Islamic path – Dugin was inevitably confronted with this question. Dugin’s ultimate answer, although hinted (sometimes explicitly) in his earliest works, came in the form of his 1996 work *The Metaphysics of the Gospel: Orthodox Esotericism*. In the latter, Dugin argued that Traditionalist critiques of the traditional and initiatic quality of Christian doctrines and rites were valid with relation to Ca-
tholicism and Protestantism, but not Orthodoxy. In terms of “traditionality”, Dugin argued that Orthodoxy has preserved a synthesis of manifestationist and creationist metaphysics in a unique, “third way” which offers the path of “initiatic deification” lost in exclusively ontologically-transcendent creationism as well as a resolution to the problem of eternally cyclical closed immanentism through a rigorous eschatologism. The latter is most significant to Dugin: after all, in the depth of the Kali-Yuga, it is the subject of the End Times that is most relevant, and it is precisely a special type of “eschatological gnosis” which Dugin discerns as unique to Christianity, and particularly to Russian Orthodoxy, as in the doctrine of “Moscow the Third Rome”. On the other hand, Dugin meticulously argues that in the Russian context Orthodoxy inherited, synthesized, and “transfigured” earlier pagan traditions in a much more harmonious and substantive way than in the experiences of Catholicism and Protestantism. In this perspective, Orthodoxy harbors a more “organic” continuity with pre-Christian initiatic lines, rendering it to some degree a culminative continuation of the whole traditional-initiatic line of Russian folk spirituality and religion. In fact, this is a point which Mircea Eliade seems to have alluded to in more than a few places as the “cosmic folk religion” of Eastern Europe. Within Orthodoxy, Dugin argues, it is the Old Believers Rite, which emerged out of the schism over the Nikonian reforms in the 17th century, that remains most true to original Orthodox doctrines and, most importantly, retains the central focus on eschatology that crowns Christian metaphysics and the spiritual identity of Russia as the “Third Rome” and Katechon.

Dugin’s Metaphysics of the Gospel is, in many ways, a unique chapter in the history of Traditionalist thought as well as in the history of Orthodox theology and metaphysics. Dugin’s theological perspectives, narrative on church history, and analysis of the continuities and distinctions between the pagan and Christian legacies presented therein have yet to receive due attention from scholars, but are undoubtedly of great interest, especially in the context of the resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church today.

It is also worth considering the fact that Orthodox Christianity is habitually excluded from the perspective of the study of esotericism, even as the field of Western esotericism has increasingly sought to move “beyond the West”. Dugin’s analysis, meanwhile, would seem to suggest that many of the doctrines and currents that became the “rejected knowledge” of Western Christian dogma and polemics have had a different experience and configuration in the context of Russian Orthodoxy. This poses a very intriguing avenue for research.

5) You have recognised in Dugin’s esoteric heritage two main sources: the Traditionalist school – especially Guénon and Evola’s works – and ‘Völkisch Occultism’, in relation to which you particularly highlight Herman Wirth’s symbolological theories. It might be relevant, both for Dugin’s followers and La Rosa di Paracelso readers, to consider the potential role of Gnosticism in Dugin’s worldview, especially as you mentioned it in connection with Mamleev. Dugin’s un-
understanding of this ancient metaphysical doctrine seems to be complex and even somewhat contradictory: on the one hand, we have his explicit theorization of “Eschatological Gnosis” and a kind of Manichaeism in the Endkampf between Light and Dark, while on the contrary other, his committed Christian impulse that is structurally anti-gnostic. What do you think about this?

This is a complex and sensitive question, both for scholarship and for Dugin, without an unambiguous answer. Firstly because, as is well known, the very definition of “Gnosticism” and “Gnostic”, whether with reference to the ancient currents, or as a typological category in the study of religious and esoteric currents, or in relation to the type of knowledge of gnosis, is the subject of much controversy among scholars. In my thesis, I employed April DeConick’s rather broad concept of “gnostic spirituality” as merely a working term to characterize the transgressive, anti-worldly metaphysics of Mamleev. Secondly, this question is difficult because while in his early (and indeed some later) works Dugin frequently does paint what is typically seen as a Gnostic-Manichaen hyper-dualism between Light and Dark, Good and Evil, Tradition and Modernity, and so on, the overall trajectory of Dugin’s thought has been to complicate and “conditionalize” this dichotomy and, at the same time, Dugin’s expressed positions on Gnosticism, especially with regards to Christianity, can be complex, sometimes ambiguous.

In his “religious manifesto”, The Metaphysics of the Gospel: Orthodox Esotericism, Dugin devoted three chapters to Gnosticism, in which he distinguishes between three categories or lines of Gnosticism relevant to Christianity: (1) Jewish esoteric-Gnostic trends, among which he names the Ebionites, (2) Valentinian Gnosticism, and (3) Christian Dualist-Gnosticism, among which he names Bardaisan, Marcion, the Pistis Sophia, the Ophians, Bogomilism, and Catharism. Between these, Dugin argues: the first category is most distantly removed from Christian doctrine; Valentinianism can be seen as an attempt by the manifestationist side of Christian metaphysics, of “Helleno-Christianity”, to eradicate creationist metaphysics, or “Judeo-Christianity”; and the third category comes closest of all to recognizing and addressing the “paradox” of the synthesis of creationism and manifestationism, and therefore in many ways highlights, grasps, and cognizes aspects of Christian doctrine which orthodox dogma has avoided or smoothed over. Dugin thus argues that Gnosticism, while forming one “pole” of heresy within orthodox Christianity and being heretical and anathema, in fact “exposes” some of the most profound peculiarities of Christian metaphysics which have been preserved in Orthodoxy. In other words, even though Gnosticism is officially rejected, the value of some of its trends to the elucidation and understanding of Christian metaphysics is historically and structurally crucial. This point is extremely interesting but ultimately ambiguous. Thus, I would say that the question which you are posing deserves to be the subject of further research that is attentive to nuance.
6) As you mentioned earlier as well as in your thesis, Dugin is perhaps better known as the main theoretician of neo-Eurasianism. Could you give us a brief definition of this orientation, which seems to be both geopolitical and cultural, and to explain how Dugin’s esoteric concepts, such as the ones expressed in the book *Mysteries of Eurasia*, form his notion of “Eurasian sacred geography” and Eurasianist perspective on international relations?

Unfortunately, I could not enter into Eurasianism in my thesis. Yet Eurasianism is increasingly recognized to be one of the most complex and influential currents of thought in recent Russian history, one whose relevance, representation, and weight is only growing in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, more than a few scholars have recognized that the “rise of (neo-)Eurasianism” is in no small part thanks to its propagation and application by Dugin himself, who played a major role not only in the excavation and (re-)publication of classical Eurasianist texts in the 1990s and early 2000s, but also in the founding of the first neo-Eurasianist political party and movement, the latter of which is still in operation today as the International Eurasian Movement. At the same time, however, like Dugin and the Yuzhinsky Circle, Eurasianism is still relatively understudied, frequently sensationalized and mistreated in Western literature, and the picture of its history, present, and future is being pieced together under conditions of controversy amidst contemporary tensions in international relations.

Although anticipated by a number of thinkers and currents of the 19th century, the birth of Eurasianism is usually dated to 1920/1921, respectively to Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoy’s publication of the pamphlet *Europe and Mankind* and to the founding Eurasianist-emigration “congress” in Sofia, Bulgaria, which yielded the publication of the collective volume *Exodus to the East: Premonitions and Fulfillments – The Affirmation of the Eurasian(ist)s* by Trubetzkoy, Petr Savitsky, Petr Suvchinsky, and George Florovsky. Eurasianism was born as a broad school of thought, involving thinkers from diverse intellectual backgrounds, which saw the 1917 Revolution (from which its founding thinkers suffered) as a turning point necessitating an equally revolutionary reconsideration of Russian history, culture, and identity beyond what they saw as the Modern Western-European ideologies and trends that had progressively taken sway in Russia since Peter the Great and whose contradictions ultimately precipitated the Revolution. “Revolution” should be understood here in the original etymological sense of the word: the Eurasianists saw their own perspectives as well as – although this was more controversial among them – the Revolution itself as returning to the fore some of the most fundamental aspects of what made Russian culture distinct between “West” (Europe) and “East” (Asia). A crucial nuance of the nature of this current is encapsulated in the word itself: in Russian, Eurasianism is *evraziistvo*, which is to say not so much an “-ism” as it is “Eurasianity” or “Eurasianess”, and scholars continue to debate the extent to which (and by whom) *evraziistvo* has been variously turned into or interpreted as a specific political “ideology”, an “-ism”, both in the context of the “classical” interwar Eurasianism(s) and
post-Soviet neo-Eurasianism(s). The Eurasianists called themselves euraziitsy, i.e., “Eurasians”, by which they meant to emphasize that they recognized and advocated the reconstruction of Russia’s intrinsic “Eurasian” historico-cultural identity as opposed to being mere ideologists of a competing -ism.

Amidst all their diversity and divergences, the interwar Eurasianist school’s key unifying concepts or approaches were twofold. Firstly, the Eurasianists argued that from virtually any field of analysis – historical, cultural, geographical, economic, linguistic, ethnosociological, religious, etc. – Russia and many (but not all) parts of the former Russian Empire and Soviet Union together constitute a unique, multicultural civilization, a “third continent” between Europe and Asia, which they called “Russia-Eurasia” or “Eurasia.” Secondly, the Eurasianists cited this particularity as a most impactful argument for the deconstruction of Eurocentric, Modern Western narratives of universalism, progress, and “Civilization” with a capital “C.” The Eurasianists argued that the latter are not only ideologically chauvinistic but anti-historical, and instead they posited that the world is fundamentally pluriversal, i.e., there are many civilizations, histories, and cultures which cannot be reduced to the criteria of any one other nor be slated to conform with one path of development. Thus, while the Eurasianists were, of course, predominantly concerned with reconsidering the nature, history, and future prospects of Russia-Eurasia, their perspective was rooted in and advocated a pluriversal approach to the study of civilizations.

At the same time, the more politically-minded Eurasianists argued that by virtue of its multicultural synthesis and “central” position on the Eurasian continent, Russia-Eurasia is predisposed and has the potential to oppose and counterbalance the geopolitical and culturo-ideological hegemony of Western Europe and the United States, an endeavor in which the Eurasianists saw what would later come to be called the “second” and “third worlds” as necessarily having an interested stake. To this end, classical and neo-Eurasianist thinkers, including most centrally Dugin, have sought to formulate a Eurasianist school of geopolitics – that which many scholars see as highly influential in Russian politics today. Some of the classical Eurasianists predicted and hoped that the Communist Soviet Union would be reformed or replaced by a new, more Eurasian(ist)-conscious Russian statehood, and many parallels on this point could and indeed have been drawn with some aspects of the contemporary Russian Federation and the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union. However, such appraisals should not be taken to overshadow or reduce the diverse perspectives which the Eurasianist school of thought has offered in its classical and neo- versions.

Dugin’s theoretical development of Eurasianism has been one of the most central, consistent aspects of his corpus and one of his most well-known associations both within and outside of Russia. Most iconic, of course, would be Dugin’s 1997 textbook, *The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia and Thinking in Space*, which is widely seen as the seminal formulation of the neo-Eurasianist school of geopolitics. In the latter, one can find a chapter entitled “From Sacred Geography to Geopolitics”, which was originally part of Dugin’s second
book which you mentioned, *Mysteries of Eurasia*, and which demonstrates how Dugin has correlated and synthesized the perspectives of Eurasianism and geopolitics with esoteric ideas and discourses through the lens of Traditionalism. The concluding sentence of “From Sacred Geography to Geopolitics” is “Thus, the path is not from sacred geography to geopolitics, but from geopolitics to sacred geography.” This, along with the discussion of geopolitics in Dugin’s 2002 book *The Philosophy of Traditionalism*, testifies to the resounding centrality of understanding Dugin’s esotericism to the other “branches” of his philosophy and how he engages different currents of thought, especially Eurasianism. In *Mysteries of Eurasia*, Dugin presents an analysis of the “sacred geography” of Russia-Eurasia and argues that Eurasianism’s “intuitions” as to Russia’s Eurasian identity can in fact be traced back to archetypes in myths, cosmic cycles, prehistoric and ancient cultural phenomena, and spiritual correspondences between geography and religious traditions. Dugin argues that sacred geography is to geopolitics what alchemy is to chemistry and magic to physics, which in Traditionalist terms means an antecedent, superior “spiritual science.” In fact, “sacred geography” is somewhat of an ambiguous topic within Traditionalism: Guénon insisted that such a “traditional initiatic science” and conceptualization of “qualitative space” existed in antiquity, but only broached the topic in passing in a few texts; Evola also briefly described “sacred geography” as an integral part of the Traditional worldview, but his formulation of such has yet to be reconstructed out of his numerous works; and, to my knowledge, Guénon’s Romanian correspondent known as “Geticus” (Lovinescu) was the only Traditionalist to have authored a whole substantive work on sacred geography. Dugin’s formulation and application of “sacred geography” is thus in many ways one of his original contributions to Traditionalism, and is of interest especially as many scholars of religion who have employed the term “sacred geography” have admitted to a lack of definitional conceptualization of the term.

As I briefly broached in my bachelor thesis on Eurasianism, there are in fact some parallels between Traditionalism’s dichotomy of Tradition vs. Modernity and discourses on religion and spirituality in the classical Eurasianist texts. In fact, one of the classical Eurasianists, Nikolai Alexeyev, seems to have been the first to cite Guénon in Russian. But it is to Dugin that is owed this explicit, original synthesis of Eurasianism and Traditionalism. Of great research interest in this light would be revisiting the discourses on “Russian” and “Eurasian” spirituality which can be found in late 19th and early 20th century Western European, especially French and German occultisms, some of which assigned a particular “esoteric”, “spiritual”, “cosmic” role to what the Eurasianists living in emigration in Europe were simultaneously or a bit later calling “Russia-Eurasia.” The Serbian scholar Nemanja Radulović has already proposed the conceptualization and a few case studies of “Slavic esotericism.” Research into the “occult sources” or “parallels” of Eurasianism is definitely on the agenda, for which Dugin offers a most compelling point of departure, and with many of which he and the Yuzhinsky Circle seem to have been acquainted.

As for Dugin’s conceptualization of Eurasianism within the field of Interna-
tional Relations, instead of attempting to recapitulate such here, I would refer readers to Dugin’s recent lecture series in English at Fudan University in Shanghai, entitled “International Relations and Geopolitics”, available online at Eurasianist Internet Archive, and to his English-language book, Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism which, unfortunately, has along with his other English-language books been banned on Amazon.

7) Among Dugin’s recent work, we cannot avoid mentioning the impressive Noomakhia project, consisting of 24 volumes devoted to the complex analysis of all human civilizations through the hermeneutical concept of the war between the three Logoi (the Apollonian, Dionysian and Cybelean). An Italian translation of Dugin’s introductory lectures on this project has recently been published under the title Noomachìa. Rivolta contro il mondo postmoderno (introduction by Luca Siniscalco, translation by Donato Mancuso. Milano: AGA, 2020). This massive study, which synthesizes through the theoretical and methodological approach of Noology elements of Philosophy, the History of Religions, Sociology, Geopolitics, Ethnology and Anthropology, is a unique attempt to elaborate a unified and coherent scheme for understanding human cultural pluralism, overcoming the well known esoteric dualistic opposition between the principles of Light (masculine, Olympic, transcendent) and Dark (feminine, Telluric, immanent). Could you summarize Noomakhia’s fundamental topics and approach? How much have Dugin’s early esoteric experiences influenced this latest of Dugin’s culturological works?

You have already offered quite an insightful introduction to Noomakhia, for which I commend and thank you! Noomakhia is truly an impressive, massive project, one which will likely only begin to receive the attention it deserves years from now, so for now I can only hope to provide some brief introductory remarks, clarifications, and considerations.

The immediate prelude to Noomakhia which laid the philosophical groundwork for the latter was published in 2013 as In Search of the Dark Logos: Philosophico-Theological Outlines. In this collection of essays, Dugin articulated the thesis that canonical (Western/European) Philosophy proper has been founded not only on the prioritization of the rationalization of Logos over or against Mythos, but, furthermore, on only one specific form and arrangement of Logos. Accordingly, Dugin argues that the “end of philosophy” marked by Nihilism and Postmodernism represents merely the exhaustion and dissolution of one Logological arrangement extracted out of an inappropriately “closed Hellenic philosophy.” Instead of one Logos and one Philosophy, Dugin argues for the discernment of three Logological paradigms, or three philosophical types corresponding to three ancestral mythical paradigms, which, partially borrowing from Nietzsche, he calls the Apollonian, the Dionysian, and the Cybelean. If in In Search of the Dark Logos Dugin works through the initial conceptualization of these three Logoi and analyzes them in the context of different philosophical
systems and currents, then in *Noomakhia* Dugin advances to further refine and propose such as a revolutionary approach to the history of ideas and the study of cultural pluralism.

A significant dimension of the perspective of *Noomakhia* is encapsulated in the term itself: “War of the Nous” or, as the Russian subtitle of the series phrases it, “Wars of the Mind”. Taking cue from Heraclitus’ famous fragment that “War is the father and king of all”, Dugin conceptualizes the history of ideas and cultures as a diverse field of conflict and relations between the Apollonian, Dionysian, and Cybelean-type Logoi as representing the most fundamental paradigms or “archetypes” of thought within what Dugin calls the “multiplicity of noetic fields” of human cultures and the “complex diversity of noetic and noetic chains which permeate the reality of the world on different planes and along different geometries.” The theory and methodology of this “war of the Logoi” across conceptual fields, cultures, and historical periods is laid out in two volumes: *The Three Logoi: Apollo, Dionysus, and Cybele* (2014) and *Geosophy: Horizons and Civilizations* (2017). In the former, Dugin typologizes the Logoi and analyzes their philosophical germination across ancient Hellenic and Hellenistic currents, and in the latter volume Dugin articulates the “horizontal topography” of *Noomakhia*, or the application of the synchronic, “vertical Logoi” to the diachronic span of the history of civilizations. Just as the main emphasis of the “vertical topography” of *Noomakhia* is on the multiplicity and diversity of philosophical forms, Dugin’s main thesis in the “horizontal topography” is that every culture and civilization, in its own time and space, experiences and is uniquely distinguished by its different “projections” and “proportions” of the Logoi. Dugin therefore seeks to identify the “civilizational Logos” of each culture as the existential parameters within which cultures can be understood on their own terms, but with a common framework which allows for dialogue, change, and comparison.

*Noomakhia* is, without a doubt, Dugin’s magnum opus, and he has repeatedly called it such. Counting the *In Search of the Dark Logos* prolegomena, the two theoretical-methodological books, and the volumes dedicated to specific civilizations and cultures, the “Greater Noomakhia Cycle” consists of 24 dense volumes (and this is not counting the early four “Lesser Noomakhia” volumes, which Dugin revised and expanded into the 21 civilizational-case-study volumes), which Dugin has called the “most important work of his life” and which he has compared in scope to the tomes of Danilevsky, Spengler, Toynbee, Eliade, and Culianu. *Noomakhia* is at once the culmination of Dugin’s philosophy and engagement of so many different schools of thought, now brought together into one approach to the history of ideas and civilizations, and, at the same time, *Noomakhia* is the site of Dugin’s most extensive attempt at integrating and establishing a coherently, originally articulated bridge between his ideas as such have developed along his own trajectory and established scholarly approaches and fields, particularly from anthropology, linguistics, and the history of religions.

Thus far, besides Dugin’s introductory lectures on *Noomakhia* held in English
in Belgrade in 2018, the only English-language “exposures” of Noomakhia have been the excerpts and translated tables of contents available online at Eurasianist Internet Archive, and the online courses of the Canadian scholar Michael Miller-man ongoing since 2019. Understandably, it is a bit too early to be able to hold truly, deservedly substantive discussions on Noomakhia as long as such remains untranslated and especially in view of the sheer immensity of the work(s), but I am confident that the materials which have been made available offer suggestive hints as to the significance of Noomakhia as one of the most original and ambitious contributions of thought in the 21st century, and as a defining milestone – perhaps the most definitive – of Dugin’s corpus.

That being said, the question which you’ve posed about the reflection of Dugin’s esoteric thought in Noomakhia, or about an esoteric side of Noomakhia more generally, could not be more challenging. The most I can offer for now are three observations or preliminary hypotheses.

Firstly, in Noomakhia Dugin offers some definitive revisions of his understandings and applications of many of the esoteric doctrines and discourses with which he’s operated since the Yuzhinsky Circle and his early works. For example, a significant part of my thesis was devoted to Dugin’s reception of the symbological and prehistoric-religious theories of the “great unknown” völkisch thinker Herman Wirth (1885-1981), whom Evola also called one of his major influences, but who has fallen out of mention in Dugin’s works since the early 2000s. In Noomakhia, Dugin reconsiders Wirth’s works in the light of new understandings of paleoanthropology and the history of religious ideas. Another most central example is that in In Search of the Dark Logos and Noomakhia Dugin offers a fundamentally new conceptualization of Traditionalism in the history of philosophy and the relevance of Traditionalism to the study of cultural pluralism. The significance of these developments in Dugin’s ideas can hardly be understated. I’m tempted to say that if one wanted to see how Dugin’s engagement of esoteric currents and the development of his philosophy have panned out over the past 30 years and into what they have culminated, they should turn to Noomakhia.

Secondly, Dugin seems in some places to be proposing that philosophia perennis and numerous historical esoteric currents are representative of or in many ways correspond to the typology and legacy of the Dionysian Logos. This is particularly significant insofar as Dugin argues that the Dionysian Logos is that one which has developed in the “periphery” of mainstream Western-European thought, at times being rejected and neglected completely and at others peeking through certain authors and ideas. Furthermore, it is none other than this Dionysian Logos which Dugin sees as that whose conscious restoration is crucial to realizing Heidegger’s call for a “new beginning of philosophy” and requires a new approach that relativizes the predominant Logological experience and reintegrates the heritage of Mythos.

In connection with the latter point, I would submit that, thirdly, in Noomakhia Dugin aims to transcend the dichotomous, polemical dualisms between “Tradition” and “Modernity”, “Logos” and “Mythos”, “mainstream” and “periph-
eral”, “accepted” and “rejected” knowledge in favor of an integrative, pluralistic model which recognizes the whole diversity of existential worldviews as part of the ever-unfolding “wars of the mind” reflected in different ways across different paradigms, cultures, and temporal and spatial axes. For the study of esotericism and religions, this approach harbors some promising attempts at overcoming categorical constructs and reintegrating these worlds of thought and practice into the greater picture of human cultural diversity.

8) How would you summarise the role of Western esotericism in Dugin’s works? What lessons and threads of research can we derive for academic research in this field of studies?

I hope that I’ve already highlighted some of the major and potential threads in my previous responses to your very thorough questions. Perhaps in lieu of a conclusion I can offer some emergent connections and considerations which I think stand to be better understood and conceptualized between Dugin’s corpus and broader perspectives on the study of esotericism.

I would attempt to summarize thusly: as a broad category of currents and ideas, Western esotericism was the matrix within which Dugin’s first philosophical reference points, discourse, and ideological imperatives were developed as part of his formative experience in the Yuzhinsky Circle, for which Western esoteric works constituted the main source-base. Dugin’s early works, and perhaps his philosophical trajectory as a whole, might therefore be seen as a unique chapter in the history of esoteric ideas. I also see it important to emphasize the importance of this chapter’s treatment not being left alone to political and “journalistic” perspectives which have little interest in accurately presenting and understanding Dugin or esotericism. At the same time, beyond his early “emic” esoteric experience, Dugin’s works have over the past twenty years shifted to a more “etic” perspective, within which there are important historico-cultural and philosophical considerations being offered.

One of the major, perhaps most glaring questions which I see as arising out of both Dugin’s early works and his later philosophic development is that of the “Western” in “Western esotericism.” The question of the significance of this spatio-cultural qualifier has over the past few years come to the very forefront of debates within the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism around which the field has developed since the early 2000s. Dugin’s experience and works provide an interesting perspective and case for consideration in these debates. After all, Dugin’s worldview and philosophy are formulated as fundamentally anti-Western and anti-Modern, seeking to deconstruct and transcend such, and in this context many of what the field calls Western esoteric currents are, I think, seen and operated with by the Yuzhinsky Circle and in turn by Dugin as “anti-Western currents” within the West, as alternatives and “anti-Wests” to the polemical identity-formation of Western Modernity which rejected them. Of course, this suggestion is too broad-brushed and it would be more fruitful
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to discuss specific currents, but the overarching idea here is paradigmatic, not
case-by-case: if esotericism is the rejected knowledge of Western Modernity, then
it is not surprising that a Russian philosopher aiming to radically critique the
latter would see in esoteric currents a profound historical-ideational spectrum
and legacy posing the alternative of a pre-, anti-, or counter-West from the posi-
tion of which Western Modernity can be deconstructed. This kind of “Western
esotericism against the West” born out of the late Soviet Union and early new
Russia and influenced by Traditionalism, contrasts the trajectory of, for instance,
the “globalization” and “secularization of esotericism” à la New Age that can be
seen in the late 20th century United States and Western Europe.

In terms of a “lesson”, I would say that the case of Dugin is a glaring example
of the importance of the history of ideas approach in the field of Western eso-
tericism’s emphasis on sources, historiography, and rigorous textual engagement
as the foundations for proper research into such colorful and controversial cur-
rents. For example, in my research for my thesis and in my work on a forthcom-
ing article in which I examine the development of Dugin’s conceptualization of
Traditionalism and how such relates to scholarly understandings of this current,
I found that some of the most assertive academic articles on Dugin, i.e., ones
claiming to offer final, definitive (and at that negative) conclusions on Dugin’s
philosophical identity, did not even bother to cite or engage Dugin’s works or to
consider his actual intellectual origins. At the same time, it is important to not
overly fixate on or engage in reductionism to the level of initial sources, in which
case original and further development, the very essence of intellectual contribu-
tions, is left unattended. What often seems to me to be the emerging “field” of
“Duginology” is very young and has much to catch up on, integrate, and con-
nect. In the absence of serious, rounded research, any understanding of Dugin,
of the many paths and experiences of Western esotericism, and as follows, of
crucial dimensions of the past, present, and future, can be very easily lost or, per-
haps worse, substituted with self-fulfilling caricatures and superficial judgements
in which there is no room for critical reflection.