

The Great Awakening vs The Great Reset

Alexander Dugin

London: Arktos Media Ltd., 2021

ISBN 978-1-914208-47-8 (p/b)

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The first thing to say about this book is that it isn't a book at all, it's a pamphlet. And it isn't any old pamphlet either: it's agitprop. The first claim can be quantified. Shorn of its flyleaves, copyrights and contents pages, this text covers 43 pages of (roughly) A5-sized paper, and the print isn't even in a particularly small font. There are two appendices, which take the total length to 86 pages, but they are reprints of material from elsewhere.¹ Their inclusion might also have been due to the peculiar economics of the book-manufacturing industry. The second claim, that this is a piece of agitprop, is inherently unquantifiable, and so the rest of this review will attempt to demonstrate it instead.

First, we have to get our bearings. Readers might find the author's name familiar. Alexander Dugin briefly made headlines in August 2022, when his daughter was murdered in a car-bomb attack on the outskirts of Moscow.² But Dugin was already infamous, in academic circles, as 'The World's Most Dangerous Philosopher'; and he is sometimes referred to, half-jokingly, as 'Vladimir Putin's Brain'. The latter appellation arose in 2014 when some observers noticed seeming parallels between Dugin's published output and Putin's public statements about the annexation of Crimea. In the eyes of some modern Kremlinologists, therefore, Dugin seems readily explicable as a Rasputin-like character who is secretly exerting undue influence on the course of Russian affairs. But no such Putin-Dugin relationship is known to exist, and whatever other charges can be levelled against him, Putin is no simple-minded bumpkin anyway. It seems likelier, therefore, that the supposed covert

¹ One is an interview with Dugin, reprinted from a far-right German magazine, and in Dugin's case the inclusion of this extract here should be regarded as a performative choice rather than a revealing one. Similarly, it is unlikely that his publisher for *The Great Awakening vs The Great Reset* – Arktos Media – was an undeliberated choice. Arktos is briefly discussed below.

² <<https://tinyurl.com/DaryaDuginaMurdered21Aug2022>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/21/daughter-of-putin-ally-alexander-dugin-killed-in-car-bomb-in-moscow-reports>>

relationship between Putin and Dugin is an observational artefact arising from certain commonalities of thought that are not readily apparent to those outside the upper echelons of the Russian state. Or it could be that Putin has simply read Dugin's published output. In any case, the murder of Darya Dugina suggested immediately to many observers that Dugin himself had been the real target. Why would anyone want to murder a philosopher? The presumption has to be that the assassins believed the nickname 'Putin's Brain' reflects a hidden political reality.

As for the claim that Dugin is the World's Most Dangerous Philosopher, this depends entirely on what one means by 'World'. If one means the general human presence on planet Earth, then Dugin is not that. His stated aims include (and this is one of those supposed clues about a secret relationship with Putin) hastening of the creation of a multipolar world order. This doesn't necessarily mean that he actively seeks the downfall of the United States of America, whose global hegemony would be the major casualty of multipolarism. Rather, Dugin sees the end of US hegemony as the opportunity to direct global history into multipolarity – if you like, it's both an escape route and a new beginning. The beneficiaries of this multipolarity would be the global South and East, Russia belonging to the latter of those categories. This sounds like explicit anti-Westernism, but Dugin himself has been clear that the West also has a natural place in the multipolar order. Just – and this is the catch – not the West *as it currently understands itself*.

And this leads us to the other potential reading of the epithet World's Most Dangerous Philosopher. He is being identified as the philosopher who is the most dangerous to the current world order. And when we boil it down, what does Dugin see as the current world order? This goes beyond the 'New World Order' promoted by US President George H.W. Bush in 1991, which the pre-megalomania Christopher Hitchens drily skewered as 'order imposed by the New World'. Dugin's main foe, which he sees possessing the West with almost demonic force, is Liberalism. And by 'Liberalism', he doesn't mean the laissez-faire social attitude,³ he means Big-L Liberalism, the political ideology that has been powering Western society since the late 18th Century.

By anyone's standards, the elision of the radically-different concepts of political Liberalism (on the one hand) and personal liberalism (on the other) has been one of the most successful PR tricks in the history of political ideologies. Just as dissidents in Communist Russia were self-identified by default as opponents of their comrades, and hence enemies of the common

³ Although there is, confusingly, some conceptual overlap, and it's unclear how closely the two are linked. This doesn't greatly trouble Dugin who is ideologically opposed to big-L Liberalism and is not particularly liberal with a small L either.

good, anyone in the West who now dissents from big-L Liberalism seems to automatically self-incriminate as preferring a social order that is restrictive, coercive, authoritarian, and perhaps even totalitarian. To identify as a non-Liberalist is (in the received wisdom) to be a covert fascist, communist, or worse. Dugin, for what it's worth, regards Communism and Fascism as historical reactions against Liberalism, and maintains that they are failed ideologies, beyond ethical redemption and rightly consigned to oblivion. (This rejection of Fascism is the main reason that his dalliance with far-right publications in Liberalist societies should not be automatically taken at face value. More on which below.)

Very loosely, you might say that Dugin thinks that in the three-way fight that dominated the 20th Century, Liberalism triumphed not because it was the best ideology, but because it was the least worst. Fascism and Communism provided objective illustrations of what Liberalism opposed, and thus – implicitly – what Liberalism stood for. The reactionary natures of Communism and Fascism had accidentally helped to redefine and thereby perpetuate Liberalism instead. Dugin has therefore expended much effort on trying to carve out an intellectual space for what he calls the Fourth Political Theory – an as-yet unformulated ideology that will transcend Communism, Fascism, and Liberalism all in one go. But Dugin's writings on the subject of a potential post-Liberalism world are distinct from the content of the Great Awakening vs The Great Reset, and so we'll let the subject of the Fourth Political Theory rest for the time being.

What the pamphlet now under review aims to achieve is obvious, in fact almost self-declared. Dugin hopes to trickle some of his heretical ideas into the growing counter-culture within the US, with the obvious hope that this will hasten⁴ the weakening of American global dominance, and thus drive the Liberalist tradition out of its indomitable natural fortress. That inferred authorial intention wouldn't be quite as quixotic as it might seem. America's 21st century counter-culture is a different proposition from the original counter-culture that arose there in the 1950s and 1960s. For a start, the 1960s counter-culture in America didn't even have a preferred presidential candidate, let alone get that candidate elected. Unpacking the term 'Great Awakening' would be a gargantuan task. But we can pin it to a tide in domestic US affairs by noting that the phrase first leapt to prominence in a book written by adherents of the QAnon movement and published in 2018.⁵ By a metonymy

⁴ NB: 'hasten', not 'cause'.

⁵ *QAnon: An Invitation to the Great Awakening*, (by) WWG1WGA, (Dallas, TX: Relentlessly Creative Books, 2019)

which also applies retroactively, it now covers almost any social movement driven both by deep discontent and disengagement from the US political duopoly.⁶ Dugin had no hope of reaching those social movements by publishing yet another citation laden and excruciatingly detailed volume of political philosophy. This pamphlet was therefore written instead, providing the Great Awakening with a clear political objective: the defeat of the Liberalist project, which Dugin deliberately – though not completely dishonestly – misidentifies as the Great Reset. To make his text taste more familiar to contemporary counter-culturalists, Dugin even talks seriously about characters like Alex ‘InfoWars’ Jones. If the counter-culture of the 1960s took as its mantra ‘Tune in, turn on, drop out’, the counter-culture of the early 21st century might be said to operate under the slogan ‘Log in, level up, get even’. This probably wouldn’t work as a hashtag though. A few of the more literate key American dissidents might read Dugin’s book and metabolise it (even for someone who is not a habitual book-reader, it would take an afternoon, at most) and like all psyops, the rest is down to osmosis and social contagion – vectors which are highly reliable precisely because they are uncontrollable.⁷

What Dugin sees as the toxic heart of the Liberalist agenda is Nominalism⁸, the belief that categories are artificial impositions, and that objective presences are not inherently any *thing* in particular. We can say that a particular object exists, but we can’t say (under Nominalism) that several of those objects constitutes proof of the existence of a general class of such objects. This philosophy is the diametric opposite of Realism, which holds that whatever name we give to them, objects can and usually do belong to classes, and language is just the tool we use to talk about those classes, which we can do because we have correctly inferred that there is such a class from the generality of its contents. Mammals have warm blood and suckle their young,

⁶ For example, about a decade before QAnon, there was a very vague movement identifying as ‘the Zeitgeist’, which was inspired by a series of non-profound but portentously written video critiques of American military expeditionism, the erosion of the US Constitution, and similar themes. It didn’t have a coherent core philosophy, but with the benefit of hindsight, the Zeitgeist movement was recognisably an early phase of what Dugin identifies as the Great Awakening. It would be fascinating to know how the beliefs and activities of the Zeitgeisters have evolved, both during the QAnon period and since.

See ‘What is the Zeitgeist movement?’ at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYo3ShH6QrE>>.

⁷ Dugin has already been spotted and promoted by Kevin Macdonald, one of the leading intellectual anti-semites in the USA. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y8j6pfsk>> or <<https://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2022/06/29/aleksandr-dugin-on-the-alien-substantially-jewish-elite-in-the-u-s-and-its-war-against-traditional-american-individualism/>>.

⁸ <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/nominalism>>

for example.

To transpose this lofty distinction onto a topical concern, a Realist might argue that a post-operative transgender woman is not a woman, only a surgically-altered man. Whereas a Nominalist might argue that when a man has taken as many steps as possible to be identified as a woman, they are a woman. The famous Turing Test for artificial intelligence is probably the modern era's best-known Nominalist concept. It isn't concerned with whether a machine is really conscious and self-aware, only with whether it makes sense to interact with such a machine *as if* it is conscious and self-aware. You either accept this position as intuitively reasonable (after all, could you even prove that your fellow humans are truly conscious?) or you are left with the nagging feeling that it's an intellectual short-cut – or more cynically, perhaps just a confidence trick.⁹ On the Turing Test, at least, the Nominalists have the upper hand for the historical time being. The questions 'What is a woman?', 'What is consciousness?' and (most infamously) 'Ah, but is it art?' only start to make sense when understood as Nominalism operating within a Liberalist political context.

Dugin sees this deep-rooted impulse for deconstructionist thought as having been stoked far earlier in history, although history has (per Dugin) been written in such a way as to repackage it as something positive and constructive (or at least, non-deconstructive). One of his main examples is the revolt against the Catholic church which began during the late Mediaeval period. Writing from within a Russian Orthodox tradition, Dugin sees the European advent of Protestantism (the clue's in the name, folks) as a Nominalist attack on the rigid Realism of Catholicism. The translation of the Bible into languages other than Latin was crucial to the revolt's success: scriptural interpretation was made available to the lay individual, which eroded the Vatican's dogmatic absolutism (viz. that the Bible was the ultimate truth and literally unquestionable). Once the Protestant revolution had begun, it led into a social 'liberalisation' in which the Vatican's social power (priests as local thought-police) began to wane and new social contracts were established, out of which capitalism emerged and quickly spread. This, in turn, gave rise to the political Liberalist movement – at first, in England. A seemingly all-powerful collective religious identity had been weakened, and a new order of questioning individuals had arisen. As Dugin observes, the new anti-collectivist Protestant movement inevitably began to turn on itself, resulting in schism after schism and the gradual creation of a bewildering number of Protestant traditions and

⁹ It is entirely possible to believe that the artificial intelligence industry is an out-and-out scam, without taking a decisively Realist or Nominalist position on that industry's products.

denominations, many of which still exist in the 21st century.¹⁰

This splintering and re-splintering wasn't an accident. In Dugin's persuasive telling, it was a Nominalist inevitability, once you had freed people to ask the question 'Ah, but what do we mean by "Salvation"?' For Dugin, the somewhat recursive process of liberation-enabling-Liberalism was so successful in Europe, and then in America, that it ultimately led to the capitalist project of globalisation, and the 'freeing' of people from within societies that had been unaffected by the rise of political Liberalism in the West.

In other words, it was no ideological opposition, but only an unfortunate nuisance. Civilisational differences were to be gradually erased. The adoption of capitalism by China, Russia, and the Islamic world would sooner or later entail processes of political democratisation, the weakening of national sovereignty, and would eventually lead to the institution of a planetary system – a world government. This was not a matter of ideological struggle, it was simply a matter of time. (p. 18)

Enter Donald J. Trump, whom Dugin sees as the creator of a movement rather than a historical one-off. Perhaps prematurely, Dugin calls this movement 'Trumpism', and links it back to the counter-culture by making an intellectual flex that is well outside the scope of this review to explore. Trumpism, says Dugin, is really a return to the world of nation-states; and the parts of the 21st century US counter-culture that have grouped themselves around Trump/Trumpism are mostly conservative because the culture to which they are counter is the modern Liberalist-capitalist globalisation project. Trumpism and all its handmaidens constitute a movement that seeks to turn back the clock, erase globalism, and return to the Old World Order.¹¹ Dugin doesn't say so, but it would have to be an upgrade and continuation of the Old World Order, because short of global nuclear war or a new Ice Age, there is no way to reverse many of the social and scientific advances that have been made in the decades since the Second World War. And Dugin's silence is what gives his game away. If you impose a Trumpist vision of an ordered but incoherent world

¹⁰ An objective and theologically disinterested catalogue of Protestant churches was compiled for opinion poll purposes in 2015 and makes for fascinating reading.

See <<https://tinyurl.com/yc2fzr3k>> or <<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/appendix-b-classification-of-protestant-denominations/>>.

The number of Catholic churches remains historically stable: one.

¹¹ On page 51 of this book, Dugin endorses the claim that the US General Election of 2020 was fraudulent, and that the fraud was perpetrated precisely to remove Trump and replace him with a Liberalist-globalist frontman, who mostly by happenstance turned out to be Joe Biden. It seems likely to this reviewer that Dugin has little evidential basis for believing in Trump's claim of a stolen election, but has every motivation for affecting to believe it here, because Dugin's envisioned readers have almost certainly believed it wholeheartedly from day one!

onto the objective conditions of 21st century modernity, what you will inevitably end up with – on paper, at least – is something that looks suspiciously like Putin’s vision of a multipolar world.

By now, the enormous agitprop dimensions of Dugin’s tiny book should be reasonably clear. The so-called Great Awakening in the US is being exploited as the avant-garde of the multipolar worldview. For some of the Great Awakeners, this will happen unwittingly. For others it will happen unwillingly. And of course, there’s a good chance that most of them will never even notice. Because Dugin doesn’t present the multipolar world as the desirable outcome toward which all efforts must be directed, but rather presents the near-future of the Liberalist-globalist project as something that must be avoided at all costs. It is the West’s semi-dystopian futurity that Dugin claims to have revealed to the horrified reader. Whether he has described it fully and fairly is another matter, but he can point directly to Klaus Schwab’s boastful and grandiloquent writings about ‘The Great Reset’¹² as very strong evidence that the West’s future might look that way. Offered a choice between a cyber-genetic future in which our current definitions of the word ‘human’ have been rendered almost obsolete by Nominalism, and a future that looks like a vastly improved version of the 19th century, most average Americans are probably going to choose the latter. Not because they’re Americans, but because it is natural and instinctual to prefer safety, security, and familiarity. Dugin says to those Americans: the time to choose is now.

Futurologists and proponents of accelerating historical processes (accelerationists) are confidently looking into the near future when artificial intelligence will become comparable in basic parameters with human beings. This moment is called the Singularity. Its arrival is predicted within ten to twenty years. (p. 13)

This is hard to accept. Futurologists have been warning of the impending Singularity for decades, and its advent still seems as remote as the realisation of an infinitely less-ambitious goal, viz. the paperless office. So we are posed with the question of whether Dugin believes the Singularity is (a) realisable and (b) approaching; or whether he just wants to play into the fears and misgivings of his readers. Dugin is quite plainly the opposite of a stupid person, so this reviewer’s conclusion is that the latter interpretation is the right one. It’s an irreducible fact of life that there’s nothing that focuses the mind as decisively as a looming deadline, and, on the face of it, it appears that the Singularity serves as Dugin’s McGuffin for galvanising the minds of would-be Great Awakeners. The implicit warning is: act within two decades, or

¹² See <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/covid-19-the-great-reset/>>.

humankind is toast.

Viewed from a Liberalist perspective, Dugin is deploying some bad-faith arguments. Whether it looks that way to Dugin is another matter: one of his major themes is the absence of an underlying philosophy of the 'Russian soul', for want of a better term. You won't get far by peering into the Russian psyche (says Dugin) because there is no hidden order, only more of what you stripped away to reveal it. It's the same all the way down, like a set of the iconic Matryoshka dolls that Russians have embraced as symbol of their selfhood. And this is why his dealings with far-right/alt-right publishers have to be interpreted with some care. Dugin doesn't believe in Fascism, and only an exceptionally ignorant Fascist would express unqualified support for Dugin's proposals. What we seem to have in Dugin's contract with Arktos media, then, is a politically alt-right imprint channeling Dugin's ideas into the US alt-right, purely because Dugin's ideas are superficially similar to the alt-right's. Both want to overthrow Liberalism. From propagation into the US alt-right, Dugin's ideas will leach into the wider 'Great Awakening'. The history of the 20th century provides a major indication that this minor Russo-Fascist 'marriage of convenience' would not last very long, if push ever came to shove. These contemporary alliances are mutually-exploitative and therefore inherently temporary.

Nevertheless, it is worth re-stating, Dugin has identified something real, even if he is perhaps over-egging it for dramatic effect, and being amplified by the far-right for nefarious purposes of their own. We cannot shy away from the fact that an inevitable step after the current attempts to deconstruct biological sex and gender is going to be the attempted deconstruction of the human being itself. Cyborgs would probably not become the normal state of affairs, but they would be welcomed into the human family – if indeed they were ever viewed as outsiders in the first place. Combatting social prejudices against the augmented human community¹³ would immediately become a new Liberalist battlefield for equality and human rights, giving the Liberalist tradition another worthy task to justify its own continuation (Incidentally, see how easily the concept of 'human' got smudged there?)

But the mass uptake of cybernetics doesn't seem terribly realistic at present, mostly because of the horrendous environmental implications of manufacturing them. Genetic engineering is where the real 'transhumanism' revolution will probably take place. It's far cheaper, and (after an initial push in the right direction) the manufacturing/maintenance takes care of itself.

¹³ Or whatever non-judgemental term is eventually applied to cyborgs. This re-naming will happen.

Whether our eventual engineering is to be cybernetic, genetic, or a mix of both, we can disregard the obvious ethical considerations, which will of course be trampled, mangled, and contorted to fit the prevailing exigencies of the day. Scientific progress deals in *faits accomplis*, leaving the lay public to cope with whatever innovations are dumped in their midst. Morality is just an interesting set of social conventions from pre-modernity, after all – perhaps even from pre-history. And yes, Dugin is on the side of those conventions, because he is an ultra-extreme Traditionalist who regards the work of Galileo and Newton as constituting ‘a pure catastrophe and a lie about nature and humanity’.¹⁴

This review could be much longer, such are the gigantic implications of Dugin’s argument, and of his opportunistic dealings with the far-right. Dugin is an intellectual big gun, and he has allowed his aim (within the US general public) to be determined by people who only share some of his concerns and oppose him on most others. Whether or not Dugin has correctly divined the Liberalist future is something for his readers to reflect upon. But the most interesting thing about it is that, even if this little book goes virtually unread, the mere fact of its existence will exacerbate and deepen existing social discontent in the US. By conceptual contamination, Dugin has created a situation in which the US counter-culture could one day be denounced as Russian stooges. This probably wouldn’t end well for the US counter-culture, but it definitely wouldn’t end well for the US itself. Either outcome – domestic repression or geopolitical erosion – would serve Dugin’s agenda.

There is trouble ahead.

¹⁴ I am not familiar with Dugin’s enormous philosophical oeuvre, most of which remains untranslated and thus inaccessible to non-Russophones, so I have absolutely no idea what arguments, evidence, and reasoning Dugin uses to underpin this truly startling statement.