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# Heidegger and post-colonial fascism

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Alexander Dugin is considered a fringe figure in contemporary Russia. Yet, his writings exert considerable influence and develop a virulent nationalism that exploits the vocabulary of post-colonial resistance in an unaccustomed way. Dugin should not be ignored, and this article gives a brief account of Dugin's peculiar brand of post-colonial thinking by reference to its central source: Martin Heidegger. Specifically, the article examines how Dugin adapts the anti-metaphysical thinking of Heidegger's most radical work of the 1930s – a thinking that seeks to renew Western thought in an other beginning – to the context of modern Russia as it tries to free itself from Western (American) domination. Dugin aims at nothing less than the creation of a new Russian identity and destiny that will not only save Russia but also, in a nod to Heidegger, renew the Western tradition itself from the "outside." If Dugin's political project is ambitious, so is his interpretation of Heidegger which attempts to bring out the full radicality of Heidegger's thinking, both as philosophy and as politics.

**Keywords:** Dugin; fascism; Heidegger; post-colonialism

## Introduction

If the old specter of Communism no longer haunts Europe, or is indeed a ghost of its once ghostly self, a new, aggressive specter has emerged in its wake: Heideggerian fascism. In a remarkable act of paying one's teacher back by remaining not merely a disciple, Alexander Dugin has endeavored to turn Martin Heidegger's radical political thought of the 1930s into the basis for a revolt against the hegemony of the West in its most crass, influential, and powerful current incarnation, the United States. Through his voluminous writings on Heidegger, extending now to four volumes collected together under the telling name, *The Last God*, Dugin turns Heidegger's dismantling of the Western metaphysical tradition into a call for renewal that takes up the challenge of Heidegger's thought, a challenge, according to Dugin, that the West is unable to meet (Dugin 2014a). Dugin seeks to lead this fight just as Heidegger sought to lead it in the 1930s. While Dugin's attempts to create a new radical consensus have met with modest success, compared to Heidegger's dismal rectorate (May 1933–April 1934), they seem more formidable than those who summarily dismiss Dugin as a crank might be willing to admit.[1]

Accordingly, in the present article, we examine some of the principal points in Dugin's extensive engagement with Heidegger's thought. We do so not only in order to provide a succinct account of Dugin's thought but also to track its sources in the Heideggerian corpus;

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the recently published *Black Notebooks* (Heidegger 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015) offer a wealth of material that in its virulent attitude to the United States and the notion of liberal democracy surpasses Dugin, while also attesting to Dugin's precocious appreciation for the fundamentally political character of Heidegger's thought. Specifically, we focus on Dugin's interpretation of Heidegger in the first volume of his series of works on Heidegger called, *Martin Heidegger: The Philosophy of Another Beginning* (2014b), then investigate its origins in the Heideggerian corpus with reference in particular to the recently published *Black Notebooks* (1931–1947).[2] Finally, we attempt to account for Dugin's view as an alternative form of post-colonialist ire that has received scant attention as such and fully merits that attention in a number of contexts. We think that considering his work as an unexpected offshoot of colonialism seeking refuge from the colonial in radical autochthonic self-assertion is important and gives an adequate sense of an unpleasant new political reality: what appears to be a resurgence of fascism across parts of the world that embraces ethno-cultural nationalism in rebellion against the egalitarian ideal of the French Revolution.[3]

## I.

Dugin's first published work on Heidegger emphasizes the notion of the "other beginning" Heidegger developed primarily in the writings he held back from publication in the 1930s. In the *Contributions to Philosophy*, for example, Heidegger describes his project as follows:

> The "Contributions" question along a road that is only now being opened up by the *transition* to the other beginning into which Western thought is currently advancing. This road brings the transition into the openness of history and grounds it for what may be a very long stay in whose completion the other beginning of thought only ever remains something intimated, but nonetheless already decided. (Heidegger 2012, 6)

The other beginning is the central narrative that Dugin takes over from Heidegger. Dugin does not simply wrest this narrative from the Heideggerian corpus. He adapts it to a particular purpose: liberation from the hegemony of Western thought, which he considers exhausted, particularly in the form of liberal democracy and the supposed neo-liberal consensus that consolidated itself increasingly from 1980 onwards. In so doing, Dugin grafts the Heideggerian narrative onto older narratives of liberation from the baleful influence of the West in Russia that achieved prominence in the 1860s, especially in the radicalized form of the novel created by Fyodor Dostoevsky. It would be no exaggeration to argue that Dugin reprises important aspects of Dostoevsky's fervent nationalism in adapting the Heideggerian notion of another beginning. The famed star from the East that shall renew and save a decadent (Europeanized) world announced in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* finds a fitting complement in the underlying tone of Heidegger's narrative in which not Russia but Germany shall rise to renew and save the rest of the world, even Europe itself, from the decadence that has befallen it (Dostoevsky 1991). Yet, rather than picking up a strand of Russian thinking in his attack on the West, Dugin adroitly chooses a Western thinker (moreover, one influenced by Dostoevsky).

This move is adroit precisely because Dugin shows that his program is not "merely" nationalist or Russian or inscribed within the national rivalries that dominated so much of nineteenth- and twentieth-century life; on the contrary, Dugin shows that even the West recognizes its own exhaustion, and for Dugin, no one recognizes this exhaustion more powerfully than Heidegger. To risk a provocative anachronism, if Dugin expresses what is in many ways a post-colonial argument, he places responsibility for that argument on the most formidable post-colonial thinker, Heidegger. And Heidegger is the most formidable post-colonial thinker precisely because he not only seeks to undermine a certain

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modern tradition of thought in the West that may be said to have authorized the colonial endeavor as well as the concurrent rise of technology, but the entire Western tradition insofar as it is yoked to the thought of the West's first great colonialist: Plato.

These may seem to be outrageous statements. Plato the first colonialist? Heidegger, the great anti-colonialist? Yet, if one is attentive to the Heideggerian narrative of an other beginning and Dugin's adoption of it, the confluence between the subjugation of the West by Platonic thought and the subsequent subjugation of the entire world by the West is striking (Heidegger 1998a). Dugin does not explicitly follow this route, however. Rather than finding an equivalence between the anti-Platonic and post-colonial stances, Dugin prefers to focus his adoption of the argument for an other beginning by engaging the Heidegger of the 1930s through the Heidegger of the late 1920s, a peculiarly evasive approach that has much to do with Dugin's desire to preserve Platonism to the extent it is crucial to the self-understanding of the orthodox church in Russia. The tension here between the Heideggerian narrative and significant elements of Russian culture is intriguing and telling.[4]

For the moment, let us endeavor to explain Dugin's approach to Heidegger's other beginning within Dugin's terms. According to Dugin, the other beginning is justified and necessitated by Heidegger's ontology, which is thus overtly and irremediably political.[5] It is an ontology of revolution, for that is precisely what the other beginning presupposes as being the *sine qua non* of its own possibility. But not only that. The other beginning, as revolution, is also *apocalyptic*, signaling the end of one order in a moment of supreme self-reckoning or transparency and the beginning of another that cannot but remain unclear from our point of view.[6]

To get a sense of how Dugin derives revolutionary ardor from Heidegger's ontology, we need to provide a succinct but sufficiently detailed account of Dugin's view. This account requires that we engage in a complicated act of translation from Heidegger's philosophic idiom as glossed by Dugin. Indeed, one of Dugin's merits as a reader of Heidegger is his recognition of the difficulty of thinking Heidegger without becoming totally beholden to the latter's vocabulary and habits of speech (Dugin 2014b, 32–36). While it is a common complaint about Heidegger – that it is hard to think Heidegger without using his apparently idiosyncratic language – Dugin reads this complaint in an opposed way as a sign of poverty: that our languages are so shaped by the very tradition Heidegger seeks to undermine that we can express Heidegger's thinking only by adapting his terms and finding proper equivalents. The very transition Heidegger bids us to prepare, the transition to the other beginning, is exemplified by the simple problem of adapting our philosophical vocabularies to Heidegger's.

For our part, we attempt to carve out a space for reading Dugin's account of Heidegger's ontology that is preeminently transitional in Dugin's sense. While we have no choice but to use Heidegger's vocabularies, we try to do so in a way that reflects our concern to adapt those vocabularies to the specific contexts of Dugin's political thought.

## II.

Dugin's account of Heidegger's ontology is explicitly Trinitarian, triplex. He identifies three basic levels of ontological investigation: the ontic, the ontological, and the fundamental–ontological belonging to Heidegger's own project of fundamental ontology. In so doing, Dugin deliberately reprises several basic distinctions Heidegger articulates in *Being and Time* (1962) as a way to introduce Heidegger's thought of the 1930s. Dugin discerns with these distinctions what amounts to three levels of relation (*Bezug*) to what is (τὸ ὀν), each with its own place and role (Dugin 2014b, 53–64).

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For Dugin, the ontic is distinguished as the level at which we deal with beings simply as given to us: we typically proceed no further than to view them as "there" in some way. This is a level of dealing with beings we may associate with positivism, certain kinds of scientific rationality or, more broadly, with larger cultural formations unaware of themselves as such: to use a language inimical to Heidegger's approach, we may refer to the ontic as a kind of naïve realism. The moment the givenness of beings comes into question, however, the level of inquiry as well as the kind of understanding sought become ontological. By this, we mean that an ontological inquiry looks at what makes givenness possible; no longer is a naïve realism at work but, in its stead, a concern for what has to be in place in order for a naïve realism to prevail. To use a simple example, we no longer view something as simply "there," say a cup, but as "there" due to certain conditions permitting the cup to appear to us as it is and not as anything else: we ask about the being of the thing in question, the cup, and this research is the basic task undertaken by ontology. Now, the third and final level Dugin describes takes this question a good deal further. If we identify something along with what permits it to be what it specifically is, we have not yet responded to the most difficult and seemingly abstract question of all: What is the more general sense of being that all specific things share? If the recognition of things as such remains on the level of the ontic, the recognition of what permits them to appear as the things we know ontically transcends the ontic level in two ways: (1) in the determination of what characterizes the specific being of each thing (like its form, essence, or concept) and further, (2) in the determination of what characterizes all beings more generally as beings.[7] Hence, if the first level is one of mere recognition of a thing, the second involves the recognition of what makes out the being of that specific thing and the third what makes out being itself as such.

Dugin remarks that the tendency in ontology prior to Heidegger is to confuse the latter two levels in favor of assimilating the third level to the second (Dugin 2014b, 59). The problem with this assimilation of the third level to the second is that the being of all things ends up defined as a certain kind of being or thing itself. Yet, how can this be? For, if the general being of things is itself a being or thing, we have done little more than include being itself among the things whose reality it is supposed to explain. How can this general notion of being have such a double identity as *explicans* and *explicandum*? It should be quite evident that it cannot. If one were to argue to the contrary, then one would have to go back to create yet another level to explain what brings all things together as such, and so on.

Being in this respect (*Sein*) gives way in the 1930s to a different notion of being (denoted by a slightly different spelling, *Seyn*) to clarify that what is sought can no longer be understood within the purview of a "What?" question, one that effects this assimilation of being to a thing (Dugin 2014b, 57–58). We may, of course, ask what a specific thing, say a cup, is. We may also ask about what it is for that cup to be what it is (akin to essence or Aristotle's τὸ τι ἦν εἶναι). We may finally ask what it is for any thing to be at all, but Heidegger contests the possibility of asking this latter question. To ask: What is the being of things? or, more simply, What is Being itself? seems wrongheaded. For Heidegger, these questions belong within metaphysics, within a regime of thinking that is unable to think adequately about its own basis because it remains within what Heidegger refers to as the guiding question (*die Leitfrage*). To remain within the guiding question is to regard all questions as referring to things (or beings, *Seiendes*) and the definitions of things; none of these questions ever enquires about the more comprehensive point as to how things may be grasped as such in the first place. This question, concerned with that which allows things to be, is the "grounding question" (*die Grundfrage*) because it asks about their possibility without assimilating the Being of all beings to a

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being. More simply put, the guiding question ignores anything that cannot be classified within the framework of the ontic or ontological.

As Dugin points out, however, Heidegger shows himself to be most concerned about getting beyond the guiding question to pose the question about the basis of classification, the grounding question that asks about the origin or basis of the framework, that asks, in this sense, to think about the framework from outside of it (Dugin 2014b, 46–49).[8] This latter question emerges for a simple reason – one may classify a thing as X or Y, but the basis that allows such classification, that permits one to speak of a definition as such, remains almost wholly unexamined, even though it may well be the most important aspect of definition, its very basis or, in Kantian language, condition of possibility. Dugin maintains that the emphasis on this grounding question is transformative. Heidegger leads us to discover the perennial blind spot of Western philosophy, its hitherto unexamined grounding, to which we may gain access only through a careful investigation of the blind spot itself. Once, however, that blind spot has been illuminated by engaging in the grounding question or the question about Being, or the truth of "Beyng" (*die Frage nach der Wahrheit des Seyns*), there is no going back, and we find ourselves on the threshold of an other beginning that is also the ending of all that came before. In a word, we shall no longer aim to understand Being through beings or things but as it is in itself.[9]

## III.

This new question illuminates far more than it might appear to at first blush: it suggests that Western thought has been genuinely stuck in a false approach to the world, leading to a fundamental misapprehension of our relation to Being that cannot easily be dismissed or discarded. Moreover, this false approach is disastrous because it has ended up in the termination of human freedom and possibility in the regime of *Machenschaft*, a final regime in which Western history reaches its culmination and end. The term *Machenschaft*, which Heidegger adopts in the mid-1930s, denotes precisely that state when it is impossible even to recognize the blind spot. As Heidegger puts it colorfully: not only have we forgotten the question of being, we have also forgotten our forgetting of the question.[10] This is a rather complicated (or precious) way of indicating that we have returned to the ontic level in spite of the immense efforts of the Greeks,[11] and it leads to a question that we may only answer obliquely here as to why we would prefer to forget the result of these efforts.

*Machenshaft* is an inspired name for the regime of forgetfulness (Heidegger 1997, 16–25). *Machenschaft* describes total absorption in the process of production that never pauses to think about that process itself. If this absorption may be associated with the wondrous process of creation, in Heidegger, it ends up as a managerial process whereby norms are set for creating continuity and ensuring that a certain reality cannot be other than it is. The heritage that asserts the power of creation as one that creates a "hole" in what had been hitherto taken for granted is rendered impotent, useless, and harmful by the productive impetus of *Machenschaft* that privileges uniformity over variety and extreme conformity. The final regime entails the rule of repetition, of gestures that are empty precisely because they cannot be anything but formal.

For Dugin, the prime contemporary representative of this final regime is the United States, the Americanization of the world being a sort of apocalyptic twilight in which the West shows itself as both supremely powerful and ready to collapse (Dugin 2014b, 161–168). In this regard, the United States is "spent" as a truly inventive and powerful force in human affairs, having no lingering authority other than force itself – the triumph of

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force, and of technology as the handmaiden of force, are signs of ultimate decadence and aridity. The rule of *Machenschaft* cares nothing for these possibilities because it seeks not to affirm but to accommodate them to a way of thinking that must forget itself. The United States is the perfected regime of forgetting, the regime that allows no challenge to its basic presuppositions, a regime as such that is utterly unable to defend itself against critique because it hears nothing of that critique, is, indeed, constitutionally bound *not* to think it.

Here is the West or *Abendland*, the land of evening (Dugin 2014b, 91–93).[12] Dugin presses this point in connection with the notion of decay. The West is the land of evening that crosses over (or *geht unter*, a Nietzschean echo, *Übergang* as well) into a new dawn. If the United States is the terminal expression of Western vitality, the collapse of the United States as a power having anything but raw, brute physical authority to compel and control, allows new powers to act as forces of renewal whose authority will rest on persuasion and intellectual ferment rather than on physical force. Those who will bring about genuine revolution in the other beginning will do so because they offer a vigorous alternative to the eviscerated West of consumerism where the shopping mall replaces church and university. One senses an utter disgust for the excesses of American consumer culture, which, despite its enormous success and prevalence in many parts of the world, seems to be regarded as suffocating and vacuous.

## IV.

This disgust was propagated by Heidegger as Dugin's own account suggests. Indeed, the contemporary situation has become so "terrifying" for Dugin that at one point, he remarks: "Thank God Heidegger did not live long enough to see this" (Dugin 2014b, 265). To be sure, Heidegger did not live to witness the computer revolution, but it is hard to believe that it would have made him any more distressed than he already was by the hegemonic reign of technology. After all, Heidegger enthusiastically embraced the National Socialist revolution in no small part because he saw in it the "saving power" that might have been able to wrest Western civilization from the metaphysical forgetting of Being that, he feared, modern technology threatened to bring to completion. Nazism offered the possibility of transitioning to a new beginning beyond the instrumentalized being disclosed by the essence of technology or *Machenschaft*. The *locus classicus* of this interpretation of Heidegger's Nazism appears in his much-cited and notorious praise of the "inner truth and greatness [namely, the encounter between global technology and modern humanity]" of National Socialism in his 1935 summer lecture course published later in 1953 as *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2014d, 222).

There has been much controversy over whether Heidegger added the part in brackets in 1953 or if it was already in the original text written in 1935. The concern over the date of insertion – while not unimportant – misses nevertheless the content of the claim here: that the inner greatness of Nazism lies in its encounter between global technology and modern humanity. This inner greatness had been lost for Heidegger by 1935, as we now know based on the recently published *Black Notebooks* in which he expresses intense frustration with the bureaucratic intransigence that his reforms for the German university faced (Heidegger 2014a). Yet, this very frustration only reveals the radicalism of Heidegger's Nazism. Hitler's movement was not revolutionary enough for Heidegger. Nazism not only failed to confront technological modernity but it also turned into another form of *Machenschaft* (Heidegger 2014a, 160–161, 194, 350, 2014c, 195). As Heidegger put it in 1946, the movement failed to become the salvific force that could lead "the transition to overcoming metaphysics" (Heidegger 2015, 147). Hitler's seizure of power proved not to be the right

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moment for his revolution. The "mistake of 1933" was not Heidegger's involvement in Nazism but the timing of it: "Every significant *thinker* comes too early" (Heidegger 2015, 126, 147).[13]

Nevertheless, the costs of this missed moment are all too clear to Heidegger – the bestial last man amid the near total forgetting of Being in modern technological society threatens to triumph unless a god intervenes to save us. Technology as the most complete and pernicious instantiation of metaphysics was one of Heidegger's most pressing concerns from the end of his rectorate in 1934 to his death in 1976. He expressed this concern in each of three forms: first, in the "hidden" Ereignis-manuscripts of the 1930s; second, in the public lectures that he delivered after the war; and third, in the "private" diary-like writings of the *Black Notebooks* that he kept from the early 1930s until 1970. If these notebooks tend to be far more acerbic than the more guarded postwar lectures and far blunter than the more esoteric idiom of the hidden manuscripts, they cannot easily be bracketed off as political rants that have little relation to Heidegger's "serious" philosophical thought (Krell 2015).[14] On the contrary, we think that the notebooks must be read carefully as the most apocalyptic of Heidegger's writings, ones that extend both his critique of technology in the public lectures and his prophetic warnings in the Ereignis-manuscripts against what he sees as the darkening hour of our times, our emergency era of needlessness or complacency (*Not der Notlosigkeit*), when everything has been rendered solvable, secure, and uniform amid the dominance of *Machenschaft*. This spread of planetary technology is the heart of modern nihilism, namely the forgetting that we have forgotten our relation to Being. It is also deeply imperialistic. One gets the impression from the *Black Notebooks* that *Machenschaft* is a sinister and uncontrollable power that emanates from the West – often named specifically as "America" and sometimes as "World Jewry" – that threatens to destroy all "differences among peoples, states, and cultures" as it instrumentalizes and calculates all aspects of life across the globe (Heidegger 2014c, 53). *Machenschaft* reduces everything in the world to a resource, including the human, to advance the "living standard" of bourgeois consumerism (Heidegger 2014c, 269).

In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger infamously names two nihilistic epicenters of technocratic modernity: "Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man" (*bodenlosen Organisation des Normalmenschen*) (Heidegger 2014d, 41). This passage is uncharacteristically imprecise; there is in fact a major difference between Russia and the United States for Heidegger. The former is more culturally profound and rooted to the soil (*bodenständig*) than is the latter (Heidegger 2014c, 257). Heidegger admired the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and expressed greater appreciation for *Russentum* than he ever did for American culture. It is not Russia itself, but rather *Bolshevik* Russia, that is metaphysically the same as the United States. The difference is significant because Heidegger interprets Bolshevism as an instantiation of metaphysics that has been imposed upon Russia: Bolshevism is destroying *Russentum* by forcing it to conform to the technological abandonment of Being that defines modern Western metaphysics as "global-imperialism" (Heidegger 2014c, 237). Russia has been colonized by the West. Hence, the real epicenter of the imperialistic nihilism of *Machenschaft* is the United States.[15]

The juxtaposition between Russia and the United States is a striking thought that Heidegger develops in the *Black Notebooks*. The fundamental difference between the two lies in their relationship to the soil. One of the most nihilistic aspects of modern technology is the elimination of rootedness and difference. Heidegger makes this point clearly in his

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Nietzsche lecture on nihilism, which he delivered in 1940, when he turns to Dostoevsky whom he quotes at length:

> That Pushkin, with his profound, penetrating, and highly compassionate mind, and through his truly Russian heart, was the first to see and recognize for what it is a significant, morbid manifestation among our intelligentsia, our rootless society which seems to hover high above the common people. He recognized it, and enabled us to place graphically before our eyes the typical, negative Russian character: the character who finds no rest and cannot be satisfied with anything permanent, who does not believe in his native soil nor in the strength of his native soil, who fundamentally denies Russia and himself (or rather, his social class, the entire stratum of the intelligentsia, to which he too belongs, and which has detached itself from our folk heritage), who will have nothing to do with his own people, and who sincerely suffers from all this. (Heidegger 1991, 3–4)

The nihilism of modern technology is the disregard for distinction and rootedness. It is the reign of cosmopolitan equalization in which the Being of all entities in the world is disclosed in the same way as equally processed resources of measurement and exchange (*Bestand*). The Being of everything becomes interpreted as a resource that can be used to make "life" as comfortable and secure as possible, including *Dasein* whose possibilities become reduced to one – that of "homo faber" (Heidegger 2014c, 270).

America is the land of homo faber. It is the land of total comfort. It is the land where the nihilistic, metaphysical aim of security and mastery over necessity has found its deepest and most threatening home from which it can expand across the globe. Obsessed with the "new," America strives constantly to make "progress" toward satisfying material needs and improving the "living standard," calculating and regulating every aspect of life with the sole aim of ensuring "its security for the purpose of enhancing the will to live" (Heidegger 2014c, 269, 271–272, 2015, 32).

This singular concern with material existence reflects for Heidegger the sheer exhaustion of our age. America is the sickness of a history that has reached its end and must now transition to an other beginning. But this other beginning cannot come from the United States. America is too infected with technological modernity for any cure to come from it; indeed, Heidegger goes so far as to say that "Americanism" is the "historically observable appearance of the unlimited ending of modernity in desolation." The German here is worth repeating: "Der Amerikanismus ist die historisch festellbare Erscheinung der unbedingten Verendung der Neuzeit in die Verwüstung" (Heidegger 2014c, 257).

The word *Verwüstung* is central here. We translate it as "desolation," but "wasteland" or "desertification" may be closer to the German, the basic sense being an eradication or leveling of all distinction in a vast monotonous barrenness. The root word, *die Wüste*, means desert. The significance of this word for Heidegger becomes clear when we consider the important connection Heidegger makes between "thinking" and "land" both in the *Black Notebooks* (and elsewhere in his corpus). In different writings, Heidegger experiments ceaselessly with ways of attempting to articulate his understanding of thinking as a dynamic and creative enterprise that embraces the tumult of beginning again and refuses to congeal into final doctrines (Heidegger 2012). The incessant experimentation itself reveals Heidegger's interest in aligning thinking with non-finality and creation: he celebrates creation precisely for its evanescence and radicality. The "thinker" for Heidegger creates something truly "revolutionary" far beyond the superficial novelty of Americanism and does so in full awareness that it will never last.[16] Indeed, Heidegger nourishes the possibility of a transformation so complete that our relationship to creation would fundamentally change in such a way that we would celebrate the strife and impermanency of creation itself; we would embrace the fragility of creation without brooding pessimism or revenge.[17]

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How is Heidegger to explain this kind of "thinking" without betraying it through explanation, that is, by assimilating the "creative" into what is already known? Heidegger is very well aware of the problem and tries out different kinds of responses to it. The one he tries out in volume 97 of the *Collected Edition* is to compare thinking to plowing a field. He says that the thinker is a plowman (*Pflüger*). Rooted to a particular place, the thinker uproots the dead roots of the past, turns over the soil, and sows the land with new seeds in a perpetually creative cycle of birth and decay. The thinker does not harvest what he sows; like a god, he plants and then vanishes.

Just as the farmer must have fertile soil with which to work, so, too, must the thinker be situated in a fertile land in order to create – and this basic point brings us back to Heidegger's connection between America and *Verwüstung*. The United States has been rendered barren by its metaphysical addiction to technology as ensuring security and comfort from the burdens of finitude. It has become so habituated to modern technological life that its land has been sapped dry of the nutrients needed to produce something new again. At this late hour in the history of Being, America has nothing left to offer the world except production of the same metaphysical thought over and over again.

There are, however, still fertile lands out there. During the first two years of World War II, including during the first months of Nazi Germany's brutal *Vernichtungskrieg* against the Soviet Union, Heidegger wrote positively about Russia as a rooted and profound nation that could possibly play a role in overcoming the decadent nihilism of modernity's near total forgetfulness of Being, perhaps in some sort of historical–political alliance of forces with Germany to preclude the "pulverization by *Machenschaft*" that both nations faced (Heidegger 1998b, 119).

In short, a "possibility of beginning" existed in Russia that Heidegger simply could not entertain for the "rootless" United States (Heidegger 2014c, 257–258). Heidegger sees in Russia a culturally rich nation that, because of its "brutality and hardness," has a "rooted source in its soil" (Heidegger 2014c, 257). This rootedness lies not only in the vitality and heartiness of its still peasant-dominated society but in the strength of its culture as evident in its exploration of the most fundamental and probing questions about life. Why are there beings at all instead of nothing? What is life in the face of death? Few other authors probe these kinds of questions more deeply than Tolstoy whom Heidegger famously cites in *Being and Time* in his discussion of Being-towards-death (Heidegger 1962, 495). There is thus in Russia still a strength to face the burdens and pains of life; there is still an openness to exploring the human as a limited and finite being. Facing the truth of our own possible mortality unsettles the clichés that we flee toward in fearing the actualized event of dying and thereby opens up new paths of thinking and creation. To diminish or sever this relationship toward death – as "Americanism" as the consummation of technology does – is to take away the very wellspring of creation. At its most fundamental level, then, the "desolation" and "rootlessness" of Americanism lie in its superficiality in comparison to Russianness: its optimistic narratives of constant progress and uplift turn away from the suffering and incomplete beings that humans are. There is a profound lack of "depth" (*Tiefgang*) in the history of the United States that makes Americans a people without philosophy (Heidegger 1994, 4).

Heidegger sees the same superficiality in Bolshevism, which threatens to destroy the vitality of Russianness. This threat seemed especially apparent to him after 1945 with both the ascendancy of the United States and the forward march of Communism. Amid the rapid transformation of West Germany into a "little America" and East Germany into a Communist state, he feared the possibility that modern technological life would be able to assert itself as the final regime of history, thereby consummating the metaphysical

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dream of constructing a perfect world free of suffering and a world of complete equalization that unites all peoples under a universalist, general principle. If successfully asserted, such an end to history would overcome the limits of finitude and erase all historical and cultural differences among peoples. Heidegger fought against this striving for perfection and equalization throughout the rest of his life, planting the seeds of revolution for others to harvest long after his death.

## V.

Dugin's post-colonial vision harvests these seeds, combining Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics with an overcoming of the dominance of the West as a whole in the form of Americanism. But Dugin's post-colonial vision is hardly consonant with the dominant model of post-colonial politics; indeed, it seems to exploit the vocabulary of the post-colonial to an imperialistic end inimical to the spirit of post-colonial thought. To be sure, Dugin is not after the kind of cosmopolitanism advocated by Kwame Anthony Appiah (2007). On the contrary, he is after a kind of politics that tries to give a modern face to the essentially conservative arguments of the Russian 1860s and the German 1930s: he creates a potent and disturbing amalgam of revolutionary nationalisms that disguises its nationalistic agenda by transcending nationality in an overall salvific mission. Dugin thereby allows himself to claim an original politics, the so-called "fourth political theory," which combines in a necessarily problematic way thinking that promotes revolution as the self-assertion of other possibilities of community against the American model while at the same time asserting the correctness or necessity of such a revolution, a self-assertion that seems to belie the insistence on "multipolarity" that is otherwise a part of Dugin's conceptual arsenal (Dugin 2012, 81, 197). Multipolarity is the term Dugin employs to describe a political reality in which various communities coexist by rejecting the hegemonic aspirations of Americanism and modern technological mastery, or *Machenschaft*, in whatever form they may take such as globalism or multiculturalism. Multipolarity thus sounds attractive to an audience habituated to a cosmopolitan point of view. But one should be cautious since Dugin's presentation of multipolarity is not markedly multipolar. In this respect, Dugin falls prey to the very same inconsistency that Leo Strauss noted in Carl Schmitt's understanding of the political as based on the friend–enemy distinction, and this despite the fact that Dugin tries to distance himself from Schmitt by aligning himself with Heidegger.

Strauss's brief comment on Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (2007) amounts to an astute critique of a central aspect of Schmitt's thought: his advocacy of particular interests (for Schmitt, it seems even universalist claims are fundamentally interested and particular, no matter how they attempt to disguise that fact).[18] Strauss points out that Schmitt's argument succumbs to a performative contradiction, for Schmitt seems to articulate his particularism from a point of view that transcends particularism.[19] Specifically, if one accepts the notion that the friend–enemy relation is indeed the crucial relation identifying the distinctively political, then the presentation of that view should also be an example of it – as such it cannot proclaim any authority other than to the extent it gains converts. Schmitt is, then, simply another combatant in the political arena who does not play fair but hides under the mantle of dispassionate authority a view that denies the very possibility of such authority.

Dugin is vulnerable to the same critique, though his Heideggerian foundation may complicate the critique: Is Heidegger as handily dismantled as Schmitt? This would initially seem to be the case, since Heidegger's "ontology," such as it is, tends to deny the possibility of an unconditioned, uninterested point of view as well. In contrast with Schmitt, however,

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Heidegger approaches the problem directly and flagrantly dismisses the law of non-contradiction. This dismissal may seem shocking or merely facile, but it forms part of a broader critique of logic that should shock and which plays a significant role in Heidegger's thought as well as Dugin's:

> For we cannot just decide outright whether logic and its fundamental rules can provide any measure for the question about beings as such. It could be the other way around, that the whole logic that we know and that we treat like a gift from heaven is grounded in a very definite answer to the question about beings, and that consequently any thinking that simply follows the laws of thought of established logic is intrinsically incapable of even beginning to understand the question about beings, much less of actually unfolding it and leading it toward an answer. In truth, it is only an illusion of rigor and scientificity when one appeals to the principle of contradiction, and to logic in general, in order to prove that all thinking and talk about Nothing is contradictory and therefore senseless. "Logic" is then taken as a tribunal, secure for all eternity, and it goes without saying that no rational human being will call into doubt its authority as the first and last court of appeal. Whoever speaks against logic is suspected, implicitly or explicitly, of arbitrariness. This suspicion already counts as an argument and an objection, and one takes oneself to be exempted from further, authentic reflection. (Heidegger 2014d, 28)

Here is the heart of Heidegger's indictment of the law of non-contradiction: it belongs to a normative system, called logic, that is not divine, but human, a product of a specific history that can make no greater claim to be the unique and universal history than any other. If we consider Dugin's characterization of Heidegger's ontology, it is not at all hard to see that Dugin advances the same point, for the definitive unavailability of "Beyng" (*Seyn*) to any one exclusive interpretation asserts that basic questions about beings cannot be definitively answered.

How to grasp this point? On the one hand, it seems to justify an attitude that undermines any definitive judgment. On the other hand, it is itself a definitive judgment. We seem to rehearse the very contradiction Strauss identifies and Heidegger dismisses as superficial. But to stay with the contradiction is to miss Heidegger's point whose sheer radicality is such that it is easy to ignore – logic is merely another form of hegemony, deeply Western, deeply imbricated in a particular history, and there is no reason to accept logic as the final arbiter of thinking. The law of contradiction, then, as a legislative principle, a sort of constitutional safeguard, only maintains a certain hegemon, metaphysics, that Heidegger seeks to overthrow. There is no constitution for thinking – such is little more than a barrier to thought for Heidegger – and we must free ourselves of the illusion of constitutionality.[20] We must learn to think without banisters (*denken ohne Geländer*) as Arendt says.

What remains is the truest potential for an other beginning – that is what thinking without constitutional limits must mean. We have a thinking that takes the leap and dares to create according to its own "logic" as against the universalist logic of the West. This kind of proposal is transparently particularist insofar as it grants full authority to any group that seeks to assert itself – it is, as we noted, a thinking that encourages and justifies, albeit inconsistently, nationalist revolutions. Heidegger was very blunt on this point during the height of his involvement in the Nazi revolution:

> If one interprets [Plato's] ideas as representations and thoughts that contain a value, a norm, a law, a rule, such that ideas then become conceived of as norms, then the one subject to these norms is the human being – not the historical human being, but rather the human being in general. … Here all of the powers against which we must struggle today have their root. (Heidegger 2010, 129)

The crucial question here is whether the inconsistent "logic" of national revolution can be reconciled with an overweening commitment to accept the authority of other groups. The

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inconsistent cannot be avoided, if the full authority of the national revolution is fundamentally qualified by the imperative to respect the authority of others that sets up a universal injunction whose very existence acts as a threat and rebuke to self-determination. Yet, if universality is repugnant – and how can it not be so? – we come far closer to a situation that must be fluid, that must give way to practices that will have the primary normative burden and which, as having that burden, do not need to justify or explain themselves.

With his reliance on Heidegger, Dugin thus returns us to the very conditions of conflict among differing groups that gave rise to universalist thinking in the first place. Moreover, he does so with a fundamental orientation to Russian authority over that of detested, aberrant Americanism. If Dugin is wise to avoid the other implications of this Russian orientation, those who care cannot help but find them in his turn to Eurasianism, a traditional language of Russian imperial and cultural Messianism. Post-colonial ire turns into the advancement of post-colonial struggle without end, an unexpected turn on Carl Schmitt's notion of the political as well as the assertion of an invigorated Russian empire as one of the participants in this new and inherently unstable world order.

## Notes

1. While Dugin no longer manages his own institute at the University of Moscow, he still has access to considerable resources through *Evrasia*, an organization that has a sophisticated website which distributes a wealth of information concerning current events from a notably nationalistic perspective. Perhaps no one has done more to raise awareness about Dugin intelligently than Marlene Laruelle. See Laruelle (2012, 107–144).
2. We refer throughout to the "other beginning" (*der andere Anfang*) following Heidegger's practice. Dugin himself likely alludes to this other beginning, though the translation as given in the book title (*filosofia drugogo nachala*) is also possible based on the ambiguity created in Russian by the lack of indefinite and definite articles. We note that the publishing house Dugin's book is operated by a white nationalist, Richard Spencer, who happens to be the translator's husband.
3. The word fascism is notoriously difficult to define because, unlike Marxism, it lacks a central theorist. We follow Robert Paxton and George Mosse in defining fascism as an ethno-cultural nationalist movement that embraces a violent politics of particularity. At its core, fascism opposes both liberalism and egalitarianism, while expressing a deep disdain for the bourgeois life of comfort and security (see Mosse 2000; Paxton 2005).
4. There seems to be a defense of Platonism as having a distinctively Russian dimension at work here; more crudely put, Dugin may simply not wish to run afoul of the Orthodox Church.
5. And in a far more comprehensive and radical sense than hinted at by Pierre Bourdieu (1991) in his famous study.
6. Dugin seems to follow Heidegger here in seeking a change that is "more than" revolutionary. Heidegger's attitude to revolution is decidedly equivocal. The *Black Notebooks* suggest that he sought change so radical that revolution as hitherto understood would be an inadequate term. See Heidegger (2014b, 48, 53).
7. Heidegger himself brings into question the notion of being as "general." See Heidegger (1994, 53–68).
8. This move is also a highly controversial aspect of Heidegger's thinking. How might one get beyond the limits set by the contexts of a tradition? Derrida, for one, denies that this move is possible. See Derrida (1989, 31–36).
9. Dugin relies frequently not only on the *Contributions to Philosophy* but another manuscript unpublished in Heidegger's lifetime called *The History of Beyng* (*Die Geschichte des Seyns*). In that volume, Heidegger puts the matter succinctly by suggesting that the first move in getting beyond metaphysics is to think Being in itself and not through beings. See Heidegger (1998b, 131).

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10. While parody is not likely the right term to use in the case of Heidegger, the forgetfulness of being seems quite clearly an acerbic reflection on the notion of salubrious forgetfulness developed by Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1994).
11. Or, perhaps, because of their success insofar as Plato and Aristotle represent both a peak and decline – their efforts moved farther in exploration than their predecessors but also gave answers that turned into doctrines or dogmas that remain with us to this day.
12. As noted, Dugin refers to volume 69 of Heidegger's *Collected Edition* (1998b) frequently, and it is in this volume that Heidegger provides a substantial account of the notion of the land of evening or *Abendland*. In so doing, Dugin alludes to Hegel's owl of Minerva in a way that tries to pay heed to two masters: Hegel and Heidegger. For if Hegel views the owl of Minerva as denoting an end, Heidegger's view is oriented just as much to an end as a beginning resulting from that end.
13. Heidegger anticipated that the *kairos* of revolution may not be right in his "revolutionary" speech, the "Self-Assertion of the German University," when he noted that it took the Greeks "three centuries just to put the *question* of what knowledge is upon the right basis and on a secure path." It may take time indeed to transition beyond entrenched habits of mind to the other beginning.
14. Krell (2015) subscribes to what we may call the "madness theory" that attributes Heidegger's radicalism of the 1930s to a "tragic collapse" or diminution of philosophical power. We find evidence of neither madness nor collapse (unless the madness at issue is the kind of philosophical madness Plato refers to in the *Phaedrus*). We wonder to what extent the "madness theory" is exculpatory, allowing one to protect the "good" Heidegger of *Being and Time* (1962), the great philosopher, from the "reckless adventurer" of the 1930s. For a more sober approach (which ends up, however, as a kind of *apologia*), see Malpas (2016).
15. Heidegger could not be blunter on this point when he writes: "Nihilism reaches its peak in Americanism" (2014c, 225). Heidegger's orientation to Russia was not unusual among conservative German intellectuals of the interwar period. The conservative revolutionary, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, considered Russia a nation of the future, a "young people" (along with the United States and Germany), though lamentably Marxist. While Bruck (1923) is perhaps best known for his book, *The Third Empire* ([1923] 2012), he is important also as the sponsor for the first collected edition of Dostoevsky into German (1906). *The Third Empire* has recently been translated ([1923] 2012) by Arktos Press which also publishes translations of Dugin and other figures of the European right. One of the remarkable aspects, indeed, of Bruck's notion of a third empire is its potential derivation from the Russian notion of a third Rome. In either case, a particular nation is bound to save Europe, a claim repeated by Heidegger himself after 1933 in regard to Germany's destiny.
16. Obviously, Heidegger left behind "lasting" traces. Yet, it is fair to say that he strove to create writings that perplex, challenge, disquiet, and, thus, remain "alive" to engender further acts of creation long after their inception, much like the philosopher he seeks to overcome – Plato (see *Phaedrus*, 274b–277e).
17. We mean revenge against the *passing away* of time, revenge against the "it was," as Nietzsche put it: "This, yes, this alone is revenge itself: the will's revulsion against time and its 'It was.'" See Heidegger's discussion of this sentence from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in Heidegger (2004, 92–97).
18. Schmitt writes: "When a state fights its political enemy in the name of humanity, it is not a war for the sake of humanity, but a war wherein a particular state seeks to usurp a universal concept against its military opponent" (2007, 54).
19. Strauss indeed suggests that Schmitt's attempt to rescue politics from the liberal democratic consensus, a sort of universalism, is too caught up in that universalism: it frames the attack on universalism by relying on that universalism to grant unquestioned authority to that attack. As Strauss puts it,

> If, then, according to Schmitt's actual opinion, the position of the political can be traced back to the position of the moral, how does that position square with the polemic, which pervades his whole text, against the primacy of morals over the politics? … He remains trapped in the view that he is attacking. (Schmitt 2007, 119)

20. Perhaps Heidegger put it most bluntly in the *Black Notebooks*: "Science (*Wissenschaft*) and morals have destroyed thinking" (Heidegger 2015, 234).

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