

OCCULTISM AND TRADITIONALISM
ARTURO REGHINI AND THE ANTIMODERN REACTION
IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY ITALY

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Academic dissertation in religion, to be publicly defended, by due permission of the dean of the Faculty of Arts at University of Gothenburg, on October 28, 2016, at 9:15, in Lilla hörsalen, Humanisten, Renströmsgatan 6 , Göteborg.



UNIVERSITY OF
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The thesis will aim to analyse the interaction between occultism, Traditionalism and different facets of modernity in early twentieth century Italy, focusing on Arturo Reghini's (1878-1946) writings, ranging from articles, books and letters.

In his 'The Modernity of Occultism: Reflections on Some Crucial Aspects', Marco Pasi convincingly evaluates the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (est. 1888) and the Theosophical Society (est. 1875) as modern expressions of Anglo-American occultism, which provide some evidence against the possibly oversimplistic *Theses Against Occultism* (1946-7) by Theodor Adorno, which associated occult movements with reactionary politics and irrationalism. James Webb echoed Adorno's theories in his *opera prima*, *Flight From Reason* (1971), where the author judges the Occult Revival as a revolt against Enlightenment ideals and as a total embrace of irrationalism.

Academic work has been undertaken to readdress the balance of such theories, and far from dismissing occultist currents as irrationalist and outdated, scholars have judged these milieus to be intrinsic to the making of the modern, constitutive of modern culture, sometimes even permeating the aesthetics of modernism. The occult is seen as bound up with a spiritualised vision of social change, but what that vision turned out to represent varied greatly from country to country.

By following S. N. Eisenstadt's theory on Multiple Modernities, I will attempt to focus on Italian national forms of occultism, chiefly analysing Arturo Reghini and his writings and what has been labelled as Roman Traditionalism: an Italian, autochthone, occultist current deeply interrelated with the particular climate of Italian modern society of the early twentieth century. While witnessing similar processes as the rest of European countries, such as secularization, the disenchantment of the world, and the rise of positivism, studying occultism, Traditionalism and modernity in an Italian context must take into consideration many factors privy to the Italian peninsula.

I will make clear that, when analysing the Italian occult milieu, (and Arturo Reghini in more specific terms,) the results obtained will be in some cases vastly different than the conclusions drawn by scholars focusing on other countries, while at the same time retaining some similarities which we could consider a constant of modernity's influence throughout Europe. For these reasons, in my opinion, the relationship between occultism, Traditionalism and modernity in Italy, especially taking Reghini's writings and his brand of Italian neo-paganism as a point of reference, is worthy of study and can provide deeper clarity concerning the reassessment of antimodern forms of occultism and a new positioning of occultism and Traditionalism in the intellectual history of early twentieth-century Italy.

Key Words: Western esotericism, Occultism, Traditionalism, Modernity, Religious Studies.