Julius Evola. *Revolt Against the Modern World.* Translated by Guido Stucco. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1995. 375 pp.

Julius Evola (1898–1974) is still largely unknown to English-speaking scholars. On the continent, however, and especially in his native Italy, it would be safe to say that few who are familiar with his work are ambivalent about it. He is reviled by the Left, and adored by many, but not all, on the Right. Evola's notoriety derives chiefly from the widely held view that he was a supporter of the fascist regime of Mussolini, and a Nazi-sympathizer. In reality, although Evola did flirt briefly with fascism, he went away thoroughly disillusioned. This fact has not served to "rehabilitate" Evola in the eyes of his critics, however, because the source of his dissatisfaction was that Mussolini's fascism and Hitler's Nazism were not reactionary enough.

Evola was a follower of Rene Guenon's philosophy of "Tradition," which asserts the existence of a philosophia perennis which has expressed itself throughout the world and throughout history in all the great philosophical, religious, and mystical systems. Philosophia perennis involves the conception of a cosmic order around which human life and society must be ordered in order to flourish. Guenon and Evola both hold that such cultures existed before recorded history, and that what history tells is the story of our progressive "falling away" from the philosophia perennis. "Traditional" culture involves a strict, hierarchically ordered society in which kings rule by divine right, and all human institutions derive their meaning and legitimacy from being "directed toward" the cosmic order.

Evola's *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (first published by Edizioni Mediterranee-Roma in 1969) is an overview of the main characteristics of Tradition, and a critique of modern culture in terms of its departure from Tradition. Now translated into English by Guido Stucco, it is one of several works by Evola being published in translation by Inner Traditions International of Rochester, Vermont (the other works include Evola's *Eros and the Mysteries of Love*, *The Hermetic Tradition*, *The Yoga of Power*, and *The Doctrine of Awakening*). The first part of the book, entitled "The World of Tradition" is an attempt to describe in detail the various aspects

of life in traditional culture. Chapters include "Reality," "Polar Symbolism: The Lord of Peace and Justice," "Spiritual Virility," "On the Hierarchical Relationship Between Royalty and Priesthood," "The Soul of Chivalry," "The Doctrine of the Castes," "Man and Woman," and many others (there are twenty-one chapters in Part One alone).

Evola's procedure is to argue for the various aspects of Tradition by presenting evidence from anthropology and from a variety of ancient texts. As with all of Evola's works, this makes for a very dense and sometimes bewilderingly detailed text, filled with a wealth of data, but very difficult for the reader to digest (Evola's works generally must be read at least twice: once simply to get the general sweep of the argument, and a second time for the details). The second part of the work, entitled "Genesis and Face of the Modern World" is something of a disappointment. It is mainly a continuation of Evola's description of Tradition, an account of its transformations and decline. He devotes disappointingly little space to a direct, detailed dissection of contemporary culture in its various aspects.

What little Evola has to say about today's world, and particularly about America, is always interesting and incisive, however. For instance: "In the eyes of a typical American, the ascetic is regarded as one who wastes time, when he is not looked down upon as a social parasite; the hero, in the ancient sense, is regarded as some kind of fanatic or lunatic to be neutralized through pacifism and humanitarianism, while the fanatical puritan is himself surrounded by a bright aura" (p. 353). And: "so-called feminism has not been able to devise a personality for women other than by imitating the male personality, so that the woman's 'claims' conceal a fundamental lack of trust in herself as well as her inability to be and to function as a real woman and not as a man" (p. 164). But these claims have all been made by others, and developed more fully than Evola does here. The real value of the book lies in its detailed description of Tradition.

Evola's "World of Tradition" is, of course, Vico's "Age of Gods." His modern world is Vico's "Age of Men." It is clear from references in the text that Evola has read Vico carefully (detailed reference is made to Vico's *New Science* on pp. 37, 39, and 56). While Evola's cyclical view of history was no doubt influenced by Vico, following

the ancient Hindu tradition, and particularly the *Visnu Purana* text, Evola divides time into four ages. Our age, Evola says, is the *Kali Yuga*, in which, according to what Evola quotes of the *Visnu Purana*, "property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of devotion; passion will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in litigation. . . . In the Kali age men corrupted by unbelievers will say: 'Of what authority are the Vedas? what are Gods or Brahmans?'" (pp. 367–68).

Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World* may be read with profit by all Vichians who find the theory of ages compelling, and who take to heart Vico's critique of modern "barbarism."

Georgia Southern University Glenn Magee

Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov, editors. *The Legacy of Rousseau*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. xiv + 331 pp.

If we want to understand ourselves, we would do well to go back and re-examine the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and to trace out his influence to our own day: "It was Rousseau who originated modern dissatisfaction with modernity and he is the source of the multiple polarities through which that dissatisfaction still expresses itself today" (p. xi). The fundamental polarity in Rousseau's thought is that between nature and society and this polarity underlies all the others. It is manifested most clearly in the divided man of modern society, the bourgeois. The unity of this book derives from these claims and from Rousseau's critique of the bourgeois as that critique is understood by Allan Bloom. (As the editors inform us, all of the contributors were friends, students, or colleagues of Bloom.)

Part I, "Bourgeois versus Artist," consists of two chapters. The first, by Werner Dannhauser, deals with "The Problem of the Bourgeois" and, in one respect, sets forth the major underlying theme of the entire book. For Rousseau, modern man is bourgeois: he is neither natural man nor citizen, but something in between. He possesses neither natural goodness nor moral virtue. Here and throughout, the bourgeois is described as a "hypocrite." He is a "low human