



The Occult: a review

by ATHOS

There are not many books in English about Tradition or Esotericism. More than that, the word “esotericism” or “esoterism” is not popular in English, better known being “occultism.” One of the few books about such a subject is “The Occult” written by André Nataf. The book was first published in France, in 1988 (Éd. Bordas), under the title “Les maîtres de l’occultisme” and was translated in English and published in 1991 by W & R Chambers.

The book is an insult. First of all, it is a kind of dictionary gathering very different things, so the title is completely false. The Occultism is a very specific current, belonging to pseudo-spirituality and anti-tradition, containing a syncretism of elements taken from various places. It has nothing to do with Masonry, Tradition, Metaphysics, or Taoism. Yet we can see in the first part of this “dictionary” (erroneously called “The Nature of Occultism”) these entries ranged beside others like Magnetism, Reincarnation, Theosophy, and Psychoanalysis.

In a way, it is understandable why Tradition was considered something “occult.” The Tradition in Nataf’s work, even if defined in accordance with its true meaning (Tradition means “what was transmitted” but refers to what was transmitted at the beginning of this humanity along the “golden chain” and coming from the One-and-only Principle), it is compared to the Stalinist Marxism, and the author considers the definition a product of a kind of “traditionalistic school.”

What is more insulting is that in the second part of this “dictionary” (called “The masters of occultism”), René Guénon is considered as part of this school. To consider Guénon as a “master of occultism” is absurd, knowing the he was the one who pointed out the anti-traditional and pseudo-spiritual nature of Occultism. And Guénon is not even a “traditionalist,” since in his view “traditionalism” and Tradition are two different things.

Nataf calls René Guénon “the Karl Marx of occultism,” an indeed bizarre definition, since even the author admits that Marx was looking to “the many” and Guénon to “the few.” This idea of connecting Guénon to Occultism is not new; neither is the comparison between Guénon and Marx. In “Le Dossiers H” (L’Age d’Homme), dedicated to René Guénon, René Alleau has an article “De Marx à Guénon” (From Marx to Guénon); the attraction of the French authors for Marxism is weird, but that is another story.

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Antoine Faivre did the same thing as Nataf, mischievously and wrongly suggesting that Guénon was a product of Occultism. Faivre praised a lot the “revolutionary socialist” Raymond Abellio and with this name Nataf’s list of the “masters of occultism” starts. Nataf said: “René Guénon’s aim was simply to rediscover this tradition; Abellio was determined to renew it.”

“Simply to rediscover”? Nataf thinks that understanding the Tradition is very simple, and that explains why he dared in his ignorance to write such a book. Many years ago, Patrick Lebail tried to convince us that Guénon’s work is old and “out of fashion.” How could be a traditional work “out of fashion”? How could be the sacred texts, which are very old, “out of fashion”? In the same way, Abellio’s determination to “renew” the tradition is absurd.

There are many errors we should stress, but for now we just want to note that Nataf defines “initiation” following Jung and Gérard de Nerval, which is really ridiculous.

“The Occult” is a work that should be rejected (as the genuine Rosicrucians would say) by the true disciples of Tradition, a work that is meant to produce confusion, being a part of the counter-initiatory offensive.