A great deal has been said recently about Alexander Dugin’s thought. Michael Millerman, the foremost English language interpreter of the “most dangerous
The Great Reset was announced as a project in 2020 at the World Economic Forum in Davos. “The world must act jointly and swiftly,” the plan states, “to revamp all aspects of our societies and economies, from education to social contracts and working conditions.” The scale of the revamping knows no limits: “Every country ... must participate, and every industry ... must be transformed.” Thus, the project envisions total, global transformation. Aleksandr Dugin’s book, *The Great Awakening vs the Great Reset*, aims to interpret the meaning of the Great Reset and to offer a plan of equal scope for opposing it.

“It is noteworthy that Dugin’s analysis forecasts escalation “with those countries and regimes that reject globalization,” “strengthening the NATO bloc,” “strengthening the structures of World Government,” and “widespread use of ‘demonization,’ ‘de-platforming’ and network ostracism (cancel culture) against all those who hold views different from the globalist one (both abroad and in the U.S. itself)” all of which has come to pass under Biden’s presidency, as documented, for instance, by Darren Beattie, Julie Kelly, and Glenn Greenwald. Russia’s “special military operation” only accelerated these trends but was partly also a response to them. Dugin’s language is reflected by Russia’s President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov when they speak not only about “multipolarity” but about the West’s attempt to “finish Russia off” after the Cold War. Globalization brooks no
But Dugin’s analysis is not limited to the geopolitics of international order or to the propaganda war against, and persecution of, anti-globalist forces worldwide. He is also keen to address the ideological dimension of the Great Reset. In this book, he traces the roots of the globalist idea to the foundations of liberalism and the medieval dispute over the ontological status of universals. “This dispute,” Dugin explains, “split Catholic theologians into two camps: some recognized the existence of the common (species, genus, universalia), while others believed in only certain concrete, individual things, and interpreted their generalizing names as purely external conventional systems of classification.” The nominalists took the position that “only individual things and beings are real,” denying the reality of universals. For Dugin, this is the theoretical origin of liberal individualism: “Here, humans were seen only as individuals and nothing else, and all forms of collective identity (religion, class, etc.) were to be abolished.”

To see what makes this a powerful perspective, consider how it illuminates two trends of contemporary global liberalism. After rejecting the most influential forms of collective identity and defeating its collectivist ideological rivals, communism and fascism, liberalism discovers “two more forms of collective identity”: gender and humanity itself. We are currently in the phase of “gender politics, the transformation of the category of gender into something ‘optional’ and dependent on individual choice.” Transgenderism, in other words, is the logical application of the principle of individualism or nominalism to the latest form of collective identity standing in the way of progress. After gender politics, Dugin warns, transhumanism will come more fully to the fore, since “the human is also a collective identity, which means that it must be overcome, abolished, destroyed.” Just as the “individual” can choose to be “religious or atheist,” “male or female,” soon the choice will extend to “human or not.”

That might seem ridiculous. But it’s worth remembering something. In 1960, Leo Strauss lectured on Marx at the University of Chicago. He stated the following argument. “If the division of labor is rooted ultimately in the bisexuality of man [i.e., our division into male and female sexes]...and the division of labor is to be overcome, let’s get rid of the
bisexuality.” In other words, Strauss saw that the implication of Marxist egalitarianism was overcoming the sexual difference between man and woman as the source of the division of labor and therefore inequality. The class laughed at the preposterous notion. “Don’t laugh,” Strauss replied, “I mean, it is silly but it is a very serious problem... Marx’s position describes itself as humanism. How can there be a humanism if there is no relevant essential difference between men and brutes, and therefore if there is no relevant essence of man? No humanism without a fixed nature of man which may undergo any changes but which retains its identity within the change.”

Globalism, as Dugin discusses it, shares with Marxism this tendency towards post-humanism in the name of liberation from divisive constraints. That partly explains the “silly” but “very serious problem” that statements of human essentialism are today met with accusations of “fascism” or worse. The Great Reset does not want anyone to get in its way; belief in a “relevant essence of man” hinders progress.

So, transhumanism as a consequence of nominalism may seem crazy, but it isn’t. Haven’t enough things that belong in the madhouse been normalized now to make us doubt whether today’s most outlandish speculations won’t be tomorrow’s well-established absurdities? In any case, we have to think the principles through to their logical conclusions. Framing the Great Reset as a war on the human essence allows Dugin to rally the opposition around preservation of humanity:

>This is not the West against the East, not the U.S. and NATO against everyone else, but liberals against humanity—including that segment of humanity which finds itself in the territory of the West itself, but which is turning more and more away from its own globalist elites.

Is the human being to be or not to be? For Dugin, if you answer “to be,” then you are part of the Great Awakening.
Dugin’s account of the Great Awakening begins with those American anti-globalists who intuitively “grasp the essence of the most important processes unfolding in the modern world,” without any particular expertise in ideological analysis, to say nothing of philosophy:

What is now awakening is not a camp of ideological opponents of liberalism, the enemies of capitalism, or ideological opponents of democracy. They are not even conservatives. They are just people—people as such, the most ordinary and simple. But... people who want to be and remain human, to have and keep their freedom, gender, culture, and living, concrete ties to their homeland, to the world around them, to the people.

The awakening, Dugin writes, is “spontaneous, largely unconscious, intuitive and blind.” In it, “humanity itself, man as eidos, man as species, man as collective identity...is rebelling against the liberals.” Spontaneous opposition to the Great Reset shows the possibility of “a new beginning in the history of man,” distinct from the process that has led to the possibility of post-humanism.

The politics of the Great Awakening are multipolar, “for the salvation of people, peoples, and societies.” As Dugin writes, “The Great Awakening necessitates an internationalization of the peoples’ struggle against the internationalization of the elites.” Peoples (nations) vs. Elites (globalists): not left vs. right, East vs. West. That’s how the battle lines are drawn. Trumpists (anti-globalists) in America; integral populists in Europe, who must, Dugin argues, overcome the split between left and right populism; China—though note: “the Great Awakening must not become Chinese”—the Islamic world; and (unsurprisingly) Russia, “the most important pole of the Great Awakening”—all form a united, multipolar peoples’ front against unipolar global liberalism, in Dugin’s vision.

If, in the American context, anti-globalism is intuitive and spontaneous, there must still be a coherent philosophical basis for it more broadly. That is the important theme of one of
Dugin’s anti-liberalism is not anti-Westernism: “The West is not an enemy.” Rather, Western political modernity is the problem, “a kind of form based on the anti-Christian, anti-spiritual, anti-traditional, anti-sacred turn in Western history that coincided—not by chance—with colonialism, the beginning of the Enlightenment, and so on.” Dugin calls Western political modernity as “evil.” The fight against it needs a standpoint. One option is “to go beyond the West” by considering other civilizations and their “political thought, cultural thought, philosophy, religion.” “We should,” Dugin writes, “recognize the value of political thought outside the West,” including systems of law other than Roman law, for instance. That is one of the core ideas of Dugin’s political theory, which is committed to the defence of civilizational multipolarity and elaborates various methods for the study of fundamental pluralism.

Besides taking us beyond the constraints of Western political modernity by looking to other civilizations with their own traditions, the Great Awakening can also have the effect of liberating the West from progressive liberalism and allowing it to return to its own traditions. Western society has been “hijacked by modernity,” Dugin argues, and “Modern-day liberals are trying to cancel the very principles of Western identity. Cancel Aristotle, cancel Plato, cancel Hegel, cancel Nietzsche, cancel Heidegger—demonizing everything in great Western thought and culture—everything that doesn’t fit into the narrowing limits of this radically intolerant left-liberal ideology.” To oppose Western political modernity thus means “to liberate Plato, Aristotle, Graeco-Roman antiquity,” and “to restore the dignity of the Christian pre-modern societies—political thought, cultural values, philosophies,
metaphysics...

Dugin invites us to reopen the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, to make it possible again not only to learn about the premodern thinkers but to learn from them. In his lecture How To Study Medieval Philosophy, Strauss asserted that “there are many important lessons which modern man can learn only from pre-modern, from un-modern thinkers.” That is Dugin’s judgment, too. The most important matters require that we learn from “unmodern” thinkers and liberate ourselves from the suffocating effect of modern ones. But that is not simply a question, as it was for Strauss, of “Progress or Return?” Dugin does not insist that we oppose globalism by going back. Rather, “The Fourth Political Theory,” he writes, “is an invitation to go forward, to go ahead. We can take inspiration from the past, but we are living in the present ... we need to make a step ahead, forward, not many steps backward.”

What is the plan moving forward, then? In his statement of principles, Dugin is emphatic: “the most important and central” practical field for opposition to the Great Reset is in education, since “it is through education [that] the liberals penetrate our society, pervert our children, destroy the very principles of cultures and countries, destroy and dissolve identities.” Therefore, “the main struggle should be at the university level.” Dugin champions the development and promotion of “an online structure of alternative education,” that could foster approaches consistent with the fourth political theory, outside liberal totalitarianism. He distinguishes three groups of addressees for the new education: “the first type is the small minority of the global population that is inclined to follow philosophy, religion and theology.” The task at this level is “to satisfy the need of the thinking persons—philosophers of the world—by giving them access to the real content of the spiritual tradition of different religions and different cultures,” as well as to promote “all kinds of philosophical tendencies that formally belong to the modern West, but that are different from it—for example, German classical philosophy starting with Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, or Nietzsche, Heidegger, the Conservative Revolution, traditionalism, Italian thought,” etc.—what Dugin elsewhere summarized under the title “the dark logos,” that is, the Dionysian undercurrent of the Western philosophical tradition.
But the online education of the fourth political theory, in the service of the Great Awakening, cannot rely on “philosophers, priests, sacerdotes, [and] intellectuals” alone. It must also be an education for “the fighters, the Kshatriyas, the warriors.” Dugin is emphatic that the warriors must not fight each other but only “liberalism, the unipolar world order and Western political modernity,” and that there must be “solidarity between the warrior type of men and women.” “The difference,” he argues, “in the metaphysical structure of the soul is much more important than gender difference.”

Finally, Dugin proposes a targeted education for the largest estate (philosophers and warriors are rare), the “absolute majority of the population, which should be linked to the restoration of the traditional family and the traditional way of life with agriculture,” for instance by restoring “the system of self-sufficient agricultural societies based on small villages.” Opposition to Western political modernity at this level aims to accelerate the tendency away from cities and towards rural life, restoring the “symbolism and sacredness” of agricultural life. He almost suggests a kind of “Fourth Political Theory Network State” (Balaji) when he writes about “a movement of massive creation of agri-cooperation: agricultural communities linked throughout the world by the system and structure provided by the Fourth Political Theory.”

This book is a good introduction to Dugin. It shows off his analysis of the contemporary ideological state of affairs in America and on the world stage, gives a brief, accessible account of the principles of his political theory, and offers concrete proposals focused on education. The most interesting part of the book will be the least well understood, if it is noticed at all, namely his defence of the practice of philosophy and its future. To save humanity, it is necessary to think: “So, the main theoretical weapon of the Trumpists in the Great Awakening should be philosophy.” Philosophy here is understood as “the rediscovery of active intelligence inside of our souls.” To philosophize is to save humanity by saving human subjectivity in its link with the active intellect. This realm of the radical subject “is not just a special branch of philosophy, not something arbitrary. It is in the centre ... it is the main problem.” Ultimately, the Great Awakening vs the Great Reset—the question to be or not to be posed to the human being and to human history, to the god and the destiny of the world—turns on this mysterious question of the radical subject. That one short tract for the times should combine the language of revolutionary political activism with the
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deepest themes of philosophical meditation testifies to a fascinating temperament.