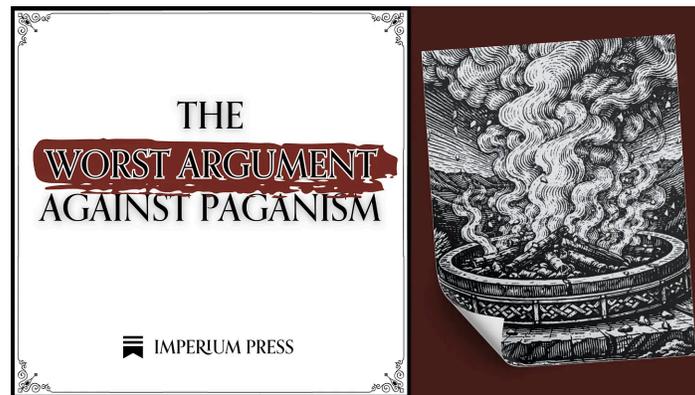


The Worst Argument Against Paganism

“Tradition Must Be Continuous”



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It's 2026, and folkishness continues to grow by leaps and bounds—so quickly that I can't keep up with all the developments. Top-notch folkish [Substack authors](#) are popping up all the time. Opponents are [seriously engaging](#) folkishness. If you're just discovering this new (but also *oldest*) paradigm, I give a three-hour crash course on a podcast I did [here](#). In this article we will address one of the most common challenges to paganism. But not just to paganism—also to any attempt to restore something from the past.

One of the most common objections to paganism is that “the tradition was broken” and therefore cannot be reformed. There is a serious argument to be made that it was never substantially broken, and that paganism continued in all but name to the present—that Christianity (even in its greatest strength) served as a vessel through which paganism was transmitted, if under different names. This argument has been made by many. Tom Rowsell comes to mind, in a number of Telegram posts where he shows that folk traditions continued pagan practices to the present. *The Tradition of Household Spirits* by Claude Lecouteux expands upon similar data in great detail (as does Lecouteux's entire body of work). Recently, Dave Martel and Tristan Powers did a two-part series on pagan revival titled [Our History](#) on Hearthfire Radio, which details the continuity of pagan practice from the earliest times to modern revival. The degree to which paganism “was broken” is wildly overstated.

But this is not an argument I want to make here. I want to admit, for the sake of argument, a total rupture in pagan practice and test this argument—that tradition must be continuous to be valid. When we apply a little pressure to this idea, it falls apart easily. What emerges in its place? More anti-authoritarianism. Exactly the kind that was required to “break from” paganism in the first place.

“Tradition must be continuous” is advanced quite naturally by Christians, as it allows them to bypass paganism as a “non-starter.” But strangely, you find it in some pagan-adjacent circles such as the capital-T “Traditionalists” such as René Guénon, Julius Evola, etc. For example, Evola, in his book *The Bow and the Club*, defines the essential function of an initiatic centre as transmission, and this yields the idea of an uninterrupted chain that is “parallel to a ‘tradition’”:

Generally speaking, this [transcendent] influence is transmitted, and the transmission is an essential function of an initiatic centre. What results from this is the idea of an uninterrupted ‘chain’ (the term used in Islam is *silsila*) of remote and mysterious origin, and parallel to a ‘tradition’.¹

In the same discussion he points to the later Rosicrucians and questions their legitimacy on the basis of discontinuity with the earlier Rosicrucians:

After causing quite a stir, [...] the Rosicrucians also withdrew—this, at the beginning of the 18th century, which suggests that those groups which subsequently described themselves as ‘Rosicrucian’ were doing so illegitimately, as they lacked a regular traditional affiliation or continuity.

This *continuity criterion*—the demand for continuity as a condition of the authority of a tradition—is even stronger in René Guénon:

It is therefore easy to understand the supreme importance that all traditions attach to what is called the initiatic 'chain', a succession that ensures the uninterrupted transmission in question; outside of this succession even the observance of ritual forms is in vain, for the element essential to their efficacy is lacking.²

To understand the error of requiring tradition to be unbroken, we must lay down some fundamentals. The first fundamental is that tradition is an expression of normativity, or more colloquially, ethics. Tradition is a set of *practices*, practices involve *action*, and the demand for this or that action is *ethics*. I take this to be more or less obvious and not in need of argument.

The second fundamental is less obvious: that *ethics* is at bottom a series of *commands*. All ethical statements reduce to imperatives, not descriptions. When someone says "you ought to do X", this is just a propositional way of saying "do X." We have developed this ethical framework at length and you can find more in the [guide](#). The important takeaway of imperative ethics for our present purposes is that continuity is irrelevant to commands. Whether or not the command has been disobeyed—indeed even the presence or absence of the commander—does not affect the command's normative force. A command does not become invalid because it was forgotten, disobeyed, or interrupted. Continuity has nothing whatsoever to do with whether a command is binding. And here we come to the root problem with the continuity argument—it confuses authority with obedience.

The claim is that *a command is legitimate only if it has been continuously obeyed*, but the hidden premise is that *obedience confers authority*. This is exactly the opposite of what the capital-T "Traditionalist" wants to say, especially Evola who was nothing if not concerned to restore traditional ideas of hierarchy, caste, and moral order. And yet by asserting the continuity criterion, he asserts that authority flows upward from practitioners, not downward from a commanding source.

In a real command structure, authority issues commands and obedience may or may not follow. In the continuity model, obedience retroactively validates command. This reverses the order: per the "Traditionalist" or Christian who makes this argument, the command is binding *because* people follow it, not followed *because* it is binding. Thus the believer becomes the authority. If continuity validates a command then the community is the source of legitimacy, and thus the "tradition" is no longer something that commands the believer, but rather it is something the believer licenses by participation. This collapses into, at best, collective self-legislation.

This is why among the foundations of the right you will find *heteronomy*.³ This is the idea that law must come from *outside* the will to bind the will. What the believer thinks or feels or "reasons" for himself is irrelevant to the law—a self-issued command is a preference, not a moral obligation. If the commanded is also the authority, morality evaporates. Self-command is a contradiction, because to command is to stand in a position of authority over another, and one cannot stand over oneself.

And so, the continuity criterion entails moral subjectivism. If authority depends on obedience, then all that is required to dissolve obligation is disobedience—all that is required to abrogate the law is to ignore it. This completely undermines even the *possibility* of law, as it then depends on one's own will—precisely what law is there to bind. If a command is valid only when obeyed, then before the first act of obedience, it is not a command. Therefore no command can ever *begin* to bind. Therefore morality cannot arise at all. The continuity argument not only *fails* to undermine *paganism*, but it *succeeds* at evaporating *all morality*.

This exposes the real motive behind the continuity argument. It is not about truth or goodness—it is about protecting incumbency. A morality whose authority depends on obedience is not morality but autobiography.

Imperative ethics restores the correct order. Command *precedes*, and does not follow, obedience. A command can confront, accuse, and judge its hearers—which is impossible if they are its source. Pagan reconstruction is accused of lacking authority due to interruption, but interruption only matters if obedience generates legitimacy. Under imperative ethics, interruption is morally irrelevant, and revival is simply renewed obedience to a standing command. The critic's position collapses before *paganism* is even mentioned.

There is a tremendous irony here in the "Traditionalists," especially in Evola himself. Evola *says* he affirms hierarchy, caste, order, authority, and the "transcendence" of the individual. On the surface, this looks maximally illiberal and anti-modern. But dig a little deeper and you find that Evola denies any authority that binds the will from outside unless it is inwardly ratified by the subject and voluntarily obeyed. This is structurally anti-authoritarian. Authority, properly speaking, must be able to say "you must, whether or not you recognize me," but Evola's model cannot do this. If the subject does not recognize the authority,⁴ the authority has no force—what else could

the continuity criterion possibly mean? If recognition is required, then authority flows upward from the subject, and this makes authority conditional on acceptance. That is the core liberal move.

This is the vacuity of “aristocratic voluntarism”—Evola replaces bourgeois autonomy with aristocratic autonomy. Not *everyone* gets to legislate, but *those who are qualified* do. And certainly this is better than rank democracy. But the core problem goes unaddressed: the individual will remains sovereign and obligation remains elective. As a result, command becomes self-authorized and this collapses into subjectivism. Whereas in a genuine imperative order authority does not depend on interior resonance, in Evola no disobedience is even possible since command is self-issued, and one can no more disobey oneself than one can hold oneself hostage.

By insisting on uninterrupted transmission, Evola makes legitimacy dependent on historical recognition, not on the force of the authority issuing the command. Obedience retroactively validates authority. Evola advances hierarchy but removes the binding law that underwrites it, and puts in its place taste. He does not “revolt against the modern world,” he revolts against *being commanded as such*. Despite appearances, his position is fundamentally anti-authoritarian.

The Christian traditionalist does not fare any better, but in advancing the same continuity criterion, advances the same anti-authoritarianism. Indeed, Christianity *requires* a break with ancestral, civic, and cultic authority. Conversion is intelligible only if inherited obligation can be overridden and tradition judged by the individual. The fact that this conversion happened thousands of years ago is completely irrelevant—the theology rests upon anti-authoritarianism, and bears its stamp as the son does the father’s.

Christianity commanded the believer to disobey tradition, which requires a principle that invalidates continuity as such. This could only be done by the same mechanism as in Evola—by interiorization. Authority is relocated from cult, law, ritual obligation, and ancestral command into conscience—interior assent. This makes obedience conditional on recognition. Pagan systems were totalizing and inherited; they could not be displaced by argument. Christianity had to break the spell of inherited command and delegitimize continuity, which involved elevating refusal as morally meaningful.

The irony of Christian “tradition” is that once victorious, Christianity tries to restore authority and appeal to continuity. But the tool that won the battle—conscience over cult, belief before obedience—permanently undercuts those efforts. Anti-authoritarianism was a strategic necessity, but the sword was then picked up by the critics of Christianity, which was defenseless against the weapon it had itself forged.

And here Evola and Christian traditionalists converge. Both speak the language of authority, but both also collapse obligation into assent. Evola does this aristocratically, and Christianity does it universally, but structurally, they are the same move. Imperative ethics exposes the flaw shared by both: if morality is command, then authority precedes belief, and obligation binds prior to assent. Both Christian traditionalism and Evolian traditionalism fail this test. They explain why someone *might* obey, not why they *must*.

In the podcast linked at the beginning of this article, I explained why the Axial age and its innovations constitute the left wing in embryo. When asked to summarize in the Telegram chat, I summarized thus:

The Axial turn introduces logos. This is the idea that the divine must be accountable to an objective standard, or maybe that it’s identical with that standard, rather than that any possible standard derives from and is subordinated to it.

This is left-wing because it puts the individual with conscience in a position to judge the divine (“does this god meet the standard/its own standard?”) This is the grandfather of all subjectivism, individualism, and nihilism.

The divine does not need your assent. It does not need your conscience or your approval. It does not even need your obedience. But obedience is owed. The divine is above everything, answers to nothing, does not owe an explanation or an account, and is under no obligation even to be rational at all. It is morally, epistemically, and ontologically primordial, and it is an offense even to look upon it, much less to presume to question it. Law is always and everywhere heteronomous. Autonomy is the cardinal sin. The law comes from outside.

And yet, so-called “traditionalists” of all stripes deny these obvious facts. This is why the articulation of folkishness as a theological paradigm is necessary, and frankly it is a scandal that it is so. Right-wing paradigms for thousands of years have been some flavour of “fuck you Dad,” which explains why they have all ceded ground to those that said “fuck you Dad” harder and better.

But something older is coming back. It is being born of the [Archaic Revival](#), of which folkishness is the philosophical expression. But folkishness is prior to all philosophy, it subordinates metaphysics to ethics—which is to say, belief to authority. Folkishness has ruffled all other paradigms, because it underwrites and buttresses them all, who then turn around and attack it, like a branch attacking its own root. But folkishness is the father of them all, and the father is authoritative for no reason other than that he is the father. That is all ye know, and that is all ye need to know.

- 1 Julius Evola, *The Bow and the Club* (Arktos, 2018), ch. 17 “Initiatic Centres and History.”
 - 2 René Guénon, *Perspectives on Initiation* (Sophia Perennis, 1946), ch. 8 “Initiatic Transmission.”
 - 3 Tellingly, Evola endorses the opposite—*autonomy*, and in this he agrees with liberals like Kant.
 - 4 Via initiation, and also what he calls *autarkeia*. I discuss the latter in ch. 43 of *The Cultured Thug Handbook*.
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