

When The Far-Right Reads Lacan

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ABSTRACT. This article examines the recent appropriation of Lacanian Psychoanalysis by Aleksandr Dugin, who utilizes Lacan as a resource for nationalist and illiberal politics. Against the traditional split between the Lacanian Left and the Clinical Orientation, the paper argues for the emergence of an interpretative phenomenon that can be understood as a Reactionary Lacanianism. Through a close reading of Dugin's texts and interviews, it shows how Lacanian concepts are rigidified into algebraic formulas that foreclose dialectical negativity. This symptomatic misreading exposes both the dangers and the plasticity of Lacan's corpus: every attempt to stabilize him as a Master inevitably confronts the void at its core.

Keywords: *Reactionary Lacanianism, Far-Right, Aleksandr Dugin, Jacques Lacan, Left Lacanianism, Slavoj Žižek.*

Introduction

The master's disappearance has unfailingly compelled its disciples to engage in a contest of interpretation, a perpetual race toward the "correct" exegesis and the exhaustive mastery of the *oeuvre* he bequeathed. Yet this very moment has always inaugurated a fundamental disjunction among them: as we will see, as far as Lacanian legacy goes, some advanced ambitiously toward new horizons of thought, while others entrenched themselves in a posture of caution, rigidly defending what appeared as conservatism. The truth, however, is that no disciple has ever been in

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possession of the truth, just as the master himself was never unconditionally sincere. As Lacan observes in his conference *Television*¹, he always tells the truth, though never the whole of it – for he cannot, and because he does not know it. Every reading is, therefore, structurally a misreading, an interpretation constitutively marked by error, issuing from a hermeneutic fissure that can never be sutured. Such misreadings inevitably propel the master's thought beyond itself, even if certain conservative disciples imagine their gestures to be acts of "preservation." The very jouissance of not being like the others thus unites both the progressive and the conservative camps, for both, whether willingly or unwillingly, advance the master's legacy beyond what he desired or prescribed.

It is precisely within this horizon of constitutive misreading that the contemporary political fortunes of Lacan must be situated. Once canonized by the so-called "Lacanian Left"² as a resource for emancipatory critique, Lacan now circulates in contexts that radically displace this reception. This paper argues that the recent appropriation of Lacanian theory by reactionary³ ideologues such as Aleksandr Dugin exposes the latent conservative dimensions of Lacan's oeuvre, dimensions that the Left has strategically repressed, thereby undermining its own interpretative monopoly.

The object of the present analysis is what we cautiously call the emergence of a "right-wing Lacanianism." At this stage it remains incipient, more symptomatic than structural, without a consolidated theoretical or institutional infrastructure. The "corpus" under examination is correspondingly limited: Dugin's Lacanian analysis of the 2024 U.S. elections (*Lacan and Psychedelic Trumpism*⁴), together with his interview with the streamer Haz Al-Din (*HAZ x DUGIN: Fascism, Žižek and Lacan*)⁵.

¹ "I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there's no way, to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real". Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. Joan Copjec, trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, W. W. Norton, 1990, 3.

² We have adopted the term "Lacanian Left" from Yannis Stavrakakis's well-known book *The Lacanian Left: Psychoanalysis, Theory, Politics*, Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

³ In this article, the term "reactionary" refers to a political stance that seeks to reverse the course of history rather than simply preserve tradition. While a conservative typically aims to protect existing institutions, a reactionary ideologue – like Dugin – views the modern liberal world as fundamentally broken or "decadent." Therefore, they use Lacanian theory to justify a radical break from the present in order to return to a presumably lost form of absolute authority, often rooted in national or religious identity. Essentially, it describes an attempt to turn a psychoanalytic theory originally focused on individual liberation into a tool for imposing strict social order and hierarchy.

⁴ Aleksandr Dugin, "Lacan and Psychedelic Trumpism," Arktos, September 19, 2024, <https://arktos.com/2024/09/19/lacan-and-psychedelic-trumpism/>

⁵ Infrared, HAZ x DUGIN: Fascism, Žižek and Lacan, YouTube video, posted January 7, 2025, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=xjeozrLalkM&t=2s>

Despite their relative isolation, these instances are sufficiently revealing to trace the initial outlines of an ideological reconfiguration of Lacan's conceptual apparatus. If certain of Dugin's theoretical maneuvers may appear erroneous or distorted – as Žižek argues in his counter-essay "Vance, Dugin, Lacan"⁶ – they cannot be dismissed as mere misunderstandings. Rather, they must be understood as necessary effects of an ideological operation of adaptation: Lacanian thought is selected, truncated, and reorganized to conform to an eschatological, authoritarian, and illiberal worldview. What emerges is not a naïve misapplication, though it retains elements of naivety, but a deliberate repositioning of key Lacanian concepts such as the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. This repositioning occurs within a political architecture fundamentally at odds with the premises of the Lacanian Left and the structural open-endedness of Lacan's own writings and teaching, upon which Dugin seeks to impose closure on through reactionary dogma.

The methodology of this paper is dialectical and it constitutes a close reading of both the article and the transcribed interview. Its purpose is not to dismantle Dugin's discourse by refuting it as a "mistake," but rather to decipher it in its conditions of possibility. To reduce such texts to errors would be not only insufficient but potentially dangerous, for there are no mistakes in the void: every misreading is itself a reading, situated within a determinate key, whose logic must be reconstructed. What is at stake, therefore, is an inquiry into how a discourse as antagonistic as Lacan's – premised on fundamental lack, constitutive negativity, and structural impossibility – can nonetheless become compatible with *ressentiment*-driven projects. The conditions for this compatibility are not merely external, geopolitical, or cultural; they are also latent within Lacan's own corpus. The theoretical Left, eager to claim his work in its entirety, has too often passed too quickly over these constitutive ambiguities. The thesis, it must be stressed, is that Lacan can no longer serve as a guarantor. Lacan is not a settled position but a political field of tensions.

Within the limited corpus considered here, Aleksandr Dugin proposes nothing less than an ideological reconfiguration of Lacan's conceptual apparatus. The registers of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary are mobilized to diagnose the contours of contemporary American politics. In this reading, the liberal enterprise, personified by Kamala Harris and the Democratic Party, appears as a delirious Symbolic that seeks to dissolve the traditional Imaginary, while "psychedelic Trumpism," supported by the Alt-Right, Peter Thiel, J.D. Vance, and others, functions as a right-wing Symbolic that is ironic, insurgent, and subversive. Dugin contends that this transfer

⁶ Slavoj Žižek, "Vance, Dugin, Lacan," Sublation Magazine, October 25, 2024, <https://www.sublationmag.com/post/vance-dugin-lacan>

of unconscious energy signifies nothing less than a traversal of the fantasy, in which the dreamlike voter of the Left migrates into the conservative camp. In his recent interviews, Dugin explicitly claims Lacan as a conservative thinker and warns of the impossibility of substituting the Imaginary with the Symbolic without producing new forms of dictatorship. Power, he argues, is always Imaginary, yet never reducible to stasis: it is modeled through a Symbolic that remains active, onirical, and irreducible. Conservatism, in this view, is not stagnation but a dynamic form of mediation between the registers, a kind of ontological revolution that valorizes the very tension between desire, order, and the impossible.

With this methodological orientation and preliminary summary in place, the analysis will now proceed to the central zones of tension emerging from Dugin's texts and interviews: (a) Lacan's own political positioning (*Lacan, Maurras, and May 1968*); (b) the conservative inflection of Lacanian concepts (*Conceptual Freezers: From Vernunft to Verstand and Algebraic Reductions and the Imaginary*); and (c) the motivations behind Dugin's investment in Lacan at this historical juncture (*Why Dugin Desires Lacan*). With the methodological framework established and the specific trajectory of the investigation mapped out, it is now necessary to situate this phenomenon within the broader historical context of Lacanian reception.

Lacanianism after Lacan: The Established Bifurcation

Before addressing the specificities of the reactionary appropriation, one must first survey the theoretical landscape that Dugin seeks to infiltrate. This section outlines the historical and institutional bifurcation that has defined post-Lacanian scholarship for decades: the division between the "Lacanian Left," which mobilized psychoanalysis for cultural and political critique, and the "Clinical Orientation," which guarded the specificity of the analytic act. Understanding this established binary is crucial for grasping the novelty and the disruption posed by the emergence of a third, antagonistic current.

The hermeneutic impasse – the impossibility of "capturing" the master within a stable meaning – was one of the reasons why, beginning in the 1980s, a series of left-leaning theorists developed a sustained interest in Jacques Lacan's work. His corpus itself was already bifurcated: on the one hand, the *Écrits*⁷, obscure and seemingly impenetrable; on the other hand, the twenty-seven Seminars, some

⁷ See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, W. W. Norton, 2006.

edited and translated into various languages, others still circulating only in clinical editions, awaiting the light of publication.⁸

The first major division of post-Lacanian thought was articulated by authors such as Slavoj Žižek, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Judith Butler, and Alain Badiou⁹. Lacking professional training in the analytic clinic – although most of them had undergone analysis themselves – their primary function was to extend psychoanalytic logic into a variety of intellectual domains. The “Lacanian Left” thus appropriated both the form and content of Lacan’s thought, translating them into metaphysics, epistemology, political theory, feminism, postcolonial studies, as well as literary and film theory. This multidisciplinary, which Lacan himself would likely have welcomed, was nevertheless received with caution and skepticism by the other side of the division: the clinical orientation.

Led by Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan’s son-in-law and the editor of all published Seminars to date, this orientation consists largely of analysts trained and certified through the demanding, costly, and uncertain process of Lacanian formation. From the standpoint of the “Clinical Lacanians,” the extrapolation of psychoanalytic concepts from the singularity of the analysand to macro-social phenomena such as society, capitalism, womanhood, or even the economy, is regarded with suspicion. For them, psychoanalysis can indeed have political effects, but only from the bottom up – emerging from the singular relation in the analytic setting. Miller proposes a vision of psychoanalysis as a form of private education with public structural consequences: “An immense project of private education! This is indeed how psychoanalysis must appear when one considers its practice as a political scientist. It does not take man en masse, so to speak, but one by one.”¹⁰ Practiced one by one within the intimacy

⁸ Jacques Lacan’s Seminars represent the oral core of his teaching, spanning from 1953 to 1980. While several volumes have been officially established and edited by Jacques-Alain Miller – such as *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, W. W. Norton, 1998 – many others remain available only as “clinical editions” or unedited transcripts (*sténotypies*). These unofficial versions, such as *Seminar XXIV: L’insu que sait de l’une-bévue s’aile à mourre (1976–1977)* or *Seminar XXV: Le moment de conclure (1977–1978)*, circulate widely within Lacanian analytic circles and specialized clinical journals while awaiting formal publication.

⁹ Some fundamental works for the way these authors interpret Lacan’s thought are: Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Verso, 1989; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, 1985; Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Verso, 2000; and Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham, Continuum, 2005.

¹⁰ Jacques-Alain Miller, “Entretien: Lacan et la politique,” interview by Jean-Pierre Cléro and Lynda Lotte, *Cités* 16, 2003, 106. Translation mine unless otherwise specified. Original French: “Un immense projet d’éducation privée! C’est ainsi en effet que la psychanalyse doit apparaître quand on considère sa pratique en politologue. Elle ne prend pas l’homme en masse, si je puis dire, mais un par un.”

of transference, analysis transforms the subject by elucidating the singularity of the symptom. Yet its influence does not remain confined to the individual. Miller compares the broader cultural effect of psychoanalysis to the infiltration of Enlightenment ideals among believers as described in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

He had foreseen from the outset that, step by step, there would eventually occur in society what he did not hesitate to call a psychoanalytic Aufklärung, and that it would result in a social tolerance toward the drives, unprecedented until then. This is precisely what we witness every day.¹¹

What Miller, following Freud, calls psychoanalytic Aufklärung – a diffuse and silent enlightenment – produces, over time, a cultural mutation in collective sensibilities regarding drive, guilt, sexuality, and intimacy. In this act of conserving the analytic technique – though not conservatively – Miller nonetheless insists that the conceptual apparatus deployed in the clinic cannot be extrapolated to describe social, political, or economic dynamics. At the same time, he acknowledges the psychoanalytic axiom that the unconscious is permeated by the discourse of the Other, the socio-political order with its array of ready-made identifications, and that every analysis implicitly analyses the structure of the epoch and culture in which we live:

The Freudian unconscious is not a substantial reality that would be hidden in the individual psyche, conceived as a closed world [...]. It is the unconscious of a subject who is structurally coordinated with the discourse of the Other. This subject has no other reality than being supposed to the signifiers of this discourse which identify and convey him.¹²

Every analytic act is, in this sense, an auto-reflexive, ideological act of scrutinizing social and economic mechanisms. It is precisely here that the clinical orientation categorically rejects the analyses of Žižek, Laclau, or Butler, which proceed “from above downward,” frequently invoking their lack of clinical experience as the very cause of their ideological derailments. This division – between the political-theoretical appropriation of Lacan and the clinical defense of analytic singularity – remains unresolved to this day.

¹¹ Ibidem, 107. “Il avait prévu d'emblée que de proche en proche il se produirait à terme dans la société ce qu'il n'hésitait pas à appeler une Aufklärung psychanalytique, et qu'il en résulterait une tolérance sociale inédite jusqu'alors à l'endroit des pulsions. C'est bien ce à quoi nous assistons tous les jours.”

¹² Ibidem, 112. “L'inconscient freudien n'est pas une réalité substantielle qui serait cachée dans le psychisme individuel, conçu comme un monde clos [...]. C'est l'inconscient d'un sujet qui est structurellement coordonné au discours de l'Autre. Ce sujet n'a d'autre réalité que d'être supposé aux signifiants de ce discours qui l'identifient et qui le véhiculent.”

With the methodological framework established and the specific trajectory of the investigation mapped out, it is now necessary to situate this phenomenon within the broader historical context of Lacanian reception to understand exactly what tradition Dugin is disrupting.

The Emergence of a Third Path: Reactionary Lacan

This section identifies and analyses the rupture in the Lacanian field: the explicit strategic turn of Aleksandr Dugin toward psychoanalysis. Here, we examine how the Russian ideologue reframes Lacan not as a resource for emancipation, but as a crucial instrument for decoding and combating Western hegemony. By tracing Dugin's public declarations and strategic injunctions to Russian patriots, we demonstrate how Lacan is being repositioned as a disputed territory in a clash of civilizations, effectively ending the Left's monopoly on his political interpretation.

For three decades after Lacan's death, post-Lacanian thought maintained a relatively stable bifurcation between a clinical orientation (Miller, Soler, and others) and a left-political trajectory articulated by figures such as Žižek, Butler, Badiou, and Laclau. This separation, while institutionally and discursively operative, has increasingly been destabilized as Lacanian discourse entered the broader public sphere of global ideology, becoming recognizable even within antagonistic political contexts. After several attempts at self-systematization, among which Yannis Stavrakakis's *The Lacanian Left*¹³ occupies a central place, a new and emergent phenomenon has appeared, one that complicates the traditional division.

In 2023, Aleksandr Dugin, the Russian far-right ideologue known for his neo-Eurasianist doctrine and close association with Vladimir Putin's authoritarian regime, made a striking declaration on Russian television:

Lacan is the key to understanding how the West thinks today, especially in its most intensive centres. Since the West exerts a tremendous influence on us, even a negative influence, and considering that we are in conflict with it, and we definitely are in conflict, without an understanding of Lacan, I fear everything we say about the West will be extremely inaccurate and incomplete. We cannot defeat what we do not understand. We cannot simply turn away from the threat; we must engage in a serious dialogue with it, and for that, we must comprehend what we are dealing with. That is why I believe that studying Lacan is an absolutely essential pursuit for every self-respecting Russian patriot.¹⁴

¹³ Yannis Stavrakakis, *The Lacanian Left: Psychoanalysis, Theory, Politics*, Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

¹⁴ *Dugin on Lacan (with subtitles)*, YouTube video, posted by "bilet biletta," December 10, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1kg6higRcc>

This passage constitutes a strategic statement: the ideological “threat” must not only be confronted but symbolically co-opted and integrated. In this respect, it echoes Deleuze’s remark on Kant, that one must read and reread one’s enemies without cessation¹⁵. Dugin’s illiberal agenda, which rejects the three great political ideologies of the twentieth century, finds a strange resonance with Lacan’s critique of the discourse of the Master. For Dugin, Lacan becomes indispensable as an analyst of the Western unconscious, perceived as decadent and degenerate. Within Lacan resides both the symptom of decline and the key to its resolution. He is, simultaneously, an adversary to be overcome – unlike the Lacanian Left, which views him as an ally of emancipation – and a mouthpiece through which reactionary theory can be disseminated. In this repositioning, Lacan is mobilized to consolidate a Russian theological-nationalist vision of history, one that the West, supposedly structured around Lacanian coordinates, will be compelled to recognize.

Within this framework, Lacanianism ceases to be a univocal ideological vector and becomes instead a contested terrain between emancipatory leftist projects and reactionary right-wing appropriations. This instrumentalization of Lacan by an ultranationalist, anti-liberal, and anti-Enlightenment agenda introduces a major symbolic rupture into the previously stable map of Lacanian discourse. Lacan no longer belongs exclusively to the radical Left or to the analytic clinic; he now figures as a reusable resource for the Far-Right in its effort to articulate a metaphysical alternative to the global liberal order.

Such a reappropriation marks a significant mutation in the public theoretical sphere: Lacanianism ceases to function as a politically guaranteed signifier. Questions that once appeared to configure their answers within a left-Lacanian horizon – What does political change mean? What should we expect from it? How can it be implemented? – now resurface in an indeterminate space where “Lacan,” the Master Signifier, is emptied out into a battlefield for the reconfiguration of political metaphysics. This is not a marginal occurrence but a development of considerable consequence: if Lacan can no longer serve as a guarantor of leftist interpretation or of clinical exclusivity, it is because he was never, in truth, either one, as we will argue in the next section.

Having established the existence of this far-right project, we must now test its validity by confronting Dugin’s claims about Lacan’s biography against the historical record.

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, 1972-1990, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990, 14-15.

Lacan, Maurras, and May 1968

Central to Dugin's appropriation is the construction of a historical lineage that paints Jacques Lacan as a consistent conservative thinker. This section critically interrogates these claims, contrasting Dugin's narrative of a Right-wing Lacan with the biographical and intellectual realities of Lacan's engagements – from his early interest in Maurras to his complex interactions with the student movements of May 1968 and the legacy of Stalinism. The aim is to expose the selective historiography required to sustain the fantasy of a reactionary psychoanalysis.

Dugin's recent writings and interviews repeatedly underscore the claim that Lacan was, in his essence, a conservative thinker. As he argues:

Lacan was well aware that the model of the three orders casts doubt on the basic strategies of reformism, progressivism, and revolution. It is no coincidence that in his youth, he was right-wing and a monarchist, close to Charles Maurras. And in the 1960s, contrary to the "New Left," he supported the status quo and de Gaulle's rule.¹⁶

and elsewhere:

But about Lacan I would like to stress one point – he was not Left. Lacan himself in his youth, he was a monarchist, he was [a] Nationalist, and it is not just [a] political attraction of youth. If we consider his system and his position towards [the] French Revolution of '68, he was extremely sceptical. (31:00 – 31:25)¹⁷

Both passages advance the same thesis: that Lacan was consistently a man of the Right, and that his political views, once extricated from leftist interpretation, must be re-inscribed within the horizon of the Right. Yet this interpretation ignores the radical revisions of his intellectual and political positions over time. The youthful fascination (1923) with Charles Maurras and the far-right group Action Française was followed, in 1933, by Lacan's entry into surrealist and Marxist circles, which promoted him as a "champion of the materialist theory of mental disorders."¹⁸ In the 1930s and 1940s, Alexandre Kojève's lectures convinced Lacan to transform this aristocratic nihilism of youth into a critique of nationalist ideals. After 1945, he explicitly broke with Maurrasian traditionalism, adopting what he called a kind of

¹⁶ Dugin, "Lacan and Psychedelic Trumpism."

¹⁷ HAZ x DUGIN: Fascism, Žižek and Lacan.

¹⁸ Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan: An Outline of a Life and a History of a System of Thought*, trans. Barbara Bray, Columbia University Press, 1997, 58.

“democratic utilitarianism” and rejecting the notion of French civilizational superiority characteristic of Action Française¹⁹.

When the student revolts of May 1968 erupted, Lacan suspended his seminar to discuss the events “in order to be worthy of them,” signed petitions in support of Régis Debray (then imprisoned in Bolivia with Che Guevara), and co-signed a pro-student manifesto²⁰. At the same time, he warned that every revolution risks a return to the “discourse of the Master”, not out of loyalty to de Gaulle, but in order to expose how political desire inevitably gravitates toward the figure of a leader who sutures the constitutive void of the social order. By disregarding these transformations – the explicit break with Maurras, the critical engagement in 1968, and Lacan’s own tripartite distinction between knowledge, truth, and ignorance – Dugin reduces a complex trajectory to a caricature, deploying Lacanian concepts as a pretext to claim him as a legitimating voice for a nationalist-conservative agenda.

This oversimplification is compounded by the claims of Haz Al-Din, who in a recent interview suggested that Lacan’s theory was indirectly influenced by Stalin, via the reception of his 1950 text “Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics”, as well as through Russian Formalism and Kojève’s émigré Hegelianism:

Haz: For Lacan’s traversal of the fantasy, it ends up being an acknowledgement of the irreducibility of the gap between the symbolic and imaginary.

Dugin: In that sense he was conservative.

Haz: I agree to an extent. Yes, I think that is conservative with respect to the liberalism, to anarchism, to liberal leftism and the prevailing tendency in the French Revolution, but I also think that there is an element of conservative Stalinism here. Because, for example, Stalin’s writings on the language were actually very famous and influential in French and I heard, I read somewhere, this actually ended up influencing Lacan. Because Stalin very famously in his intervention in this debate that was happening in the Soviet Union on the status of language: is it just the consequence of... is it the superstructure, is it just a reflection of underlying material relations or what is the status. And Stalin had a provoking contribution to Marxism. Stalin regarded language not as a superstructure, but more like a fundamental base, a material base, so this means the nihilism, nihilistic tendency of Western Materialism was rejected. For Stalin logos had the absolutely irreducible accumulation of the total history that was not inherently proletarian, not inherently bourgeois, not inherently serving this class, or that class but language as such as a horizon of reality that is somewhat still at a distance. I think that this is a profoundly Hegelian intervention within Western Philosophy of acceptance of distance and acceptance of gaps as the ultimate kind of reconciliation

¹⁹ Ibidem, 175-176.

²⁰ Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political*, Routledge, 1999, 11.

and yes that is conservative but simultaneously I also think that it is not simply a passive acceptance of the status quo... (36:23 – 38:48)²¹

Such assertions are problematic. Stalin's text did circulate widely in postwar France, particularly among intellectuals close to the Communist Party, and it was read as an attempt to reaffirm the active role of language within a materialist framework of society. Yet no direct or substantive influence on Lacan can be documented. Lacan's conceptualization of language derives not from a Marxist-Leninist doctrine of "superstructure," but from Saussure, Jakobson, Kojève, and Freud, within a structuralist and later post-structuralist trajectory that emphasizes the unconscious, divided, and non-operational dimension of language.

Roman Jakobson, probably the "Russian formalist" Haz alludes to, cannot in any meaningful sense be described as "Soviet." Although sympathetic to the 1917 Revolution, he was not a Party member, did not support Stalinist policies, and spent most of his career outside the USSR, in Czechoslovakia, Scandinavia, and, from 1941, the United States. His work on phonology, Russian poetry, and semiotics circulated widely in the West, while in the Soviet Union it was mostly cited critically until the post-Stalin thaw.

As for Kojève, one must, as the saying goes, give Caesar what is Caesar's: he transmitted to Lacan a singular, if often idiosyncratic, reading of Hegel, and an intellectual enthusiasm shared by an entire generation. Yet Lacan decisively distanced himself from Kojève's Stalinist inflections. Where Kojève saw in Stalin the figure of the Absolute Master reconciling history, Lacan shifted the emphasis from labour and recognition to desire and lack, insisting that the subject is defined precisely by the constitutive failure of satisfaction. In place of a completed historical synthesis, Lacan proposed an open model in which the Symbolic can never fully encompass the Real. The Kojevian "end of history," from this perspective, is nothing but a desperate attempt to close the incomprehensible advance of time, an echo that fades quickly in the infinite cavern of History.

Politically, Lacan explicitly rejected Soviet authoritarianism, describing it in Seminar XVII as a form of the university discourse²²: a technocratization of knowledge that merely reproduces the structure of the Master under the guise of expertise. Far from endorsing the Kojevian idea of the subject healed by a totalizing State, Lacan dismantled its very premise²³.

²¹ HAZ x DUGIN: Fascism, Žižek and Lacan.

²² Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg, W. W. Norton, 2007, 206.

²³ For a comprehensive analysis of Lacan's departure from the Kojevian model, see Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, W. W. Norton, 1998. In this seminar, Lacan redefines

If there is a “Stalinist influence” on Lacan, it exists only as a retrospective projection. Where Stalin conceived of language as a social instrument of communication indifferent to class, Lacan insisted that language speaks through us rather than we speak through language, and that the subject is produced not by idiomatic consensus but by a symbolic rupture. Language tends to reproduce the socio-political order only until it is disrupted by an eventual break. To link Lacan to Stalin through the mere coincidence of textual circulation is to miss the radical specificity of his position: language is the structure of the unconscious, the medium through which the Other speaks to itself, not a neutral tool for interpersonal exchange.

Yet, Dugin’s distortion is not limited to historical revisionism; it extends deeply into the theoretical structure itself, requiring a rigidification of concepts that we must now examine through a Hegelian, immanently logical lens.

Conceptual Freezers: From Vernunft to Verstand

Moving from history to theory, this section scrutinizes the specific conceptual mechanisms Dugin employs to domesticate Lacanian thought. By utilizing the Hegelian distinction between the Understanding (Verstand) and Reason (Vernunft), we argue that Dugin strips the registers of the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary of their dialectical negativity. We will explore how his reading “freezes” these fluid, interpenetrating categories into static identities, thereby transforming a logic of contradiction into a tool for conservative stasis.

We begin here an analysis of the conceptual forms through which Dugin reconfigures, in a peculiarly distorted manner, the apparatus of Lacanian thought. In both his article and interview, Dugin invokes a series of Lacanian concepts: the Real, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, the Traversal of the Fantasy, the Borromean Knot, the objet petit a, the Dream, the Unconscious, and so forth. At first glance, one might believe itself confronted with a “master of psychoanalysis,”²⁴ as Dugin styles himself. Yet the way he understands and deploys these notions is symptomatic of the way the reactionary Right misrecognizes the Lacanian framework. It is, as Dugin himself concedes, “very easy” to apply Lacan to political phenomena, and indeed

desire not as a search for recognition (the Hegelian-Kojévian *Begierde*), but as a relation to the *objet petit a*, which functions as a non-symbolizable remainder. While Kojève envisioned the Universal and Homogeneous State as the terminal point of the dialectic, Lacan insists on the impossibility of such a final reconciliation due to the structural incompleteness of the Big Other.

²⁴ HAZ x DUGIN: Fascism, Žižek and Lacan. „I am mastering many different theories: psychoanalysis, sociology... etc.” (24:35 – 24:53).

one “can do it again and again”, provided the concepts are reduced to oversimplified, non-dialectical dimensions. The triadic registers of Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary, instead of functioning as interpenetrating strata whose knots inscribe negativity, are in turn treated as rigidly separate categories.

Rather than rehearsing well-known counter-explanations, one can cite Žižek, who has remarked in his response to Dugin that “everything is wrong in this description”²⁵ of the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary. His diagnostic is both precise and persuasive. What interests us, however, is less the correction than what this apparent “error” reveals: the dimension of ignorance that paradoxically makes manifest the truth-content of Lacanian theory. Why does Dugin get it wrong? The point is that truth emerges precisely through the exposition of ignorance, through the productive contradictions that make Lacanian concepts undulate in atypical and peculiar ways.

In Dugin’s rendering, the Lacanian “model” is assimilated to the categories of the Understanding (*Verstand*), rather than those of Reason (*Vernunft*). This Hegelian distinction, we suggest, lies at the very core of the reactionary operation, and everything Dugin criticizes ultimately recoils upon himself:

The Real is the domain where every object is strictly identical to itself. This absolute identity ($A=A$) excludes the very possibility of becoming, i.e., of being in a state of transformation. [...] The Symbolic is the domain where nothing equals itself, where one thing always refers to another. It is an escape from the Real, motivated by the desire to avoid death and falling into nothingness. [...] The Symbolic is the unconscious. The essence of a symbol is that it points to something other than itself (it does not matter what specifically, as long as it is not itself). The Imaginary is the domain where the dynamic of the Symbolic stops, but without the object dying and collapsing into the Real. The Imaginary is what we mistakenly take for Being, the world, ourselves - nature, society, culture, and politics. It is everything, yet it is also a lie. Every element of the Imaginary is actually a frozen moment of the Symbolic. Wakefulness is a form of sleep that does not realize itself. Everything in the Imaginary refers to the Symbolic but presents itself as supposedly “Real.” [...] The Real is nothing. The Symbolic is ever-changing becoming. The Imaginary consists of false nodes of the frozen Symbolic.²⁶

For Dugin, the Real becomes the site of inert identity, where $A = A$; the Symbolic, as antithesis, becomes the space of endless slippage, where A is never equal to A ;

²⁵ Slavoj Žižek, “Vance, Dugin, Lacan,” *Sublation Magazine*, October 25, 2024, <https://www.sublationmag.com/post/vance-dugin-lacan>

²⁶ Aleksandr Dugin, “Lacan and Psychedelic Trumpism,” *Arktos*, September 19, 2024, <https://arktos.com/2024/09/19/lacan-and-psychedelic-trumpism/>

while the Imaginary serves as a “freezing” – a telling word – of the Symbolic into an image. Stripped of dialectical negativity²⁷, these categories reveal not the depth of psychoanalysis but the cognitive mechanisms of conservative thought. Even when Dugin speaks of the Symbolic as a place of “movement,” it is only an apparent movement, stasis disguised as dynamism, frozen within the categories of the Understanding. The three Lacanian registers, ordinarily caught in perpetual self-negation and interwoven through the Borromean knot, are thus reduced to a level of the Imaginary, abstract images, fixed conceptions without the concrete negativity that animates them. In his schema, the Symbolic is not transformed by its own inner dynamic but only by the Imaginary. Hence the relevance of the Understanding-Reason distinction as an explanatory key for reactionary formations.

The Understanding operates through rigid oppositions, excluding internal contradiction, and its aim is not to comprehend but to control and conserve the existing order. Negativity, in this framework, never arises from within but only from an external threat. The logic of identity is not undermined by the structural impossibility that A could equal A, but rather by the intrusion of some hostile third term that menaces the system from outside. For Hegel, such categories of the Understanding become “reactionary” precisely because they refuse to be sublated (*aufgehoben*) in dialectical movement. They transform everything into something fixed and finite, thereby blocking the opening to a dynamic conception of history – a history of the unpredictable.²⁸

From this perspective, the Symbolic in Dugin’s appropriation cannot undermine itself, cannot engage in genuine dialectical self-reference. Even if it appears to permit the sliding of signifiers, it remains a category identical with itself, preserving its autonomy from the Real and the Imaginary and allowing only a false rivalry among the registers. In short, the Symbolic as conceived by the Understanding is incapable of sublation, though in practice it constantly undermines itself through failure: the failed attempt to grasp the object. A failure that, through Reason, can be

²⁷ In this context, ‘dialectical negativity’ refers to the Hegelian and Lacanian conception of negativity as a productive, self-relating force of contradiction that drives the movement of the Symbolic (*Vernunft*). It designates the constitutive lack or gap within an identity that prevents it from ever fully coinciding with itself. My argument is that Dugin forecloses this internal negativity, reducing dynamic concepts to static, positive identities (*Verstand*).

²⁸ See G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford University Press, 1977, §33, where Hegel discusses the necessity of making fixed thoughts fluid to overcome the rigidity of the Understanding (*Verstand*). Also, in §40, Hegel links this rigidity to dogmatism: “Dogmatism as a way of thinking, whether in ordinary knowing or in the study of philosophy, is nothing else but the opinion that the True consists in a proposition which is a fixed result, or which is immediately known”, an effect that is directly attributable to the dialectic of the Understanding.

made explicit as the constitutive impossibility of identity. Žižek emphasizes that the Symbolic demonstrates its impossibility precisely through the endlessly fragmented attempt of the Real to equate A-the-signifier with A-the-object: „The Real is not a self-identity ($A=A$ is strictly the formula of symbolic identity) but an obstacle immanent to the Symbolic, the impossibility of $A=A$, of any symbolic identity fully actualizing itself.”²⁹ To cry out “it is” is, in fact, to say “it is not”; and in this ceaseless circling around a central void lies both the fundamental problem of language and its greatest virtue. The most radical limit of language is that it has no limits.

This static conceptualization does not merely freeze the concepts; it prepares the ground for them to be manipulated like variables in a rigid equation, leading to a specific form of algebraic reductionism.

Algebraic Reductions and the Imaginary

Building on the critique of static understanding, this section analyses the consequences of Dugin’s “algebrization” of psychoanalysis. We investigate how the Borromean knot is reduced to a deterministic formula used to diagnose American politics, transforming the dynamic relations of the psyche into a fixed geopolitical board game. Furthermore, by employing cognitive metaphor theory, we reveal that despite his claims to wield the Symbolic, Dugin’s discourse is fundamentally trapped within the aggressive and narcissistic rivalries of the Imaginary.

What Dugin articulates, far from being a merely naïve or erroneous logic, constitutes the peculiar outcome of a reactionary experiment imposed upon Lacanian thought. The rigid and isolated structure he attributes to each register is itself symptomatic of an Imaginary dimension. For Lacan, the Imaginary is the register of unity, autonomy, utopia, and the fantasy of overcoming any obstacle or division³⁰. In this sense, Dugin is not wrong to employ the term “freezing,” yet what he identifies is freezing qua failed attempt at freezing. What he cannot perceive – precisely because his discourse is structurally reactionary – is that this Imaginary dimension inheres in his very conceptualization of the three registers, generating a series of algebraic reductions:

²⁹ Slavoj Žižek, “Vance, Dugin, Lacan,” *Sublation Magazine*, October 25, 2024, <https://www.sublationmag.com/post/vance-dugin-lacan>

³⁰ Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, Routledge, 2005, 17–31.

In other words, despite Lacan's own warnings about the unchanging structure of the Borromean rings, the Democrats are actively trying to destroy the American Imaginary, fervently wanting to replace it with the Symbolic. [...] Even though the Democrats' narrative depicts the Imaginary as Trump - the tough, feminine Melania, the Republicans, and old liberal America - in the larger system, it is the Democrats who now embody the Imaginary, desperately holding onto power. [...] In Vance, the Democrats' psychoanalytic strategy fails, as Vance himself embodies the atypical right-wing Symbolic pole. It is even possible that he understands this and is familiar with Lacan. [...] The attempt to replace the Imaginary with the Symbolic is doomed to failure but will only generate a new Imaginary [...].³¹

Thus, Dugin speaks of replacing the Imaginary with the Symbolic, or of the Real being subsumed by the Symbolic. His approach transforms Lacanian registers into fixed, quasi-mathematical variables, manipulable through formulas, thereby extending the precise mechanism of Hegelian *Verstand*: that form of understanding which, once it fixes oppositions such as finite/infinite, ceases to think and preserves them as separate existences. Through this, what we would call, *algebrization* the Borromean topology loses its circular co-conditioning (the cutting of one ring untying all the others), and the internal mobility of the concepts is replaced by block permutations. The result is a deterministic scenario in which every traversal necessarily ends in an identical, tautological and predictable knot. Truly, with this approach, Dugin transforms Lacanian Theory into an empty formalistic abstract exercise. The results can never take one by surprise.

By freezing the triad Real-Symbolic-Imaginary into compact, totalized, and mathematical units, conceived almost as numbers, Dugin makes change thinkable only in terms of substitution, addition, or elimination, rather than as dialectical becoming (*Vernunft*). Politically, this yields a reactionary grammar in which history culminates in closure and the only imperative becomes the return to the past. This Imaginary dimension is further sedimented at the level of what Lacan called the "topic of the Imaginary," the terrain of rivalry, competition, hatred, and aggression.

Dugin himself declares that "in spite of Lacan's warnings regarding the unchangeable structure of the Borromean knots, the Democrats are actively trying to destroy the American Imaginary, passionately seeking to replace it with the Symbolic." Few statements could more vividly illustrate the good old topic of the Imaginary. The sentence is saturated with markers of this register: it proposes a duel between personified entities ("the Democrats" versus "the American Imaginary"), employs verbs of spatial aggression ("destroy," "replace"), and frames the political

³¹ Aleksandr Dugin, "Lacan and Psychedelic Trumpism," *Arktos*, September 19, 2024, <https://arktos.com/2024/09/19/lacan-and-psychedelic-trumpism/>

scene as a mirror-like competition for possession of an identity-image. Instead of indicating the structural gap that knots together Symbolic and Imaginary, the statement externalizes lack and treats it in military-topographic terms: the Imaginary becomes a territory to be conquered, the Symbolic a weapon of substitution, while “passion” signals the libidinal investment characteristic of Imaginary rivalry. The utterance itself performs the schema it describes: it fixes the registers as visible objects and sets them into narcissistic confrontation, exemplary of the Imaginary.

Moreover, Dugin sustains the illusion of a totalized block, denominated the “American Imaginary,” a formation pervaded by its own Imaginary core – namely the fantasy of non-castration. By framing this Imaginary as a unified entity, Dugin disavows the inevitable lack within the social order, positing instead a mythical, self-identical wholeness that has supposedly escaped the divisive cut of the Symbolic. For Lacan, by contrast, the Symbolic inevitably fails when it formalizes itself; the lack is represented by a remainder, an ontological and epistemic surplus resistant to symbolization. Nothing can be articulated without such a remainder, which acts as a void around which the Symbolic is compelled to knot itself, like a vortex or maelstrom. This lack, which renders every symbolic structure incomplete, is covered by fantasy: a scenario that narrativizes the void as if it were a contingent obstacle to be overcome. Ideology itself functions in precisely this way.

From this perspective, the “attack” of the Democrats is portrayed by Dugin as the cause of the American Imaginary’s decline, rather than recognizing that decline as intrinsic to the Imaginary itself. The external enemy threatens at the gates of the city; this is the grammar of reactionary thought. The enemy, whether Cancel Culture, LGBTQ movements, gender theory, or political correctness, must be expelled, and once expelled, peace and multipolar harmony will supposedly prevail. At the heart of this scenario lies what might be described, not without irony, as a reactionary “live, laugh, love”: a fantasy of restored plenitude.

Yet this construction cannot be separated from Lacan’s fundamental anti-utopianism. For Lacan, neither the alienation of the subject nor the alienation of the socio-symbolic order derives from contingent external attacks; they arise from the very structure of human subjectivity. If the New Left of 1968 desired a new Master, Dugin, too, secretly – though in truth visibly – harbours a desire for a new Master, this time a “Multipolar Master.”³² The deconstruction of his discourse reveals that the “American Imaginary” functions as a fantasmatic screen, designed to conceal the constitutive void of which Lacan consistently warned. Instead of negotiating lack through symbolic mediation, reactionary discourse insists that order can be restored by expelling dissonant elements. Yet in Lacanian terms, the

³² Alexander Dugin, *The Theory of a Multipolar World*, Arktos Media, 2021.

operation produces precisely the opposite effect: the more violently the excluded part is forcluded, the more insistently it returns in the form of a terrifying and delirious Real-whether in the guise of conspiracy theories or unrestrained political delirium. This is, tellingly, what Dugin himself names “Psychedelic Trumpism.”

Having deconstructed how Dugin manipulates Lacanian theory, a final question remains: why does he invest so heavily in this specific intellectual tradition at this precise historical moment?

Why Dugin Desires Lacan

To arrive at the final point of this inquiry, it is necessary to analyze the motivations that might underlie Dugin’s decision to wager so insistently on Lacan and his oeuvre. Why must he present himself as a “master” of psychoanalysis, and why does he condition Russian patriotism on a deep understanding of Lacanian theory? In a recent interview, he stated unequivocally: “If you understand Lacan, you can be a thousand times more interesting than Žižek.”³³

This remark betrays a double ambition. On the one hand, it functions as an act of intellectual seduction aimed at Western audiences: to surpass Žižek, the emblematic figure of “popular Lacan”, is to gain direct access to the global stage of critical theory. On the other hand, it reveals an opportunistic calculation: the Western space is not, as Dugin claims, defined by a Lacanian structure. Rather, Lacanian discourse has been institutionalized peripherally through the Ljubljana School (Žižek, Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupančič) and, in a politico-discursive vein, through the Essex School (Laclau, Mouffe, Stavrakakis). Dugin perceives here a breach: these authors have demonstrated the versatility of Lacan’s apparatus for ideological readings, and Western universities, through their centers for cultural studies and discourse analysis, continue to canonize him. Mastery of this code thus affords rapid legitimacy within a field already saturated by competitors.

Lacan also provides precisely the vocabulary through which two of the West’s most vulnerable points can be simultaneously attacked: liberal individualism (through the notion of constitutive lack) and progressive utopianism (through the impossibility of fully traversing the fantasy). Both right-wing and radical-left audiences

³³ δ baudrillard-lacanian, „Aleksandr Dugin: ‘We can be 100 times more interesting than Zizek thru Lacan’ with Bracha Ettinger,” YouTube video, 0:58, July 17, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDcOkruPoDk>. Unfortunately, this fragment is currently the only extant record of the discussion available online; the original full-length video can no longer be retrieved.

are susceptible to these critiques. On this wager, Dugin seeks to perform the role of geopolitical “translator” of the European unconscious, thereby offering Russia symbolic capital to compensate for its politico-economic isolation. In other words, Lacan becomes the pivot through which theoretical soft power is transformed into an instrument of civilizational influence.

Yet the very insistence with which Dugin displays his competence as a “master” of Lacanian reading betrays what Lacan himself described as the irrepressible function of *manque-à-être*. The master is always lacking, sustained by a void that discourse compulsively attempts to fill. The ostentatious exhibition of doctrinal sufficiency, coupled with the reduction of Lacanian registers to rigid identities, does not confer authority but rather reveals intellectual impotence. Dugin fails to internalize the constitutive negativity of the Symbolic and remains ensnared in his own fantasy of mastery – repeating, in effect, the very gesture that Lacan’s thought was designed to deconstruct.

Conclusion

Dugin’s reading transforms psychoanalysis into a static inventory of fixed labels, thereby missing the very wager of Lacanian thought: the production of structural ignorance, the constitutive not-knowing that binds the subject to truth. Rather than entering into the play of this lack, his reactionary interpretation projects negation outward, demanding a new Master to fill the void – an operation that reveals, at the level of discourse, the radical Right’s persistent difficulty in integrating Lacan’s discovery that every identity is fissured from within.

The conservative caricature collapses, however, when measured against Lacan’s intellectual trajectory. After his early flirtation with Maurrasian nationalism, Lacan moved through surrealism, the Marxist Kojévian milieu, engaged with the debates of May ’68, and consistently ironized both progressive utopianisms and the Gaullist order. What emerges is not the glorification of power but the unrelenting dismantling of its fetish. This is the core that reactionary readings cannot domesticate: Lacan exposes the void at the heart of mastery, rendering every Master structurally incomplete. For Dugin, this contradiction is acute. If he wishes to secure an audience in the Western theoretical space already occupied by Žižek, Butler, or Laclau, he must perform a mastery of Lacanian discourse. Yet the very display of such expertise undermines his identitarian premise, for Lacanian discourse destabilizes identity from within. His position, then, becomes symptomatic: Lacan is ushered in through the front door as philosophical guarantor, while reactionary ideology sneaks in through the back, seeking cover under the same signifier.

What this emergent phenomenon ultimately demonstrates is the plasticity of Lacan's corpus. It can be mobilized by the emancipatory Left, by the analytic clinic, and now by reactionary ideologues, because Lacan offers no secure doctrinal position. His work functions instead as an apparatus of displacement: a set of tools with which anyone can do anything, but which simultaneously oblige every user to confront the vertigo of ignorance that accompanies every act of knowledge. To invoke Lacan is always to risk exposing oneself to the void he theorized.

In this sense, the encounter between Lacan and Dugin reaffirms a paradox. The very openness that allows Lacan to be appropriated across ideological divides also guarantees that no appropriation can remain stable. Each attempt – whether from the Left, the clinic, or the reactionary Right – ultimately confronts the same impasse: Lacan cannot be made into a Master without immediately being undone by the lack that sustains him. This is the lesson of Lacanian politics: that power and knowledge are never fully possessed, and that every discourse which claims them must stumble upon the structural impossibility at its core.

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