



Traditionalism and the modern world

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We have had several opportunities to defend traditionalism against ignorant accusers in other reviews published in Oriens (*A commentary about Mark Sedgwick's interview* – Oriens vol. 3, Nb. 3-4, March 2006; *A commentary about "The Spiritual Fascism of René Guénon and His Followers"* – Oriens vol. 3, Nb. 5-8, June 2006). Unfortunately, it becomes more and more noticeable that Mark Sedgwick's book about traditionalism history (sic), with all its errors and misunderstandings, is generating more and more damages and confusions by giving ammunitions to people who have no knowledge about the subject and who are now developing excessive and biased relationships in between traditionalism, and politics or religious fanaticism.

Another of these articles was published online in July 2004, in Tapei Times, and is entitled *Traditionalism harbors a special hate for the modern world*.

The article, just like many of its kind which are openly against traditionalism, is once again taking metaphysical statements out of their context, and is applying them to the secular world. For example, the introduction to the article states that according to traditionalism "the Western world is decadent. Its emphasis on individualism is corrupt. Its materialism is dangerous. Its vision of modernity reflects not progress but regress."

Obviously this might sound horrendous for atheists, or politicians, but this statement is nothing new from a metaphysical point of view, since the goal of spirituality for most religions is to achieve exactly what is stated: distance from the material world in order to develop a true spirituality, less emphasis on the individualism because the ego is an obstacle to a sane spirituality. And obviously the "modern world", which is symbolized by the Western world because of its cult for individuality (the Hollywood syndrome where everybody wants to be Someone, to be original, to be adulated) as well as the ever increasing loss of interest for spirituality, should not be a surprise, from a metaphysical point of view. Yes, the Western world is spiritually decadent. Yes, its emphasis on individualism is corrupt and its materialism dangerous for spirituality. This is a spiritual regression and this is nothing new.

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What becomes dangerous is that the author of this article, Edward Rothstein, adds as “facts” in the same introduction: “The West will destroy itself. But if it doesn’t, its destruction should be helped along. True salvation can be found only by returning to ancient disciplines and beliefs.” And he concludes his article with such nonsense as “Traditionalism declared a war in which modernity itself was the enemy. Only in the total destruction of democratic individualism and liberal humanism could the lost wisdom be restored.”

Such statements really show that the author has never read any of the traditionalist authors, and especially not René Guénon who never said that the destruction of the West should be helped along and that traditionalism declared a war to the West. This is totally ridiculous, and unfortunately the author uses these false statements, and others of similar kind, to support his thesis that traditionalism and Islamic fanatics or fascists share the same goal and ideas.

Traditionnalism, as introduced by René Guénon, is based on the knowledge that at the beginning of times, men were in direct contact with the Divine, and the relationship was expressed through a one-and-only Tradition (with particular rituals, symbolism, ...). *Cyclically*, men gradually regress from their primordial and divine state as they become more and more attracted to individualism and materialism. *Cyclically* the single Tradition becomes a multitude of traditions and religions and nowadays, which corresponds to the end of the cycle or the nadir of humanity, very little remains of the primordial tradition at all, especially in the Western world. However, Tradition, as fragmented as it is, is still present, the remains of which are held alive by an elite of people who keep the flame and transmit it from generation to generation. This is not an elite in a political sense, but in a tribal sense, in the sense of wiser people who protect what they consider very precious from the decadent world (decadent in the spiritual term).

Where is the politics in what we described above, where is the fanaticism, where is the appetite for destruction? Nowhere. Guénon has described our modern world at the end of a cycle. And this corresponds to a law in symbolism: when a world is at its material peak, it is also at its spiritual nadir. That some people misinterpret the symbolism in Guénon’s work for political or fanatical reasons is something that should not be blamed to the author itself but to the ignorance of the readers. Especially readers without any knowledge of esoterism and symbolism, as these elements are key to understand the metaphysics behind Guénon’s work. Sadly, Mark Sedgwick admitted that, as an historian, he is lacking these elements, which gives him the status of outsider with an objective eye. He could not be more wrong.

The Bible saying has never been of such actuality: “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.” [Matthew 7:6]