

In recent years one hears ever more frequently about the crisis of the West, its sickness, its twilight, and even its demise. Some politicians speak of this (eagerly making use of the rhetoric of the coming catastrophe for political gain), as do publicists, artists and teachers, as well as many political scientists, scholars of culture, and philosophers. Conferences, debates and symposia are organised, the goal of which is to throw light upon the symptoms, and propose diagnoses of the lethal causes of the supposedly moribund condition. The West, as a certain defined type of cultural-civilisational formation, as a complex of historically conditioned, characteristic spiritual, moral, creative and socio-political practices (which have a range somewhat beyond the geographical borders of Europe, containing as they do Byzantine and non-western territories) should be – before our eyes – inexorably and finally approaching the exhaustion of its constitutive powers of creation and self-sustenance, simultaneously succumbing to multifarious external threats. Chief among these would be the demographic pressure of the southern peoples and the economic pressure of the mighty economies of Asia and the Far East. Thus the West – it is said – is in decline, as once the Roman Empire, geopolitically and demographically exhausted, spiritually indifferent and militarily and socially exploited to the maximum, fell beneath the blows of wild, yet vital and power-hungry Vandals, Alemanni and Lombards. Of course, this sort of predicting and prophesying is nothing new. It constitutes the repetitive refrain of nearly every reflection on Europe; after all, as early as 1917 Oswald Spengler published his famous *Decline of the West*. And he was not the first. For in the mid-19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche had already mercilessly described the deep crisis of European culture and its pertaining narratives in detail. In their own ways, the other “masters of suspicion” – Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud – pointed to it as well. All of these thinkers – as well as countless numbers of their more or less capable epigones – have argued tirelessly that Western man has undergone a transformation of epochal significance: he has lost faith in himself, in his founding myths and chief virtues, which means that he has exhausted his vitality – at least in the form in which it has appeared heretofore – as well as his ability to form and impose sense and meaning, in short, all that has made him, up until now, reasonable, courageous, creative, expansive and sure of himself. Some of them have stated this truth with unfeigned satisfaction – seeing in the formation of the West the root of all evil or, at least, spiritual mediocrity – others, not without sorrow or deep apprehension concerning the future.

[...]

For the West is beginning to worry about itself, to calculate, retreat, and “abandon” the realisation of its vital goals even where it still possesses the advantage and could achieve them without much

trouble, so preserving the state of its spiritual and material possessions. But the West has begun to doubt in its God, who is the necessary foundation and philosophical support of all its values, power, art, law and customs, as well as knowledge, science, political stability and societal achievements. On the other hand, the instability of cultural bases and the contempt in which they are held, a direct result of their constant relativisation and ferocious, destructive self-criticism, which gives birth to distaste, and even disgust and hatred, constitute already terminal symptoms for the given formation. For no culture which has ceased to believe in itself and its historical mission can endure. An organism which turns against itself, which hates itself, which no longer wishes to live – must die. This process is known as an auto-immunological disease, and leads inexorably to death.

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