

The Crisis of the Modern World



René Guénon

COLLECTED WORKS OF RENÉ GUÉNON

THE CRISIS OF THE MODERN WORLD

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Translators

Marco Pallis
Arthur Osborne
Richard C. Nicholson

SOPHIA PERENNIS

HILLSDALE NY

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For information, address:

Sophia Perennis, P.O. Box 611

Hillsdale NY 12529

sophiaperennis.com

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE PAST CENTURY HAS WITNESSED an erosion of earlier cultural values as well as a blurring of the distinctive characteristics of the world's traditional civilizations, giving rise to philosophic and moral relativism, multiculturalism, and dangerous fundamentalist reactions. As early as the 1920s, the French metaphysician René Guénon (1886–1951) had diagnosed these tendencies and presented what he believed to be the only possible reconciliation of the legitimate, although apparently conflicting, demands of outward religious forms, 'exoterisms', with their essential core, 'esoterism'. His works are characterized by a foundational critique of the modern world coupled with a call for intellectual reform; a renewed examination of metaphysics, the traditional sciences, and symbolism, with special reference to the ultimate unanimity of all spiritual traditions; and finally, a call to the work of spiritual realization. Despite their wide influence, translation of Guénon's works into English has so far been piecemeal. The *Sophia Perennis* edition is intended to fill the urgent need to present them in a more authoritative and systematic form. A complete list of Guénon's works, given in the order of their original publication in French, follows this note.

Though first published in 1927, *The Crisis of the Modern World* bears reprinting unaltered and unannotated at the beginning of this new millenium, for it rests upon principles that stand outside—indeed determine—the conditions of time and space. What few particular illustrative points may be 'dated' will be readily identified and put in perspective by those readers for whom Guénon intended the book. In this very important book, which has become a classic, René Guénon analyzes the crisis of our times from the metaphysical point of view. That is, it is diagnosed not as a degradation of morals, which is a perversion of the will, but as the degradation of knowledge, that is, a perversion of the intellect. Such intellectual analysis of present disorders is not merely a legitimate supplement to the