



East and West

By Rene Guenon

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East and West, first published in 1924, was the fourth of a series of books that cleared the ground for Guénon's later writings. His first book, *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines* (1921), was an exposition of metaphysics as transmitted in the Hindu tradition, and served to establish his specific use of important terms such as 'esoterism', 'tradition', and 'orthodoxy'. He next set about writing two extensive volumes critiquing what he called 'pseudo-esoteric' groups. The first of these, *Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion* (1921), is an exposé of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society; the second, *The Spiritist Fallacy* (1923), examines the current of nineteenth-century spiritism that set the stage for many occult movements that appeared toward the end of that century. Guénon's application of traditional metaphysics to the special case of pseudo-esoteric groups was then broadened in the present book to the general question of East and West as conservators and transmitters of traditional wisdom in the modern age. The titles of its two parts, 'Western Illusions' and 'How the Differences Might be Bridged', describe perfectly the book's intention. Later books, especially *The Crisis of the Modern World* and its magisterial sequel, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, further extended Guénon's penetrating critique of the modern world.

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East and West By Rene Guenon Bibliography

- Rank: #586899 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Sophia Perennis
- Published on: 2004-07-02
- Released on: 2004-07-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .43" w x 6.00" l, .64 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 188 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

René Guénon (1886–1951) was one of the great luminaries of the twentieth century, whose critique of the modern world has stood fast against the shifting sands of intellectual fashion. His extensive writings, now finally available in English, are a providential treasure-trove for the modern seeker: while pointing ceaselessly to the perennial wisdom found in past cultures ranging from the Shamanistic to the Indian and Chinese, the Hellenic and Judaic, the Christian and Islamic, and including also Alchemy, Hermeticism, and other esoteric currents, they direct the reader also to the deepest level of religious praxis, emphasizing the need for affiliation with a revealed tradition even while acknowledging the final identity of all spiritual paths as they approach the summit of spiritual realization. René Guénon, of whom Jacob Needleman wrote in *The Sword of Gnosis* that 'no other modern writer has so effectively communicated the absoluteness of truth,' is gradually being recognized by deeper thinkers as one of the few who have truly penetrated the seductive veil of the modern age. As an expositor of pure metaphysics and its application to the science of symbols, Guénon is without peer; and his extraordinarily prescient critique of the modern world is attracting more and more attention among cultural commentators. Little known in the English-speaking world till the recent appearance of his *Collected Works* in translation, Guénon has nevertheless long been recognized as a veritable criterion of truth by a vanguard of remarkable writers who evince that rare combination: intellectuality and spirituality. After a lonely childhood, often interrupted by ill health, Guénon navigated the seductive half-truths of occultism toward a deeper, unified vision offering a way out from the confusion and fragmentation of our time. Regarded by leading scholars as the first truly authentic interpreter of many Eastern doctrines in the West, Guénon never tired, in face of the seemingly inexorable process of dissolution in the twentieth century, of pointing to the transcendent unity of all religious faiths and the abiding Truth that contains them all.

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