

The end of the Western Civilization?

The Intellectual Journey of Humanity to Adulthood

SERIES IN WORLD HISTORY

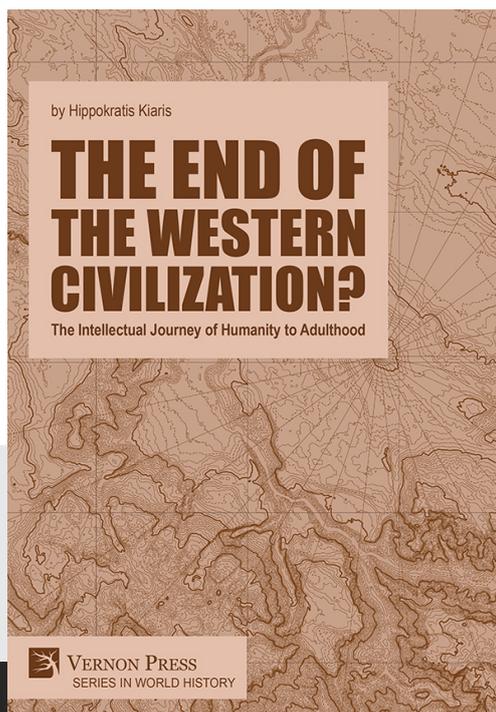
About the editor

Professor Hippokratis Kiaris studied biology at the University of Athens and received his PhD at the University of Crete. After performing postdoctoral research at Tulane and Harvard Universities, he taught at the University of Athens and is now at the University of South Carolina.

Summary

Civilizations can be perceived as living human beings that are born, mature, age, and ultimately die and disappear, passing their legacy to the future generations. These transitions may be projected to the different stages of cognitive development of children. The Western Civilization, which embodies our current state of cultural advancement from the Classic Greek to the modern period, can be paralleled by the gradual transitions of human beings toward adulthood. From this perspective, the ancient Greek era resembles the toddler years of humanity at which the first “why”-type questions are being asked. The theocratic period that followed until the Renaissance can be seen as our childhood, when people lived their lives under the tight boundaries set by religious authorities. The period spanning from the Enlightenment until almost the end of the 20th century can be considered as our teenage years when people rediscover their past, are liberated from superstition, and set the path forward based on reason by a manner at which the distinction between plausible and feasible is vague. Within this scheme, postmodernism also finds its place in our teenhood. The last few decades,

from this perspective, signify our entrance to adulthood at which major questions are considered answered, or at least settled, and the only path forward perceived as feasible is the one that is followed already, a state that is bringing us closer to our intellectual aging and its inevitable death. Some signs of aging-related pathologies are already manifested in today’s technology-intensive society. By identifying our intellectual age and by appreciating our health status, we may be able to proactively delay or even avert our intellectual aging and death.



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