

Chapter 10

Towards the Wise Civilization

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this investigation is to find out whether wise civilization is feasible and if it can exist indefinitely, or at least as long as the strategic resources of the Earth will last. Since Western civilization is the most resource-thirsty, this investigation will be limited mostly to this kind of civilization in the 21st century.

The history of Western civilization will be synthesized from its contribution to wisdom to its sustainability from a civilizational point of view. The alarming messages about this civilization's decline have been increasingly prominent in the last 100 years, despite its amazing progress in science, technology, and food production, as

well as improving the well-being of almost one billion people in developed nations. This kind of conflicting development is due to the nature of world-systems such as capitalism, socialism, and communism. Therefore, they will be synthesized from the point of view of their wisdom for sustaining civilization.

Certainly, through its 6,000 years, civilization elaborated certain laws of development and functioning, namely in mankind's liberation from many kinds of oppression. These laws should be observed in synthesizing wise civilization. Eventually, wise civilization will be defined as a combination of certain kinds of spirituality, society, economy, infrastructure, communication, and so forth.

The feasibility of implementing a wise civilization will be evaluated. Perhaps the probability

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of implementing such civilization is very low, but any better options that humankind has on its “menu” are not known to this author at this time.

THE SIMULTANEOUS GROWTH AND DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Today, Western civilization includes nations practicing Roman-Catholic and Protestant religions. Its roots are in the Classic civilization (Greek-Roman) and its formal beginning is associated with the rise of the Frankish Empire in 800 A.D. Western civilization has many branches or many alternative names, according to some authors. For example, it is also called “Atlantic.” Spengler (1928) uses the term “Faustian.” Coulborn (1959) calls it “European,” Koneczny (1962) calls it “Latin,” Danilevsky (1867, 1920) uses the term “Germano-Roman,” and Gobineau (1852, 1999) calls it “Germano-Roman.” Also some social scientists call it “Occidental” or “Euro-American,” while the majority of scientists calls it “Western,” since “Germano-Roman,” “Faustian,” and “European” seem to be synonymous (Wescott, 2000). Certainly, names of civilizations reflect the practice of applied popular terms in a given time period. Today, the term “Western” is well established and understood by many people the post-World War II. The next war, the Cold War, divided the world into three parts: “Western,” “Eastern,” and the “Rest.” This term was popularized by Toynbee (1939-1961, 1995) and Huntington (1993).

Western civilization is the force that rebuilt Europe after the fall of Rome (fifth century), which took place over the span of 900 years between the fifth and 14th centuries. The first 500 years of these nine centuries are called the Dark Ages. They are characterized by barbarian invaders, superstition, and the straggle for existence. However, Christianity was the force which made a strong effort to minimize that “darkness.” The Renaissance, or period of “rebirth” after the Dark Ages, began its

mission in the 15th century. It hailed the rise of ideal form, found in the works of Michelangelo (1475-1564), Palladio (1508-1580), and Brunelleschi (1377-1446). However, the Renaissance was also a modern age of exploration and invention. Released from the Dark Ages, people began to rebuild and used science and nature to achieve a cultural rebirth. No Renaissance man exemplified the spirit of this era more than Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), scientist, innovator, and artist of world-renowned works such as the Mona Lisa. Also in this period, the role of Copernicus (1473-1543), Pomponazzi (1462-1525), Bruno (1548-1600), Descartes (1596-1650), and Bacon (1561-1626) was to advance civilization at odds with religion.

From the miraculous domed cathedral of Florence to urban palaces and rural villas, the Renaissance captured the new world view that spread from Italy throughout Europe—to English country houses, French chateaux, and German town halls. It chronicled the achievements of the period with its architectural styles, furnishings, fashions, art, designers, and notable buildings. During this time, “ideal” cities and real gardens were invented in the spirit of Leonardo and Michelangelo.

This free and inventive spirit of artists led to the Age of Enlightenment, or simply the Enlightenment, which is a term used to describe a time in Western philosophy and cultural life centered upon the 18th century. Most of the leaders of the Enlightenment were either deists or atheists. During this time, reason was advocated as the primary source and legitimacy for authority. Developing simultaneously in Germany, France, Great Britain, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, the movement spread through much of Europe, including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russia, and Scandinavia, as well as in America. It could be argued that the signatories of the American Declaration of Independence, the United States Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and the Polish-Lithuanian

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