

BOOK REVIEW

THE REIGN OF QUANTITY AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

By René Guénon, “*The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*”, Logos-A, Skopje 2024

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In an age saturated with the endless clamor of progress, where every day promises a new salvific technology and where the measure of income, data, and productivity appears to be the sole metric for understanding the value of things, the publication of René Guénon’s monumental work, “*The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*,” arrives as a profound, radical, and unsettling silence. This is not merely another philosophical volume; it is a metaphysical alarm, a rare testament of an intellect that refused to drift with the current of the age, choosing instead to measure the depth of our fall using the immutable criterion of the Perennial Wisdom (*Sophia Perennis*). For the Albanian public, this 2024 edition by Logos-A is more than a translation; it is the opening of an alternative portal, an invitation to view the world not through the narrow lens of the 20th or 21st centuries, but through the objective of eternal principles that guided traditional civilizations.

The essence of Guénon’s message is simple in principle yet dense in its radical depth: modernity is not the pinnacle of human history, but its most profound and perilous deviation. This is not an observation rooted in a romantic nostalgia for the past, but in a relentless metaphysical analysis. Guénon introduces us to two cardinal categories: **Quality** and **Quantity**.

Quality is the domain of Essence, of the Principle, of the Immovable and Transcendent Reality. It is the foundation of every true tradition, that which bestows meaning upon things and anchors them to their divine Origin. **Quantity**, on the other hand, is the domain of the outer shell, of division, of the material and of numbers. In all traditional societies—from the Hindu and

Buddhist to the Islamic and Medieval Christian—Quality predominated and regulated Quantity. Modernity, as Guénon diagnoses with chilling precision, represents the total inversion of this order. We have constructed a “Reign of Quantity,” where everything is reduced to its lowest, most measurable, and most external element. Spiritual life, art, education, and even human relationships are subjected to the logic of numbers, statistics, efficiency, and material production.

This “solidification” of the world is not a random or unpredictable process. Guénon, drawing from traditional Hindu doctrines, situates it within a vast cyclic cosmology. We are living in the end of the *Kali-Yuga* (the Dark Age), a long historical cycle characterized by a gradual deterioration, the loss of true knowledge, and the triumph of the most banal materialism. The “Signs of the Times” mentioned in the title are precisely the visible symptoms of this cyclic end: the spread of global uniformity (which masquerades as “globalization” but is, in fact, the destruction of all traditional diversities), the replacement of quality with quantity in every sphere, the collapse of true spiritual authorities, and the surge of the “false authorities” of profane science. When Guénon speaks of the “inversion of symbols,” he describes a demonic process in the strict sense of the word: sacred symbols, which traditions used to refer to higher realities, are now utilized to worship lower ones.

The eagle, a universal symbol of spiritual height, becomes a sign of material empires; fire, a symbol of mystic transformation, is reduced to a mere energy source; the very concept of “progress” is an inversion of the spiritual path that leads upward, turning it into a horizontal movement toward a “future” that is, in truth, always further from the Principle.

In this context, Guénon’s critique of modern science is devastating and fundamentally different from other known critiques. He does not accuse science of failing to discover “truth” in its own sense; he accuses it of being a form of knowledge that has focused its attention solely on the domain of quantity, declaring it to be the only reality. “Profane” science, as Guénon termed it, is profane precisely because it is severed from any metaphysical and transcendent source. It studies only the various correlations in the world of the external shell, refusing to inquire about Essence and Purpose. This renders it not “wrong” at its own level, but fundamentally incapable of understanding the true nature of reality and, consequently, dangerous when it seeks to replace all other forms of knowledge. Thus, the myth of “progress” is shattered. What we

call progress—faster technology, greater production, wider communication—is, from a metaphysical perspective, a progression toward degradation. It is the ability to manipulate the world of quantity with ever-increasing efficiency while completely losing any connection to the world of quality, to meaning, and to Truth.

A particularly vital and prophetic aspect of Guénon's work is the phenomenon of the "Counter-Tradition." This phenomenon is not a denial of tradition, but a demonic parody of it. Since man is fundamentally a spiritual being with an unceasing need for the Sacred, when the connection to true Tradition is severed, he seeks replacements. And the forces of the end-times, of the *Kali-Yuga*, offer these substitutes in abundance: political ideologies that demand unshakable faith and sacrifice (a parody of religious faith), new "pseudo-sciences" and New Age movements that offer rapid spiritual "solutions" tailored to the ego, and even new forms of art and music that claim a "ritual" power but are detached from any sacred source. This is "pseudo-spirituality," one of the surest signs of the end of a cycle. Guénon warns us that this is the greatest danger because it deceives people by leading them away from the true solution, making them believe they are finding something higher while they are, in fact, sinking into the lowest.

What relevance does this message, written primarily in the first half of the 20th century, hold for the Albanian reader today? Perhaps more than ever. Albanian society has experienced, over several decades, an accelerated process of "modernization" that represents exactly the transition from an still-traditional way of life (even in its simplified form) into the "Reign of Quantity." The demand for economic development, European integration, and technological adoption often brings with it, unnoticed, an adoption of all the principles that Guénon views as destructive: practical materialism, the cult of quantity, the weakening of traditional family and social structures, and a profound confusion in matters of identity and meaning. Reading Guénon is not an invitation to an unthinking reactionary turn to the past. It is a call for an intellectual return to Principles. This means taking a critical distance from every form of modernity, evaluating it not by its material success, but by its proximity to or distance from the eternal Truth. For a culture like ours, in constant search of self-definition, Guénon offers an unforgettable filter: that which is true, beautiful, and good does not change with the fashions of the time; it is present in

the essence of every true tradition, and our task is to grasp that essence, not to imitate the external forms of a dying modern world.

Guénon's conclusion, though permeated by a sense of great urgency for the times in which we live, is not fatalistic. The cycle of history implies that after a time of total darkness, when the Reign of Quantity has reached its extreme limit of dissolution, there will come a necessary return to Unity and Quality. The return to the Principle is inevitable on a cosmic scale, for reality cannot be permanently based on an error. The message for the individual is one of choice and will: you can choose to remain imprisoned in the "prison" of quantity, feeling free while running along its fortifications, or you can choose to return, with mind and heart, toward the true source of Quality, even if this requires a solitary exit from the great current. "*The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*" is not, therefore, a pessimistic book. It is the book of a true realist, showing us the depth of the crisis to reveal the only way out: upward, toward that which is eternally True, Good, and Beautiful. In this sense, this edition is a precious gift to the Albanian language and a courageous decree from a mind that refuses to bow before the idols of our time.