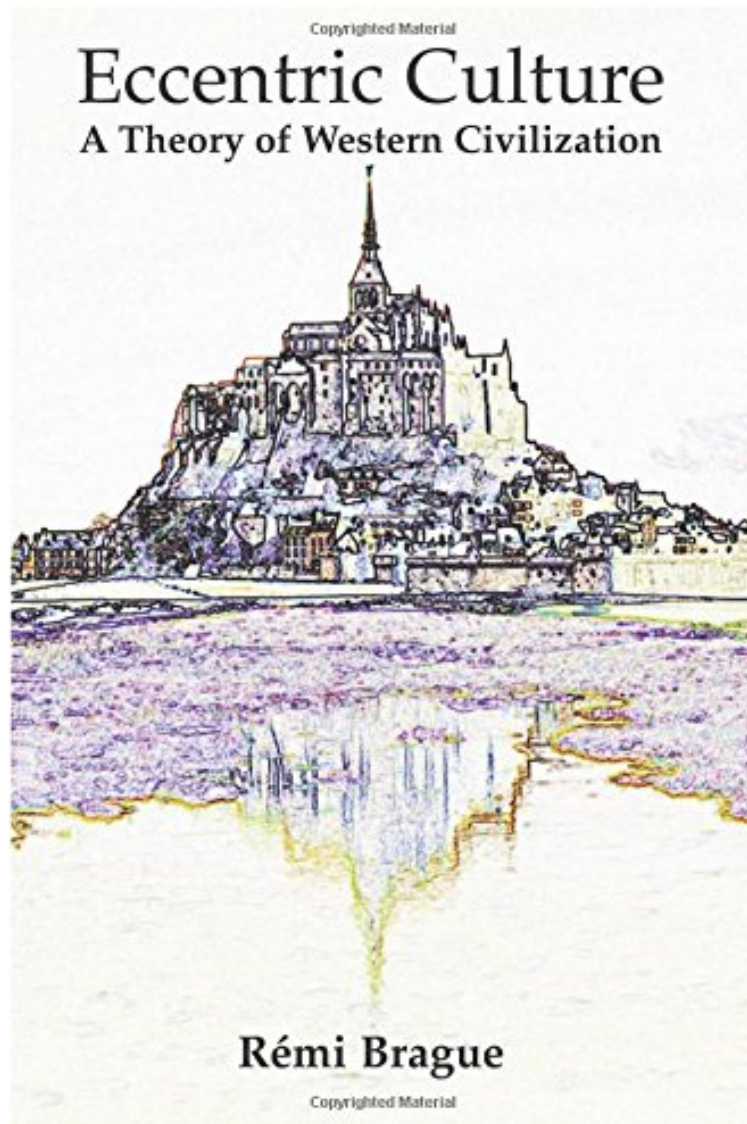


(Free) Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization

# Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization

*Rmi Brague*

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**Rmi Brague : Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization:

28 of 30 people found the following review helpful. Luminous and LucidBy MARGARET PETERBrague's luminous imagination and lucid style (in French) are difficult to match. The book is chock full of original ideas, everyone who reads it will find his mind stimulated; but Brague has also written an indispensable work, a work which fills a gap in western historiography: it nudges our Protestant, Anglo-American, German-dominated historical tradition into coming

to grips with an important and neglected strand of Western culture: the Mediterranean-Catholic contribution which has been out of the mainstream of historical thinking at least since the late 16th century, and triumphantly so since the late 18th century. Whoever is up for an exciting journey of rediscovery, and a more complete and more accurate diagnosis of our contemporary Western world and its future will find this mercifully brief and elegant book indispensable. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. An essential book for any library By Anonymous and loving it Take my word for it: this is an essential book for any library. Why are Europe and the Americas the way they are, culturally, at their best? What is most enduring in what we call The West? Polyglot Brague, a truly original and creative mind, has answers, based on the best evidence, elegantly argued. All of his books and articles have these qualities, so let your purchase of this book be the first of many of his works. 32 of 37 people found the following review helpful. graced secondarity By Andrew P. Porter A very simple thesis, with a lot of rich detail accompanying it. The Latin West has always thought itself secondary in culture, and doubly so: The Romans thought that for culture, you had to go someplace else, namely Greece. And the Christian West, that for religion, you had to go someplace else, namely to the Bible, most of which is from Hebrew sources. The result was a graced secondarity, not a graceless inferiority or an other-ignoring superiority. This is the root of the West's perpetual interest in, and value of, other cultures. The pivotal crisis was in the second century, when the Church decided, against Marcion, to keep the inherited Hebrew scripture in its entirety. The Greek East viewed the Greek literature as its patrimony, and took it for granted. Islam translated what it wanted and ignored the rest, content with its own superiority.

Western culture, which influenced the whole world, came from Europe. But its roots are not there. They are in Athens and Jerusalem. European culture takes its bearing from references that are not in Europe: Europe is eccentric. What makes the West unique? What is the driving force behind its culture? Remi Brague takes up these questions in *Eccentric Culture*. This is not another dictionary of European culture, nor a measure of the contributions of a particular individual, religion, or national tradition. The author's interest is especially, with regard to the transmission of that culture, to articulate the dynamic tension that has propelled Europe and more generally the West toward civilization. It is this mainspring of European culture, this founding principle, that Brague calls Roman. Yet the author's intent is not to write a history of Europe, and less yet to defend the historical reality of the Roman Empire. Brague rather isolates and generalizes one aspect of that history or, one might say, cultural myth, of ancient Rome. The Roman attitude senses its own incompleteness and recognizes the call to borrow from what went before it. Historically, it has led the West to borrow from the great traditions of Jerusalem and Athens: primarily the Jewish and Christian tradition, on the one hand, and the classical Greek tradition on the other. Nowhere does the author find this Roman character so strongly present as in the Christian and particularly Catholic attitude toward the incarnation. At once an appreciation of the richness and diversity of the sources and their fruit, *Eccentric Culture* points as well to the fragility of their nourishing principle. As such, Brague finds in it not only a means of understanding the past, but of projecting a future in (re)proposing to the West, and to Europe in particular, a model relationship of what is proper to it. An international bestseller (translated from the original French edition of *Europe, La Voie Romaine*), this work has been or is presently being translated into thirteen languages.

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