

Modern Civilization: Impressive, but Not Great

Modern civilization is uniquely capable of rebuilding great cathedrals, but it is uniquely incapable of building great cathedrals. It is capable of spectacular recreation, but it is spectacularly incapable of creation. It commands unprecedented resources, but it often uses them in an unprecedentedly unresourceful manner. It is remarkably long on qualitative potential, but remarkably short on qualitative achievement.

In other words, it is an all-purpose tool without a purpose: an embodiment not so much of a tragically necessary tradeoff, but of a tragically wasted opportunity. Thus, what it needs is not will, but discipline, not progress, but direction, not freedom from arbitrary discrimination, but freedom to prudent discrimination, and not unrestricted self-realization, but the unhampered pursuit of virtue.