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The End of the West and Other Cautionary Tales

Sean Meighoo

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Most historical accounts of "the West" take it for granted that the guiding principles of the Western tradition?reason, progress, and freedom?have been passed down directly from ancient Greece to modern Europe, evolving in isolation from all non-Western cultures. Today, many political analysts and cultural critics maintain that the Western tradition is fast approaching its end, for better or worse, as it becomes more and more integrated with non-Western cultures in an increasingly globalized world. But what if we are witnessing something else entirely?not the "end" of the West but rather another historical mutation of the idea of the West itself?

This groundbreaking work shows that whether the West is hailed as the source of all historical progress or scorned as the root of all cultural imperialism, it remains a deeply problematic concept that is intrinsically connected to an ethnocentric view of the world. In a critical reading of the continental philosophers Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida as well as the postcolonial thinkers Said, Mohanty, Bhabha, and Trinh, Sean Meighoo strikes at the intellectual foundations of Western exceptionalism until its ideological supports show through. Deconstructing the concept of the West in his provocative interpretations of Martin Bernal's controversial publication *Black Athena* and the Beatles' second film *Help!*, Meighoo poses a formidable question to philosophers, writers, political analysts, and cultural critics alike: Can we mount an effective critique of Western ethnocentrism without reinforcing the very idea of the West?

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