

NORTH COAST



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'In a dark time the eye begins to see'
~THEODORE ROETHKE

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ONE WORLD FOR ALL

BY MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

"History is just one damned thing after another."

~A. J. P. TAYLOR

Humanity's sly calculation of time might not fit any other world than its own, and even so is a compromise between observation and superstition. This beginning of an early year of the 3rd Millennium of the Xian calendar might be an opportunity to reassess a few perceptions of human reign over our very small crowded planet.

One of the larger misperceptions of our era is that early civilizations and the people who lived in them are archaic and beyond any relevance. We consider them the old, decayed (even decadent) times, vanished into the fog of history and myth. But those were not the old times. They were actually the young times. This is the old time: Earth is getting older, our species is aging, our civilization approaches Alzheimer's.

Our ancient ancestors were not the wintry grayheads we regard of them as. We are the grayheads. They are instead the vigorous youth of *homo sapiens sapiens*, ecstatic, reckless children, wildly avaricious and ruthlessly violent. We ought to think of them — without condescension — as the youthful nursery of our species.

We too often scorn our ancestors as naïve and aboriginal — and we condescendingly regard their epochs as simpler periods compared to our own generations' modernity (actually post-modernity) and sophistication. We forget what they learned for us; nearly everything we know. We are what they bequeathed us, an inseparable thread of maturation as well as deterioration.

We are the old ones, born much later in Earth's age than our predecessors whose brilliant and inspired youth constructed our own golden middle age. For all our technological skill we are enervating beings absorbed only in our own comfort. A species' lazy middle-aged dream of an effortless materialistic paradise. A sign of incipient old age.

(Young people believe they pioneer a new future of galactic cyberspace, but they are later evolutions of Earth, older than everyone else the instant they are born.)

We are at the cusp of a new millennium, a trillennium that already moves as rapidly into its realm of time with the acceleration of a starship. A millennium is an awesome thought when you think about it, and we look into this new one in fearful anticipation, numb from too much change too quickly — we are afraid of the future, not only because our corpses lie somewhere up the timeline, but our dreams of the future are seriously handicapped by a possibility of endless war against phantoms who have very different dreams and are able to strike anywhere at any time to express them — but we are also worried by a grim perception that we have seriously injured our home planet and that most of the familiar guideposts are continually ripped away leaving us perplexed about what is next.

The 20th century lies behind our surge into this new millennium like a huge junkyard, strewn with the rubble of transient significance and memories already becoming fables. Humanity spent the last half of the century in fear of obliteration, and the immense psychological effects are yet to be measured or understood, especially in regard to their effect upon this new century/millennium.

Perhaps a millennium up the line the 20th century might only be remembered as the advent of the Nuclear Age, when the future really began; or for its human representations of darkness and light personified by Hitler and Gandhi; perhaps also for Einstein who changed everything.

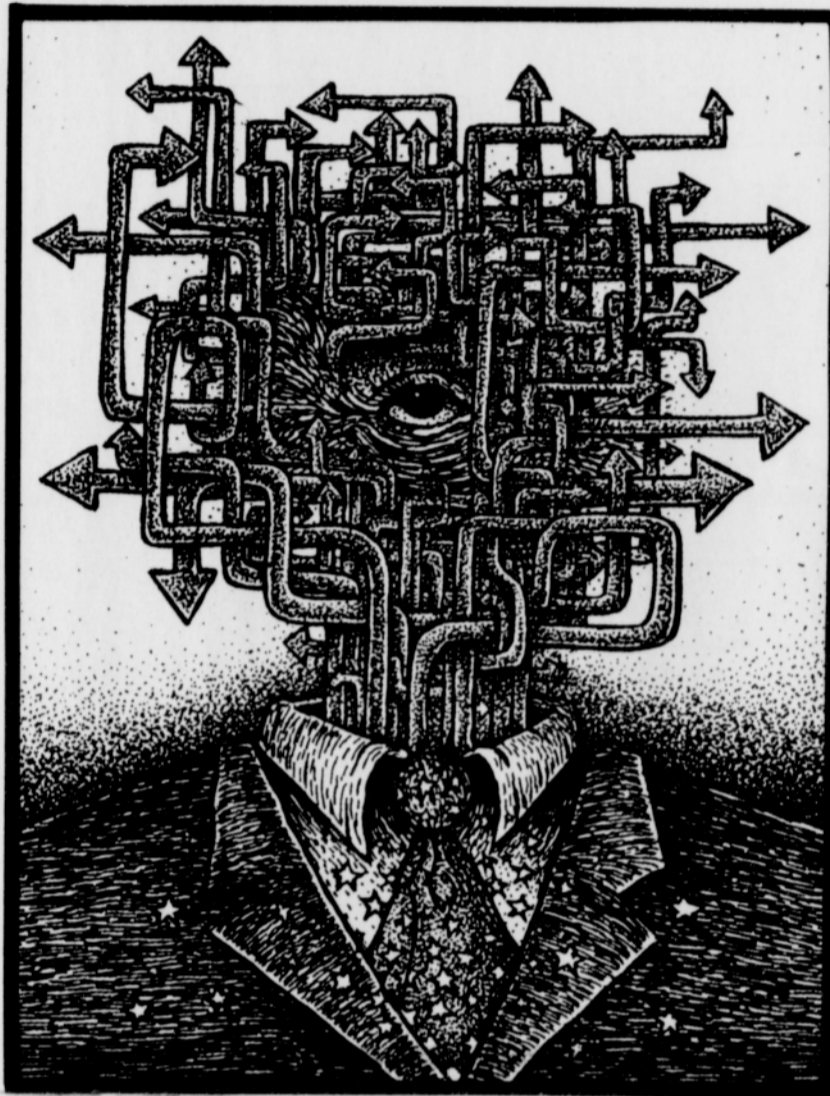
A millennium evokes old prophecies; apocalyptic cults that believe the end is close at hand and flourish to make it likely. The world was scheduled to end at the first millennium of the Xian age with an identical script (as well as scripture) of Armageddon, with the exception we have developed the means to accomplish the abominations ancient prophecy continues to incite. Our collective angst is world suicide brought on by the conflict of our parallel tendencies of piety and murder.

Our past grips the present grimly, wickedly. We feel out of phase; we sense we have lost control or are out of control as we lunge into the new century/millennium with accelerating velocity. We instinctively resist change even as we promulgate it. Change percolates chaos.

Our fear is that we are being forcibly propelled into an unknown future in which we will only recognize ourselves opaquely, moving through an indistinct environment. A future worldwide civilization of colossal promise and terror is projected. Gene splitting, recombinant DNA, invented and patented lifeforms — these human tamperings with the secrets of life frighten the majority of us more than the continuing possibility of obliteration.

We live at present in an age of intellectual reversion, of savage descent into public ignorance and intolerance, which are generally present but not often given the forum or respect of recent years. We pay serious, nearly morbid attention to the pathological pieties and simplifications of religious zealots who act at the extreme edge of our anxieties and reduce the national dialogue to a medieval level reminiscent of witchburnings.

Although we are inclined to measure progress through technical achievement, it should be as important to concentrate on the contradictory evolution of political liberty and the slow development of a world civilization. Marx anticipated such a



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civilization in the 19th century and the two World Wars of the 20th century made it impossible to resist. Nuclear power, the fortress of nationalism, has rendered it obsolete.

The contradiction lies with the rights and liberties of individuals and minorities, and with former colonies and subject nations that have been released from foreign dominance and reassert their claims as separate and independent peoples while genociding themselves with ancient feuds and virulent ethnic cleansing.

Another contradiction is that a very few powerful persons and corporations wish to rule the world in much the manner earlier dictators, fascists and communists dreamed of doing. International class war is replacing nationalism, and it first real aspect is the war on terrorism conducted by the Xian West against the Islamic East.

The designer 'New World Order' is a direct schism between the rich and the poor. The two party system in the United States reflects this class war. Two political parties don't represent the people of the country any more than Congress, the White House or Wall Street. Talk of forming third and fourth parties are predicated on the assumption that a two party system actually exists. Instead it is one big party with two heads. The true second party is made of the disenfranchised who seldom take part in the political process and generally don't vote because they don't believe it has any effect. The only real political parties in the U.S. are the "Rich Party" and the "Poor Party."

The raw excesses of corporate capitalism in its quest to dominate world trade and commerce since the end of the Cold War — represented by the empirical rise of the USA — are under siege, however, by a mounting turbulence caused by intense pressure from below, the bottom of the resources trickle-down, which is uniting the majority of overcrowded humanity that struggles for a decent living on the planet. This upheaval collates every previous civil rights and working class struggle and might very well readjust the center of power and pioneer the first true universally human community in its long evolution.

The major barrier to that universal community is the United States, which consistently declares itself the only form of government capable of uniting the world's peoples into an umbrella democracy of its own form — paradoxically at the very moment that democracy is in serious decline in the homeland.

The United States has evolved to world supremacy in two centuries since its Revolution, which has been the ambition all along despite fearful and protective tendencies toward isolation. A history of the USA is not entirely an evolution of democracy but more essentially its rise as a superpower.

The two World Wars of the 20th century made the USA a superpower during which it built a war machine unsurpassed in history while demonstrating a productive capacity that overwhelmed allies and enemies alike. This nation was created by war, maintained its union by war, became a continental power by decimating native peoples and invading its southern neighbor and stripping it of its northern half; and became a world power by terminating the decrepit colonial empire of another.

The United States is among history's most successful militant societies and now dominates global politics with its immense and highly sophisticated potential for total war as the only reigning superpower after emerging the victor of a half-century Cold War against communist Russia, which was characterized by inconclusive brushfire wars and a horrendous nuclear arms race that economically and politically broke its

competitor but seriously injured its own economies and ideologies.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent disappearance of communism from major regions of the world has significantly reduced the options and bargaining power of so-called third world nations. The end of the Cold War and Soviet communism gave the industrial northwestern part of the world tremendous power to reshape the politics and economies of the southern and eastern areas. A major consequence has been that the USA, the world's remaining superpower, has been able to act aggressively with impunity in these parts of the world without the threat of Soviet counteraction as prevailed for nearly half a century.

America flexed its massive military might in Iraq in a preemptive invasion last year and stampeded over a weak and bloodied opponent (soft-ened up by a decade of punishing airstrikes on Iraq's military infrastructure), watched by a worldwide television audience that was in general disagreement with the war.

The U.S. reached back into its history to win the initial stages of the two-part war, to Grant's axiom of hitting first with the mostest (Voltaire said that "God is always on the side of the big battalions"). The war has put the world on notice: although America's position on the international market is weak, with domestic recession and mismanagement of the economy that has produced a whopping national deficit, the USA's military potency is unmatched and is willing and capable to send in the troops anywhere in the world at any real or perceived provocation, or arrogantly for no discernible reason except the desire to do so.

The new realities of world commerce have adversely affected American labor; real work has been transferred overseas as corporate domination moves like a cancer through American culture. The country is governed by a counsel of merchants similar to medieval Venice with the exception of a comic charade of outer layer political marionettes. Cheaper labor and manufacturing costs in third world nations not only add to an imbalance of trade but considerably shrink the jobs of American workers as the U.S. shifts from a producer nation to a global headquarters complex in which computer programmers, accounts clerks and stock brokers are more important to the economy than steelworkers or farmers.

The foundations of the modern interdependent world economy were laid in the late 19th century with business cartels dominating the international trade in raw materials through colonizing most of the third world and infusing billions of dollars into foreign capital investment, primarily in Eastern Europe (by Western Europe), North America and European colonies. The two new great industrial powers in 1900 were Germany and the United States.

The USA started the 20th century by inheriting as a result of a brief triumphant war the remaining vestiges of moribund Spain's deteriorated empire and became overnight a world power — except that its new empire was situated on islands rather than mainlands. The real power the United States developed over the century was through neo-colonialism — dominance by proxy control of foreign economies, industries, politicians and generals with coercion matched by corruption instead of occupation and colonial ministries.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was an outcome of the collapse of the inflated American stock market and caused worldwide financial ruin, dried up international trade and created mass unemployment: 12 million in the United States alone by 1932. Franklin Roosevelt won the Presidential election that year with his promise of a 'New Deal' to end the Depression and set in motion reforms and economic stimulation, including protection of labor unions for the first time and wage and hour laws — all of which are under intense assault by the combined Reagan/Bushes Sr. & Jr. administrations. Social Security was initiated by FDR (presently in danger of being thoroughly looted) and public works programs were revitalized on a massive scale — huge dams, rural electrification projects, CCC programs, aid to small farmers — but ultimately accelerated military spending and the advent of World War 2 ended the Depression.

The burden of destroying Nazi Germany fell primarily upon capitalist America and communist Russia. Essentially the U.S. provided the material and Russia the man/womanpower; after the war these *novaeu* superpowers polarized the world into nuclear-armed camps separated by an infamous "Iron Curtain," which symbolized their fierce competition for supremacy.

One year short of its platinum anniversary, Bolshevik communism disintegrated into ruin and chaos. Once hoped to be the essential revolution of the masses against the long history of repression, Bolshevism quickly developed into a monstrously cruel and eventually stagnant system that simply fell apart from the mendacious inertia of its own history. The vast empire of Russian "republics" and east European satellites collapsed into bitter splinters of ancient hatreds as around the world communism was simultaneously rejected as a successor to colonialism and as the structure and ideology of newly enfranchised governments. Instead of seizing the future and proclaiming a "new Man" through world revolution, communism swiftly diminished as a relic of the past into the 'dustbin of history', the god that both failed and died.

Which has left the United States as the world's only superpower at the beginning of the 21st century. The deceit that capitalism and democracy are intertwined quickly came apart following communism's collapse. The result is that the USA has failed to show itself to the world as a true democracy, corrupting its real manifest destiny with the decrepit quest for empire, much to the disgust and discouragement of the rest of the world.