

How Bad Will The Future Really Be?

Our media make the world out to be a terrible place. It s not. We need to find what s good. The future can be better too if we know what to do..

Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present.

- Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, nicknamed "the wise" Roman Emperor, (121 CE - 180 CE)

An emperor of Rome, indeed the leader of any country up to modern times, would need to be sanguine about the future because the chances of his having his head detached from the rest of his body before that body was worn out stood exceedingly high.

What about old Julius? He certainly couldn't have used all of his weapons of reason when he allowed his formerly trusted ally Brutus and his gang to slay him. Actually, he likely did. To the best of his ability.

Julius was a very ill man, suffering from a great deal of pain and loss of his abilities of perception due to disease at the time of his death. It's entirely possible that he did the equivalent of falling on his sword, just to put himself out of misery. He knew he was too sick to rule Rome, to give it his best. Yet his honour forbade him from committing suicide, even if it be for the good of Rome. It's highly likely that he knew what was about to happen when he met privately with his "enemies."

In other words, we now know that Julius Caesar likely used the best of his mental faculties to do what was best for both himself and for Rome. History hasn't recorded the event of his death that way, but history has a way of relating what its teller wants to the story to be.

Marcus Aurelius must also have used his abundant mental faculties during his almost two decades as emperor of Rome (actually king, as Rome did not call anyone an emperor). His reign was the ultimate example of *Pax Romana* and his death brought turmoil as to who should lead the greatest empire the world had known until then (later the British Empire was greatest in history, covering one-quarter of our planet's surface at one time).

Though Christians were still persecuted in his time in theory, in practice they seldom were. Rome (undoubtedly a brutal regime in many ways, though hardly the worst in history) really was fairly peaceful during Marcus's reign. It would have required considerable weapons of reason to make peace so effectively that the period was given its own name.

So we turn to ourselves. Every media outlet in the western world and most in other parts of the world report almost daily about how bad conditions are in the world. I have heard many young people from North America say that they don't plan to have children because the world is just getting worse and they couldn't in all good conscience bring children into such tragedy.

The world must be getting worse, just listen to our media tell us. But it's not so.

No point in history has ever been so peaceful, with such a great percentage of people living long lives, healthier than their ancestors, in human history. The media always tell us that the world is a terrible place and leave us to conclude that the future will surely be worse. Neither is true.

Even during the dreaded Holocaust, when millions of Jews, cripples, people with much lower than average intelligence and people who simply pissed off the Germans were being exterminated, good things were happening elsewhere in the world. In the west, women who worked necessary jobs in factories earned a decent living and started a movement for equal rights for women that is still going on today. The Jews that survived got a country of their own a few years after the war, something they had not been able to accomplish for themselves for the previous 3000 years. The powers of the world came together as never before to defeat evil.

Just as Marcus Aurelius said that we will face the future as it comes to us with the same weapons of reason that we use today, we must use the weapons of reason we have available to us today. Or we will make the world a worse

place to live, unsafe, unhealthy, unlivable for our children and grandchildren.

Our weapons of reason that help us to cope with today must make us realize that good things are happening in the world each day, even we if don't read about them. We must reason that just because our media report almost exclusively bad news does not mean that the world itself is getting worse. They just report what many people want to hear. Paris Hilton makes the news when she sneezes (and maybe her dress has a "wardrobe malfunction"), but we hear nothing about the millions of good people around the world and in our own communities who are doing good deeds and making good things happen every day.

It's important that we heed Marcus Aurelius's advice about the future. It won't be as bad as the fear mongers want us to believe (they make their living scaring people, remember, rather than getting "real" jobs). And the present isn't as bad as almost every source of information we have make it out to be.

We need to use our weapons of reason every day of our life, not just about the future. The more we refuse to find out information about what is really going on in the world and decline to use our powers of reason when we learn it, the worse the world will become and the worse our own lives will become.

Not learning and not thinking is what will make the world really worse. Bad guys can easily manipulate the thinking and voting of people who are ignorant and who don't want to think for themselves, who depend on others to think and to tell them what to think and believe.

We have the power within us, even those of us with the poorest of education and the most dire of backgrounds. It doesn't cost a thing to use it. We just have to try.

Bill Allin

Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, a guidebook for parents and teachers who want to grow children who can think for themselves about subjects other than the limited ones taught in schools.

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