

# It's the end of the world and I don't feel fine

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2004

“Not only religious zealots but economists, social theorists, technologists, nuclear critics, population experts, ecologists and political ideologues agree that an unprecedented shift in man's world—whether catastrophic or beatific—is inevitable within the next half-century.”

—Richard Heinberg, *Memories and Visions of Paradise*

Deeply troubled by the threat of nuclear war, I used to justify self-centered, adventurist spontaneity on the notion that the world was going to end soon, so why not go down drinking, drugging, dancing, tramping, and fucking.

With humanity recklessly facilitating self-destruction, I sometimes sympathize with Tool lyricist Maynard James Keenan when he howls,

“Some say the end is near  
Some say we'll see armageddon soon  
I certainly hope we will  
cuz I sure could use a vacation  
from this silly shit, stupid shit...  
One great big festering neon distraction.”

I also feel folkster David Rovics when he sings,

“While they sit in their mansions  
On their plush leather chairs  
And everyone's waiting  
For us to decide  
From dust we were born  
And in dust we reside  
Will we realize the commons  
Is to shepherd and share  
Here in this war zone  
Called land, water and air  
Yes I'm talking to you  
From here at the end of the world.”

From millenarian Christians to eco-survivalist anarchists, people everywhere are anticipating the apocalypse. From the Greens' warnings about global warming to New Age prophecies about the Mayan calendar and a paradigm shift to pop culture's crude capitalizing on critical fears with films as wide-ranging as "Armageddon" or "The Day After Tomorrow" to thought-provoking theories dealing with everything from the science of extinction and the earth's carrying capacity to paranoid conspiracy to fundamentalist fantasies about a final showdown in the Middle East, the End Times are in the air.

Will the neoconservative born-again boldly engineer a nuclear rapture or will the revolution arrive when the last WalMart is wiped out by a natural disaster?

Some radicals see the presumptions of this debate as inherently faith-based and inflexible while others welcome the possibility of impending ecological and political doom as an opportunity to break with the even more calamitous status quo.

Writing in his 'zine *Willful Disobedience*, Wolfi Landstreicher thinks that this fashionable apocalypse talk is terribly reactionary. In the essay "Waiting for the Apocalypse: The Ideology of Collapse and the Avoidance of Revolutionary Responsibility," Wolfi takes on the primitivists who plan for the end.

He asserts, "Those who hold to any apocalyptic view may look upon the coming end with either hope or despair, and this is true of the ideology of collapse as well. Some of the anarchoprimitivists who adhere to this belief look at the collapse as a great opportunity for reinventing primitive ways of living free of the institutions of civilization. A few even seem to take delight in the suffering and death that would inevitably accompany such a collapse, apparently forgetting that this suffering and death would not be likely to recognize distinctions between rulers and ruled, between domesticated and wild, between civilized and 'primitive.'" Wolfi believes that such notions of inevitability excuse anarchists from taking any responsibility for revolutionary action.

The editors of the CrimethInc. journal *Harbinger* look at the likelihood of a disaster differently. In their typically charged prose, the Crimethinkians court calamity. It's not that they support suffering, but where others see doom and gloom, they see the dawn of a new day. "The free, the fearless," they write, "ready to live and all too aware of what is insufferable in the everyday, welcome new horizons, disasters included." These post-Situ punk poets have a point—if the catastrophe is coming for certain ("any environmental scientist can tell you that," they quip), shouldn't we find ways to make the unavoidable change into a revolutionary challenge?

But is the end of the world as we know it sheer inevitability? Are prophecies and predictions a form of prone submission to the tyranny of fear? Do radical subjects resisting the industrial machine have any hope of halting the hideous intentions of Capital's incompetent engineers? Will we emerge from the wreckage freer and less domesticated than we are today? Do our dreams of sustainability stand a chance against a pending holocaust bound to make Dachau look like a day in the park?

As far as my analysis goes, neither the brash denial of such horrible possibilities nor the dire bravado that welcomes the last days like a new video game seem appropriate. Like many, I believe that something big and bad is coming and that we should prepare emotionally, spiritually, ecologically, socially, and politically for a drastically different way of life. But I further recognize that faith and fear about the future should be balanced by a revolutionary politics for the present. People living today were born for this confrontation with history. Will we face up to the task?

# fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #365, Summer, 2004

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