



Some Thoughts On 1999 For The Useless And Stupid

By Gil Merritt

Well folks, it's 1999! Time to die!

I hate to bring you down like that, but it's no secret that come 2000 a great catastrophe could strike. It's a threat of global proportions that may forever change the way we live our lives. Millions of people are stockpiling years' worth of supplies in hope of surviving this danger. It is, of course, the imminent presidency of Hulk Hogan.

Yes, I agree that seeing Elizabeth Dole and Al Gore get blasted with a folding chair during the debates would indeed be hilarious, but before you vote for him, remember that Hulk's name is a trademark of Marvel Comics. Giving Stan Lee the copyright to the Presidency would suck on wheels.

And speaking of things that suck, we can't enjoy *Space:1999* anymore, because the sad and sickening fraud that underlies the show is all too clear. The age has arrived and we have neither laser rifles nor alien beasts; just a meager handful of cloned sheep. Never before has our nation, weaned on honesty and integrity, been rattled to the center of its foundation by so hollow and soulless a lie. Okay, there was that worldwide book burning by millions of George Orwell fans, irate that Big Brother or somebody didn't show up about a dozen or so years back...

Sorry for being silly. The truth is, we have a lot to worry about. First of all, where are we going to hide all the Jews?

Totally true: inside the 1998 year-end issue of *Esquire* is an engaging little article about Pat Robertson's Y2K conference (yes, Pat Robertson held a Y2K conference) and at this conference was a Christian woman who sympathized with the um, plight of the Jews. "How are we going to get them back to Israel before Christ reappears in the um, United States?" She suggested a method similar to the "Underground Railroad or Alaskan Pipeline" (yes, that famous pipeline stretching from Alaska across the States to

Israel.) By making a spare bedroom in your house, you yourself can hide your very own Jew. According to this woman, she knows of people who are doing this so Jesus apparently won't keel over in disgust when He returns from wherever He's been. Just keep the whole thing hush-hush, because anyone caught hiding them will be struck down along with their Jew. Jesus may have loved everyone, but He still needs to know which places on Earth to avoid.

I'm just awestruck over the fact that God's own followers are presumably trying to put one over on His Son! What, Jesus knows about the pot in your 13-year-old's sock drawer but He gets all confused when people drag lumber and tools into the house? God instantly pegs Cain as a murderer[§] but He can't

[§]: Okay, there were only four people around at the time, and it probably didn't take a lot of omnipotence to realize that the one who WASN'T crying was guilty...





**Gracies
Dinnertime
Theatre™**

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PUBLISHER: C. Diablo

EDITORS:

Matthew Weaver
Jeremiah Parry-Hill
Giles Francis Hall
Adam Fletcher

LAYOUT:

Adam Fletcher
Jeremiah Parry-Hill

WRITERS:

Gil Merritt
Sean Hammond
Howard Hao
Pat Fleckenstein

ILLUSTRATOR:

Gil Merritt

CARTOONISTS:

Gil Merritt
John Holt

*All material copyright 1998
Gracies Dinnertime Theatre and
the respective authors.*

Deadline for submissions is
2pm on the Saturday before
publication. Submissions
should be emailed to:
gdt@hellskitchen.org

Or mailed to:
**Gracies Dinnertime Theatre
c/o Hell's Kitchen
472 French Road
Rochester, NY 14618**

detect the can of matzo ball soup at the bottom of the shopping bag you so carefully hid under the Doritos and Wonder Bread? Hello!

[POUND POUND POUND] "MY PEOPLE, WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE?"

"Uhh...nothing, God!!!"

Second, there's the legendary Third Incarnation of the Antichrist hanging over our heads. Well, not OUR heads, just yours. See, we here at Hell's Kitchen don't fear Satan's arrival on Earth, thank you. We're concerned about far more pressing matters, like when C'Thulhu rises from the sea to hand humanity its ass. I mean, C'Thulhu's got like 400 hit points, for cryin' out loud. Still, I wish we'd find this Third Antichrist already so Nostradamus' ardent followers would shut the hell up.

Well, somebody else can find him. I saw "The Omen" enough times to know that putting two and two together with demonic secret identities only gets your head chopped off by big honking panes of glass. Studies show that those best suited for decapitation by runaway inanimate objects are people who are useless and stupid. Enter Jerry Falwell. As expected with the useless and stupid, the Rev' admitted that he doesn't know who the Antichrist will be. Gee Jer', you keep up with the Trinity Broadcasting Network, don't you? Then you KNOW it's got to be a celebrity!

Watch as much TBN as I have[£] and you'll learn that their conception of the Devil is that of a very arrogant and direct sumbitch, obsessed with drawing attention to his activities on Earth. Satan is more fascinated with getting young people to behave irresponsibly than enticing powerful people to establish him a counterfeit empire. Why? Apparently the TBN needed their eternal adversary to get whapped easily. Ergo, you can burn a heavy metal album but you can't fight City Hall.^µ This is why Metallica are agents of Satan but Bill Gates and Michael Eisner aren't. Which is weird; who hasn't wanted to burn Windows or set Mickey ablaze?

At least Nostradamus' fans are a little more accurate in their hunt. Their eyes glued to cable TV, they scope out every CNN Madman Of The Week, mentally comparing each one to Napoleon and Hitler...geez, between them and the TBN, we've got like twelve Antichrists running around. That's enough to make a basketball Dream Team. "Hussein would take center

£: Hey, it's funnier than Comedy Central.

µ: However, you can teem it to overflowing with homophobic shitheels.

court, with Qadafi and Marilyn Manson on offense; bin Laden would cover D..."

Until recently, my choice for the Antichrist was Puff Daddy. C'mon, he drags Sting kicking and screaming into a half-assed "tribute song," mumbles the damn thing as opposed to actually rapping (and as proven by Teletubbies, gibberish is Satanic)...and thanks God for his fame and success?! "Thank you God, for making sure that The Notorious B.I.G. was shot through the heart, otherwise I'd still be running coffee for Snoop Doggy Dogg..."

But don't worry all you Puffy fans, because I'm wrong. Falwell dropped another unexpected bombshell about the Antichrist, and he will be "male and Jewish." That's not fair! I don't care if he is the Deceiver Of All Mankind, I STILL LIKE Gilbert Gottfried! But then again, it could be WCW champion Goldberg (Okay, then YOU explain that undefeated streak of his!) or even better, Jerry "Jailbait Was Fun, Now Howzabout Some Multiple Adultery" Seinfeld...

Wait a minute! Does that mean the Antichrist is currently being stashed in a spare bedroom by sneaky Christians, ignorant of his true identity, yet still trying to smuggle him to Israel? Gah! How are they gonna explain THAT one to The Man Upstairs?

"WHY DIDN'T YOU WATCH "THE OMEN" WITH EVERYBODY ELSE?"

Feh. Apocalypse, Shmocalypse. Dinosaurs were on Earth for 200 million years, and we've been around for what, half of that?

However, the year 2000 is almost here and as a culture we still have a lot to do before the 21st Century arrives. Look at what we've accomplished in almost 1000 years... scratch that, look at what we've done in just over 100! The factory! The computer! The bigger firearms! The mil-



lions of species rendered extinct! Impressive!

So with one year left, this is our final checklist of Things For Mankind To Do, so we can start with a fresh slate on January 1st. Be warned, for some of these accomplishments are sort of out there, in as much they may suggest that a big hairy Apocalypse is on the way. But for now, forget about the Y2K bug and concentrate on these:

1) Capturing the Loch Ness Monster. We don't have to capture Bigfoot, because everybody's seen him. And forget about the Abominable Snowman, since his life was claimed in an X-Treme Sports Event when

some multi-neon colored schmuck accidentally beheaded him while biking down Mount Everest. ESPN2 did air the tragedy, and don't worry, there was a silly sound effect played at the impact.

2) Putting a man on Mars. Maybe John Glenn. That way, we'd give a shit.

3) Creating a Satanic country-western band. I don't mean "rockabilly," I mean Merle friggin' Haggard and the Dixie Chicks crooning "Lucifer, O Lucifer" to a goat's head live on stage at the Grand Ole Opry. Look, I'm not actually going to BUY this type of music. It's just vitally important that we have all musical genres covered.

4) Gathering every man, woman and child on earth together regardless of race, creed or religion and lining up as one united, loving consciousness so we can gag and bind Bob Saget and, one at a time, kick him in the testicles.

5) Coercing Mike Wallace of 60 Minutes to interrupt his news report so he can jump up on his chair and rip off his suit to reveal a Wonder Woman costume and sing and dance to the theme "Wonder Wo-MAAAAAAN!!!" Wait, I'm sorry, I got that one out of my system a long time ago...^ß

What am I going to do before 2000? Oh the usual... find a job, work on getting Perky and Slick syndicated, dream of having my very own B-movie on the rack in a video store, and also wonder and contemplate the next step of evolution. Are we truly the final step? What life form is going to transcend man? What will we evolve into? Yeah, it's sacrilegious, but it sure beats the hell out of wondering how we're all going to DIE...

ß: No, you REALLY don't want to know.



Howard's Happy Hour

By Howard Hao

Them Signs

"Sensible Salting Require
Sensible Driving"

States nocturnally lustrous
Bloodless and lime alloy
Road signs posted at specific
Strategic locations.
What a laugh; what salt?

Winter Snowstorm

I'm certain we've all had just
About enough of the winter snow.
The slippery driving, the crummy
Walking conditions—it is quite
A mess!

Wine Tasting

Inexperience shows profoundly
As the Master experiences hints
Of mint, berries, chocolate even
Whereas I note only fermented
Grapes and the pungent odor
Of fermentation and wood. One
Thing we both agree on...
It's a great red wine.

Contraband

Not exactly illegal
But not exactly Kosher
Is the contraband
Looted and contained
Within these very walls

19990120

Pat Fleckenstein

Oi. It's been over a month since I've written here. It's not like I'm short on topics for which I wish to proselytize. All of my writing efforts this month have been directed toward my long-distance love. But, I shall try to hammer out one of the other topics today with whatever portion of my muse is leftover. If I thought for a second that you were compelled to read this, I'd probably back off now. But, since I believe in your ability to choose for yourself, it's your own damn fault if you get the whole way to the end and feel you've wasted your time.

I was going to write about "value" today-- economic value, social value, etc. But, I think I'm going to move it up a level from there. I want to spew for a bit about emergent properties of large systems. "Value" is one such property. It will make a good starting point.

I recently read a Jewish folktale that speaks to this "problem" rather well. Two brothers were in travel. They were off to deliver a cask of wine to a wedding. On the road, one of the brothers became thirsty. He fished around in his pockets and found a single gold coin. He offered it to his brother in exchange for a cup of wine. The brother obliged. But, now, the brother was thirsty as well. He fished around in his pockets and found only the single gold coin his brother had just given him. He offered it to his brother in exchange for a cup of wine. By the time they reached the wedding, the cask was half empty, the brothers were both very drunk, and they still only had one gold coin between them.

That story underlines my big problem with "economic value". Every time I try to define some system where someone could actually make money that other people

aren't losing, I fall into a constructivist quagmire. These two drunken brothers are a micro-economy. If we added a third person into the mix, the end-result would not be much different. Everything is zero-sum. Any time one person receives the gold coin, it is necessary that someone else relinquished the gold coin. Adding a fourth person does nothing to change the situation. In fact, adding any number of people or any number of gold coins does not change the situation in my mind at all.

I have even tried various models where alliances are allowed or prices wouldn't have to be the same for each customer. I still can't get around the fact that there's a fixed amount of money. The only way to generate more money is for some money-making authority (or counterfeiter) to decree that there is more money. But, how do they have that authority? Is "economic value" that flimsy a concept that some group can come along and say "there's more of it now" and *poof*?

"The apparent intelligence and sentience of humans is a measure of the disorder of the system..."

Things get even more flaky when it comes to the stock market. There, the "economic value" of something is solely what one is willing to pay for it. There, people trade things back and forth. The transactions are largely transfers from one person to another with commissions being doled out to the brokers. Now, it's clear to me that if I have 1000 red jellybeans and you have 1000 green jellybeans, if you and I trade a bunch of jellybeans back and forth through brokers who eat 10% of each transaction, either you or I or both are going to end the year with significantly fewer than 1000 jellybeans. How can this be beneficial to society? How can this be worth it? I have no idea.

Here's another place that I run into this constructivist quagmire---consciousness. Which synapse breaks the camel's back? I can't imagine that a single brain

cell is sentient. I can't imagine that adding a second brain cell improves the matter tremendously. I can't imagine that adding a single brain cell to a cluster of any number of brain cells would cross some boundary into sentience. How does it all happen?

Another place I run into this constructivist quagmire is when I'm trying to think about how mirrors work. I mean, if you think about it as photons hitting a surface of atoms, what do you get? You get these photons being absorbed by electrons in the atoms. You get these electrons bumped up to a higher energy state where they're a bit unstable. You get these electrons bumping back down to lower energy states and emitting photons. But, somehow, on the macroscopic level, the angle of incidence still equals the angle of reflection. What's up with that, Pike?

In the case of the mirror, the answer is simple, right? The answer is that I can't think of light as a particle. I have to think of light as a wave. I have to think of that photon probabilistically hitting all of the atoms along the mirror's surface and probabilistically reflecting off of that surface and all of these things conspire to make the light reflect off at basically the same color at basically the same angle. Sure, that's easy enough to say. But, the whole wave-particle duality doesn't always sit well with my

classical brain. This is especially true when, in my more lucid moments, I realize that it isn't so much a wave of light, but a wave of probability that is bouncing off of the "surface".

And, maybe that's the economic answer as well. Maybe there are complex integrations of all of the possible paths economic photons could take through the system. And, maybe economic value's apparent growth is simply some measurement that masks all of those paths. And, maybe intelligence is just some measurement that masks complex integrations over all of the possible paths that neural photons could take through the system. But, most quantities that I'm familiar with in physics are conserved. The only one that jumps to mind which isn't is entropy. And, that says a lot about intelligence and economic value to me. The apparent intelligence and sentience of humans is a measure of the disorder of the system. The total value of the economy is akin to a measure of the disorder of a system. Maybe I can't think of intelligence or economic value as a particle. Maybe I have to think of it as a wave---a wave of probability.

Coming soon... a grand unified theory base upon $h = p \log(p)$. Wheee....
until again,
pat



Cult Corner

by Sean T. Hammond



hip me. Beat me. Make me bleed. This week, we take a look at those zany flagellants. Though the various flagellant movements never cooked up any really interesting heresies, any group of people that whipped the be-jeebers out of themselves in a sadomasochistic ecstasy is worth a peek.

Flagellation, in general, was condoned by the Church as a form of monastic discipline, either to be self-inflicted, or with the help of a friend. Today, most people prefer a little help from a friend.

A-hum.

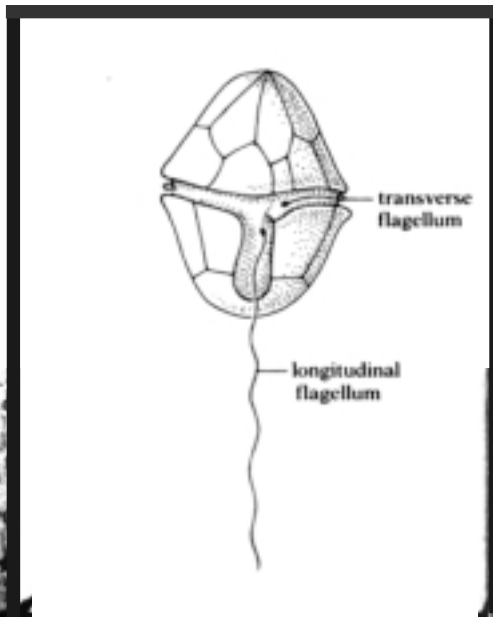
Anyway, starting in the mid-13th century, social stress triggered periodic bouts of group flagellation. Just after the Italian plague of 1259, the Umbrian hermit Raniero Fosani began to organize large groups of flagellants. Called the *diciplinati*, their belief was that God was angry with humanity and had decided to wipe them out. The Virgin Mary begged God to reconsider, and he

agreed, but only if mankind abandoned their adulterous, blasphemous, usurious, blah, blah, etc. ways.

Led from town to town by a priest, the *diciplinati* would stand in the streets or in the square in front of the local church, flogging themselves for hours. With each town visited, more and more people would join. Some estimates say there were as many as 10,000 flagellants in Italy by 1260.

The movement was prohibited by the Church in 1261 and quickly disappeared in Italy, but some practitioners had moved north into Germany. Between 1347 and 1349, when hundreds of thousands were dying of the plague, the flagellant movement blossomed. Wearing white robes with a red cross on the front and back, the flagellants were led from town to town by renegade priests, monks, and self-appointed leaders, all believing Jesus' return was imminent.

The leaders of flagellant processions took on the role of priests whether they were ordained or not. They'd hear confessions, give penances, and absolve sins. When these sore-backed



Ow! Quit it! Ow! Quit it!

rovers would reach a town, they would gather in front of the church, strip to their waists, and sing hymns while they whipped themselves. Their leader would walk among them, thrashing himself, and stopping to beat his followers every-now and then, saying, "Arise, by the honor of pure martyrdom."

The spectacle of the beatings and the hymns was such a crowd pleaser that the Church began to worry, feeling that the people were substituting the normal sacraments for flagellation. Another decree was issued in 1349 by Pope Clement VI forbidding public displays of flagellation.

A revival in the early 1400's finally led to the condemnation of the practice by the Council of Constance (1414-1418).

Difficult to enforce, flagellation persisted in Europe for centuries. Like the Inquisition, the last stronghold was Spain, where it was banned in the 18th century.

In this country an offshoot of the Spanish tradition of flagellation established itself in what is now New Mexico and part of southern Colorado where it combined with Native American traditions. Called the Hermanos Penitentes, the group continued to exist into the 20th century, despite condemnation by the Catholic authorities.

Until next time:

*"If love isn't forever,
and it's not the weather,
hand me my leather."*

-*"Leather,"* Tori Amos

Gap by John Hoff

Miss-Adventures

unbeknownst to many of our readers, gar spent the better part of his teens earning money as a prostitute,

though no true income gain was made, as his only John was a fetishist, into many wild things... such as

bouls

and oral castration



Consider a bequest to Hell's Kitchen.

When planning one's estate, careful consideration must be given to those oh-so important tax-emept bequests. Why donate your hard earned money to causes that don't give back?

Tired of thank you notes from groups like "The Jimmy Fund" and "Red Cross"? Donate to the Kitchen and know your dollars are working for the good of the people.

For more information, contact:
Hell's Kitchen
472 French Road
Rochester, NY14618

"Hell's Kitchen: It won't cure cancer or help retarded kids, but it's better than nothing."