

Credo 2026: Perspective



By Steven Yates

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Every January I write a “who I am and what am I doing here” kind of article. Last year’s installment is [here](#).

My superficial rereading of that didn’t reveal anything significant I’d change. I still work on integrating Stoic insights into Christian faith.

The biggest change from last year at this time to this year at this time is that I’m done with partisan politics. (See my “other” [archive](#).)

The other day I was browsing in Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations* and this leaped out at me (Book 2, p’graph 17):

Human life:

Duration: momentary. **Nature:** changeable. **Perception:** dim. **Condition of Body:** decaying. **Soul:** spinning around. **Fortune:** unpredictable. **Lasting fame:** uncertain. **Sum up:** the body and its parts are a river, the soul a dream and mist, life is warfare and a journey far from home, lasting reputation is oblivious.

Then what can guide us?

Only philosophy.

Which means making sure that the power within stays safe and

free from assault, superior to pleasure and pain, doing nothing random or dishonestly and with imposture, not dependent on anyone else's doing something or not doing it. And making sure that it accepts what happens and what it is dealt as coming from the same place it came from....

Let's look at it.

Momentary duration: life is short. And the older you get, the faster the years fly by.

Changeable nature: are we the same person we were, say, 30 years ago? I recall a time when I would have laughed off anyone telling me I'd be living overseas. I would have laughed at anyone saying Donald Trump would become president – twice.

Dim perception: none of us knows as much as we think we do. Our five senses are far from perfect. The past couple of weeks show how many people can view the same video (of the events surrounding the shooting of the woman in Minneapolis) and draw very different conclusions about who should be blamed.

Ideological programming is stronger than we think. What we believe we've seen is almost never the whole story and often biased, which is the biggest problem with eye-witness testimony in trials.

These days, when someone waxes hysterically about some outrage on another continent, I remind myself, *he/she wasn't there. I'm not there.* I finally ask: *would my being there accomplish anything?*

I find thus myself "bracketing" a lot of what comes my way: not believing, not disbelieving, not judging, unless and until more evidence comes my way or if I can seek out more information – always assuming it's something I want to spend my precious time on.

Decaying condition of body: none of us are getting younger.

Everyone knows this *intellectually*. Most of us *live* as if our days weren't numbered. Even me. Paraphrasing a different Stoic philosopher, Seneca: the problem is not that life is short but that we waste so much of it.

Soul spinning around: much energy is wasted fretting about things we can't control. Again: I'm guilty of this as anyone.

Unpredictability: I don't like to make predictions about a new year because neither I nor anyone else really knows the future. I recall I prediction I made at the beginning of last year: that we'd see more Luigi Mangiones. We didn't. I was wrong.

Fame uncertain: I have no expectations of it. It is liberating, though, to be able to write knowing that few are going to be interested.

So here goes. Sort of a potpourri.

The dollar *as we know it* is collapsing. This explains, in part, the meteoric rise of silver and gold prices over the past year or so. Powerful people are preparing for the dollar to collapse, and some are almost certainly orchestrating their alternative.

I said *as we know it*. The transition to a *digital* dollar as cash is phased out will be as smooth as those in power can make it ... so as not to provoke an understandably reluctant peasantry any more than is necessary. I imagine we'll see classes aimed at sixty- and seventy somethings in how to use a digital wallet on a smartphone. We'll also be hit with news reports intended to associate cash use with drug dealing and other criminal activity.

But no one knows for sure when this planned "reset" will kick in fully. So the best thing to do now is calm the hysterics and act from reason: get out of debt, move what wealth you can into hard assets (gold, silver, real estate), and learn new

skills – skills you can use outside the coming *de facto* digital prison.

The first of these isn't instantaneous, but you can create a system in which you pay the same amount consistently each month more while cutting spending. And then be patient. You'll get there.

You may not be in a position to buy assets if you're working two jobs to survive. But if you can find a mentor you can start learning one survival skill: say, electrical wiring. It'll take maybe an hour per session.

I don't advise Christians to wait on the "rapture." Without getting into whether a "pre-tribulation rapture" is Scripturally sound ... neither you nor I knows God's timetable.

Marcus says that "only philosophy" can guide us. I'd supplement this: "philosophy following an adequate worldview," which acknowledges God as the Author of the world we have to navigate.

A world about which we have learned a few things and learned how to do a few things. Our areas of ignorance are still enormous, though.

Proverbs counsels (3:5-6): "Trust the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

That should be kept in mind, given what follows.

Among the things we haven't learned, in all our thousands and possibly many more years of existence is how to organize ourselves socioeconomically and politically.

If we're sinners, as Christianity avers, this is to be expected.

I've done multipart treatises on how civilizations – empires –

have lifespans just like people (start [here](#)). Assuming we can trust the history books:

Civilizations have a breakout and period of rapid expansion ... heaven help anyone in the way (ask remaining indigenous peoples of North America!).

They reach relative stasis, with a stable currency, a single governing body and administration, a common language, a common culture. Trade routes are laid down; transportation systems fall into place.

Problem-solving opportunities aplenty open doors to wealth creation and social mobility. The wellbeing of all isn't a mere afterthought. Endeavors public and private serve a common good. Social trust is high, because most people accept and play by rules they see as beneficial to all.

It's not that the society doesn't hit bumps in the road, some major. It adapts and course-corrects. Optimism abounds, reflected in culture (art, architecture, music, and long-term planning).

Then things go wrong.

Wealth starts to become an end in itself. It soon serves family dynasties instead of the common good. Elites separate from commoners seen as a peasantry to be "guided," i.e., manipulated, as when the Rockefeller's hijacked public education.

A loss of direction ensues. Fundamentals that built the society – in our case, Constitutionalism, the idea of limited government, and that our republic is suited "only for a moral and religious people" (John Adams) – are either forgotten or shelved.

Intellectuals, some of whose ideas went into laying out those fundamentals, are marginalized or marginalize themselves by

turning to insular and highly specialized conversations no one outside their academic cubicles can follow.

The period of drift can last decades. By and large, social and cultural optimism hold. But if one looks closely, one sees real leadership disappearing. Statesmen become politicians; captains of industry become wealth extractors; thinkers become talkers; real problem-solving is replaced by quick fixes.

Decadence then sets in. The commanding heights become increasingly corrupt, as do efforts to hide the corruption while pretending nothing is amiss.

The state grows into a massive bureaucracy. Instead of solving problems it usually makes them worse, often creating more problems in its wake.

Sound currency is abandoned because the bureaucracy needs more money. Raising taxes will provoke a revolt. So the central bank and treasury department begin creating "money" out of thin air.

Result: inflation. What is being inflated is the money supply, and as more money circulates, the purchasing power of individual units shrinks.

This isn't taught in schools. Most people thus identify inflation with rising prices and don't look deeper. Every attempt to control inflation fails, because the central bank and political class continue the quick fixes (e.g., with interest rates) instead of attending to fundamentals: spending and money printing.

As students are now viewed as consumers, universities dumb down their curricula to retain them. Attention spans shorten. More and more people look for easy routes and short cuts.

Since the wealthy have systems that protect them from the

ravages of currency debasement, and because they've abandoned service to anything except profitability, we see Peter Turchin's "wealth pump" and rising inequality.

Social mobility has declined. The middle class is now struggling. Social trust is dropping. Some resent the rich, suspecting that they've rigged the system.

National and international policies work against sustaining a middle class: globalization, "free trade" agreements, open borders (free migration means cheap labor), replacing humans with automation, etc.

The administrative state and corporations are more and more united into a seamless whole of wealth concentration and extraction: what Chris Hedges once called a "corporate coup."

Subsidies and other handouts abound, but they come with strings attached. The number of genuinely productive people is shrinking while dependency is rising.

Empire is characterized by dominating others: sometimes through military conquest, but economic encirclement is more common these days. It is true that some are lifted out of poverty. But embracing [modernity](#) comes with costs.

In an empire's final stages, one sees:

- overextension: foreign policy becomes increasingly irrational and belligerent;
- a rising debt spiral, the result of irrational fiscal policy and weakening currency;
- if by some chance it's the world's reserve currency we're talking about – hint, hint – one sees attempts by others to circumvent the need to use it; some of these are crushed militarily, but when rival powers with their own global reach work on alternative currencies, this isn't possible without provoking world war;

One also sees:

- politicians becoming glorified celebrities; spokespersons for wealth extractors openly celebrating “greed [being] good” (think: Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street*); talkers become babblers; quick fixes grow increasingly desperate;
- colonization of cities by migrants, legal or not, who don’t assimilate or learn the dominant language; they become sources of friction and disruption as we’ve seen in living color;
- cultural disintegration: nihilistic art, music, movies, lifestyles; architecture, designed for functionality only, turns *ugly*;
- the mainstreaming of a similarly nihilistic “eat, drink, and be merry” or “don’t worry, be happy”;
- a marketplace filling up with scam artists, further reducing social trust; everybody is expected to out “hustle” everybody else; you can’t get through an hour without someone trying to sell you something;
- education collapsing at all levels; the institutions remain but do not educate; their price tag is beyond absurd;
- a fascination with sex (all varieties), even as relations between the two actual sexes break down and birthrates crater; populations of singles explode; we read of loneliness epidemics; porn flourishes.

Finally: some able to do so pack their bags and flee, whether to preserve assets they have left or just to get off the proverbial sinking ship... Rome had its expats, and so does America.

History moves in cycles of various lengths and scales. This should give us perspective.

On the largest scale, “linear progress” is historically local. The past few hundred years of technological advances and

whatever societal progress we've made is, like a human life span, a *blip* in comparison with how long we've been on this planet.

Though it's a topic for a separate article, there is evidence we've come this way before.

There are reasons, that is, to think it possible that long before the peoples of ancient history we know, there existed at least one civilization of global reach, that it achieved heights comparable to our own including flight, that a few memories of its existence and a few of its artifacts survived into historical times. Not only do we find accounts of its existence in Sumerian and other mythologies, Scripture itself, and in curious tracts such as the Book of Enoch; but a few ancient maps, most likely compilations of much older maps long lost, reveal geographical knowledge not possessed by Mediterranean civilizations of history.

Stone ruins, moreover, have been found on every continent that cannot be identified with any known culture. Some bespeak of the abilities of their builders, whoever they were. There are, finally, hundreds of "ooparts" as some colorfully call them: *out-of-place artifacts* that don't fit accepted history and archeology. All these findings have been documented by writers such as René Noorbergen, Charles Berlitz, Graham Hancock, and others.

We have no *full* account of what happened to this civilization. Many texts maintain that it turned evil and God destroyed it (e.g., in Genesis 6:5f.). Some of its destruction may have been self-inflicted just as ours is self-inflicted.

Conventional ancient historians and archeologists don't acknowledge any such civilization, of course. Their term: "pseudo-archeology."

I get it. Recognizing that such a civilization might have existed implies that advanced empires are vulnerable to the

same things that destroyed lesser ones like that of Alexander, the Romans, the Arabs of a thousand years ago, Spain, France, the Ottomans, and the British; and that we could fall from grace and leave similarly few traces behind. This is humbling! I think the idea frightens conventional historians and archeologists, which might explain how they deal with “ooparts”: putting them in the back rooms of museums and forgetting about them.

Empires rise; empires fall. The details may be vastly different; the patterns are similar.

Our present cycle is trending downwards. The U.S. empire is in decline, and if the dollar loses its status as the world’s reserve currency, we’re toast ... just as the British were toast when the dollar replaced the pound.

I’m not a historical determinist. I think it possible, in principle, for a declining empire to turn its fortunes around and come back from the brink. Almost none have done so, though. They’ve not made the choices they needed to make, such as facing their situation realistically and returning to fundamentals. The few who reinvented themselves ended up worse, as Rome the republic became the Roman Empire.

In the case of our republic turned empire, those of us who have spent much of our lives urging such choices have not gained traction in a marketplace that rewards catering to short attention spans, entertainment, simplicity: a marketplace where deep thought is invisible and “consumers of information” with little patience for anything truly difficult or demanding. Thus we can shout from rooftops and not be heard above the noise. What we don’t have is an easily grasped, infotainment-based, instant-gratification “offer.”

We *do* have what some Stoic philosophers described as an “inner citadel”: the mental resilience Marcus Aurelius urged in that final paragraph quoted at the outset: that “power within” kept

“safe and free from assault, superior to pleasure and pain, doing nothing random or dishonest ... not dependent on anyone else ... accept[ing] what happens” because what happens is outside our control.

Realizing this affords even greater perspective.

You’ll have lower blood pressure as the billionaire Technocrats do as they please and the masses remain blandly accepting of most of what is thrown at them. (Look at how they kowtowed to Covid lockdowns and shots.)

Coming full circle: Christians may be convinced that these are the end times, but we also enter the world of the Stoics when the elites force upon us their digital dollar (programmable CBDC without that label), a digital ID to access your digital “wallet” and spend it on necessities; and (programmable) universal basic income for those rendered unemployable by AI.

These Technocrat moves might last for a while, but whatever God’s timetable turns out to be, some *natural* shock the Technocracy didn’t anticipate and can’t contain may come along and push the entire shebang off the cliff.

Which is why I close by emphasizing something we *can* control: cultivating that “inner citadel” and acting with intention: especially acquiring survival skills (growing things, making things, cultivating relationships of various sorts, taking care of those around us, minimizing contact with undesirable persons and institutions).

Expectations of fame or no, I kinda wish more people would read this and take it seriously.

Because those who *don’t* do the above things may find out what it means to suffer....

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Steven Yates is a recovering ex-academic with a PhD in Philosophy. (Obtain his recent slim tract on the "wisdom" of obtaining such a degree [here](#).)

He taught for more than 15 years total at several colleges and universities in the Southeastern U.S. He has authored three books, more than 20 articles, numerous book reviews, and review essays in academic journals and anthologies. Refused tenure and unable to obtain full-time academic employment (and with an increasing number of very fundamental philosophical essays refused publication in journals), he turned to alternative platforms and heretical notions, including about academia itself.

In 2012, he moved to Chile. He married a Chilean national in 2014. Among his discoveries in South America: many of the problems in the U.S. are problems everywhere, because human nature is the same everywhere.

He has a Patreon.com page. Donate [here](#) and become a Patron if you benefit from his work and believe it merits being sustained financially.

Steven Yates's book *Four Cardinal Errors: Reasons for the Decline of the American Republic* (2011) can be ordered [here](#).

His philosophical work *What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory* (2021) can be obtained [here](#) or [here](#).

His cosmic horror novel *The Shadow Over Sarnath* (2023) (written for the sheer fun of it) can be gotten [here](#).

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