

Ouroboros

by Steve Finan

It was towards the middle of the second decade of the 21st century (as we calculate it) that the schism began.

Mankind has always had its divisions, its sects, its classes, castes, creeds and conditions. We would identify ourselves as left or right, black or white, upper or lower, believer or freethinker.

Everyone thought they were right. Everyone thought everyone else's position was foolish. How can you believe in a God in this desolation? How can you not? The free market is what feeds the many, but the many deserve equality. You do not think like me, yet I do not think like him.

But these arguments had fired all their shots again and again. We'd had war and peace, the famines and the feasts, the slaughters and the slaughterers.

It was time for a change.

No-one knows how it started. Some say it was a cash-hoarding schoolteacher in Rohtak, India, not far from New Delhi. Others said it was a cancerous doctor in Biltine, Chad. I heard from a well-travelled friend of my father that it started as the miraculous first words of a mute submarine-parts machinist in Severodvinsk on the southern shore of the White Sea.

But it matters little who thought of it first, what mattered was the schism. Or, to be more accurate, those on the opposite sides of the schism.

And, of course, you are a part of this, dear reader. You are of one side or the other.

In those days the idea was quite old, yet the possibilities were quite new.

You were either part of the past or part of the future. You looked back or you looked forward, you thought mankind has passed its zenith or you felt the flower of humanity had not yet fully bloomed.

This was a chasm of thought.

The Past-Lookers dwelt on times gone. They studied the exploits and achievements of our forefathers and revelled in them. They recalled Man's glories — the race for the South Pole, the eradication of polio, the abolition of slavery, the throwing-down of despots . . . and they praised those momentous achievements. Rightly so, for we have done much as a species. Much to be proud of, much to regret.

The Pyramids, the Great Wall, the cities, the irrigated fields, the libraries of knowledge, the empires of thought. These people were proud of their past, proud of their fathers, proud of their mastery of history.

And yet . . .

On the other side were the Forward-Lookers. These were men and women who acknowledged the achievements of civilisation, but regarded those achievements merely as beginnings. Milestones along the way.

These people looked to a green and clean future, discoveries to be made, frontiers to cross. Their tomorrow was golden, they revered their children and longed to live on, to beat the ravages of time so that they too could bear witness to the glories to come.

Tomorrow there will be no regrets, no mistakes, no wars, no death, no sadness.

And yet . . .

Soon people began to seek out the company of those who thought as they did. They formed groups, they moved to live closer to those who had a similar outlook.

Soon whole cities were either of the past or (built afresh) were of tomorrow.

It did not take long until countries and then continents were either Past or Forward. Then the hemispheres became the separate entities we know today, with the Areas Of No Time between that no man may cross.

Travel between the hemispheres dwindled and then stopped. What reason was there to visit? Then communication slowly ceased. Why talk to such fools?

Now, we do not even know if the others still hold to their ideals,
what they look like or how they think.

Are they even alive?

And if they are, how foolish they must be to still hold to their
outlandish, ill-considered, crazed ideas.

We are right. We have the truth of it.

We are the intelligent ones.

