

## When Will We Wake Up? By Michael Mannion

“On December 7, 1941, there occurred the event which plunged the United States into war...The date is also significant as well as tragic for the United States...provided that the right conclusions be drawn and the right lessons learned. The first and most important lesson contained in the slogan ‘Remember Pearl Harbor!’ is that preparedness always wins. This lesson really means that unless we are prepared for peace after victory, and prepare so effectively as to make future wars impossible, we shall have to prepare for war everywhere; that is we shall be forced to kill democracy throughout the world.”  
—Bronislaw Malinowski, *Freedom and Civilization* (1942)

In August 2001, the destructive consequences of mechanistic and mystical thinking for humanity, particularly their merging in the phenomenon of mystically-motivated war and terror, preoccupied me. The militarization of space by the United States was also a subject of study at that time. How would the intelligences beyond earth react to the first steps taken by our violent species to bring weapons and war-making into their realm, I wondered. Then came “9/11.”

September 11, 2001 and the World Trade Center attacks, and analogies to December 11, 1941 and Pearl Harbor, continue to dominate the news and public discourse at the moment. Thirty years ago, when the United States was at war in Vietnam, I immersed myself in Malinowski's work. Recently, I opened *Freedom and Civilization* and found I had underlined the above passage, writing a note in the margin that read, “This has come true:1971.” Sadly, the United States was then, and is now, prepared for war everywhere, and not for peace. Malinowski's words were not heeded.

Between 1945 and 1971, the United States, under Republican and Democratic administrations, aligned itself with anti-democratic forces throughout the world, toppling the democratically elected leaders in a number of countries, interfering in free elections in others, supporting military dictatorships across the globe. The United States did not prepare for peace after its military defeat of the Axis powers. Therefore, “realpolitik” compelled it to kill many democracies throughout the world.

Today, we hear much about learning the lessons that the 2001 terrorist attacks have to teach us. Yet we hear very little about the lesson Malinowski urged his contemporaries to learn from Pearl Harbor—to prepare for peace after victory so well that future attacks will be impossible; to prepare so well that true democracy (and not merely formal, paper democracy) can thrive. Reagan's freedom fighters are now Bush's terrorists. Could they once again be reinvented as freedom fighters? The terrorists of today will most likely become the statesmen of tomorrow, as yesterday's terrorists have become today's leaders in many parts of the world. Will these people then promote democracy? Hardly.

The politics of the day perishes with each succeeding age. Transient political players like

the Bushes and Bin Ladens—now united in both international business and the business of war—will soon be forgotten. Capitalism will fade in time, as did feudalism, monarchism, and communism before it. The nation-state will even vanish as the “One World” forces of “globalism” assert themselves economically and politically.

**But basic questions remain ignored, such as the roots of human violence, the source of human sexual dysfunction and inability to love, the origin of human authoritarian social institutions and the authoritarian family, all of which undermine mankind's natural capacities. These long-standing issues are far deeper than the politics of the moment.**

In the early part of the 20th century, Bronislaw Malinowski revolutionized the practice of anthropology. The results of his research into indigenous cultures played a pivotal role in a crucial debate, one which continues to this day—the debate over such basic questions as the origin of human social institutions and the nature of human beings. His work revealed a society of people with a character structure and psychology fundamentally different from that found in mechanistic-mystical society and a social structure that reflected these differences. In the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski studied a culture that was in transition from a matrilineal to a patriarchal form. Social structure was evolving.

In contrast, there were many in his era, as there are today, who believed that the basic institutions of Western society (e.g., the authoritarian family and state) are essential to control an inherently destructive and self-destructive humanity. Those who hold this view assert that the character structure (or “human nature” as some call it) of the average human being as it exists today is of biological origin. These are not “ivory tower” debates. Such beliefs are put into practice in the form of terrorism, warfare and social policies by the human beings who espouse them. The battle between “Evildoers” and the “Good,” or between the “Holy” and the “Infidels” is a current expression of these views.

Malinowski's work—along with the investigations of many searching minds such as Friedrich Engels who preceded him and Wilhelm Reich who followed him—demonstrates that “human nature” is not immutable and unchangeable but is created and shaped by social conditions, which themselves evolve and change. Therefore, the authoritarian family and state of today, along with other major human institutions, are also not of biological origin. Neither are they of divine or “genetic” origin.

Human beings create their institutions, are in turn molded by them, and then recreate them in their children over succeeding generations. Character structure creates the social structure which then maintains itself by shaping the character structure of the next generation. One conclusion from Malinowski's research is obvious: human character structure and human social institutions were not always as they are now and can be changed.

There is a way out of the morass we find ourselves in today—potentially. It will not be easy and cannot be achieved by political speeches or programs. Hard, practical work on the part of parents, educators, physicians, scientists and all those involved in vital, life-positive

activities will be required.

However, this change will be resisted fiercely, not only by the elites who wish to maintain the status quo and preserve their privileged positions, but tragically, by the very people who would most benefit from such change. Because the underlying assumptions of our mechanistic-mystical world are anchored in the bodies of the people of the earth, they will resist the very changes they strive for and that would benefit them.

The inner conflicts of human beings, and their incapacity to live their dreams, will continue to undermine their efforts. The global fascism that arose in the 20th century is a clear example of how the desire for freedom led people, who did not have the inner capacity to live freely, to support tyranny for themselves and for hundreds of millions of Earthlings. At present, no one knows how to overcome this enormous obstacle to social change, if they are even aware of its existence.

There is an ancient Buddhist saying that is applicable here, "Everyone knows the weak overcomes the strong, and the soft the hard, but no one knows how to live it."

As difficult as it may be to conceive at the moment, the memories of "9/11" will fade, as did the memories of Pearl Harbor, the memories of the Holocaust, the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the memories of the lynchings of African-Americans, the memories of the Vietnam War (or the American War as it is called by the Vietnamese) and on and on.

But the great unanswered questions about who we are, the nature of the social structures we create, the origin of our savage violence, will persist. If we remain ignorant about these issues, if we do not begin to look honestly at ourselves and our world, we will bring about our end, individually, as societies, and as a species.

What is the lesson we can learn from "9/11"? As Malinowski wrote, we need to prepare so effectively for peace, that we make future wars and terrorism impossible. How can we do that? By looking in the mirror. By looking into our hearts. By feeling the raging hatred inside each one of us that bursts forth in the cruelties of daily life, small and large, or as terrorism, Bosnia, Rwanda, the Khmer Rouge, Vietnam, the Nazis, Stalin and Mao's mass murders, pogroms, the genocide in Armenia, the slaughter of indigenous Americans...Cain and Abel.

By recognizing how we cripple our infants at birth and our children during their youth, for religious, political, ethical, economic or ideological reasons, turning them into the men and women who perform the horrible deeds we then claim to abhor.

Our cosmic future beckons. We are leaving the planet and exploring beyond our home for the first time. A living universe filled with life's infinite variations and marvels awaits us. But look at how we live, individually and as a species. On Earth, virulent mystics use mechanistic technology to destroy life. And mechanistic materialists respond in kind. In space, instead of exploring the wonders of this unknown realm, the United States is creating a new arena for war. Will our great potential go unfulfilled? Will we throw away

the gift of Life?

It seems as if we will squander our cosmic inheritance. There is still a little time left. If only we can wake up. And once awakened, not go back to sleep.

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