

I wonder what kind of changes might have come to these parts in the first sixteen years of the last millennium, from 1000 to 1015. Probably not many, compared to the first decade and a half of this one. But I like to take the longer view. I like to think of the years and centuries going by, and how this ancient river has been rolling all along in one unfolding moment.

Approaching 2017, we find ourselves in perilous times that require vigilance: Here, for what it may be worth, are three points I try to keep in mind:

First: I try to separate what I feel from what I think. I may feel like throwing up, and I may feel betrayed and angry. But what I think is another thing altogether, and that is trying to understand what's going on in the world. I feel emotions; but I try to think analytically, to lay things out and take a dispassionate look at them.

Number-two: identify the things I can change and separate them from those I cannot. *"We find the things we cannot change are numbered in the stars / Like diamonds flung across the sky shining from afar / Beyond those stars are others, and beyond them even more / As we gaze upon forever from a distant shore."*

I quote from a record we made a few years ago called *From a Distant Shore*. All we can change, if only day by day, and little by little, is ourselves; we can alter our attitudes and habits, and with time the configuration of our brains. We are best advised to do this for ourselves; otherwise we can be sure our brains and thinking will be configured by others to fit someone else's plans.

Number-three: Keep your eyes open and stay alert.

What I think reflects what I see: A world with nature everywhere on the run, with tyranny on the upswing, and democracy and liberty in retreat on every continent, much of it ruled by sneering thugs and autocrats, people whose sole reason for existence is to feed their own egos. The soon-to-be incumbent President of the United States has expressed open admiration for these men. The countries they rule are dangerous places to live in, particularly if you're a journalist, artist, or anyone who happens to disagree with—or even worse—dares to poke fun at them.

Once heralded as a boon to freedom, the Internet and Social Media are now routinely used as tools for surveillance. What did you expect?

I guess my main concern is to avoid getting hung up in the barbed wire of my own anger, confusion and despair. It helps to have work to do, and I have plenty to keep me busy with a new record, and a new book in the works. It helps to have a partner, and Edith and I are celebrating twenty years together this month.

Now, to get on with the task of developing compassion for all sentient beings, even the dangerous and repugnant ones. I'm working on it, but that's a tall order and won't get done before the end of the year. It might take a few lifetimes. Or at least long enough to eat this watermelon.

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Whoops, come to think of it, it's the wrong time of year for watermelons. But hey, they are green and red. We celebrate Christmas as a time of rebirth and return to light. Keep your own light shining, Merry Christmas, and Peace to all. *Guete Rutsch*, as the Swiss say—Have a Good Slide into the New Year 2017!

RIP: Enzo Mercurio, Trudi Matter; Old friends: Steve Young, Rich Minus, Guy Clark. We're going to miss you: Geri Stocker, Redaktor and Christof Schwegler, Moderator, Swiss Radio DRS "Country Special." Tom Luley and the Dolder 2 in Feuerthalen—another home and haven for the music awaiting the wrecking ball of progress.

Ricardo

Richard J. Dobson

Diessenhofen am Rhein, 19 December 2016

[www.richard-j-dobson.ch](http://www.richard-j-dobson.ch)