

## ***United States Stuck in the Antarctic Night like the Belgica***

By John Stanton

*“The masses are so blinded by greed that they do not even notice that their own leaders live in ill-gained luxury, in cozy isolation and at their expense. Indeed, they do not see that in their political party there is an even more degrading regimes and greater repression of personal fulfillment than that suffered by the most repressed subjects of the state which it opposes. In the past people fought their lords, fooled b the promise of liberation of the nation, national freedom; nowadays it is the promise of freedom for the working class. But the people themselves will never be liberated, they will continue to be oppressed and exploited out of greed and for the sake of the mad phantasies and ideals of some individuals. Oppression and exploitation are only shifted elsewhere by the apostles of the new truth; injustice will live on, generously fed by fear, greed and folly, and in its prevailing form supported by some new aspect of justice...Look at this world, full of wretched people who imagine they have possessions worried that they might loose them and ever toiling in the hope of acquiring more. Look at these people, striving after luxury and wealth, those whose riches are secured, whose stocks and shares are safely deposited and who now nurture an insatiable appetite for knowledge, power, health, glory and pleasure.” L.E.J. Brouwer*

The quote above is excerpted from *Life, Art and Mysticism\**, written by the brilliant mathematician L.E.J. Brouwer in 1905, some years before he would gain fame as a pioneer in the field of topology. But he is, perhaps, most well known for his development of Intuitionism.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Brouwer’s “brainchild is intuitionism, a revisionist foundation of mathematics. Intuitionism views mathematics as a free activity of the mind, independent of any language or Platonic realm of objects, and therefore bases mathematics on a philosophy of mind. The implications are twofold. First, it leads to a form of constructive mathematics, in which large parts of classical mathematics are rejected. Second, the reliance on a philosophy of mind introduces features that are absent from classical mathematics as well as from other forms of constructive mathematics: unlike those, intuitionistic mathematics is not a proper part of classical mathematics.”

The implications of Intuitionism are many, one being that mathematics just might be understood as a branch of computer science, not the other way around according to Damien Kristian, a machine language and distributed systems software scientist.

This is not the place for a discussion of Brouwer’s fixed point theorem and other discoveries but rather to point out that his observations of his world in 1905 easily apply to today’s “Sad World” (a chapter so titled in his book).

### ***Sad World***

The “sad world” of Brouwer, applies most directly to the tactics and strategies of the United States of America’s plutocracy, the source of many of the country’s internal problems and the woes besetting much of the global economy walloped by food shortages, unstable oil prices a flood of US weapons flowing into Ukraine and Europe. The USA is careening into a political civil war in 2024 as the Republican Party and former president Donald Trump plan to incite their

followers to disrupt the election process in whatever way they can and—if they do not gain the White House by electoral or popular vote, they will do their utmost at the state and federal levels to undue the election outcome.

Every pundit left, right, and center knows these issues—including me—and we have analyzed from our particular positions just about everything wrong with the “other” side, plus the callousness of US government leaders whether they be political, economic or military. We’ve also commented on the pliability of the American mind and public over and over again to no avail: American citizens have been battered with so many lies from their leaders that most just don’t care about civic responsibility any longer.

We pundits watch in disgust, though most in hawkish pleasure, at President Joe Biden’s administration as it sets to wage war against the East (Russia, China) ushering in the beginning of a new chapter in the history of decline of empire, this time an American Empire that has been rampaged by disease and economic hardship at home—and a January 6 coup attempt on the US Senate and House of Representatives by rioters intent on disrupting the certification of the election of Joe Biden—and like many empires past (Rome, for example) seeks to take perpetual war to new heights to patch over its ills at home.

### ***Nothing New Here***

With so much focus on the military and war in US society, is it any wonder that random mass shootings take place all over the country. When there is nothing to work or hope for, or the mind gets bent by whatever “ism” there is, there is always the path to go out in a blaze of infamy by taking others down with you. Do American soldiers fight for the freedom to gun down people at home?

Nope, we pundits, talking heads, and the plutocratic leaders of the land have nothing left to offer each other or the readers/voters who happen upon our insights whether in the mainstream media or the blogs of the world. We are all stuck in ever thickening liberal, conservative, republican, or democrat stovepipes. The “Apostles of New Truth” are everywhere reminding us all how our false consciousness or unconscious prejudices control who we are.

Brouwer reminds that we are nothing special here in 2022. Oh sure, we have the World Wide Web, Social Media, handheld devices, nuclear weapons and can catapult machinery into space, but is all that really an accomplishment? The speed of information is faster but in all our 21st Century glory we are still simple two legged primates led by tribal chieftains.

### ***Belgica***

Perhaps the United States can be compared to the crew of the Belgica, a ship named by Belgian sea captain Adrian De Gerlache. Gerlache, ship and crew set out to reach Antarctica and the South Pole. Gerlache intentionally steered the Belgica into ice flows in a maniacal quest to reach the pole, which would assure him of glory back home. Gerlache’s decision caused ship and crew to become sandwiched in the frozen and drifting icepack for a full year from 1898 to 1899.

The crew lived in cramped, rat infested quarters during that time. Each night they could hear the noises of the ships timbers reacting to the strains caused by the icepack. Insomnia became a

real problem. The canned food they stored turned into a gelatinous, tasteless goo, causing the disgruntlement among the crew. To tame the scurvy that plagued the crew they were ultimately forced to eat nauseating raw seal and penguin meat to get the nutrients they needed. Much of the crew despised killing the penguins and seals they encountered. The grisly deaths of the creatures by their own hands pained the crew, but they had to eat to survive. They lived in three months of darkness and suffered the blizzards and wicked temperatures typical of the Antarctic. After a time, the leap into madness was only one thin thread line away and crew members had to watch each other closely. Gerlache was a skilled sailor but a lousy leader and mutiny was only a few bad decisions away (the book *Madhouse at the End of the Earth* by Julian Sanction has all the details).

Still, through luck and herculean efforts they managed to escape the icepack and make it home to Belgium where Gerlache and crew became celebrities. They achieved many firsts in science exploration, cartography, and were the first to winter in Antarctica.

The United States of America is stuck in an icepack of its own creation. It neither has a skilled helmsman or leader of "people," and there are none on the horizon. It may soon have to fight for its survival like the crew of the Belgica.

But, as Norbert Weiner opined, "In a very real sense, we are shipwrecked passengers on a doomed planet. Yet, even in a shipwreck, human decencies and human values do not necessarily vanish, and we must make the most of them. We shall go down, but let it be in a manner to which we may look forward as worthy of our dignity."

\*Luitzen Egbertus Jan Brouwer. "Life, Art, and Mysticism." *Notre Dame J. Formal Logic* 37 (3) 389 - 429, Summer 1996. <https://doi.org/10.1305/ndjfl/1039886518>

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