

Write on / **By Sebastian de Assis**

# When society ages too fast, the human

**I AM ONLY 44 years old, for crying out loud! Why do I feel more like a Middle Age monk than a middle-aged man? After all, I am healthy, active and in excellent physical condition. I have a superb memory that stores thousands of words in four languages, not to mention poems by Whitman, Frost and Shakespeare, to name a few.**

Why, then, do I feel outdated? Perhaps it is the world that has aged faster than I.

It is not that I feel old, I just think things are so much different than when I was a young man. I have realized that when I think of my age in terms of the changes I have seen in my life, I feel much older than I do when I count the number of years I have been treading on this beautiful Earth. Let me tell you how old I am in social changes time.

First, my childhood. I grew up watching the original Superman and Zorro on a black-and-white television. In my adolescence, I listened to Pink Floyd long

plays (vinyl) on a record player; I had to clean off the needle every so often in order to get mediocre sound quality.

As a young man traveling abroad, I went from the ticketing counter straight to my seat on the airplane, without passing through any metal detectors or any kind of personal inspection — and I felt absolutely safe. My idea of bioterrorism was when Julie French-kissed me in the schoolyard when she knew she had strep throat.

And, whenever I overheard someone saying, "It's getting warmer every day," I rejoiced at the approach of summer rather than fret about some ecological disaster.

But things have changed, dramatically. Today, children who are not squandering their precious time in front of a 62-inch, color television watching "Cops" or "The Jerry Springer Show" are glued to their computer monitor playing video games, some of which can make the most hideous television shows look innocuous.

Adolescents listen to CDs in

sophisticated and portable players, cook meals in microwave ovens and socialize with friends by talking on their personal cell phones while on a lonely walk. And yet, in spite of all these technological gadgets at their disposal, their lives are not any better or more fun than my generation's, and certainly not safer.

The truth is that the world is not the same. Air travel has become a worrisome adventure that can turn into a nightmare, which makes me not want to go anywhere.

The idea of hot weather, rather than warming my heart with joy, evokes terribly disturbing images of penguins from the Antarctic showing up on the tropical beaches of Rio de Janeiro.

Yes, the Cold War is over and I no longer have to worry about the "evil empire," though the nukes and a vast array of mass-destruction weapons are still widespread.

Instead, I dread the globalization of savage capitalism, in which excessive greed

---

# spirit gets left behind

and selfishness further separate individuals and nations, while increasing the risk of international conflict.

Indeed, we have made extraordinary intellectual and technological progress in the 20th century. Within the century, we went from wagons powered by horses to spacecraft powered by nuclear energy; from bicycles to airplanes and from the telegraph to the Internet.

On the other hand, in the emotional and spiritual development realm, we seem to have regressed. Two brutal world wars and barbaric atrocities against humanity made the 20th century one of the most violent in human history.

While intellectual capability evolved at a remarkable pace, other equally important modes of intelligence remained stagnant, and in some cases even degenerated. While the cities became illuminated by electric light engineered by scientific intelligence, the human spirit was left out in the dark.

As I observe the world where there is

growth without development, freedom without responsibility, democracy without justice and rhetoric without meaning, I realize that there are many very old patterns time has not been able to change. Maybe time has gone nowhere. And yet, how did the world manage to change so quickly?

At least I now realize that it is not a personal aging issue, but a collective sociological drama of which I am a part. It is the world, not I, who got older so fast. Unfortunately, it did not get wiser in the process.

---

*Sebastian de Assis, Ph.D., is a free-lance writer and educator. He is the author of "Teachers of the World, Unite" and the upcoming book "Evolution in Education."*