

Man and the atom—by the year 2000*

When it comes to speaking about the atom in the year 2000, I am not in as bad a position as it might seem, mainly because of three things. First, although we have never seen the nucleus of the atom, we have seen what it can do—both destructively and constructively, and we know also of its ever-growing potential for peaceful uses. Second, the year 2000 is not that far off. (To some it is already too uncomfortably close to be a visionary future.) And, finally, I am not going to confine myself to the state of affairs in the year 2000. Even though everyone seems to be talking about that year, we are not going to be able to fall asleep like some modern-day Rip Van Winkle and wake up in a utopian or nightmarish (take your choice) age three decades from now.

We are already very much involved in making that age, and the next thirty years will see us engaged in what may be the most crucial struggle of mankind's existence—the struggle to prove that one "mankind" as a physical entity and not just as a glorious idea can be created and can survive. In this sense I am talking about mankind as a global civilization—men and nations not only coexisting with each other and with nature but essentially living and acting as an organic whole. This is more than a utopian dream. *It is the new imperative*, the goal toward which we must all move. Though each may phrase it somewhat differently, this seems to be the consensus of most of the thoughtful philosophers, scientists, and educators speaking, writing, and thinking today. There seem to be few if any viable alternatives to moving in this direction.

I do not wish to sound like the voice of doom, but I would not fulfill my obligation as the final speaker at this convocation if I did not stress this point and if I did not emphasize the responsibility involved in our near-term future—the importance of the vital day-to-day decisions and

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