

# Letter from an American Technophile and Artist

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December 11, 2001

The world is mildly resentful about the United States of America. The stereotypical American tends to think that America is going straight down the drain. Observers note that he has been thinking this selfsame thought for years and years. The stereotypical political opinions of the American depend, to some extent, on those of the one doing the stereotyping. If the stereotyper is a libertarian, the American thinks that the government needs to be stronger and better-funded, and this thought disgusts the stereotyper. If the stereotyper is a communist, the American is the biggest capitalist pig in the world, willing to sacrifice vast swaths of idealism for money. If the stereotyper's political beliefs are somewhere in between, it is guaranteed that the American holds as close to exactly the opposite of the stereotyper's beliefs as is possible.

The world is also resentful at my country because of its immense prosperity. The country is full of Americans, who are incredible mean bastards with no organization, but who somehow manage to be clever and successful.

To an American technophile such as myself, the American public seems to be quite villainously uneducated, argumentative, and headstrong. The American supports censorship, a subject which sets off a hairtrigger in the technophile's brain. The technophile has seen what true lack of censorship and inhibition can do: even without a face-to-face meeting, people get to know each other incredibly well. People can become wise in a truly tiny timespan. Many technophiles have read *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* by Douglas Hofstadter. In the book, one of Hofstadter's subjects is the impossibility of creating a rule to decide whether something is "good" or "bad" (for instance). Programs that attempt to censor out only "bad" content from the Worldwide Web can never censor only the pornography, nor even censor all of it. Everyone fears being the one whom some misguided program decides is a fornicator.

To an American performing artist and beginning poet such as myself, the American public seems to be ignorant, unappreciative, and incapable of perceiving beauty. The American does not care if a certain piece by Vivaldi leaves me breathless when I listen to it. The American cares about the way that today's youth are going to hell in a handbasket because of the terrible influence of death rock and other evils. The American does not care if a certain poem by Rumi dissects the nature of the Universe while only actually talking about what one could say in a conversation. The American cares about the New York Times bestsellers. I want every american to read the poem *Like This* by Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks.

...When someone mentions the gracefulness of the night sky, climb up on the

roof and dance and say, *Like this?* . . .

The fact that artists can exist in America is a credit. America is not all that bad. I get nationalistic sometimes, like when I read the Declaration of Independence. Then I remember that the government doesn't actually care about the Declaration of Independence anymore, and that Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness are not the easiest items to find, especially in good old America, where the first place the American would look for them is Wal-Mart.

Now all of the planes have landed  
And the soldiers are in their beds  
Smoke rises from their clothing  
And sweet dreams through their heads

Truth faced leaves a strange taste  
When joy and sadness meet  
A country rain on a city street  
This life is bittersweet

—Moxy Früvous, “Bittersweet”