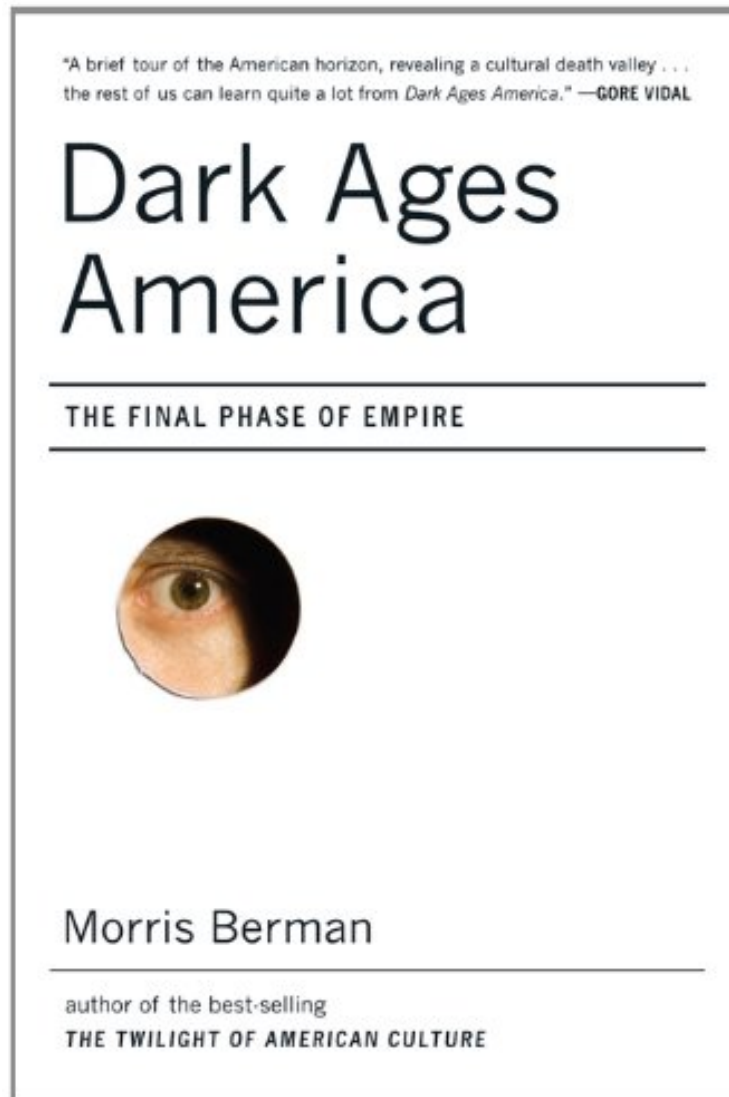


(Download ebook) Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire

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Morris Berman

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Morris Berman : Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Gripping Description of Where We AreBy Frances C. Fowler"Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire," by Morris Berman, paints a somber picture of the contemporary United States. In a 330-page analysis that I found hard to put down, the author first describes the symptoms of decadence so apparent in the United States today and then devotes four chapters to an outline of American foreign policy from McKinley to Bush II. He ends with three chapters that hammer his central points home.This is not a hopeful book. Berman believes that 9/11 was the last wake up call for the United States. However,

instead of waking up, American leaders intensified the very behaviors that led to the terrorist attacks in the first place: military interventions in Muslim countries; arrogant treatment of all countries (even supposed allies) that disagreed with them; and excessive confidence in what can be accomplished by bombing cities to smithereens. He believes that American decline is proceeding rapidly, and that in the foreseeable future another powerful country or group of countries will assume world leadership. This book isn't without its flaws. Two that annoyed me at times were Berman's tendency to personify history and his uncritical admiration of the Enlightenment. Nonetheless, anyone who wonders why the United States is in trouble should read this important book. 16 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

The Dark Path By E. Flynn Quite simply, Morris Berman thinks America is going down! His book is a very comprehensive examination of American cultural, geopolitical, economic, and urban development. He looks at where we are now and the history that got us here. And then projects the direction we as a society are going, economically, culturally and politically. The title of "Dark Ages America" was chosen by Mr. Berman because of the similarities he sees with the present day United States and post Roman western Europe in the aftermath of the fallen Roman Empire; the dominance of religion over reason, failing education, and most significantly, "...the integration of religion, the state, and the apparatus of torture...." (p 2). Remember those shocking images of prisoner mistreatment that emerged from the American controlled prison in Iraq, Abu Ghraib? For me, the Abu Ghraib scandal was the most dire warning to date of something gone terribly awry with the State of the Union. Mr Berman refers to the findings of Seymour Hersh; that the mistreatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib was ordered by Donald Rumsfeld as an expansion of operation "Copper Green", which consisted of physical abuse and sexual humiliation. American soldiers were ordered to sexually abuse prisoners of war??? Those prisoners were captured in a war of aggression, started by the Bush Administration that tasked the United States military with invading a country that did not pose any threat to us, and had not played any role in ever attacking the United States. The Army reservists in charge of providing security at Abu Ghraib, were lead by military intelligence and interrogators (mercenaries) hired under private contract (p 224) to institute operation "Copper Green". This isn't the army of our grandfather's time. The Red Cross also confirmed systematic abuse of soldiers and also revealed that American military doctors, at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, "...collaborated in the interrogation and abuse of detainees"(p 225). Mr Berman goes on to deplore the lack of public outrage at the Abu Ghraib torture scandal. Rush Limbaugh, with an audience of twenty million, compared the mistreatment to a fraternity prank. Donald Rumsfeld remains unapologetic. As of 2006, no independent investigations were called for by Congress. Officers above the rank of colonel were found innocent of wrong doing by the military, although they did scapegoat a few enlisted personnel, imprisoning Lynndie England and others for the results of operation "Copper Green". The Washington Post is quoted as writing, " the worst aspect of the Abu Ghraib scandal is this: The system survived its public exposure.... Mr. Bush will perpetuate this systematic violation of human rights, and fundamental American values...." (p 290). One could claim that the 2008 election of Barrack Obama was the ultimate public rebuke of Bush Administration policies, including the legitimization of torture. But as of this writing, more than a year into the Obama presidency, none of the individuals responsible for authorizing operation "Copper Green" have been prosecuted or even investigated for their crimes, and the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba remains open, despite campaign promises to close it. Am I the only one to find these events and their unpunished outcomes, deeply disturbing? Berman goes on to question how healthy a democracy can be that accepts torture by its government. If maintaining power by any means becomes acceptable, then transparent democratic elections, the rule of law, and civil liberties are endangered (p 226). If it is acceptable to torture prisoners of war, where does it stop? Does it then become acceptable to torture family members of suspected terrorists, political opponents that advocate violence, political opponents....? Berman writes that, "...once torture becomes common, it undermines a societies' democratic norms, whereby a nation is defending what it stands for by subverting its own values in order to defend them" (p 226). And if torture is okay, whats wrong with taking away a few civil liberties? If all of this seems too fantastical to the casual reader of this review, the reader should be made aware of the article in Newsweek of July 2004, that the Bush Administration considered postponing the presidential election of 2004, citing national security concerns (p 226). Among many other topics, Berman examines the American culture of "radical individualism" and its manifestations. According to Berman, in the modern American culture of obsessive individualism, people treat each other badly on a daily basis (p 288), and everyone loses (p 286). We are losing our ability to empathize with others. A large portion of the American public doesn't support government spending on social programs because they have accepted a culture of competition (individualism) that regards the poor, sick, disabled, imprisoned, as losers. The book also examines modern America's structural weaknesses, such as an over dependence on imported oil because of poor urban design, ever expanding suburbs farther and farther away from our metropolitan centers. Poorly designed cities that cater to the automobile and shopping, that are hostile to people, leading many Americans to travel to foreign destinations in search of people friendly environments. A voracious military industrial complex and outrageously high military spending. A general decline in public education and an informed public. On page 297, Berman quotes a critic of our culture in an online book review, "If the populace of the future is made up mostly of ignorant, ahistorical, consumer drones with no concept of how a civilization is made possible and what it takes in order to maintain the precious gains of civilization, then aren't we looking into the abyss?" I have just scratched the surface of the content

contained within this book, complimented with some excellent analysis. I gave it four stars instead of five because of its academic writing style that infuses too many references into the text, and an overly pessimistic outlook that lacks any constructive suggestions to avoid the abyss. My own suggestion for a brighter future, besides reading and discussing this book or one of similar subject matter, is for all Americans to insist that no one is above the law, that war criminals, whether foreign or domestic, be brought to trial. Every American should also insist of every federal politician, before any tax raises or social program cuts are entertained, that the military budget be cut in half (Its not defense if you are the one attacking). And finally vote for politicians that promise to maintain the separation of church and state. Whether you are religious or not, once one religion or denomination achieves political dominance they won't stop until every American is forced to adopt their religious belief. Our Founding Fathers learned long ago how destructive and violent religious conflict can be. 22 of 22 people found the following review helpful. The painful, ugly truth from a modern Cassandra By Tim Lukeman I'm currently reading this book again, after having read it when it first appeared -- and what seemed all too possible then has become far more probable now. The terrifying crash of the economy, the toxic sludge of brain-dead mass-market entertainment, the stridency fear-driven hysteria of fundamentalism, and the desperate hunger for comforting but empty illusions of security ... it's all around us, isn't it? Just as Morris Berman wrote in these depressingly prescient pages. No need to go into great detail after so many fine reviews already posted here. Berman's thesis is buttressed with countless sources extensive scholarship, but he comes to a starkly simple conclusion: what we knew as American culture, however much of it was real however much was an ideal, is collapsing in on itself. And it's doing so at frightening speed. Something he makes quite clear is the complicity of the public in its own destruction. So many people have willingly abdicated critical thought, basic skepticism, and personal autonomy ... all for the promise of being sheltered, protected from endless dangers, and given scapegoats to allay their nagging doubts. And the corporate/political machine is only too happy to oblige, churning out high-tech gadgets, overblown "inspiring" bromides, and thought-killing entertainment that's supposed to fill the yawning hole where a soul used to be, but only makes it deeper hungrier still. The comparison to the falling Roman Empire is apt. We've got our bread circuses, we've got our barbarians du jour, we've got a shrinking middle class, and we've got our disposable public figureheads. Bookstores close, libraries discard more more, schools teach to the test (and students learn nothing), corporations sell glittering garbage make us believe that we simply MUST have it -- in fact, we just saw the latest story of people being trampled killed in the lemming-like rush for holiday sales. So what's to be done? Well, unlike many such books, there aren't any miracle solutions to be found in the final pages. Berman sees a coming Dark Age as inevitable, so any hope for the future must be placed on whatever comes after that. Assuming that there is an "after that," of course. An appallingly dire prospect! Now, I'm not one of those who looks forward to such a dismal scenario. It would please me no end to see Berman proven 100% wrong, and my own concerns revealed as nothing more than frantic "the-sky-is-falling!" alarmism. But the more I see of the sheer crassness, the sheer mindless ugliness, of American culture, the more I feel that Berman is indeed a modern Cassandra ... and like the original, doomed to prophesy the truth to a disbelieving public. Meanwhile, we must do our best to live as civilized beings, as if we lived in a civilized world, not only preserving what's best, but embodying it as well. Most urgently recommended!

In *Dark Ages America*, the pundit Morris Berman argues that the nation has entered a dangerous phase in its historical development from which there is no return. As the corporate-consumerist juggernaut that now defines the nation rolls on, the very factors that once propelled America to greatness—extreme individualism, territorial and economic expansion, and the pursuit of material wealth—are, paradoxically, the nails in our collective coffin. Within a few decades, Berman argues, the United States will be marginalized on the world stage, its hegemony replaced by China or the European Union. With the United States just one terrorist attack away from a police state, Berman's book is a controversial and illuminating look at our current society and its ills.