A MODEST PROPOSAL,

FOR THE

Benefit of the PUBLIC WELFARE,

TO

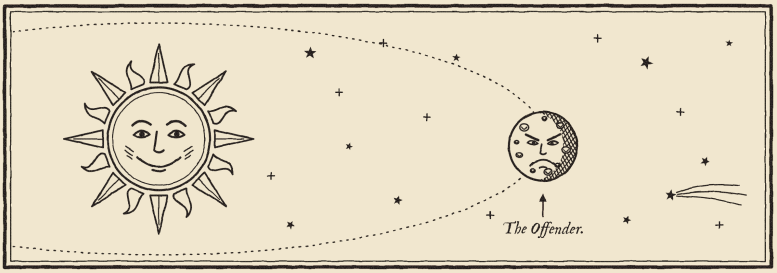
DESTROY MERCURY.

By JOSH CINCINNATI.



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A MODEST PROPOSAL,

for the Benefit of the Public Welfare, to Destroy Mercury.

WE STAND at the cliff's edge of a revolution, unsure which way the wind will blow. Unprecedented automation of labor creeps toward humanity, and with it, an uncertain fog of anxiety. How will we avoid intense concentration of capital when the marginal cost of human labor evaporates? Will this growing divide between disempowered labor and hyperscaled capital precipitate a class war to end all class wars? Or will a larger threat overshadow these already grave concerns: that these AI tools, hyped as our salvation, instead destroy us all?

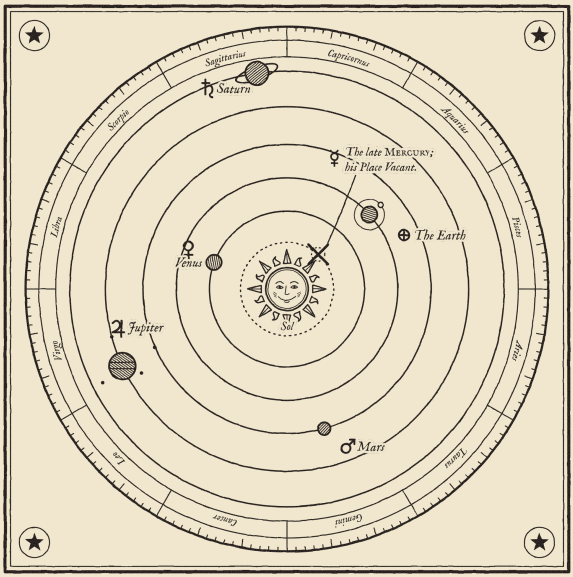
My friends, these are all difficult and important questions. And I'm afraid I don't have any good answers, save one: we should destroy Mercury.

Why Mercury Must Disappear

As you may or may not know, Mercury is a smallish planet that closely orbits the sun. Current observations suggest it is

Moreover,

the closest planet to the sun but one can never be too sure about these sorts of things so I won't hazard a definitive claim. It's very rocky, its crust mainly silicates, and due to quirks in its orbital dynamics, one day on Mercury lasts two Mercurian years (around 176 Earth days). The temperature varies wildly – nearly cold enough to liquify oxygen at night, but incidentally hot enough to boil mercury during the day. And owing to some peculiarities of celestial mechanics that beguile the intuition of most people who aren't rocket scientists, it is the hardest planet to get to in the solar system.



A Scheme of the Solar System, as Amended by the Author.

In short: it is a pitiless, barren rock that is pointless to visit and impossible to survive on. It does nothing for the solar system, and it taunts humanity's works through its sheer superfluity. The very existence of its gravity well is a stain on

the fabric of space-time. That God saw fit to keep Mercury in His Universe makes me doubt His existence, and, if anything, justifies the advancement of technology to Attack and Dethrone Him.

If that malign indifference is not enough to justify its destruction, there is a stronger metaphysical case to be made.

The Astrological Case for Obliterating Mercury

As we all know, astrology is nonsense. The positions of planets and stars whose gravitational effects vanish into the quantum vacuum on the surface of the Earth cannot, under any conceivable circumstance, change the course of your love life. Well, unless your partner is an astronomer and has a bad day at work. But you know, generally, they really can't.

Sadly for a society bereft of spiritual meaning and purpose, there are scores of people – mostly addicted to short-form videos on their phones – who believe that they can. And as far as I can tell, the sentence "Mercury was in retrograde" appears to be a catch-all for them to absolve themselves of accountability. "Sorry I got here late, Mercury was in retrograde." "I didn't see you in my blind spot on the merge lane, Mercury was in retrograde, you know how it is." "I don't love you anymore, Mercury was in retrograde."

Even more frustrating, most of these people are stubbornly incapable of thinking otherwise. Have you tried reasoning with them? I have, and let me tell you, it would be considerably easier to blow up a planet. Without Mercury, none of these rubes could ever say "Mercury was in retrograde" ever again. At best, they might say "Mercury was," while longingly reminiscing about a time their

retrograde reasoning gave them false comfort about their own inadequacies. Huge improvement on the status quo.

Now of course, they could point to other planets and stars and give new contrived explanations of their failings owing to newfangled configurations and alignments: the solution there is beyond the scope of this essay, but clearly, any expertise and resources we accrue in service of destroying Mercury can be applied to other planets, and eventually, every single star on every known astrological chart. We must walk before we run, however, so: Mercury first.

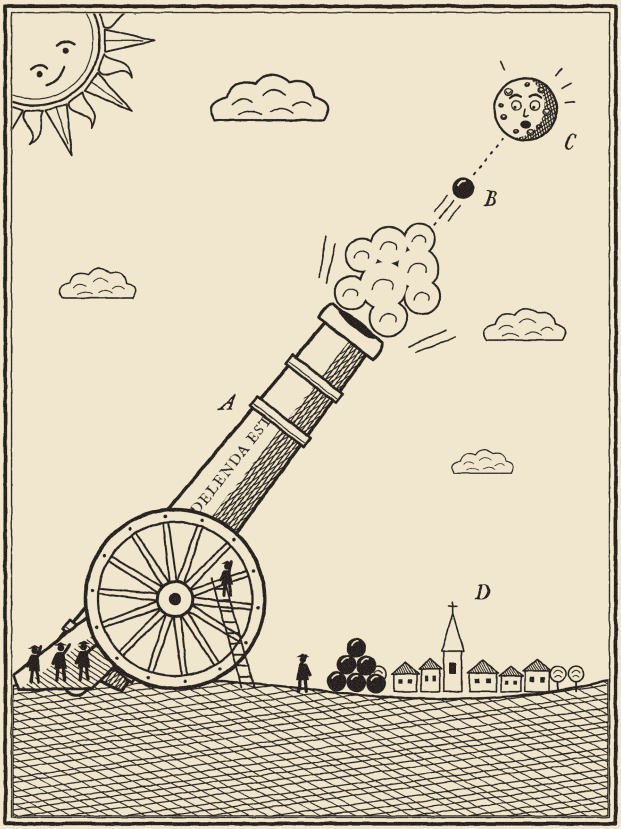
The Economic Case for Erasing Mercury

While we assuredly need little else to convince us of the argument, there is one more, baser case to be made. I am, of course, referring to the practical pursuit of profit, something which ought to persuade a lesser man if the intrinsic virtue of our cause cannot.

According to the very latest methods known to the science of economics (I asked Claude), it would take $\$30$ sextillion of today's money to conjure the $2{\cdot}10^{30}$ joules necessary to defeat Mercury's gravitational binding energy and send its soul into the nether. Assuming today's 3% global growth rate, and a conservative 50% of all global economic output redirected to the Project to Destroy Mercury, we could get there in 550 years. Not great, not terrible.

But consider how inspired, how motivated humanity might become, should the world align in this mission! Finally, a common enemy to toil against – not unlike the Cold War industriousness that brought us so much, but without human antagonists and the moral dilemma! Think of the wondrous

new things we might build and discover in our quest to fix God's Worst Mistake! Clearly, we can expect an acceleration in growth and progress, so at a paltry 20% GDP growth, we might destroy Mercury in a mere century. We may not benefit from its deletion from the fabric of reality, but perhaps our grandchildren might.



A Prospect of the Great Engine, as it may appear in the Year 2126.
A. *The Engine.* B. *The Projectile, of* $2{\cdot}10^{30}$ *Joules.* C. *The Offender, apprized of his Danger.*
D. *A Town, for Scale.*

be

Now I am aware that there are other proposals out there – ones that use Mercury's mass itself through self-replicating robot factories to turn it into some kind of planetary-scale superintelligent Dyson swarm.

I am less enthused by this approach, for a few reasons:

1) It feels like cheating.
2) The computer would be made of Mercury's mass, which is abhorrent and disgusting.
3) No doubt any intelligence generated by said cursed mass would turn against humanity and destroy us – no matter what "alignment" steps are taken. You can't align the malignity of Mercury, even when transmuted into a planetary calculator.
4) The point isn't to build a computer, the point is to destroy Mercury.

Let's not rush to recursively disassemble Mercury to apocalyptic ends – clearly, a paced approach can help society reach this lofty goal without costing us our existence.

Conclusion and thoughts

Having convinced you of the sureness of the cause to nullify Mercury's odious influence on the human soul, it would be unfair of me not to consider what humanity might have to sacrifice to get there.

Obviously, many millions (or billions) may be displaced as the global economy reconfigures itself to the cause of a century-long path to planet-scale destruction capability. Millions more may find themselves in jobs not quite befitting their station. Civil war and strife are, of course, inevitable, as

economic disparities will stratify Project Workers and everyone else. And in a hundred years, it's entirely possible society will fight over harnessing the destructive power we have created against some lesser goal, like destroying Venus, or perhaps a satellite of Jupiter or Saturn. Or even more alarmingly, other humans.

But I view these risks as an acceptable cost of progress towards a brighter future – one without the spectre of Mercury's shadow hanging over humanity's spirit, where life itself will no longer be in retrograde. Together, we can destroy Mercury.

FINIS.

