

Conspiracy or Natural Progression?

It was 1980, and his flight had been delayed. He walked over to the bookstand, hoping to find something interesting to read, when he saw a Scientific American magazine with the headline, “Is Artificial Intelligence Real?” He bought a copy and went back to read while he waited. The article wrote about how computer scientists had written code that set the foundation for computers to intelligently solve problems asked of them. The article referenced how scientists asked the computer to draw a picture of what an airplane would look like. To their astonishment, the computer, using Artificial Intelligence coding, rendered a drawing very similar to what an actual airplane looked like.

Further along in the same magazine, the man read an article about scientists who had performed an experiment that started using two rats- one female and one male. They placed these two in a custom-built, see-through enclosure the size of a two-car garage. The environment was automatically controlled; there was always plenty of food and water, and the enclosure was robotically cleaned daily. Soon, offspring arrived, and then offspring of the offspring arrived until, after eighteen months, the enclosure began to fill up. As the population increased and approached over-population, the scientists noticed the rats' behavior change. They saw that the females started resisting the males' advances to mate, first by running away and then, when that didn't work, viciously biting the males to fend them off.

Soon, the females began to live away from the males, and the males formed places within the enclosure for themselves. The females spent time grooming themselves and each other and raising the occasional offspring that were born, while the males often fought amongst themselves and began having sex with each other. Sometimes, the sex was consensual, and other times, it

was rape. The females were not engaging in sex. Soon, though, the enclosure became overcrowded, the robot could no longer clean it efficiently, and the social conditions deteriorated to gangs of rats, mainly males, roaming the compound and killing and raping those unable to defend themselves.

The scientists considered the experiment over, and all the rats were euthanized.

The man thought deeply about the two articles he had read. Then his flight was announced for him to board, and off he went.

The man had grown deeply disturbed by schisms, both in the past and now, not only in America, where he now resided, but also globally. The schisms seemed to have gone almost unnoticed at first, partly because he had lived abroad for a decade and a half in countries that were more docile than America and because he had decided to drop as far out of society as he could while remaining in it enough to run his businesses successfully.

He had seen a schism of this magnitude in the late 1960s during the protests against the Vietnam War. While returning from a demonstration in New York City, he was severely beaten by a group of middle-aged union workers while returning home. So he knew the vibe of an angry mob and the severity of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As the present anger grew into hatred towards others, and the division between those opposing the beliefs of others grew, he retreated more then and was retreating more now. He tried to understand the differences but never could. He kept trying as only curious people do, and as fate would and does sometimes get involved, he began to meet and talk to those on the “other side.” At first, the conversations didn’t go well, with either him or the others believing they knew who the other was but never asking them who they were. Each thought the other was ignorant, and

sometimes they just said it out loud. However, there was something they liked about each other, so their friendship not only continued but grew.

The man noticed that his news came from places very different from his friends. He never read what they were talking about on his news feeds. Nor did they read what his news feeds fed him. He tried explaining that he believed the world was being run by those who controlled the money—the millionaires, billionaires, and trillionaires. He also explained that he believed overpopulation was the real reason for today's anarchy, using data showing that the global population in the 1950s was 2.4 billion; by 2024, it was 8.1 billion, or a 227% increase. And it was climbing exponentially.

But still, there remained a distance between them. He couldn't find a way to understand the gap until one of his friends sent him a video. In the video, a woman speaks before a large audience about a conspiracy to control the entire human population, and she systematically details how that was happening. She was, as far as the man understood, retelling the rat experiment he had read about so long ago. However, that experiment showed what would naturally happen during overpopulation. Her account, however, included the very detailed embellishment of a conspiracy theory by unknown entities, including aliens, trying to create a world where humans would no longer exist in what she called the Post-Human Era. The audience gave her several lengthy standing ovations during her speech.

The man was impressed by her articulate, intelligent, and fact-based speech, but he could only believe her if he bought what she was selling about the conspiracy aspect. One could easily accept that everything she said was true, but replacing the conspiracy theory with it being a natural human reaction to overpopulation voided the dystopian theory she espoused. He then didn't have to buy her theory from her.

The man thought that if there was no conspiracy, then there would be no one and nothing to fight. So why were people so ready to believe a conspiracy existed when there was no proof of one? Yes, the woman's speech was eloquent and passionate, and while it could be true, it consisted of tying coincidences together and calling them facts.

Still, he was happier now, knowing that both sides agreed there was a problem. It bothered him that the conspiracy theory moved their attention from the actual problem of an overcrowded planet to a conspiracy theory, thus bolstering anger and outrage as people sought to find out who the conspirators were so they could deal with them.

He thought, *What if she was hired to promote this dystopian conspiracy theory she espoused so people would be steered away from the actual reason?* And he laughed out loud as he heard himself making up a conspiracy theory without facts to back it up.

Dystopian means relating to or being in an imagined world or society where people lead dehumanized, fearful lives. Notice it says "in an imagined world." No one can argue that wars create the opposite of an ideal society.

Tyrannical governments, environmental disasters, the use of propaganda, heavy censoring of information, the denial of free thought, loss of individuality, and heavy enforcement of conformity create dystopias. Over-population isn't listed as one of the causes, perhaps because the definition hasn't been updated in a long time.

Artificial intelligence and overpopulation are facts, and both have reached exponential rates that are now unstoppable except by natural or manufactured disasters.

Written by Peter Skeels © 12-13-2024