

The Truth About Humanity: Humans Have the Power to Change

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Abstract

It was clear when humans first roamed the earth, that they would be different from any organism before. Human brains are capable of adapting to various environments and through this they have an evolutionary skill to problem solve. Humans have grown exponentially in population due the creation of technological advancements. However, as a result, they are moving towards their own extinction. Through analyzing evidence from science, religion and philosophy, this paper examines the true nature of human beings and how their nature to change contributes to the evolution of humanity. Science provides a foundational knowledge on the human brain and an explanation for human behaviors of adaptation. Philosophy allows for humans to question the meaning and purpose of humanity. A human being's capacity to change is evident in each big institution of human creation. This paper will examine the question of can human's true nature of change help fix their destructive ways or will their nature of destruction lead them to fall into an abrupt fate of extinction?

The Truth about Humanity: Humans Have the Power to Change

Long before humans roamed the earth, before there were houses, skyscrapers, planes in the sky and boats in the ocean, organisms who simply existed walked the globe. Dinosaurs did not question their purpose on earth. They had primal instincts that they developed and listened to for 165 million years until an asteroid hit earth resulting in their mass extinction. Humans came into the picture 65 million years later and changed everything. Since the start humans have asked questions and found solutions to problems that threatened their survival. However, there are questions that even the most intelligent philosophers and scientists cannot answer, the question of human nature. What purpose do humans have on this planet? Will humans destroy everything due to their own selfishness or will humans come together to save the planet? This question has lingered throughout man's duration on earth, where in which humans have evolved and adapted to the changing environments around them. Through cultural, industrial and technological innovation, humans have changed the course of history on earth. Despite extraordinary anthropological advancements: poverty, war, and climate change are all consequences of the growth of technology that are leading humans towards a horrific fate. The relationship between human nature and our fate as humans has heavily relied on technological and evolutionary advancements made to sustain human life. Therefore, humanity's fate has relied on a strong human instinct to adapt and change to the environment. Evidence in this essay will show that humanity's true nature is to grow and change throughout time. Due to humanities' fast paced growth, and their reliance on destructive technology, they are heading towards an abrupt extinction. However, the human race, unlike any other organism, has the capacity to change, but they have to choose to do it in time to save themselves.

Before we can discuss the true nature of humans, first we must look at the relationship between human nature and its connection to our fate. Starting from the beginning, scientists in the *New York Times* have concluded that the first recorded evidence of human life on earth appeared between “five and seven million years ago” (Wilford, 2002). Meaning, despite all odds humans have found a way to survive through evolution of technological advancements. Starting as hunter and gatherer tribes and evolving into large industrial countries, humans have come a long way. However, it is important to acknowledge that somewhere between making spears with sharp edges of rock and the creation of industrial factories, human technology turned from benefiting quality of life into destroying it.

Prior to European contact in the Americas and the rise of industrialization around the world, humans only produced what they needed according to what the environment gave them. Indigenous people lived on earth, “within the limits set by nature, recognizing their dependency on it and protecting it,” (Weston, 2022). They adapted to the conditions of their environment and created ways to survive sustainably. Simple adaptations such as creating settlements near fresh water sources and planting crops according to the season kept natives alive and growing for generations before European technology. They relied primarily on hunting for food. Native American tribes used every part of the animal they caught, according to historians from *NCPEdia* they used the excess for “clothing, blankets, and tools made of antler and bone” (DiNome, 2008). In recognizing that the animal gave their life, natives never wasted any part of the carcass in their process of hunting. Indigenous tribes used their knowledge of nature as technology to preserve forest through controlled burns. The idea was that through burning certain parts of forests down the vegetation would grow back with more nutrients in the soil and thus promote regeneration. Through indigenous adaptations to the environment and creation of

technology, successful complex civilizations were created and lasted for thousands of years. The Mayan, Aztecs and Incas in Central and South America are examples of highly complex indigenous civilizations who practiced advanced medicine, philosophy and agriculture prior to the introduction of European settlers and technology which as result completely decimated indigenous populations in the Americas and West Indies.

While indigenous civilizations had technological growth in North and South America, across the ocean in Europe and Asia, societies were having technological advancement of their own. In Europe the use of gunpowder in firearms in the 14th century, and the printing press in 1436 by German gold smith Johannes Gutenberg (Roos, 2023) changed the course of human history. By spreading these creations around the continent, gunpowder began the start of the more deadly and advanced warfare. The printing press allowed a larger access to books and philosophical ideas from around the continent that the lower class could not acquire before. In China, the production of steel, porcelain and spices led to large scale networks of trading that spanned across the world. These technological advancements brought great success and wealth but created greed and thus the start of European colonialism began. European expansion of technology into North and South America through exploration trips, brought death, diseases and warfare. Starting in 1492, countries such as Spain, Portugal, France and England were the direct cause of over 50 million indigenous deaths by 1600 (Woodward, 2019). The start of the transatlantic slave trade displacing roughly 12.5 million Africans in order to work sugar and cotton plantation in the west indies started in 1526 by European countries in order to generate wealth (Minz, n.d). The growth of technologies and the appetite of European societies continued its spread across the world introducing a new period of industrialism.

The transition into an industrial manufacturing economy starting in the 18th century in Britain and continuing into the second half of the 19th century in the United States from the previous agrarian farming economy was a critical point in human destruction. The rise of industrial living brought by the industrial revolution drove people who formerly lived in small farming towns into large industrial cities where they lived in close contact with each other. Bringing societal ills such as child labor, unsafe working conditions, poverty and spread of diseases due to unsanitary living such as typhus and cholera. The large factories brought environmental consequences with them. Pollution of waterways due to leakage of factories into lakes, rivers, and streams, poisoned aquatic and terrestrial life during this time. Along with that, air pollution in the form of thick layers of hot smog that engulfed cities due to the excess use of industrial factories that released harmful emissions. One expert of that specific time period, that “[t]he amount of carbon dioxide released into the Earth’s atmosphere steadily increased at the start of the Industrial Revolution and has been rising ever since” (Hayes, 2022). Thus, human destruction has been increasing over time, since the introduction of industrialism. Capitalist greed and instant consumerism has come at the cost of environmental destruction and threat to human health. The industrial revolution was only the start of human destruction, and its consequences continue to bleed into modern times.

Modern human technological advancements led to what is called the great acceleration. This phenomenon is described as “[t]he rapid and widespread increase in human activity and its impact on the earth’s natural systems,” (Globoid, n.d.). This is correlated with the rise of industrialization and burning of fossil fuels that has increased CO₂ in the atmosphere. Unsustainable anthropogenic practices due to technology growth such as the building of dams, burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and the overexploitation of resources are all factors

contributing to climate change. One study which focused on the extent of human destruction, it has been shown that humans have changed the planetary boundaries of earth so intensely and in such a small period of time, that it is considered its own geological period in history, called the anthropocene (Weston, 2022). According to scientific research that has studied the environmental changes that have occurred since the start of the great acceleration. In 2019, The largest Level of Atmospheric CO₂ in 3 million years was recorded at 415 ppm (parts per million). Along with that, arctic sea ice volume is continuously shrinking 276 Gt/y (gigatons a year) and the glacial-ice mass had a recording loss of 665 ± 48 Gt/y from between the years of 2012-2016. Not to mention the earth's sea levels are also continuously rising around 2.70- 3.7 millimeters every year (Synvisc, Waters, Day, et. Al., 2020). The evidence that has been shown, states that humans have the potential to be naturally destructive. However, this paper is going to show that it is human's nature to evolve and change over time. During this evolution, they have created powerful technology that has made them more advanced than any living organism on earth. Despite this, in human's quest to advance faster and faster they have depleted the earth. As a result, without a major change they will seal their fate of extinction.

The famous and controversial quote "let them eat cake" was uttered by the French queen Marie Antoinette, as a response to French peasants complaining about their inability to afford bread. Regardless of whether those words actually came out of the monarch's mouth, it has been associated for hundreds of years with individuals who are out of touch with reality or who are oblivious to the suffering of the people around them. Due to the rise of technology and corporate billionaires in modern times, it seems that there are now multiple Marie Antoinettes. The rich can afford to own multiple million-dollar mansions while flying around the world in private jets that pollute the earth's atmosphere. At the same time, there are millions of Americans who go

without basic necessities such as food, shelter, and clean drinking water. Even with the mass inequalities that are seen in today's world, the modern Marie Antoinette's corporate billionaires are still hungry for more. In technologically advanced western countries, such as the United States, past generations have been instilled with the mindset of constant growth and expansion no matter the cost. Thus, consumerism has been the baseline for how humans within the last century have based their moral compass on. Charles Darwin believed that morality was the result of evolution. Is it possible that through human evolution of technology they have corrupted their own moral instinct with greed?

To answer this, it is important to mention that as much as humans are social creatures, they are also extremely selfish. This does not mean that humans are naturally selfish or destructive. This does mean that they are heavily swayed by their own selfish interests. Technology has made it easier for humans to access wealth, thus making it easier for humans to be blinded by greed. As stated previously, billionaires in recent years have shown their blatant disregard for human life through the exploitation of the working class. The company Amazon, owned by one of the richest men in the world Jeff Bezos, is famously known for its dangerous working conditions, unethical employee turnovers and absolutely atrocious wages. Although Mr. Bezos has the money to fix the unethical practices inflicted on his employees, he seems to be more interested in investing his money into going to space instead. This phenomenon of large corporations taking advantage of workers is not new and has been a constant struggle since the start of the first industrial revolution.

Wealth has always seemed to blind humans of their moral obligation. European countries have been able to get away with using African and Indigenous people as slaves for hundreds of years in the name of gaining massive amounts of wealth. It is worth noting, they would not have

stopped slavery unless popular opinion in humanity made massive social stigma and consequences to this type of oppressive treatment. Despite that fact, modern billionaires will continue to profit off their exploitation of poor people because that is what most benefits them. There needs to be another shift in how humans view expansion of technology over their own morality, however until then exploitation of labor and resources will continue as normal in spite of the detriment of the human race.

The introduction to the digital age has allowed humans the option to turn on and off their morality with each click or repost. Through instant access to information online, people see opinion-affirming news or posts that have changed the way people interact with their peers. Social media platforms such as Facebook have taken advantage of this, through the creation of an aggressive algorithm that was designed to addict the human brain to constant consumption. Thus, developing the compulsion to share or like information without a single critical thought beforehand. New York University researchers discovered that from between August 2020 through January 2021, “misinformation got six times more clicks on Facebook than posts containing factual news.” (Maruf, 2021). The algorithm takes advantage of modern human’s lack of critical thinking to peddle information that aligns with the individual's point of view. Without regard if the information is factually correct, people will still continue to share the fake news on their feed which continues the cycle of misinformation. This cycle allows for the formation of ecosystems on the internet that spew misinformed rhetoric, that have been used in the past to justify genocide of ethnic communities and other acts of extreme violence. Social media has been able to shape the morality of humans from what they consider to be right from wrong, without regarding the actual moral implication of the subject. However, as a result of the exposure to stylized social media content, human’s today are made more aware of the destruction

they inflict upon themselves. Subjection to consequences of said destruction whether it is first hand or through a screen provides an emotional response that gets humans to understand the true impact of their action. Through collective change, the human race has the capability to change their destructive ways, but it has to be now.

In today's world of the internet, every event whether it be genocide, war, or environmental disasters can be discovered from a couple clicks on a computer or iPhone. Humans now have more global awareness than any species have had in the past. This can be a blessing and curse, knowing that your species is heading towards a spiral of mass extinction is not a thought one can simply turn a blind eye to. Many people in this generation of the internet, as a result of the mass exchange of information have developed a feeling of hopelessness and despair. There are higher records of depression, anxiety and mental illness in teenagers and young adults (Pantic, 2014). Many feel betrayed by the government and other institutions of power for the carnage that generations of the past have left for them to pick up. It is important to say that this feeling of collective helplessness in younger generations is not new.

After the destruction of World War I, humans for the first time around the world saw the devastation of war. After roughly 40 million dead, due to the introduction of weapons causing massing killing and the atrocities of trench warfare. One researcher described members of the so-called "lost generation" as, "American writers and thinkers who found themselves disillusioned with and cast adrift from post-war American society during the 1920s," (Dent, 2023). It was hard for the young people of the world to move on after witnessing the firsthand destruction that humanity caused in their lifetimes. Much of the American authors and artists from this time found themselves moving into European countries to find a more liberated lifestyle through art.

However so much of the literature that is studied in classrooms across the United States are writers and poets from this era in time. Notable works such as the “Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and “The Sun Also Rises” by Ernest Hemmingway are examples of important novels from the lost generation that depict the collective lost feeling and thoughts of despair after the war. Many members of the Lost generation dedicated their life to finding answers to the philosophical questions about the true meaning of life and human existence. This occurrence repeated again with the next generation who fought in the atrocities of World War II. The youth saw firsthand another global war that resulted in a large scale of death and destruction through human made weapons of mass destruction. They then began questioning social norms, losing faith in mainstream religion, and began to look at philosophical ideas and developed a deeper interest in the arts.

Now with the creation of the internet, every citizen can see the destruction live from their bedroom, and the feelings of intense hopelessness that happened after both the world wars have been heightened. The phenomenon of “doom scrolling”, as stated by researchers in the department of psychology from *Yildiz Technical University*, refers to the “scrolling through social media and news feeds where users obsessively seek for depressing and negative information” (Jennings, 2020; Watercutter, 2020). This phenomenon has been recorded in the younger generation, who have especially been impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. During that time, everyone was stuck in their houses for months on end and the only form of interaction occurred through social media. As a result of the exposure to constant graphic content researchers have linked doom scrolling with forms of mental illness, such as anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Similar to watching a car accident on the highway, it is impossible for the human brain to look away.

Doom scrolling is a reactionary response that eases the intense hopelessness feeling occurring through the world's youth. Humans have become desensitized to acts of extreme violence that are committed by other humans, for this reason whether they want to admit it or not, humans are aware of the path that their race is headed on. When people have seen violence in history books, on television screens and now outside their windows it impacts their psyches. It is up to humanity on whether to continue to be silent regarding their destruction or break the cycle of stagnancy to help save themselves from extinction.

In an effort to avoid hard truths, humans tend to compartmentalize and behave as if what they do not understand does not exist in their world. There are actions that cause direct harm to human health and existence are overlooked as a way to avoid feeling responsible and aware of the harsh realities of the world. Why do people continue to smoke cigarettes when they are known to cause illness to the human body? The answer is simple: humans hate confronting reality and love good delusions. Smoking a cigarette is a small joy in many people's lives and by ignoring the consequences individuals can continue to live life willfully ignorant.

Identical to every organism on earth, humans are creatures of habit. They have grown accustomed to practices that cause harm to the environment and most are unwilling to change, not because they want to die but because changing would be an omission that something is wrong. Ignorance is bliss. Simply choosing to ignore science and reason is easier than accepting your own inevitable extinction. For this reason, humans are really good at living in a constant state of denial.

The institution of religion has allowed for humans to engage in behavior that disconnects them from the real world in order to reject responsibility for human made problems and avoid the harsh truth of humanities fate. To be clear, this paragraph will not debate the legitimacy of

religion or shame people for their religious beliefs. Simply it is important to point out that religion is a main contributor for denial and ignorance based stageny in the human race.

A big theme in modern religion especially in practices of Catholicism and Christianity in recent years is the idea of “god’s will”. This phrase is something that many pastors and figures in churches will say in response to heinous acts of violences or natural disasters that occur due to the effects of climate change. By saying this, religious figures dismiss the urgency and importance of an event so that they do not have to acknowledge that these realities exist or that “god” allowed it to happen in the first place. Religion prays on the fact that humans hate being left in the unknown. Through telling people to entrust all their hopes, dreams, fears and confess sins into a single god in order to gain access to heaven after death; religion gives individuals a false sense of security to shield their discomfort. When this security is threatened by scientific facts that challenge their single perspective, religious individuals can easily pretend that they don’t exist. Living in this state of denial is extremely dangerous for the fate of human existence.

Dangerous mindset based in fear such as the rapture, which according to the *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association* is where “living unbelievers and the wicked dead now raised to life will be judged at the great white throne judgment. They will then be cast into the lake of fire, while the saved will live forever with Christ in a new heaven and earth” (Staff, 2017). In simple words, individuals must repent and give themselves to god before he comes to judge the human race. On judgment day, the non-believers will go to hell to burn for eternity and believers will go to heaven with god. This mindset enables religion to fearmonger and harass individuals into following their scripture. This allows for their followers to disregard facts and justify brutality in the name of religion. Although this has been a constant problem since the start of religious practices. Religious extremism especially in the United States currently is at an all-time

high, no religion should be allowed to dictate how others live their life. However, this religious mindset is very intentional in how it goes about accumulating followers through fear and creates ignorance is extremely essential in certain political ideologies.

Ignorance leads to a rise of ill formed citizens and lack of critical thinking. Many political campaigns rely on lack of knowledge from their followers in order to achieve exploitative actions. This happens on both sides of the political spectrum, Democrats choose to ignore the war crimes committed by the Obama administration. During his time in office, according to *Vox*, Obama was responsible for the deaths of “2,436 people in 473 counterterrorism strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya between January 2009 and the end of 2015” (Williams, 2015). Through not acknowledging the war crimes committed, Democrats can effectively keep his legacy intact. Through the act of being complicit in the innocent death of civilians, the United States can effectively “fight terrorism” is a disgusting display of the mindset of political and social stagnancy.

On the far right of the political spectrum, Republicans ignore the obvious actions of corruption and illegal activities from members of their own party in order to gain more power in the country. An example would be Republican congress member Matt Gaetz and how he has been able to be elected despite multiple public allegations of sexual assault and ties to sex trafficking of minors alleged against him. In addition, he has been ignoring how former President Donald Trump proudly admitted to sexually assaulting women and has been able to commit tax fraud and other multiple acts of corruption that he is currently being investigated for. Yet he still leads as the Republican nominee for president.

Both Republican and Democratic politicians encourage their followers to be stagnant in society and rely their trust in them in order to gain higher power in political offices. These

politicians do not care about the wellbeing of citizens for this reason, there needs to be a shift in how politicians get elected and hold them accountable for the promises they make during their campaigns. However, politics can keep people in a stagnant mindset but the science of the human brain begins to explain why humans can stay stagnant.

When faced with a problem that threatens their survival, humans have two responses: fight or flight. They can either face the threat head on and fight to survive or they have the option to flee and hope the threat doesn't catch up with them in time. These are primal instincts that go back to the age of hunters and gathers. Although times have changed, and humans go to grocery stores to get food instead of scavenging or hunting for it, the human brain has not caught up to that yet. The impending challenges that humans face today such as climate change is not something the brain cannot process because the threat is not running towards them with a gun.

Brian Lichel, a social psychologist that researches human responses to threats was interviewed by *The Guardian*, he said that, “[i]f they’re [humans] not escalating or the nature of the threat’s not changing...it is to be expected that the felt emotion is going to go down.” (Mertens, 2020). This means that if a threat to the human race is not immediate or ever changing, human emotions tend to disregard it or decrease the legitimacy of the danger. The changes of the earth’s temperatures are gradual, and for this reason in order to protect itself, the brain chooses to ignore the obvious red flags. Modern humans are living in constant survival mode to compensate for the unresolved stress that uncertainty in the modern world brings. According to the *Harvard Business Review*, Heidi Grant, a social psychologist, and Tal Goldhimers, the chief learning officer of EY America, threats of uncertainty lead to a “[decrease] in motivation, focus, agility, cooperative behavior, self-control, sense of purpose and meaning, and overall well-being. In addition, threat creates significant impairments in your working

memory” (Grant & Goldhimer, 2021). This displays how the constant threat of uncertainty in the current world has physical effects on humans today. These effects are harmful to their mental health, work ethic and ability to be present in society. For this reason, it is essential for humans to break out of stagnancy and willful ignorance now more than ever because they are entering a point of no return. The act of becoming aware is uncomfortable for humans. However, throughout the 200,000 years that humans have roamed the earth, there has not been a problem that humanity cannot solve. Although human growth has seemed to halt due to modern ignorance, there is hope in the future generation of breaking cycles created due the ignorance of the past.

Conclusion

Through evaluating the effect of anthropogenic technology, it can be concluded that humans are naturally destructive. However, it is not their nature to destroy. I believe that the true nature of humans is to evolve technologically and socially. Historically humans are social creatures, when motivated towards the common good of others, they achieve great things. When motivated towards their own greed it results in the mass destruction currently happening. In the current political, economic and environmental state of the world right now, it is easy to be pessimistic regarding the human race. Human technology has changed the course of history on earth, starting with only the necessities that the earth provided. Then transitioning from small indigenous communities into large industrial cities. Through the mass industrialization of the world’s economy, anthropogenic pollution has increased.

Although humans are aware of the destruction that they are capable of, they are good at living in a constant state of denial. In modern times, the majority of humans live in immense poverty, and go without basic necessities, while the top 1% of billionaires are able to pollute the

earth and make political decisions that affect the fate of humanity. It may seem like humans are headed towards a quick and inevitable extinction but the majority of individuals are not ready to give up just yet. As mentioned before, when humans come together they can achieve amazing victories. Mass protests of practices that contribute to climate change, the creation of international aid programs that provide support to individuals in need, and collective movements for world peace, are all actions by humans in effort to halt their rapid movement towards extinction.

In determining the true nature of humans and how it contributes to their inevitable fate, it is important to remember that the “[o]ne key difference between humans and every other living thing on the planet is that humans have the ability to change” (Carson, 2022). Destruction can be undone through humanities choosing to fix the rights to their wrongs.

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