

Call Me Speciesist, I Don't Care I Love Humanity

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Abstract

This text will be an in-depth analysis of the innate good of human nature, nobody is born evil, and this paper will discuss the current pressing issues that are hurting society and pulling us farther away from our nature. Human nature is flawed in many ways, but everyone is born with a clean slate to be good, we can see through society that the environment is what often impacts people and turns them farther and farther from that innate good. Studies from psychology and sociology have proven this over many times. Things may seem worse than they were twenty or thirty years ago, and this is true in some senses that people are less happy than they were in the past. This is due to the rising economic challenges brought about by the flaws of this democratic system, the advent of the internet and social media which were supposed to bring humans closer doing the exact opposite and dividing us further with misinformation and bolstering self-esteem issues, and finally the failing of communities. In the past many people belonged to a church which gave them a built-in community now that Americans have become a more secular society many have lost those tight-knit communities and there must be a focus on redeveloping these community bonds that made life better for people.

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No humans are born evil, even some of the worst people were born with the intention to do good for the world. It may be easy to look at the world now and deduce that human nature is bad but that is only due to the rising economic struggles of the time making housing less affordable and it more challenging to raise a family. Additionally, the invention of the internet but more specifically social media has driven a wedge between people, allowing humans to enter their own echo chambers and avoid any voices that push back on their beliefs as well as the way people post only the best parts of their lives which we then compare ourselves to which hurts self-esteem. Lastly, the breakdown of American communities that followed the secularization of American society, many may argue that it was the removal of Christianity from American society that led humans down the path to where we are now. However, it is clear that it was not religion itself that allowed humans to live happier lives, it was the communities that came with churches that led to this. Humans are incredibly social creatures, and they need to rebuild these communities in a new modern world to be able to achieve the same or greater happiness levels from the past. I believe any one of these three factors could be the cause of the collapse of American society if we do not intervene and come up with solutions. While this may be upsetting to some, I do not think that necessarily the end of the American empire will be the end of humanity as a whole, as we have seen from the past, empires come and go, and it may be time for our empire to be on the way out. In these incredibly polarized times, we need to remember that the other, whoever that is, is not our enemy, may that be “the left,” “the right,” immigrants, communists, or whatever boogiemans we are being told is our true enemy. As long as we can keep in mind that all humans are good people who just want to be able to survive, maybe raise a

family, and look after their friends and those that matter to them, then humanity should be alright, assuming Earth does not get struck by a massive asteroid.

Economic Struggles

Much of the conflict in America today comes down to economic struggles. Some would argue that it is the fault of capitalism, this is only the half-truth. Capitalism is responsible for the economic struggles in some ways because it is set up as an ever-growing profit-seeking market. However, much of the success and productivity we have seen in the country as well as throughout the world is because of capitalism. The issues come from the lack of regulation, especially in this country that allows the elite class to continue to take larger and larger shares of the total wealth, this pushes those below them into tougher and tougher economic positions. As one journalist points out, “10 percent of the richest people in the United States own almost 70 percent of the country’s total wealth” (Buchholz, 2021). This does not mean that we should completely do away with capitalism, at least not yet. Instead, we need to seek to further regulate the markets and elites to allow for the majority of society to take up a larger portion of the overall share of wealth.

During what many consider the most economically equitable time in America, the overall wealth was spread more evenly throughout the population. Yes, there were problems for women and people of color. Still, in many ways, their economic opportunities were also better during this time, and the conflicts for those groups came from other issues, such as racism or sexism. Let's look at other examples of Western countries throughout the world and even some non-Western countries. We can clearly see that the recipe for happiness in your population is a large middle class that feels comfortable with their share of the wealth and their availability of economic prospects. Research shows, “For the seventh year in a row, Finland has landed the top

spot on the World Happiness Report's annual ranking of the happiest countries in the world" (Fernandez, 2024). It appears that even in countries where upward class mobility is almost impossible, the simple economic feature of people having access to their most basic needs, shelter, food, and family can almost guarantee a happy population base.

Throughout much of Western Europe, especially Scandinavian countries, which some like to call socialist, you can see largely strong happy populations. Why is this? Well, for one these countries are not actually "socialist" in the textbook meaning of the word, they engage in capitalism just like we do but in a more heavily regulated way. They have guaranteed access to privileges (or rights, depending on who you're asking) like healthcare, education, childcare, maternity, and paternity leave. All of these privileges are guaranteed by law, not up to the whims or wishes of the powerful corporations that employ you. Sure, these countries oftentimes have higher taxes than most Americans regularly pay, but the benefit gained far outweighs this tax discrepancy. Hypothetically, in countries like Sweden or Finland, you may pay \$250 a month on income tax, whereas in America we may only pay \$150, but instead, Americans pay \$300-\$400 a month for health insurance or sometimes even more. Other economic problems for many in this country have to do with affordable housing, some of this comes down to where people choose to live, but it is not that simple. Whitehouse.gov explains, "Over the last three decades, American families have experienced a rise in the costs of many necessities that has made it difficult for them to attain economic security" (Whitehouse.gov, 2021).

We could choose as a nation to build more housing, both single-family homes and high-density housing like apartments or condos for places that have less land available for development. But this would bring down the cost of housing which hurts homeowners, investors, and private equity groups that use these assets as investments. We could also create restrictive

laws around who could own homes and how many, thus limiting the number of investment properties that are owned by landlords or investment groups that have no incentive to lower prices or interest in housing becoming cheaper because it would then impact their bottom line. Additionally, there are inherent problems with the way that large corporations operate and their duty to generate profits. According to Northwestern University, “[CEOs] need to maximize the value of the corporation and act in its best interest” (Northwestern University, 2019). This gets into a complicated economic territory, but for certain industries at a minimum, there should be no legal obligation to the shareholders to continue to grow profit. This is a complete contradiction to what should be the shared goal of certain industries like healthcare, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, food, power, utilities, education, and I would argue even social media platforms. I would pose the question, how does it make sense that an industry whose sole purpose is to improve the health, well-being, and lifespan of all humans could be motivated by profit? This is an inherent contradiction, but this is the way these industries are set up. We need new laws and legislation that, if we are going to allow these industries to remain private and not centrally controlled by a government entity, they must have a mandate to do as much good as possible and be as affordable as possible instead of trying to generate as much revenue as possible for shareholders. New doctors must swear to the Hippocratic oath which says they must do no harm, generating profit for corporations has no place in the oath and it should have no place in this industry. These solutions when implemented together could have transformative effects on humanity and show those who are doubtful that human nature is in fact good.

The Internet and Social Media

The internet has been the greatest human advancement in the last thirty years and arguably even before that. It may be the greatest human advancement since antibiotics were

created or vaccines or the Industrial Revolution or the harnessing of electricity or even possibly since the printing press. There have been those who expressed worries or concerns about this technology of course. One author explains, “As well as being open to sabotage, for instance by a terrorist’s bomb whose electromagnetic pulse fries computer circuits throughout a city, complex electrical or electronic networks are subject to largely unpredictable collapse” (Leslie, 1996, p.95). Or even when he discusses the concerns around the turn of the millennium and the fears that it could cause global catastrophes because of issues with computer code (Leslie, 1996, p.96). These fears were valid and real, and because of that, we used the might of human intelligence to make sure these worries did not become problems. Additionally, the ways in which the internet has shaped and shifted our society in the last three to four decades were frequently steps forward only imagined in science fiction tales. But they became a reality in many ways, carrying supercomputers in our pockets more powerful than all the lunar spacecraft computers combined, video communications in real-time across opposite sides of the globe, or being able to purchase just about anything at just about any time from the comfort of your toilet seat.

These rapid advances were incredibly beautiful things in many ways however, humanity can only evolve and adapt so quickly and there have also been some drastic negative effects of these new technologies that need to be addressed. This shift towards building our lives and living in and around screens, mostly computers, was seemingly for many people a positive one, more people left factory or manufacturing jobs and gained employment behind a desk sitting at a computer. This had positives of course, fewer people were exposed to harsh chemicals or had to deal with the dangers of heavy equipment, but it had negatives that were not correctly predicted either. We began living a more stagnant life where the farthest you walked on any normal day was from your desk chair to your car in the parking lot. People have become fatter and sicker for

many reasons but undoubtedly one of them is a less active lifestyle thanks to the ability to work over the internet. As the CDC Points out, “the prevalence of obesity among American adults has significantly increased over time, with the rate rising from around 13% in the early 1960s to approximately 42% in recent years” (CDC, 2020).

Next, the internet became a powerful tool for consumerism, where you can buy almost anything from the comfort of your home, this often removes money from the local economy and transfers it to a central corporation like Amazon or Walmart. And goods from them may end up being cheaper than your local stores because of economies of scale. There is a good argument that this kind of access to consumerism by removing the normal barriers to spending is also not a healthy way of existing in the world. We as a society put too much focus on the important “things” in our lives instead of the things that truly matter. The internet is certainly responsible in some ways with its powerful targeted advertising and marketing to convince people that happiness will be found in the new phone, car, or clothes. There is no data to support this and the data we do have shows the exact opposite about happiness, that it is found in connections, vulnerability, and experiences with the people who matter to you. One journalist explains, “Strong social relationships are the most important contributor to enduring happiness for most people” (Vanourek, 2022). But it can be easy to understand how we have gotten so far off track with this issue when companies can see what you may be interested in and advertise it directly to you, or when you see people with wealth and power promoting a product or experience, we begin to believe that it will bring us the same happiness we perceive them having. Lastly, this all leads to the advent of social media, in some ways the most powerful corner of the internet. It sought to bring us closer initially, connecting people across the globe, and giving them the opportunity to share their experiences with each other. These companies which did not exist

thirty years ago have become some of the most profitable companies in the world, some with valuations larger than the GDP of small countries. According to Companies Market Cap, “As of November 2024 Meta Platforms (Facebook) has a market cap of \$1.398 Trillion USD” (Companiesmarketcap, 2024). This is more money than the entire GDP of Switzerland according to Worldometers.info Switzerland’s GDP was just over \$800 billion in 2023 (Worldometers.info, 2023).

These companies have brought us closer in some ways, but they have also torn us apart more than we have been in a long time, because of the programmed algorithms and revenue-generating goals. They have also done much to harm the mental health of many who use these products. First, let's dive into how algorithms have been responsible for creating these inescapable echo chambers where your personal beliefs can be amplified, and all dissenting opinions are nowhere to be found. Then, we will discuss the data on the many negative effects these companies can have on our mental health. Social media companies like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, X (formally Twitter), Discord, and Reddit are all programmed with algorithms whose goals are to increase engagement on the platforms for as long as possible, essentially, keep the eyeballs on the screen. As Dorcas Adisa points out, “Social media platforms use sophisticated algorithms to prolong user engagement” (Adisa, 2023). Other companies like YouTube, Netflix, and Google use algorithms in similar ways but they do not have the same peer-to-peer engagement of traditional social media. However, their algorithms can still be just as harmful. These algorithms learned that negative engagement increases time spent on the platforms much more than positive engagement, sometimes colloquially called “hate-watching” or “doom-scrolling,” this powerful effect alone skews and distorts reality making the world seem more negative or worse off than it actually is. Blaze Currie explains this phenomenon,

“[Algorithms are] measuring what captures our attention. As it turns out, anger and outrage, especially towards those unlike ourselves, is what best captures our attention” (Curry, 2022).

Additionally, these algorithms have often times pushed extreme or harmful content when they learn that this generates increased engagement, where children or adults might start on content about puppies or video games after a short period of time the algorithm begins pushing content about violence, drug use, eating disorders or suicidal ideations. Or with political engagement learning that young men will continue to watch when they are shown anti-women or hardcore far-right content like Nazism or white nationalism. And these companies are undoubtedly responsible on some level for these shifts in young men's beliefs as they have been further isolated from society and told that their existence is under attack. This all ties into the aspects of social media which has been shown, oftentimes, to damage the self-esteem of those who use it. Social media gives us a platform to share the best parts of our lives, which should be a positive thing right? Well, when we see only the best parts of others' lives it gives us an unrealistic view of society. Then, we begin to compare the best parts of others' lives with all the parts of our individual lives, this unfair comparison leads directly to low self-esteem and has been in some way responsible for the increase in self-harm for children especially girls throughout this country. According to Tori DeAngelis, “41% of teens with the highest social media use who rate their overall mental health as poor or very poor, compared with 23% of those with the lowest use” (DeAngelis, 2024). Further, according to the CDC, “the suicide rate for male teens increased by 31 percent between 2007 and 2015 and female teen suicides hit a 40-year high in 2015” (CDC.gov, 2017).

So, what does this all tell us? Well, the internet has been a powerful tool for human advancement in many ways, giving people safer lives and bringing people out of poverty. But

there are also some big issues brought about by this technology that require legislation, and we as a society need to take a good hard look under a microscope at these companies and decide on the best way to move forward.

Community

Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, we watched American society shift farther and farther away from religion in a more secular direction. Pew Research Center explains, “Christians now outnumber religious “nones” by a ratio of a little more than two-to-one. In 2007, when the Center began asking its current question about religious identity, Christians outnumbered “nones” by almost five-to-one (78% vs. 16%)” (Pew Research Center, 2021). This shift brought about many changes both positive and negative. We are all well aware by now of the negative effects of religion, repressing people's sexuality, teaching women to be subservient to their husbands and fathers, and sometimes giving people false ideas about the end times which can lead to apathetic views of our current world. But one thing churches got right was this in-built automatic community which some would argue is necessary for the happiness of humanity. Regarding the essence of human nature, some would argue that community is at the very core of what it means to be human in many ways. Yes, we are intelligent, can form complex ideas, have consciousness, and have the ability to reason, but some would argue that equally important to those skills, we need to belong. We have used these skills that come from our large brains to justify not needing community in the same way as before, but this is our intelligence failing us.

This is ancient knowledge and if you look at our ancestry and history it becomes clear. We come from hunter-gatherer societies that were tribal in nature and relied on tight familial bonds to survive and thrive. Our DNA is so closely linked to other primates all of which live in communal, tribal-like societies. It is the naïve folly of man to convince himself that we could be

so far superior to these species and somehow not bound by the same rules. So, what is the solution? Well, we do not need to mandate all Americans participate in a religion that would regress us back in those areas where we did make forward advances. Instead, we need to figure out how to integrate communities into our new modern society. And, importantly for our birth rate and the happiness of both men and women we need community spaces where both genders feel welcome and safe, so we do not fall into the trap of other modern nations with negative birthrates and isolated single young people. Some would argue a great first step would be passing laws instating mandatory paid public service for young people, something like other countries do frequently with the military but with more broad options than that. As stated in Galatians 6:2, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Shaver, 2012). As much as I am not the biggest fan of religion, I think this is a good lesson. We should help carry each other’s burdens, and if we need to institute a public program to do that then we should. Imagine a program for 18–20-year-olds where they were required to spend 18 months serving their nation in one way or the other, options could be military service, working in healthcare/nursing homes, homeless shelters, infrastructure, education, and non-profit industries. You may say, how is that any different from going to college, some would point out that college can also be a great place to build communities but not every child goes to college and many take primarily or exclusively online classes. This would be a great start to our new built-in communities forcing people to coexist with one another and build bonds in early adulthood. This would also have useful secondary effects of helping industries that need additional support, teaching Americans to be proud of their country and what it can accomplish, and uniting people across lines of class or wealth which frequently never get mixed.

Rebuilding community bonds will not be easy, but it can be done. We could also place focus on developing neighborhoods and cities in ways that are more community-oriented, we know the shape of suburbs can be isolating and lonely for many people as well as investing in beautiful new community spaces where people can hang out. Many believe video games are not going anywhere anytime soon but imagine if we set up free-use community centers where kids could go to play games together, instead of being isolated in their homes alone. These sorts of investments made in the community will not only help make us a happier nation, but they will go a long way to lowering this polarization we are experiencing. And reassure us of the good in human nature and the good in each other.

Conclusion

While there are certainly problems in our society, culture, and the globe generally, that does not mean that human nature is inherently bad or evil. We have problems that need to be addressed but human nature is also to solve problems and continue to move forward, our entire history is evidence enough of that. We will keep making the world a better place for everyone, eventually, maybe slowly at times, but we will continue to move forward. Humanity may even occasionally take steps in the wrong direction but that is not evidence enough of a rot in our nature. If we can focus on these issues of economic strife, the challenges of our new digital world, and the failings of community we will see drastic quality of life improvements in this country and any country that follows the same path. It may seem bleak at times but remember to trust in the process, have faith in whatever higher power you believe in or just humanity itself, and make the choice to move forward every day and things will get better with time, just as they always have done in the past. Regarding the fate of humanity, I think the only real answer is who knows. But I think rest assured we can all feel confident that as long as there are humans around

with the strength to push on, then forward, we will go. Finally, I would like to leave you with this one quote to consider.

“Where there is no struggle, there is no progress,”

-Frederick Douglass

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