

Human Nature and the Fate of Our Species: Navigating Between Progress and Extinction

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Abstract

This paper explores the intricate relationship between human nature and humanity's fate in the face of multiple global crises. It considers scientific, philosophical, and political viewpoints to compare the two starkly different opinions - a view that human nature's ability to progress will save us and the assertion that the nature of humans is the cause of our extinction. By looking at evolutionary biology, political philosophy, existential risk theory, and economic systems, this paper claims that human nature is a paradox at its core - on the one hand, it is capable of extraordinary cooperation, and on the other hand, it is capable of destructive self-interest. Our fate is not determined by a fixed "true nature" but by the fact that we choose to develop different aspects of our nature through social, economic, and political structures. The data put forward the idea that extinction is not inevitable, but our current path which is the cause of capitalist exploitation, environmental destruction, and technological hubris is putting our survival at risk unless we make a conscious effort to restructure society in such a way that our cooperative capacities are promoted rather than the competitive ones.

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What decides the fate of the human race? Given that we have these threats of climate disaster, spreading of nuclear weapons, rapid technological changes, and increasing political polarizations right in front of our faces, this question of our survival has moved from being a philosophical consideration to an urgent necessity. People are arguing about a question that looks simple at first glance: is it human nature that kills us or is it the one that saves us? However, this either-or way of thinking may be wrong. The materials we have covered this semester suggest that human nature is not a singular one, but a complicated one, determined by both our biological inheritance and our cultural development. Our destiny will not be decided by finding our “true” nature; it will be decided by realizing which parts of our nature we highlight through our social, economic, and political decisions. Two conflicting narratives, in fact, have their roots in contemporary research. The optimists, among them some evolutionary biologists and transhumanists, maintain that humanity’s extraordinary capacity for innovation, cooperation, and adaptation has, in fact, enabled us to survive and thrive in the face of existential challenges. For this reason, the very inventiveness that led to our present predicaments is the one that will be harnessed to produce the solutions - be they technological, political or moral - to the problems.

On the other hand, the pessimists argue that, ironically, the same features that have allowed humans to dominate the planet - aggressiveness, tribal loyalty, shortsightedness, and exploitation of resources - are now the ones speeding up our extinction. According to them, we are a species that will eventually annihilate itself biologically and culturally, and that its programmed nature is not able to evolve fast enough to existential threats it has caused. This piece advances the argument for a third position: human nature is one of the paradoxes in the world, it is capable of both

cooperation and competition, humans have both rational and irrational abilities, and humans have the potential to be both creative and destructive. Our fate depends on which of these human aspects we establish in and economically exploit and politically structurally institutionalize ourselves to live in politically culturally valuing. At present, capitalist social relations systematically promote the most destructive aspects of human nature while at the same time they suppress the cooperative capacities of humans. Without radically transforming these structures in a way that they not only satisfy our social but also our egoistic drives, extinction will be almost inevitable. Nevertheless, it is not “human nature” that decides the outcome but the social arrangements which can be changed.

Scientific Perspectives on Human Nature

Evolutionary Biology and Dual Nature

Through the analysis of Darwin’s Influence by Ernst Mayr, it appears that evolutionary theory has altered radically the way we understand the human nature. Darwin proved that human beings are not outsiders to nature, but rather the outcomes of natural selection and as such, they do not have a fixed essence but are populations which show variation and change. This revelation goes against the dominant typological mode of thought in Western philosophy since Plato, the idea that humans have an unchanging essential nature (Mayr, 2000). Instead, evolutionary biology depicts humans as the most diverse of all creatures with the individuals differing greatly in temperament, capacity, and behavior. Importantly, Darwin’s research on social species indicates that natural selection can justify the occurrence of altruistic behaviors in a society if those behaviors lead to the group’s survival. As Mayr puts it, in social species such as humans, cooperation and altruism make the group thrive, which then indirectly contributes to the individual fitness. Simply put, selfishness and altruism are both “natural” to humans - we have evolved for

both competition and cooperation depending on the circumstances. The point is not which one is our “true” nature, but which one does our social arrangements bring to the fore. By inserting chance and contingency in natural processes, Darwin also comes to challenge views that human fate is predetermined. Our coming is not already written by our evolutionary past. As Mayr states, evolutionary biology is a historical science where results are dependent on scenarios and environmental conditions, not on laws that are universal. This, in fact, leaves our fate as very much open - not certain extinction or assured survival, but depending on the choices we make within the limits we face.

The Problem with Transhumanism

Mariana Alessandri’s critique of transhumanism exposes the fact that some scientific methods which aim to change the human condition basically fail to see that human nature is not something to be fixed but changed. When these characteristics are discarded as “bugs” to be removed, these scientists abandon the very humanity from which these universal features come. On the one hand, transhumanists such as Ray Kurzweil and Nick Bostrom see no reason why we should not use technology to exceed human limits - pain, suffering, mortality, inefficiency - and thus produce a “Human 2.0”. However, as Alessandri claims, these are not really limitations that surround human life, but they are actually its very foundation. Death, suffering, limitation, fear, and anxiety are not barriers to humanity; on the contrary, they are part of what makes us human (Alessandri, 2020). The endeavor of transhumanists is in fact a disguised form of self-hatred. While at the same time aiming at removing those things that make us vulnerable and mortal, transhumanism, paradoxically, is on the same side as humanity, hence, ironically, the one that destroys it. This way of thinking reflects the pattern of pride and defiance against the cosmic order

which Alessandri traces through the course of human history: men propelled by curiosity who try to overcome their limits, from the “discovery” and subjugation of the colonized to today’s technoutopianism. Neither of them has delivered what they have promised - transcendence - instead, they have engendered catastrophe.

In addition, the only solution to existential risks posed by technology according to the proponents of transhumanism - i.e., more technology - is at the heart of the circular reasoning that has been a feature of the human response to crises of their own making. At the same time that questions such as those raised by Bostrom and other scholars bring to light 23 existential risks we now face, they also point out that the situation before 1945 was totally different, in the sense that there was only one risk (comets) and it was natural. Most of the dangers we are facing today are of human origin. The pattern is there, indeed: on the one hand, we are the architects of our downfall under the guise of progress, and on the other hand, we come up with technological solutions which turn out to be new sources of catastrophes. This does not imply that technology is the culprit who dooms us, but rather that the way we deal with it - by using it as a means to solve problems without looking at the social relations through which it is deployed - is what accelerates dangerous trajectories.

The Existential Risk Framework

The existential risk (X-risk) literature traces the risk or threats that may result in the extinction of the human species but does not adequately consider the reason behind the threats. Until the moment that humanity created the hydrogen bomb, the only threats to mankind were events that came from the universe, for instance, the asteroid impacts. In contrast, today we have to deal with the threat of nuclear annihilation, climate change, pandemic diseases, artificial

intelligence rages, and other threats that are the result of human activities. The fact that the number of existential threats has increased from only a few to quite a few within a span of 75 years only implies that something in the way of human social organization, not the human nature, as such, is systemically producing catastrophic risks. Climate change is only one of many examples that follow this pattern. The agreement among scientists is very strong: people are the main culprits by burning fossil fuels and engaging in industrial agriculture, and the result is that the Earth's climate is destabilized at a very rapid pace (Alessandri, 2020). In spite of the warnings for several decades, emissions continue to increase. This is not due to the fact that humans are naturally incapable of thinking about the long term or taking collective action - human societies have proven these abilities many times. The reason is, however, along the lines of Einstein's evaluation of capitalism, that our economic system is still encouraging short-term profit maximization and at the same time, it is externalizing environmental costs. The problem, however, is not human nature but the capitalist social relations.

Philosophical and Political Perspectives

Einstein's Critique of Capitalism

Albert Einstein's 1949 essay "Why Socialism?" provides us with a lot of new information about how one can use different economic systems to bring out different aspects of human nature. What stood out most to me was Einstein's criticism of capitalism as "the crippling of individuals", which he considered to be even more severe than the issue of material inequality or economic instability. According to him, in a capitalist society, education becomes a tool to train people in worshipping "acquisitive success" and turning an "exaggerated competitive attitude." Consequently, individuals are made whose "egotistical drives" get constantly emphasized whereas

their “social drives” get more and more weakened (Einstein, 1949). Einstein’s evaluation points out that human nature is made up of both solitary and social sides. As solitary beings, humans crave for self-preservation and personal satisfaction. While, as social beings, humans desire for recognition, connection, and contribution to the collective wellbeing. The degree to which these drives are balanced, determines, on the one hand, the individual’s character and, on the other hand, the social outcomes. Most importantly Einstein maintains that even though our biological nature remains fairly stable, our cultural nature which is taken from society is very changeable. This implies that social structures, on the one hand, can facilitate the development of cooperative skills and, on the other hand, they can choose to inhibit them in favor of competitive urges.

Capitalism is a system that in a very consistent way fosters the latter. By making production and - distribution dependent on profit rather than on human need, capitalism creates, in Einstein’s words, “economic anarchy” - situation where producers are trying to outdo each other in exploiting collective labor while at the same time following rules that are “legally sanctioned”. This system intensifies the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few whose interests are not aligned with the general population’s wellbeing. Private capital ownership of information sources makes objective conclusions and intelligent political participation by ordinary citizens almost impossible. Technological advancement is generally removing more jobs than it is adding, and those employed are trapped in a terrible cycle of perpetual uncertainty, thus they can hardly ever be sure if their jobs are going to be retained. For Einstein, this is a collapse of the most basic human relationships - those between an individual and society. People, as social beings, do not perceive their social dependence as a natural connection but rather as a danger to their survival. They become “unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism,” feeling insecure, lonely, and deprived of simple enjoyments. This process of social decay is happening at all levels of society and, therefore,

is turned into widespread alienation - the root of both social instability and individual wellbeing decrease. Einstein's alternative proposal - the socialist economy with democratic planning - has a goal of reorganizing society in such a way as to firstly satisfy and then cultivate social, rather than egotistical, drives. Socialism through communal ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods according to need, would provide people with a living while at the same time it would foster the development of the sense of responsibility towards others instead of that of power and success being glorified. Nevertheless, Einstein is of the opinion that this is not enough and a planned economy, on its own, might even be "individual enslavement" if it were to lack democratic safeguards against bureaucratic tyranny.

The Chomsky-Madison Debate on Democracy

Noam Chomsky's study of the American democratic theory exposes the ways in which elite ideas of human nature have influenced the political systems to control the popular will rather than to allow its expression. Chomsky, by scrutinizing the works from James Madison to the current liberal intellectuals, makes it clear that the leading American political philosophy sees common people as dangerous that might harm the society thus, they have to be supervised but of course they cannot take real decisions themselves (Chomsky, 2015). Madison's fix for "the problem of democracy" is a case in point. Seeing that allowing voting for all classes would threaten property rights - the poor may vote for redistributing the wealth - Madison engineered the constitution to do the opposite of democracy, to "protect the minority of the opulent against the majority." The Senate would serve wealth interests, not population. Balances and checks would limit people's power. The government would be handed over to the "better sort" - men of property and "independent circumstances" whose "refined and enlarged" wisdom would elevate public

views against majority “mischiefs.” Modern day liberalism still bears this aristocratic view. Walter Lippmann branded the public as “ignorant and meddlesome outsiders” that had to be “put in their place.” Edward Bernays was for mental “regimenting” as the way armies regiment the bodies of soldiers. The Trilateral Commission cautioned against “excess democracy” and advocated more “moderation,” looking back with a smile when “Truman was able to govern the country with the cooperation of a relatively small number of Wall Street lawyers and bankers” (Chomsky, 2015).

These elite perspectives are built on the assumption that humans in general and the working-class humans in particular are incapable of governing themselves. They need the guidance of benevolent superiors who have the wisdom that the common people cannot attain. This view of human nature is used to legitimize hierarchies of power while simultaneously labeling democratic tendencies as threats to social order. However, Chomsky juxtaposes this aristocratic tradition with a democratic one that can be traced from the seventeenth-century English radicals via Jefferson to the twentieth-century labor movements. Those democrats had faith in people as “honest and safe” guardians of public interest, though perhaps not always the wisest. They were for the power being distributed widely instead of being concentrated in the hands of the few, as they thought that ordinary people knew their needs better than the far-off authorities. This argument shows that disputes concerning human nature have never been only descriptive but also prescriptive - they acknowledge particular power arrangements. Arguments that humans are too selfish, short-sighted, or irrational for self-governance are used to justify elite rule. Arguments that humans have cooperative abilities and practical wisdom are used to justify democratic sharing of power. Part of our destiny depends on which one we choose to institutionalize.

Rockhill's Analysis of Liberalism and Fascism

In his historical analysis, Gabriel Rockhill traces the roots of liberalism and fascism back to one core argument: the story of how fascism, the most notorious enemy of popular democracy, was in fact enabled and repeatedly allowed by liberal capitalist democracies. This pattern exposes the fundamental contradiction of capitalism with real democracy, and, on the basis of that, it casts a shadow over the future of humanity under capitalist social relations (Rockhill, 2020). Among other things, Rockhill presents detailed evidence of the early European fascist movements that they, rather than trying to overthrow parliamentary democracies from outside, in fact, had emerged within them. The fascists in both Italy and Germany were allowed to run their way to power through the legal constitutional frameworks with the assistance from and the encouragement of the industrial magnates and the bankers who supported their electoral campaigns and propaganda through their money. After the march on Rome, the king invited Mussolini to create the government. After the presidential elections, Hindenburg offered the chancellorship to Hitler. Liberals did not just stand aside - Italian liberals supported electoral fascist laws and together, with some members of the parliament, ran in the elections with Mussolini's party. German Social Democrats declined a last-minute tripartite coalition offer with communists against Nazism. The reason system of this pattern was, that fascism's function was the most fundamental one: to be the surest guard of capitalist property relations against the threat of the organized labor and socialist movements. As Trotsky put it, "bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship are the instruments of one and the same class, the exploiters." When democratic processes put capitalist accumulation at risk, the capitalist elite were not shy to let go of democratic forms and give the green light to fascist repression. The velvet glove of hegemony would always be replaced by the iron fist when the capitalist social relations had to be preserved locally or globally.

On the international front, the Western democracies declined antifascist alliance with the USSR, did not interfere while fascists were at their work in Spain and supported the resulting agreements that allowed Hitler to extend his rule. Various American companies were more than happy to put their money into the Nazi economy, with firms like Ford and GM which profit the most through forced labor in the concentration camps. When it was all over, people like Allen Dulles were there to protect the friends in the business world from the exposing and punishing. This story is total destruction of the liberalism myth, which says that it stands against fascism. They both belong to different models of capitalist governance which use different means but still share the fundamental values of private property and capital accumulation. The real dividing line is not between the liberal and the fascist governments but rather between capitalist and anti-capitalist politics. To support this statement, Rockhill hearingly agrees: “one cannot be truly antifascist without being anti-capitalist.” According to this analysis, the question of mankind’s fate would just be as bad as the one of capitalism, if the latter would still be around. Whenever capitalism would be hit by a crisis of the economy, democratic forms would be the ones to take the hit. Besides, climate change and the over-exploitation of natural resources will be the causes of the very crises but on a scale that is far greater than ever before. If things go the same as they always have, the capitalist elite will abandon democracy and instead opt for fascist solutions to the problem of property relations. The question may eventually not be whether capitalism is democratic or authoritarian but whether it is fascist capitalism or democratic socialism.

Freudian Analysis of Anti-Abortion Politics

Judith Deutsch’s psychoanalytic study of anti-abortion politics exposes the way unconscious hostility to children is reflected in those political movements that, on the surface, are

committed to the protection of life. The contradiction - political movements that put the utmost emphasis on the life of a fetus and, at the same time, show a beautiful indifference to the suffering of the already born children - helps to understand how psychological mechanisms are capable of generating political views that are at odds with the speaker's moral stance (Deutsch, 2022). Deutsch singles out rivalry between siblings as possible psychological source of systematic neglect of children. Freud was the first to record the observation that children often react to the arrival of a new sibling with hostility and even to fantasize about the elimination of the rival. Though the majority of people get over such emotions, Deutsch argues that in some cases unresolved sibling rivalry may still exist at the unconscious level and reveal itself as bizarre phenomena: uncompromising care for the unborn fetuses accompanied by the indifference to the welfare of already born children.

The proof is quite prominent. Anti-abortion activists hardly ever show concern for the lives of already born children. They consent to the implementation of the measures that cause separation of families at the borders, where children are deprived of the most basic necessities and love. They neither care nor regret the killing of children by the military in Palestine, Yemen, Afghanistan, and other places. They reject the introduction of social programs that would help feed hungry children and give them access to healthcare. The United Nations reveal that, in 2021, Israeli forces killed 78 children, and injuring 982, while millions of kids suffered from lack of food in Yemen and Afghanistan, but these deaths barely stir the ones who claim to be the children's protectors. Such a gap gives rise to the idea that the anti-abortion politics mirror the children's death wishes residing in the unconscious mind rather than the life-affirming values. The pregnancy prevention obsession serves as a disguise under which the true hostile feelings towards children are covertly expressed - illegal abortions are prevented under the pretense of protecting life while policies that kill

children are supported. Fetus is elevated onto a pedestal (like the “gift” which older siblings receive from the newborns) and thus psychologically, one is permitted to either neglect or even attack a born child without experiencing contradiction.

According to Deutsch, this is linked to larger cultural patterns that rationalize infliction of pain on children. The child labor, which was the backbone of Victorian England’s industrialization (where children worked until death, and the employers made more money with each new recruit) and today’s America’s mass incarceration and family separation policies, are just a few examples of ways in which societies have deliberately abused children while at the same time making the loudest proclamations of concern for their welfare. The psychological defense mechanism of “reversal into opposite” - showing hostility through apparent care - accounts for the continuous pattern. For the future of mankind, this study tells that unconscious psychological dynamics can be stronger than the spoken values and rational self-interest. If the unacknowledged hostility leads to the creation of such policies that hurt the children under the guise of protecting them, then there could be similar mechanisms behind the actions that are harmful to mankind as well. The climate issue, despite the knowledge of its consequences, nuclear program, despite the extinction risk, and technological progress, without the necessary safety measures, could all be the result of unconscious death wishes being projected on to the impersonal processes. Freud named this the death drive - the drive for self-destruction that coexists with the life-preserving drives. The question of whether humanity will survive or not might be, to some extent, dependent on whether we can bring these unconscious motivations to the conscious level and in that way, have control over them.

Confucian Ethics and Political Responsibility

According to Moss Roberts, the Confucian tradition offers another framework that not only explains human nature and social organization but also questions the Western assumptions. Confucius supported “authoritarian meritocratic conservatism” which basically means that one has to exercise responsibility in proportion to power. When issues surface, Confucian logic suggests referring to the top authorities instead of going down to subordinates: “If the father is not fatherly, the son will not be filial; if the ruler misrules, his ministers will be disloyal” (Roberts, 2019). The main difference here is that the dominant American methodologies condemn those who are below and thus, minorities are blamed for domestic issues while other nations are blamed for the global conflicts. The American elites who are on the top rungs of the social ladder are never held accountable for the failures of their plans and strategies, yet they constantly demand that the common people obey them. This is a good example of the NSA surveillance scandal wherein the pattern can be clearly seen: after Snowden exposed the illegal mass surveillance, the authorities responded by blaming Huawei, a Chinese company for carrying out the same surveillance NSA is doing. Ethics, according to Confucian thought are directly related to politics rather than being two different things such as religious and secular domains. The integration that this brings about is that political authority has ethical obligations which cannot be avoided by putting them in different compartments. The leaders have to be the embodiment of moral excellence and take responsibility for societal consequences. Reform must come from the top if it is the case that the leaders have failed; it is not the lower class which has to be given more orders.

Confucian doctrines, for example, convey the idea that whoever is in charge must be responsible with their power if we want to survive as a species. Those in power over-indulging

their privileges while at the same time the working class is made to bear the brunt of the sacrifice is what is happening nowadays although it is exactly the opposite of Confucian teachings. The climate change crisis is mainly due to the choices of corporate leaders and politicians; however, it is the common folk who are forced to make lifestyle changes while the power structures are left untouched. One thing that Confucianism insists on is that the people who have the most power should be the ones to carry the heaviest burden and make the greatest changes. The author also points out that American rejection of Confucius is not merely an intellectual disagreement but rather a symptom of a profound anxiety problem. The principles of Confucius directly confront the narcissistic elite culture which is characterized by the tendency to externalize blame instead of introspection. The fight against Confucius Institutes - in reality, a matter of ideology rather than security - is a sign of the fear of American elites that alternative paradigms might expose the frailty of their narratives that legitimize them. The survival of the human race depends on this insecurity being replaced by an honest self-assessment and readiness to learn from the traditions which offer different views on authority, responsibility, and human nature.

The Paradox of Human Nature: Synthesis and Implications

Neither Angels nor Demons

The available proof indicates that human nature is not inherently evil or good, not destined for extinction, nor guaranteed survival. We are biologically programmed for both competition and cooperation, selfish and altruistic behavior, rational planning and emotional impulsiveness. As a matter of fact, Einstein noted that human beings are in a way isolated creatures looking for individual survival and, in another way, social creatures looking for connection and contribution. This duality is not a flaw but rather the feature - the tension between these drives is what makes

us human. Evolutionary biology shows that both competition and cooperation can be successful strategies depending on environmental conditions. Darwin argued that natural selection can even promote altruistic behavior if it is advantageous for the whole group, at the same time, it can be the source of competitive traits for individual winners. Therefore, it is not the case that there is one single behavioral pattern that represents our “true” nature. Individuals carry the potential for all kinds of behavior; the context decides which ones are activated.

Cultural evolution brings in more variability aspects. Einstein was very clear when he said that our biological nature is quite stable but our cultural constitution - acquired through socialization - is very flexible. Human societies, through the different aspects of human nature inherent in their institutions, values, and means of encouragement, have grown different facets of human nature. The scientific study of human societies shows that social behavior of humans varies substantially across cultures but is mostly influenced by the prevalent patterns and the kinds of organizations. This implies that assertions about a fixed ‘human nature’ that determines our fate are highly questionable. If a person asserts that humans are selfish and short-sighted to the point that no collective action is possible, what he really does is describing humans under particular social arrangements - mostly capitalist ones that are characterized by selfishness and short-term thinking. When people say that humans are intrinsically cooperative and can engage in long-term planning, they are probably talking about humans in different social contexts that foster these abilities.

The Social Construction of Human Nature

Understanding how social structures influence the potentials we develop is more important than finding our “true” nature. This is the main point that Einstein made: capitalism intentionally

promotes the egoistic side of the human nature by systems like consumption and market competition, and at the same time it represses the social side of human nature. The education systems create students who are competitive individualists through the process of socialization. The economic system rewards those who seek to make a quick profit from the exploiting the environment instead of those who aim at the sustainable use of resources. Political institutions concentrate power in the hands of wealthy people while creating obstacles for popular participation. Capital controlled media systems disable the possibility of objective understanding and intelligent political engagement. As a result, there appears to be a certain kind of human being, those who are alienated, competitive, insecure and short-sighted, and this kind of human being supposedly confirms the view of selfish human nature that needs to be managed by the elite. However, this is a circular argument. The social relations that are characteristic of capitalism produce certain human traits which are then invoked as evidence for the continuation of capitalist social relations. Moreover, as Rockhill's argument indicates, when democratic tendencies expose this system to danger, elites turn away from democratic means and employ fascist repression in order to uphold their fundamental allegiance to property rather than democracy.

Different social setups may have the effect of developing different human traits. According to Einstein, socialist economic relations would reward cooperation rather than competition, take care of the long-term welfare instead of chasing short-term profits, and promote democratic participation instead of the control of the few. Schools that concentrate on achieving social goals instead of individual success would raise students who possess different values and qualities. Political frameworks that are really accountable to the people would not only raise different kinds of leaders but also different characters. It does not mean that socialism would create perfect humans not even that it would guarantee the survival of the society. Einstein himself admitted that

planned economies could lead to the enslavement of individuals unless there are democratic safeguards. However, it would be consistent with the human nature to behave cooperatively thus social structures would facilitate collective responses to existential threats.

The Acceleration of Existential Risks

The exponential rise of existential risks from a single source (comets) to twenty-three in seventy-five years, with the majority being human-generated, indicates that our current social arrangements are not only inadequate but are essentially systemically catastrophic. Those issues like climate change, nuclear weapons, pandemic diseases, risks from artificial intelligence to name a few all have one thing in common: the root cause being the capitalist accumulation's tendency to multiply short-term profit and at the same time externalize the costs. One could say that the climate crisis is the flagship example of the pattern. It has been evident to fossil fuel companies for a very long time that their products would disrupt human survival, but instead of embracing solutions, they financed denial campaigns and impeded regulations because short-term profits were more valuable than long-term survival. It is not at all the case that this is irrational selfishness of the individual executives; rather it is perfectly logical within capitalist structures that get rewarded quarterly financial results despite everything else. The system's design in itself produces this effect irrespective of who is at the helm.

Nuclear proliferation is also a social product of geopolitical competitive game for dominance rather than security needs. As Roberts shows with the example of US militarization in Asia, the big powers move for the acquisition of dominance even in cases when it escalates the threats instead of diminishing them. The South China Sea tensions, to take one instance, are the outcome of the U.S. stubbornness to demonstrate its strength in areas where it does not need to

defend itself thus prompting the expected counteractions that add encounters instead of diffusing them. The risks to the technology from AI also come from the very same reasoning or logic. The tech companies are in a race to outdo each other with the development of powerful AI systems but at the same time they cut the safety measures as the competitors are pushing for urgency rather than caution. The winner company of Artificial General Intelligence is the one to gain huge economic advantage thus creating the incentive of safety breaches in the race to be the first place. This is the pattern that Alessandri sees whereby we create threats while calling it progress, and later we come with technological solutions that in turn create new risks.

The Transhumanist Delusion

Transhumanism is the last extreme of this pattern - trying to fix problems of pride with more pride. The idea that technology can lift human limits and make us “Human 2.0” is a perfect example of the attitude that caused the mess in the first place. As Alessandri points out, transhumanism is a project that removes the features that characterize human beings - death, frailty, limitation - and, in doing so, it is equivalent to killing humanity to rescue it. The hope of transhumanists that we can integrate with artificial intelligence, overcome death, and radically self-enhance without any side effects is a very strong case of ignoring past mistakes. In fact, in each case, going beyond human limitations with technology has led to new and unforeseen disasters. Why would this time be an exception? The increase in existential risks indicates an accelerating spiral where each “solution” to a technological problem brings about new problems that require further interventions.

Besides, the fact that transhumanism regards the pain, suffering, limitation, fear, and death as mere “bugs” of the human nature, from which we should get rid of, shows its profound

estrangement from the human condition. These are not experiences that interfere with humanity but are its very basis. A creature lacking death, frailty, and limitation would not be a better human but something else entirely. The transhumanist vision is not a proposition of human development but substitution - getting rid of humans to produce posthuman entities, allegedly superior but in reality, just different. It is a project that cannot account for the existence of existential risks because it mistakes their source. These threats are not the result of a lack of technology but of social relations that use technology destructively. Advanced technology without changing these relations merely equips the destruction with more powerful means. The answer is not in going beyond technology but in transforming society.

Conclusion: Fate as Choice

Human nature will not be the factor determining our fate as human nature is not one and it is not constant. We have within us the abilities of both cooperation and competition, both rational planning and emotional impulsive behavior, and both creative construction and destructive violence. Our fate is dependent on the capacities we develop through our social, economic, and political structures. At the moment, capitalist social relations are structurally rewarding our most destructive tendencies while suppressing our cooperative abilities. The consequent rapid increase in existential risks - from climate catastrophe to nuclear proliferation to technological threats - imply that going further down this road makes extinction more and more likely. Nevertheless, this result is not a foregone conclusion as social arrangements can be changed. The findings of evolutionary biology, political philosophy, psychoanalysis, and comparative cultural studies collectively point to the fact that humans have the capacity for extraordinary cooperation, long-term planning, and collective action when social structures are conducive to these capacities.

Economic relations based on socialism that direct production to satisfy human needs rather than to make profits, political structures based on democracy that distribute power widely instead of concentrating it, and educational systems that develop a sense of responsibility for others in students instead of making idols out of individual success - these alternatives could create harmony between societal incentives and the imperatives of survival.

Whether we undertake such transformations is a matter of political struggle. Elite interests are the ones that gain from the present arrangements and, therefore, they will resist the change, as Rockhill's analysis of liberal-fascist collaboration indicates. Popular movements that are a threat to property relations bring about a response in capitalist elites abandoning democratic forms and resorting to authoritarian repression. These battles will only intensify with the global warming because the ensuing scarcity of resources and the subsequent displacement will cause crises, which will in turn pose a threat to the stability of the society. Whether or not the popular forces are capable of raising the necessary amount of power to democratize the social relations until the elites stabilize the authoritarian regime is the question. The Confucian idea that the level of responsibility should match that of the power provides moral basis for such a revolution. The ones who caused the existential risks by their choices - corporate executives, political leaders, military planners - are the ones who should take responsibility for fixing them. This is not only through individual moral elevation, but also by making significant structural changes that hold the powerful accountable and decision-making distributive democratically. Einstein's warning about the possibility of a planned economy turning into a bureaucratic tyranny should not be forgotten. Socialistic alternatives need to have strong democratic safeguards along with them that could ensure that the economic planning is done for the popular needs and not for the interests of the

bureaucracy. To achieve this, there should be workers' control over production, the community's involvement in planning, and political structures that enable real popular sovereignty.

So, our fate is not a matter of it being fixed by human nature or being guaranteed by progressive evolution. We have a real choice: either we transform social relations in a way that is consistent with the cooperative aspects of human nature, or we go on with the trajectories which cultivate the destructive tendencies and, at the same time, accelerate our way to extinction. The increase of the existential risks over the last few decades points to the fact that we do not have much time. However, the fact that humans are capable of cooperation, long-term planning, and collective action if they are given the right structures gives us hope that such a transformation is still possible. The survival of the human species depends solely on our conscious efforts to restructure society in such a way that the social drives in us are promoted instead of the egotistical ones, the cooperative abilities rather than the competitive ones, and the long-term planning rather than the short-term gratification. It is not about going beyond human nature but about deciding which aspects of our nature we want to institutionalize. The choice is ours - but it has to be done very soon.

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