

Futurism of the Early 20th Century against the Dystopian Pessimism of the Early 21st Century

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The year 2000 and the new millennium... These words and phrases were used to define the beginning of the 21st century by people living in the previous centuries. They believed that the year 2000 would initiate new developments and humanity would flourish in all aspects. They assumed that humanity would be more and more futuristic if it prospers, yet this was not true. Today, we are not looking at the future optimistically like our ancestors. In fact, not surprisingly, dystopian pessimism appears in contemporary societies because of some reasons.



*An illustration of the year 2000 from the 19th century

Modernism

In the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, a philosophical movement called Modernism emerged. This movement basically supports progress and reforms. The advocates of this movement claimed that developments have positive impacts on humanity. However, as incidents in the 20th century didn't resemble the previous ones, their predictions turned out to be wrong. To be fair, they were not totally wrong, they just were too optimistic. For instance, the Wright Brothers invented the plane solely for flying, not bombing cities and civilians. Einstein's purpose wasn't to make nuclear weapons; he just wanted to make positive impacts on science.

Firstly, the Great War happened and millions of people died. Then the Great Depression affected the survivors negatively. After that, the Second World War induced additional millions of deaths with devastated countries and communities. Unfortunately, the tension didn't reduce after the peace agreements as the Cold War began. Even though the world needed global peace more than before, events in that century didn't allow this. All of these events damaged societies physically, psychologically, and economically. Consequently, people criticized the value systems, modernist thoughts, and the progress of science and technology.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism, which means "after modernism," became popular in the 1960s. This is a sceptical movement criticising truth, reality, science, language, technology, and more. Unlike modernism, postmodernism has an irrational and unscientific approach. Post-modernists don't believe that morality can be defined and don't believe in the concept of a universal truth. The postmodern era is chaotic because the movement is anarchical and non-totalized, which poses pessimism over people.

Generally, postmodernism is related to pessimism owing to its thoughts towards life. Nevertheless, it is not the only reason for dystopian pessimism in the early 21st century. Daily issues can also be a reason for pessimism. For example, since the beginning of the Internet era, a way of communication called social media rose rapidly. This also triggered pessimism despite not doing it directly.

The Rise of Social Media

Social media are platforms in which people are allowed to create accounts and interact with each other. Users are able to share files or written messages 24/7. In fact, it initiated a new era in communication, and has many advantages such as keeping in touch easily with friends & family and following the latest updates; on the other hand, it also has some damaging consequences on people.

Before social media came into existence, people hadn't been feeling any pressure on themselves to have an account and share posts of almost everything in their lives. It has just been an ordinary action, and seems innocent. In the social media world, nonetheless, everyone is always very happy with their friends and family, going on beautiful and famous vacation destinations in every single holiday, and giving or receiving precious gifts on every special day. Most people don't care about people who cannot do these activities. Such people may think that they are a minority who are not able to do, which makes them pessimistic.

Since everybody can share their opinions, social media contains too much information to handle. At first, the fact that everybody can share their opinions seems wonderful; in contrast, this may lead to disinformation, conspiracy theories, and pseudoscientific information. To exemplify, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the users of social media have encountered disinformation such as videos of people falling on the ground shaking, conspiracy theories such as the theory that this pandemic is not real, and pseudoscientific information such as the information in the anti-vaccination campaign. These all have posed fear, and eventually pessimism to the societies.

To sum up, the fact that dystopian pessimism exists is true. This isn't surprising due to what happened in the past and what happens nowadays. Because it is quite natural, there is no need to worry. These pessimistic thoughts will cease in the future, just as the preceding ones. Being aware of this reality would initiate adjustments of the approach about life and humanity.

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