

The Evolution and Clash of Social, Technological and Political Development

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A prophesy comes true: between the past and the future, the present gives clear hints about the extreme future that is waiting for humanity.

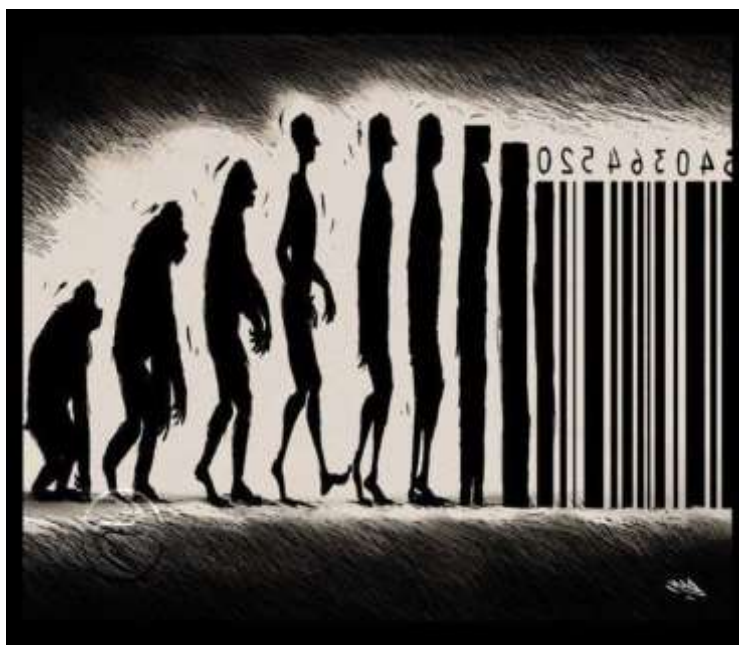


Figure 1:” The history of human evolution from monkey to bar code.”

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discuss the social, political and technological fear of the future. The extreme fear that humans have and which has been presented in literature will be tackled by focusing on H. G. Wells, a Victorian writer who succeeded in summarizing this fear in his writings especially in *The War of the Worlds* and *The Time Machine*. In *The War of the Worlds*, Wells describes his political, social and technological fear by creating intelligent, technologically advanced and superior creatures that came from Mars to invade humanity. *The Time Machine*, on the other hand, tackles the fear of the extreme social statuses that humans are going to live in and which is caused by the extreme use of technology and living in the two extremes of humanity: good and evil.

Keywords: social fear, political fear, technological fear

Introduction

People have always suffered from the atrocities of so many wars. They have always hoped to achieve the motto of a perfect life that is socially and economically suitable for them. Thus, these wars were predicted for so long in so many different ways. The fear of the unknown has been shaped in literature since the industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries up until the present time, which translates the fear that people had in earlier centuries to real actions in real life.

The fear of the unknown was shaped since the beginning of literature and was presented as the fear of supernatural powers and non-human forces; such as demons and beasts. The thought that humans might cause their own destruction was always presented, yet their great fear was not from their own invention. Starting with the Old English Literature, people composed oral Epic Poems telling stories about all kinds of supernatural powers that might be a threat to humanity. *Beowulf* is an example of the fear of supernatural powers; nonetheless, this fear has been defeated by a human hero who only needed strong faith and pure love in addition to the physical power to save humanity.

Just like any other invention in our modern time, humans started an obsession of producing better versions of themselves that are almost perfect. The evolution did not stop at the stage of humanity it proceeded to reach a stage of extreme humans that could be called post humans. H. G. Wells gave an image of what humans might look like in his novels ; they would either look like extremely advanced machines only using what is needed from their bodies or two extremely obverse classes that can never exist in one place at the same time.

Social, Technological and Political Fear of the Future in Wells' *The Time Machine* and *The War of the World*:

Mahmud Darwish, a famous Palestinian poet said in his *Elegy to Edward Said*: "...There is no tomorrow in yesterday, so let us advance/Advancing could be a bridge leading back to Barbarism..."¹ In this line, Darwish summarizes humans fear of the future by saying that the more we advance the more we lose parts of our humanity which leads us back to being barbarian and turning into numbers and machines. This advancement has been discussed by Darwin who believed that humans are only a better version of other creatures.

"Into the future or the past-I don't, for certain, know which." (Wells, 1895: 10) The time traveler's point complements the previous point, the psychologist answer the time traveler with certainty that if the machine is going anywhere it would be going to the past not the future. This idea faced a great deal of a debate between the time traveler and the psychologist, this debate is what humans have and fear. Is advancement the key to a good future or is it just the key to start the circle of humanity all over again?

Starting with *The War of the Worlds*, the Darwinian and Marxist theories are applied in this novel showing that humans, as Wells knew them back in the Nineteenth century, might not be the superior race as they believed and they might be invaded and cleared out of this earth by another advanced race.

“And we men, creatures who inhabit this earth, must be to them at least as alien and lowly as are the monkeys and lemurs to us. “(Wells, 1898: 4) 2 Seeking perfection is not a bad thing, yet, the humans’ degeneration starts when humans try to break away from their origins and when they start looking down at humans that are less perfect than themselves. Wells compares humans to the Martians and with his comparison it is more obvious that the Martians are only humans of the future.

In the previous quotation, Wells highlights the idea of social class and points out the idea that humans are the only superior race in the planet. Nonetheless, he continues to provide excuses the Martians saying that humans have been more brutal to themselves than any other creature; he also says that the Martians are looking for shelter and so they are trying to be the fittest, humans on the other hand have done all kind of terrorist actions to themselves for no reason. Wells mentioned the Tasmanians at the beginning of his novel, and how a whole human race has been ended by humans. He fears that humans might end up as the Tasmanians and yet he feels that humans deserve what might happen to them (Wells, 1898: 5)

“The only other object on the table was a small shaded lamp, the bright light of which fell full upon the model. There were also perhaps a dozen candles about, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in scones, so that the room was brilliantly illuminated.” (Wells, 1895: 8)4. Wells does connect science to light in his novel *The Time Machine*, this connection shows the importance of science, yet, it makes it clear that the extreme use of science and technology can easily destroy everything. Comparing that theory to light, light helps us in every aspect in our lives especially in the dark; a very bright light, on the other hand, might badly affect our eyes.

“Most of us hearers were in shadow, for the candles in the smoking-room had not been lighted, and only the face of the Journalist and the legs of the Silent Man from the Knees downward were illuminated.” (Wells, 1895:17) Wells also describes the absence of light from the other hearers of the story and the focus of light only on the face of the journalist as he holds the mission of transferring the ultimate truth about humanity in the future to the current world. I believe that the Silent Man’s legs are also illuminated because he will use this knowledge silently to help him walk away from the misery of humanity.

The Upper world people might once have been the favored aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants: but that had long since passed away. The two species that had resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carolingian kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylight surface intolerable. And the Morlocks made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service. They did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or as a man enjoys killing animals in sport: because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism. But, clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. The Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back -- changed! Already the Eloi had begun to learn one old lesson anew. They were

becoming reacquainted with Fear. And suddenly there came into my head the memory of the meat I had seen in the Underworld. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not stirred up as it were by the current of my meditations, but coming in almost like a question from outside. I tried to recall the form of it. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I could not tell what it was at the time. (Wells, 1895: pp. 57-58)

In the previous quotation, the time traveler discovers the complete truth about the evolution of man in the future. Man's revolution resulted in having two extreme classes a very fragile class and another very strong, harsh and almost heartless class. This completes the Darwinian theory of evolution by turning it from biological theory into social theory. Societies did progress from a stage of balance when three main classes were the main blocks of society and the strong foundations of the social life to be society with two extremely opposite classes that that turned our lives into a swinging game where the heaviest and strongest is the fittest that controls the game.

Michael Sayeau (2005: 433)⁵ explains the previous quote in his article by saying that Wells' novel is a wakeup call for humanity. Sayeau says that the imaginative future of humanity is only a "socialist horror story" which presents the outcomes of the industrial revolution and the huge difference between classes. Wells fears that humans might socially end up being like the Morlocks and Eloi. This fear is not only a social fear but also a political one; Wells believes that governments should take other actions in order to save the future of humanity from wreckage.

This is Wells' warning to his Victorian readers, if the communist keep doing what they were doing at his time there is a great possibility that the divisions of society might destroy earth "communism, said I to myself" (wells, 1895:29). The working class will end up all buried under the ground and under the mercy of the upper class until they turn to be hunters of the upper class. The upper class, on the other hand, with their advanced civilization will be more lazy, weak and fragile and the Time Traveler suspected that they were stupid creatures "were these creatures fool?" (Wells, 1895: 25).

Although people of the remote future have two extremely different main classes, they do not have any sex differences, they were all alike. All with the same outlooks, all as fragile as a little child, this is the result of living an extreme bourgeois life where both males and females are treated in the same way so no differences are needed anymore. With respect to all ruling classes and bourgeois, this is how these parties are ending in the remote future because having more than one housekeeper, a gardener, a driver a secretary all kinds of technology and luxuries and bodyguards is more than enough to turn humans into fragile creatures that only know how to order and be served. "I saw the fact plainly enough. In costume, and in all the differences of texture and bearing that now mark off the sexes from each other, these people of the future were a like. And the children seemed to my eyes to be but the miniatures of their parents. (Wells, 1895: 29)

The extreme opposite of what Wells thought to be "social paradise" appeared with the change of conditions. The other face of humanity, the other extreme evolution of Man appeared very soon answering the questions that he raised earlier about humans' cruelty "...what if in this interval the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? "(Wells, 1895:22).

The Time Traveler thought at the beginning that the Morlocks are nothing but ghosts and then he could analyze the horror that the Eloi had from darkness.

It was not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human. But, gradually, the truth dawned on me: that Man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the upperworld were not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages. (Wells, 1895:46).

These creatures are the outcome of the pressure that the upper class forced on the working class. In the present time, some working classes are still under full control of other classes; working mostly like slaves with very low wages. These classes started their rebellion at this century before it is too late; the Egyptian revolution, for instance, was caused by the huge pressure on the working class that lived like animals in some place in a way that they had to fight and kill to get a piece of bread. But even now and after the revolution, they did not get what they want simply because goodness disappears with power.

Politically, Great Britain at the time of *The War of the Worlds* was at the peak of its expansion, as it took control of so many states all over the world which made it one of the strongest empires in Europe. This fact at that time made it almost impossible to believe that the heart of Great Britain could be invaded by a greater power. Comparing politics to the human body, it is observed that the government is the brain and the rest of society is the body. The body is balanced with all its parts weak or strong, important or not yet cutting off the unnecessary parts of the body would give the brain more power turning it to a perfectionist machine and this is the case of the Martians.

The Martians in *The War of the Worlds* are big brains that gain all the power with long hands to translate the selfish needs of the brain; this could be translated as an upper controlling class and another working class. From a Marxist perspective; the Martians' long hands, which are the working class, can easily be the controlling power and can rebel against the brain. "Without the body the brain would, of course, become a mere selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being" (Wells, 1898: 133)

The last idea takes me back to the idea of the loss of humanity. In both of his novels, Wells draws harsh conclusions to humanity, predicting that the end will not be a happy ending. In *The War of the World*, although the Martians were defeated by the smallest creatures on earth, this does not mean that they will not come back stronger and more brutal with advanced filters, masks and maybe some antibiotics to prevent their fatal mistake. The fear of the future is the fear of losing our humanity. Earlier in this essay, I explained how the imaginative future in *The Time Machine* is an unequal and endless war between two types of creatures, creatures whose ancestors were human beings..

In *The War of the Worlds*, the description of the Martians and how they work for twenty-four hours a day is just like a description of a group of ants working so hard in the summer. When comparing how Martians act to humans in the twenty-first century, few differences might be found. The fact that Wells did not mention

any kind of feelings when describing the Martians leads to the fact that humans nowadays are following the steps of the Martians.

This idea might sound extreme, yet, people have the ability to do anything for the sake of reaching their goals. Looking at the age we are living in now, many wars caused many deaths and with each physical death a psychological death happen. Wars do not only affect warriors, they affect every single aspect in our lives. Wells' prophesy did come true, not yet as extreme as he described it but his image is becoming clearer by time.

In the fifties and sixties, a movement of "Angry Young Men" emerged to show their anger and rebellion against the atrocity of war. In this movement the hero is a lower-class intellectual person, the movement in general shared one theme of anger and protest which is the reaction toward the political circumstances at that period of time. This previous movement translates Wells' ideas that someday something extremely wrong will change the natural laws of this universe. Although The Angry Young Men protest against the massacres that happened and are still happening in the present time, they prove Wells is right. A first version of the Martians who work very hard to destruct humanity appeared shortly after Wells completed his novels in two great wars. Wells describe the Martians by saying:"in twenty-four hours they did twenty-four hours of work, as even on earth is perhaps the case with the ants. In the next place, wonderful as it seems in a sexual world, the Martians were absolutely without sex, and therefore without any of the tumultuous emotions that arise from that difference among me." (Wells, 1898:132)

Soldiers are trained to be more like ants, few sleeping hours only to satisfy the human natural need. Waking up at a certain time, following all kinds of orders, using certain language and training all day long on being strong enough to kill their own humanity so they can kill other humans, this system turn these soldiers into a systematic machines that can only follow the orders without arguing. Even after the war is over, it is extremely difficult for these soldiers to adopt the normal ways of living. In general, not only soldiers but humanity as a race is being subconsciously trained that a great threat is coming soon; this threat is the threat of themselves in an advanced stage of the evolution of man.

."The Medical Man smoked a cigarette, and watched the Time Traveler through his eyelashes." (Wells, 1895: 16) not only did Wells talk about the future and described the loss of humanity in it but he also makes it clear that even during his time people were beginning to lose their humanity. Being a human being means that each human is treated according to their goodness and hard work not according to their positions in the society. In the previous quotation, Wells has no names he preferred to describe the medical man who is smoking and the time traveler, this means that what matters is who you are in society not what you really are.

After all, it is not fair to claim that science and technology are the only reasons behind humans' degeneration. Starting from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, humanity shifted their focus to all different aspects of science; they tried to reform their societies according to reason and logic. The focus that shifted from Astronomy to Mathematics and the electrical advancement helped a lot in enlightening humanity in these centuries and making them better places. (Merton, 1938: p.p 160-165)³

The extreme use of science made it hard to imagine life without it. It is believed that life is much easier with technology, comparing the side effects of technology on humanity makes us want to rethink about this great advancement. Wells lived in a time when humans were at under the threat of a technological invasion, he noticed the first signs of invasion but other people were taken and amazed with the fast progress, which made it very difficult to be logical and predict the future when invaded by technology.

Since the technological invasion is mentioned, Ballardian theory must be mentioned. J. G. Ballard was interested in the effects of technology on humanity and how would humans be like after the excessive use of technology. Ballard does create a world that is almost imaginary in his writings and showed the break of relations and feelings in the post humanist era. His beliefs are highly connected to Wells fear of the technological advancement. (Baxter, Wymer, 2012:p.p 1-7).

Humans nowadays can never live without technology; it is a part of their daily life. This huge use of technology made humans rely more on this technology than on themselves and their intellect. It became very difficult for anyone to remember any of their appointments by themselves; usually their mobile phones or any other electrical device such as their tablets or computers. Humans' mind is now programmed to check the time and any missed calls or messages continuously throughout the day and night; it became very difficult to distinguish who controls who

This is what Wells predicted and feared

We men, with our bicycles and road-skates, our Lilienthal soaring-machines, our guns and sticks and so forth, are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out. Wearing different bodies according to their needs just as men wear suits of clothes and take a bicycle in a hussy or an umbrella in the wet. And of their appliances, perhaps nothing is more wonderful to a man than the curious fact that what is the dominant feature of almost all human devices in mechanism is absent-the *wheel* is absent among all the things they brought to earth there is no trace or suggestion of their use of wheels (Wells, 1898:135)

The Martians do not really need any wheels as their means of transportation is already part of themselves. With the little flesh they have more giant legs are attached to them just like being a cyborg. Since humanity has already started using technology to replace missing parts in humans' body such as legs and hands, they might turn those new parts into the humans way of transporting and moving.

No matter how much humans are technologically advanced, something natural will come and defeat them and will bring back natural life and natural humans as they supposed to be not as they are turning themselves to be. Wells says in *The Time Machine*, that the Martians can never fit on Earth; not because they are weak but because they are unnatural from an Earthy perspective. "They were huge round bodies-or, rather, heads- about four feet in diameter, each body having in front of it a face."(1898:130). he also continues to describe the external and internal anatomy of the Martians showing the simple and mainly practical organs of their bodies, just like humans without the unneeded parts and with a huge focus on the needed parts such as the brain.(wells, 1898: p.p 130-131)

Conclusion

Mind at the End of its Tether is Wells last work that was published shortly before his death. A general summary of this work is the conclusion of Wells thoughts and beliefs and also a conclusion to his fear from how the future will look like. Wells doesn't mention any emotional, romantic or fearful actions as all the bad consequences are happening because of the blind progress and the illogical following of advancement and technology. Wells did warn people about the sequences of their actions and had many social and technological fears. These fears were starting to become true in the First World War. In the Second World War, and shortly before his death, he spells out his idea of replacing the human race with any other different race that would appreciate the earth and who would use technology in a balanced good way.

On the other hand, Wells points out how intelligent and special humans can be if they used their intelligence in a good way. Humans were created with two extreme sides just like the two faces of one coin. A balance between these two sides should be created so humans can live happily. Since Wells lived in a socially harsh reality, he understand the impact of this harshness on humans and this is what made his writings in a form of social criticism and can clearly see that this change in the form of humanity will lead to extreme actions that will end humanity and create other forms of creatures.

Finally, Wells predictions of the Victorian future are translated in our modern time. Life in this century might not sound as brutal as Wells described it, yet, looking closely at states of the world such as places in Africa and the Middle East; the image that Wells created perfectly fits as massacres and hanger is spreading wildly and rapidly just like the spread of technology and advancement. He also says in his last work that tears will be bitterly shed over the loss of humanity "She turned back to the coffin. Suddenly she lost every vestige of self-control. She sank down on her knees beside the trestle. "Why have you left me!" she cried" (Wells, 1945:4912).

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