

Our Dysregulated World

by Benjamin Fry

If you took a perfect world and then changed one species so that it became self-aware, like the computers did in *The Matrix* or in *The Terminator*, what would happen next? The following is likely.

- That species starts to function differently. This new self-awareness creates more information and this information becomes a new way to assess threat. Where before it could just naturally do what mammals had done for millions of years, now the natural discharge of a threat response did not make sense and became interrupted.
 - This new species was unable to complete many of its responses to threats and this caused the first dysregulated nervous systems.
 - These new dysregulated mammals then reproduced. These children were not raised by regulated nervous systems and so they struggled to grow their brains and bodies into the regulated nervous systems they should have become.
 - Life happened to them, too. So they became more dysregulated.
 - Many, many generations went by. This new species forgot what it was like to have a regulated nervous system. Only mystics and sages could remember and they told them stories to try to explain this loss.
 - With all these new mammals unable correctly to identify and process the true level of threat in their environment, the world became a more destructive and dangerous place. Even rich mammals were hunting and fighting to get more. No-one ever felt safe, no matter how much threat they avoided.
 - With more threat being added to the world by their own actions, mammals started to live in a new world where their nervous systems were no match for the difficulties they faced. They started to become ill in a variety of baffling ways and to behave strangely.
 - Their relationships became disordered. They were addicted to substances or experiences to try to find a few moments of regulation. They altered their personalities to develop strategies for survival.
 - And they began to destroy their planet, stripping it of its resources and not replenishing them.
- Their nervous systems were under such strain that it always felt like they needed more, and they needed it right now. Taking care of things for the future seemed irrelevant.
- Ironically, their self-awareness and intelligence allowed them to build a world that had never been safer for a mammal. Fewer and fewer died of hunger, exposure or predation. But it didn't matter.
 - Life felt like a desperate, urgent problem, causing them to excuse all kinds of terrible actions.
 - It was as if they were always running away from something they could never escape. And all they did was run faster and faster.

Our endless accumulation of resources to try to make ourselves feel safe, despite there being less and less need to, has changed and shaped our planet in a very short space of time. More so in a few thousand years than in many millions. I think it's time to look at how to undo the damage. We must learn how to repair a dysregulated nervous system, one person at a time, and save the world while we are at it.

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