5. On Dysfunctional Cerebration
March 18, 2006

From: Observer 3A10Z
Re: 3rd Planet, Star B6W739E2, Cluster D51M6F, Arm 4, Galaxy C2NGI05L825G
Date: Sixty-six billion local stellar axial rotations
To: Planetary Lifeforms Archivist, Mothership 6M3K2X

Close observation of Earthlings, the dominant lifeform on this planet, leads to the conclusion that there is something distinctly dysfunctional about their neuroanatomy or neuroconnectivity, at least as it is applied to problem solving.

The concept of cause and effect, though successfully applied by individuals in simple mechanical situations, seems not to be effectively engaged by large groups or in complex situations. One local observer has written that a criterion of insanity is repeatedly performing the same operation under the same circumstances while expecting a different result. Although members of this culture have mastered not only the elements of quantum physics, electrodynamics and mechanical motion but also subatomic- and atomic- structure and molecular behavior, cause-and-effect seems an utterly alien concept in the everyday lives of most of this species.

For example, natural disasters happen; again and again, Earthlings ignore the consequences of previous disasters and situate themselves in the line of action for the next. Moreover, perceiving the consequences of prior disasters, little or no attempt is made to mitigate the utterly predictable consequences of each succeeding. Although it is clear individuals of the species possess sufficient memory for individual survival, it is as though collectively, as a culture, they have no recollective ability. Earthquakes, forest fires, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, powerful micro-cyclones called 'tornados' occur cyclically and predictably, both temporally and spatially. Yet this species continues to return to, and position itself in, harm's way with at best only minimal attempts if any to avoid further repetitions of previously experienced disasters. Speaking of this species, another local writer opined that there were two things he imagined infinite in the universe: the universe itself and Earthling's stupidity. But he wasn't sure about the universe.

A once-popular myth on this planet was that a form of migratory northern rodent, called a lemming, would periodically throw itself off cliffs en masse in an apparently maladaptive behavior. In truth, this species experiences repeated population crashes owing to cyclic food scarcity and predator abundance. Earthling's maladaptive neglect of cause-and-effect does not appear to based on starvation or predation but may well arise from other stressors such as burgeoning population and catastrophic resource depletion, both induced by this species' own behaviors.

Another anomaly in the Earthling psyche is something termed 'hope', which appears to be a glorified form of wish-fulfilling fantasy that excludes all trace of reason, that functions as a substitute for the
acquisition of experience or the use of logic. It seems to be the underlying motivator of some of the most irrational of Earthlings' behaviors: e.g. the hallmark of this dysfunctional species' neglect of actions-with-consequences, repeating the same unsuccessful operation over and over with the 'hope' that the outcome will somehow differ. 'Hoping' to secure a nail, an Earthling will ultimately cease to pound his thumb with a hammer only when the pain becomes unendurable. 'Hoping' that global warming is an error, they continue to pollute their atmosphere with heat-trapping products of combustion. 'Hoping' to control the behaviors of others of this species, they use direct force, violence, injury and death, seemingly without end. The fact that it never works is apparently immaterial. In fact they expend their finite resources on wars for what little is left, on entertainment and other non-productive pastimes, rather than correct their response or lack thereof to imminent repetitions of foreseeably impending natural disasters.

Another observer commented that after all they have done, after all that has happened to them, since Earthlings still hugely invest in 'hope' rather than in reason, rational attempts to avoid undesirable consequences or plausibly effective strategies, we must infer they, as a species, have severe learning disabilities: dysfunctional cerebration.

Knowledgeably aware,
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