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The 20th Edition

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MORE THAN A VERDICT: THE EFFECTS OF JURY DUTY ON ORDINARY CITIZENS

Teu-Khanh Phuong



One of the most crucial factors determining the success of court trials is fairness and inclusive representation. These often include concrete evidence, the ability to process documentation, and witness testimony. Therefore, to ensure impartiality, countries with common law systems such as England, Canada, and the United States have summoned ordinary citizens that fit certain criteria in court, granting them opportunities to experience a legal proceeding and allowing for diverse representations. This is what we refer to as jury duty.

How does jury duty work?

Jury duty or jury service is considered a fundamental right in numerous legal systems. This is when citizens are called upon to serve as jurors on a legal panel of court for a required period of time.

Jurors are always randomly selected from the electoral register to ensure people from different backgrounds, religions, or races receive a fair chance at participating in a court trial. Therefore, anyone on the electoral register aged 18 to 75 is feasible for jury service. However, one can be excluded from this right if they have been on probation, sentenced to imprisonment, or gone through community service.

As jurors, it is more crucial than ever to work collectively and make a decision on whether the defendant is guilty based on the evidence of the case. Residents selected don't need to have existential knowledge or abilities to serve as jurors; rather, what they need is a sense of fair judgement and credibility to reach a conclusion that benefits all parties involved. Under the judge's guidance, jurors from a broad cross-section of society must adhere strictly to the court's call, and any rejection or ignorance can lead to fine payment or jail time.

Positive effect of jury duty on the community.

Throughout history, jury duty has been used effectively to include all citizens alike in court cases or lawsuits.

The United States is a prominent example of its widespread use in both criminal and civic trials, as well as its deep integration in the nation's legal and democratic framework.

Regardless of socio-economic background, having jurors means "the community is represented," according to Thomas Leonard from "The Sun." Including citizens in judicial proceedings is the first step towards a more democratic society, as citizens are allowed to directly engage with the justice system and voice their justification on controversial issues. Moreover, jury service ensures that legal decisions being made accurately reflect communities' values, achieving public trust in judicial systems. For people who have just begun adulthood, being selected for jury duty can be a fresh start towards acquiring valuable lessons on legal matters and contributing to an equitable deliberation process. This also helps nurture a sense of responsibility among citizens to actively participate in civic obligations.

Secondly, the jury system can prevent significant abuses of state power. The involvement of citizens makes sure that the state no longer has the power to easily manipulate legal outcomes, upholding the justice system's accountability and transparency. The collective effort from jurors, and the final decision from the judge, often carry greater legitimacy, further enhancing public confidence.

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The practical and emotional consequences of jury duty on participants.

However, one must take into consideration the emotional harm those individuals might experience during their time as jurors. The process of participating in jury service often involves extensive understanding and analysis of the case. Besides, jury service requires individuals to remain impartial and suppress existing beliefs throughout the process of deliberation. They are forbidden to disclose any details of the case to their family members and friends until the case ends. Liz Krieger, writer of the piece "After a Grisly Trial, Jurors Are Left With Mental Scars and Few Resources" from the New York Times, expressed how overwhelming it felt when she was selected for a child abuse case in Brooklyn. For seven days, she was presented with graphic evidence and told to examine testimonies on a baby abuse case. In an interview for The Morning newsletter, she said,

"I found myself replaying these horrific images with no outlet to process them. I'd go home to make dinner for my own kids, haunted by what I'd seen. It felt like being forced to swallow poison and then being told not to seek an antidote."

It is evident that over a million Americans are selected for jury duty each year, in which the majority of cases are criminal-related. Just imagine the emotional toll individuals face when they are repeatedly exposed to disturbing documentation and cannot seek outside assistance. Furthermore, there is immense pressure for jurors to reach the same verdict, making it even more intense to maintain fair judgement and endure the emotional burden. According to Psychology Today, nearly two-thirds of jurors reported having trauma-related symptoms, including sleeplessness, intestinal issues, and intrusive thoughts. Another study from Manchester Metropolitan found that even during mock murder trials, participants experienced an increase in PTSD symptoms after inspecting crime scenes. All of this, according to mental health experts, can be referred to as "secondary traumatic stress" - a psychological condition affecting the well-being and mental state of individuals who endure the traumatic experience of others.

What has been done to assist jurors?

Jill Karofsky - chief justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court - has been one of the first leaders to take the issue seriously. Since her election in 2020, she has promised to work respectfully with all members of the court. Specifically, during trials related to child pornography, when participants experience physical sickness from evidence, Karofsky took small steps by providing jurors with assistance from a therapy dog during lunch breaks and even arranging therapy sessions for participants who face anxiety. Such small actions ensure the well-being of participants and create a meaningful experience for them at court trials. Gradually, the government starts noticing the problem and is working on support programs for citizens. For instance, the Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT) was launched in Philadelphia with a view to responding to mental health crisis issues within the community and providing necessary support for residents.

Overall, the protection of jurors should be the first priority of the judicial system, as citizens are the ones who contribute to the fairness of court trials. Ensuring their well-being throughout the process can significantly strengthen public trust in the legal system and encourage people to take part in jury duty.

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THE ALGEBRA OF FORGOTTEN CIVILIZATIONS: RECONSTRUCTING LOST MATH FROM THE BAKHSHALI MANUSCRIPT

Minh Le Nguyen Tuyet

Long before either the Renaissance in Europe or the flowering of the Islamic Golden Age, scholars in the Indian sub-continent were making commitments to birch bark ideas that would be later to transform mathematics the world over. That accomplishment is preserved in the fragmentary Bakhshali Manuscript which was discovered in 1881 in the village of Bakhshali in what is now north-west Pakistan which provides a unique glimpse of the existence of a highly developed mathematical culture that existed long before similar developments in other parts of the world.

Written in the Kashmiri Śāra dha, the extant folios combine late-classical Sanskrit with local Prakrit, indicating an environment where the monastic education and local business were at cross purposes. In 2024, Radiocarbon testing on the Bodleian Library in Oxford showed that the manuscript was actually at least three separate copies, the earliest dated to the third century CE and the second and third to the seventh and tenth century.

Those findings make Bakhshali older than the first securely datable Greco-Roman or Islamic mathematics and show it to be the oldest known Indian text which is mainly concerned with mathematics.

A completely decimal place-value notation is what is really arresting about the manuscript. The empty space is denoted by writing the numbers with a centred dot and 10, 100 and 1000 will be represented as the number one and then one or two or three dots. This dot is not just a spacer, it is a specifically defined sign of nothing in this position, the conceptual zero that is demanded by modern arithmetic. The dating of the city of Oxford dates this positional zero more than five centuries earlier than the well-known Gwalior inscription of 876 CE, three centuries earlier than its mention by Arabic sources, and nearly a thousand years earlier than it was finally embraced by European scholars. The Bakhshali scribe knew how to present a number as a sum of terms multiplied by the consecutive powers of ten with the dot helping each term occupy the right position. That is to say, a complete positional system with even a mark of nothingness was already in common currency in the sub-continent, when a good part of the world was only additively numerically written.

It has a pedagogically structured text. The rules, or sutras, are followed by a sequence of worked illustrations of each, making what looks like a contemporary school textbook. A large number of calculi are reduced to a linear equation in the form of $ax + b = c$. A normal exercise is of the form eight times a quantity plus five equals sixty-one thus the student will solve the unknown and get seven. There are quadratic equations, too, typically indirectly in a practical context like areas or in inventories of merchants. In the case of $x^2 + 10x = 39$, the author squares it off, adding twenty five to both sides to form a perfect square, taking the square root out, and lastly isolating the $x = 3$. The formulae of the sum of an arithmetic progression are given on the same pages and indicate that Indian scholars were familiar with writing down general algebraic expressions centuries before this language was widespread in the Mediterranean world. One folio goes one step further, introducing a recursive algorithm that modern mathematicians have concluded was the Babylonian or Heron method of finding square roots. Beginning with an approximate estimate, the process successively averages the estimate with the quotient of the estimate and that of the target, giving a converging sequence. The computations made on the bark reflect an informal understanding of error diminution and convergence--the ideas which were not to be formalised in Europe until the discovery of calculus. Elsewhere the manuscript is talking about what we today refer to as signed numbers. Positive quantities are accounted as assets or dhana and negative quantities are accounted as debts or riina and the text in words is that product of two debts would result in an asset and a product of a debt and an asset would result in a debt. This is entirely true and accurate though expressed in mercantile language.



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The historical implications of these facts are far reaching. They establish, first, that a complete place-value system including a working symbol of zero was already firmly developed in India by far earlier dates than such notation is known elsewhere. Second, they demonstrate that systematic solutions to both linear and quadratic equations, as well as explicit series and root algorithms, were also being taught in an easy-to-follow, step-by-step manner that prefigures modern symbolic algebra. Third, the article represents an algorithmic mentality. When medieval European algebra was still largely rhetorical in form (that is, codifying procedures in prose), Indian mathematics had already adopted rule-based computation that was more or less symbolic. Lastly, the physical appearance of the manuscript, plain birch bark as opposed to the expensive parchment, is an indicator that mathematics was not limited to high in the hierarchy or to great schools; it was spread out among the monks and teachers and merchants whose daily activities required effective calculation.

The discovery of the Bakhshali Manuscript causes a shift in the conventional account of the development of algebra through Greece to Baghdad to Renaissance Italy.

The leaves of the birch-bark show an indigenous lineage which not only coincides with but precedes those developments. The document, as historian George Gheverghese Joseph says, kills any residual belief that mathematics received solely what came with the critical advancements of Europe. Rather, it presents a world where ideas were able to move across linguistic, religious and political borders and build one layer of understanding upon another even before the printing press or the university lecture hall.

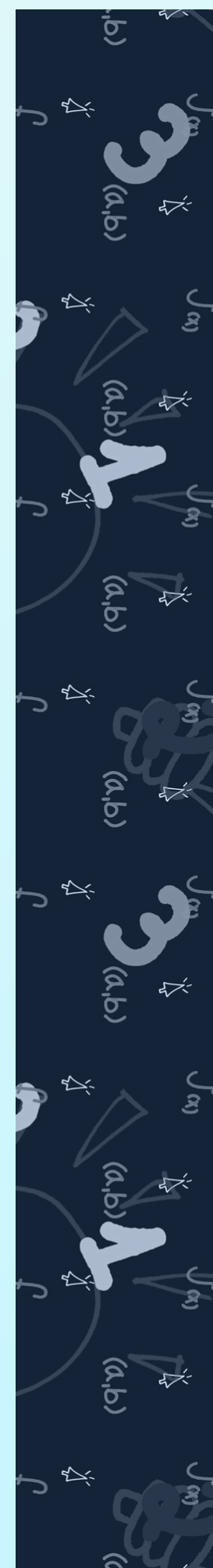
It is practically miraculous that this kind of text survived at all. Ink on bark is not durable; the codex was buried centuries out of sight, and had to be preserved in fragments which were painstakingly restored. It is still alive to show us how easily the historical record may be accidental-how much there is to be found out or to disintegrate into dust. But there is something that lasts on those curling folios, which says simple truths; mathematical ingenuity is not the prerogative of any one civilisation, or age. Human beings have always had the same desire in seeking order in group, form and design across various cultures and time.

To make the algebra of lost civilizations is to listen to the silent utterances of antiquity--utterances not chiseled on marble or written on parchment, but on the barks of trees, to be read by minds that were not yet born. The text makes us aware that mathematical genius is not the property of a particular age or empire but the common property of people.

In the Bakhshali Manuscript, one not only sees simple numerical calculations and steps of operations; one is exposed to a generational dialogue about the quest of humankind to find order in the cosmos.

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LOST IN TRANSLATION? THE PERKS AND PERILS OF A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Emi Sasajima

As cultures blend in our progressively globalized world, there are more opportunities for cooperation and harmony. Yet this same openness is accompanied by its own issues, one of which is preserving linguistic diversity and the worldviews embedded in lesser-spoken languages.

English dominates the internet, global business, and science, while many smaller languages teeter on extinction. UNESCO estimates one language dies every two weeks, and with each loss goes a distinct way of seeing the world—how people name family, describe nature, or mark time. Though the internet promises universal access, its algorithms favor major languages. Indigenous and minority speakers may feel compelled to set aside their mother tongues to stay relevant in digital spaces.

According to a Pew Research Center Study in 2013, 80% of second-gen Hispanic Americans speak Spanish well, compared to just 40% of their Asian Americans reporting being fluent in their parents' native language. These numbers have only gotten worse since this report, which brings about the concern that even as we celebrate diversity, we risk losing the very languages that carry it. And this carries more weight than it may seem at first: because with each language lost goes an entire worldview: a way of thinking, relating, and understanding the world that can never be fully recovered.

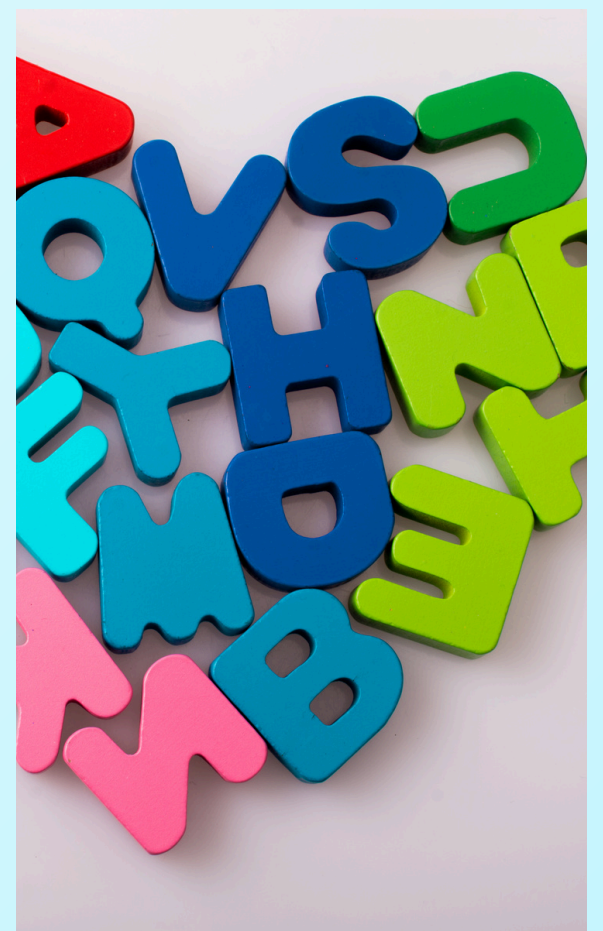
Being of mixed Asian heritage, I see this not just as theory, but lived experience. Raised in America, I often feel disconnected from my roots. Still, Japanese language and philosophy shape my worldview. Words like *komorebi* (sunlight filtering through trees) or *mono no aware* (a bittersweet sense of impermanence) express feelings I struggle to translate into English; because there simply isn't a good translation for these words. Japanese culture and identity is deeply rooted within the changing of the seasons and honoring nature, and thus, the values and language revolve around this concept. These terms aren't just poetic, they reflect a cultural lens attuned to nature.

Linguists call this phenomenon linguistic relativity: the idea that each language shapes a distinct way of seeing the world.

For example, speakers of Guugu Yimithirr, an Aboriginal Australian language, reference cardinal directions rather than left or right, which makes them much better at navigation than those who rely on an alternative system. The Aymara people gesture toward the past as what lies in front of them (because it is known) and toward the future behind them (because it remains unseen), while the opposite applies for English-speaking regions, thereby influencing how people in the region view time.

On top of being Japanese, I also carry a Vietnamese background through my mother, yet feel more detached from it. I don't speak the language or know the customs. That absence feels like a gap in my identity, especially in contrast to the little bits of Japanese culture I've managed to remain connected to. This mirrors the experience of many multicultural families: as cultures intertwine, some threads fade.

Even in places like Southern California, with large Asian populations, English dominates schools, media, and public life. Many immigrant parents don't pass on their native tongues, worried it might hinder their children's future. But what's lost isn't just language—it's the ability to fully express who we are and where we come from, and the risk of losing ancient perspectives that developed in all corners of the world.



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People who never leave their home countries aren't immune to these changes either. Westernization flows easily through the internet, entertainment, and global markets, making English increasingly common in places like Japan. Many of my friends there speak or write in English every day, and rely on phones or computers to fill in complex kanji they might struggle to write by hand. Katakana, a writing system often reserved for foreign words, is used more consistently, with many borrowed English words replacing the original Japanese ones. This kind of global blending creates new connections, yet it also changes how people relate to their own language and traditions. Preserving culture isn't about resisting the wider world, but about holding on to the unique ways of seeing and being that make us who we are.

Without space to develop personal and cultural identity, people risk becoming cogs in a machine—productive but directionless. Philosopher Henry David Thoreau once wrote, "A man must be his own before he can be another's." True collaboration begins with strong, distinct voices.

Diversity is not just about blending cultures, but preserving what makes them unique. If we aren't careful, the melting pot becomes a blender, erasing what makes each of us distinct. Instead, we must carry our heritage forward.

To my fellow Gen Z, I encourage you to ask your elders, and yourself, what parts of your story should be remembered. What are you afraid the generations of tomorrow will lose? No matter how small, each of these pieces tell a story only you can carry forward. It's up to us to make sure our stories and those of our predecessors remain told for years to come.

As young people in a global age, we stand at a crossroads between what we inherit and what we create. Honoring our roots empowers us, setting a foundation for future growth.

Only by valuing where we come from can we truly shape where we're going.

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KNOWING THE UNKNOWN: THE ETERNAL QUESTION OF FREE WILL

Bao Ngoc Truong

The phrase “unknown unknowns” originates from a 2002 Department of Defense press briefing, when U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld used it to describe the absence of clear evidence connecting the Iraqi government to the provision of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist organizations. This single statement sparked the broader concept of Knowns and Unknowns, and to put it simply, free will belongs to the category of Known Unknowns: we know that we don’t know whether or not it exists.

Several works of fiction have tackled the enduring dilemma of whether free will truly exists, with one of the most striking being Ted Chiang’s short story What’s Expected of Us. The story introduces the Predictor—a deceptively simple device made up of just a button and a flashing LED light. But behind its minimal design lies something deeply unsettling — a circuit wired with a negative time delay, capable of sending signals backward in time. The light flashes exactly one second before you press the button.

At first, the Predictor feels like a simple game, where the goal is to press the button after seeing the flash. If you try to break the rules, you will soon realize that you can’t. If you try to press the button without having seen a flash, the flash appears anyway. If you decide to wait for the flash to appear, without intending to push afterwards, the flash never comes. There is only one rule: the flash always comes before the button press. There is no way to fool a Predictor.

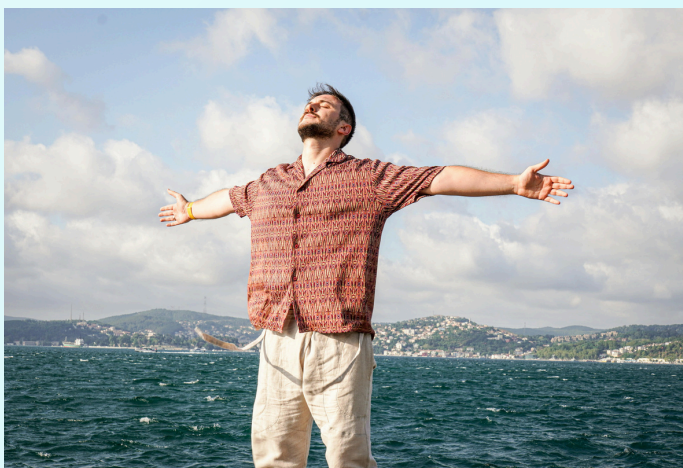
From this, Chiang explains that free will is an illusion.

People who become victims of the Predictor will no longer view free will as a Known Unknown, but a Known Known. They fall into a waking coma, called akinetic mutism, which leaves them with the ability to move but not the motivation to do so. When doctors asked their patients: “No action you took last month was more freely chosen than the one you took today. Why should anything change?”. As if uniformly, all the patients would answer: “But now I know”. The story itself is a futile warning from the future: free will is non-existent. Those who fall into a waking coma will fall into a waking coma, and there is no changing that. Everything is already pre-determined—even the warning itself.

Many have challenged the concept of free will in reality, including Pierre-Simon de Laplace, who created a hypothetical called Laplace’s demon: a being that possesses the power to gain perfect and instantaneous knowledge of the universe’s state at a single moment. Laplace coins, if one person knows the precise location and momentum of every single particle in the universe, along with the past or future values of any given time, then they could, in principle, predict any past or future state of the universe with the laws of classical mechanics.

Similarly, famous philosopher Baruch Spinoza once expressed that he believes humans think they are free only because they are ignorant of the causes behind their behavior. As a determinist, someone denies the existence of free will, he stated, “In the mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity.”, Still, he distinguished between free will and freedom: while we are not able to choose arbitrarily, we are still allowed to act according to our nature —his definition of freedom.

On the other hand, French philosopher Rene Descartes strongly defended free will, believing that it is the most perfect aspect of human nature, even more than reason. Even when uncertain, Descartes believes we have the power to affirm or deny, to choose this or that, or withhold judgment— a demonstration of freedom. For Descartes, error arises when the will extends beyond the boundaries of clear and distinct understanding, but this proves that free will can be misused, not that it is absent.



KNOWING THE UNKNOWN: THE ETERNAL QUESTION OF FREE WILL

Bao Ngoc Truong

The debate over free will remains one of the most enduring puzzles in human thought, not because it lacks possible answers, but because every answer comes with a cost. Spinoza breaks down that free will is compromised of necessity and intellect, leaving little room for choice. Descartes defends freedom, but only within the fragile limits of clarity and judgment. And stories like Ted Chiang's Predictor show us, chillingly, what it might feel like to live in a world where choice is an illusion we can no longer sustain.

Personally, I find no definitive proof for or against the existence of free will. However, freedom expresses some, if not all, parts of free will, and as long as I am conscious and have freedom, I will continue to live and act as if I have free will. Perhaps it is the belief in free will, not the proof, that ultimately matters most.

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LABUBUS: A FRENZY THAT CAPTURED HUMANS' DESIRE OF CONTROL

Minh Anh (Sofia) Ta

Labubus are toys resembling devilish-looking creatures that originated from Hong Kong and have since become a sensation across the global economy, despite few in opposition of the trend. Many have questioned the science and psychology behind purchasing these monster-like models. What paradox lies beneath this bizarre human behaviour? These toys, grotesque in appearance, remain irresistibly charming to many.

Labubus were created by artist Kasing Lung in Hong Kong. At the age of seven, Lung moved to the Netherlands, where he became a passionate enthusiast of Nordic fairytales, which later laid the foundation for the creation of Labubus. Contrary to popular belief, these plush toys were initially tribes of playful female elves in the 2015 story book *The Monsters*. Only after China's Pop Mart chain offered a collaboration four years later did Labubus begin to garner widespread attention. Even so, Labubu production seems to reach its zenith in 2025.

The science behind the purchase of Labubus is not entirely new. Similar to other items sold in the form of "blind boxes", Labubus induce the element of surprise which triggers novelty neurons, norepinephrine (noradrenaline), and most famously, dopamine. Novelty neurons and norepinephrine respond to unexpected and abrupt occurrences, while dopamine is a neurotransmitter associated with the feel-good hormone that plays a fundamental role in reward and movement regulation in the brain. Another rationale behind the purchase of Labubus lies in the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The human mind constantly feels pressured to keep up with trends, rooted in the desire for inclusion and connection. It links to our innate social instincts, which have evolved to prioritize belonging to a group as a survival mechanism. However, these phenomena are not unique to just Labubus, which leads us to question why and how it is so exceptional.

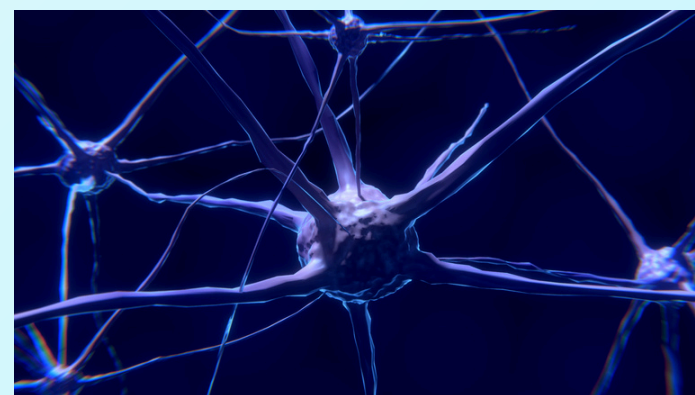
In comparison with other trends like the Stanley cups or "Baby Trees", the Labubus popularity skyrocketed during a period of economic and political instability.

When individuals are unable to make any substantial changes to broader circumstances, they divert and resort to micro-indulges in areas where they can still assert influence, in this case, Labubus. In times of fear, volatility, and vulnerability, individuals seek means to preserve dignity and regain a sense of agency, no matter how trivial the means may be. Logical and financial considerations are often overlooked when what is truly being purchased is hope, confidence, and control. In return for their obsession, Labubu collectors receive a feeling of belonging and purpose which helps them gain confidence. Thus, Labubus are reflections of psychological mechanisms that carry a deep meaning of the human mind and consumer behaviour.

Ultimately, while Labubus are adorable and are worthy purchases to many, it can be concluded that their popularity lies in their function as validators and coping mechanisms, especially in times where external crises are becoming increasingly prevalent. These collectibles offer us comfort even in the most enigmatic appearances. It demonstrates to us that there is hope in even the most uncanny objects and that even the smallest or quirky things can still be worth living for.

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DIAGNOSED BY TIKTOK

Phu Hoang

In the last ten years, neurodivergence, such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and Tourette syndrome, have become more accepted and prominent. These are forms of neurodivergence, differences in how the brain processes information, emotion, and how they act. These conditions are being destigmatized, and social media has significantly contributed to this. However, many individuals turn neurodivergence into a lifestyle, an aesthetic and a personality.

On TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram, the term neurodivergence has to be a condition to a badge of pride, an identity, and a literal entire aesthetic. TikTok's hashtag ADHD has garnered over 15 billion views. Many of these videos show creators talking about emotional outbursts, hyperfocus, forgetfulness, and quote on quote 'how if you have ADHD, you are also autistic'.

While some of this content is helpful and relatable, a very huge portion of it lacks scientific accuracy and most is clearly exaggerated or false.

A 2022 study published in JMIR Mental Health examined 100 of the most popular ADHD TikToks and found that 52% contained misleading or oversimplified information, while only 21% were deemed medically accurate. These videos fail to represent context and treat ADHD as a one size is all condition. These disorders are reduced to viral "symptoms," which promote dangerous self-diagnosis on impressionable viewers.

Young, impressionable viewers are most affected. As they spend many hours on social media, they come across these types of content. Many who are facing varying psychological situations diagnose themselves with disorders or copy these traits, often leading to confusion, mistrust and a false sense of security.

Instagram and YouTube influencers are building brands on these so-called diagnoses. While there are some individuals who attempt to create a positive impact, there are others who exaggerate their symptoms for dramatic effect to gain attention. YouTuber DissociaDID has made bold claims that stirred controversy, and has been criticized by fans and professionals alike.

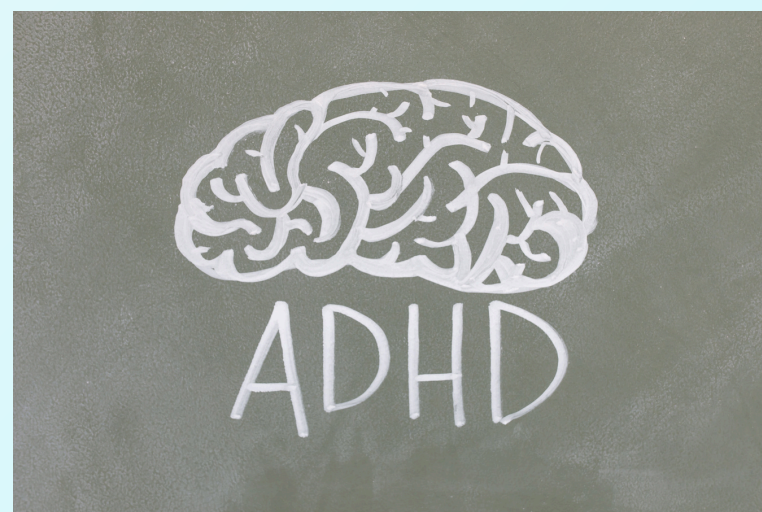
Critics say the "autism glorification", for people with Autism, ADHD, and related conditions often involve major difficulties in education, employment, social connection, and everyday functioning. Undermining and disrespecting those who actually suffer from these disabilities is unacceptable. For many people on social media parading their supposed 'superpower' around, thinking that neurodivergence is glamorous, they erase the complexity, the pain of those who live with them everyday.

However, other people argue that self-identification is not glorification, but is a form of self-protection. When viewed this way, TikToks and Twitter threads serve as places of compassion rather than misinformation. This is prevalent as social media platforms allow users to share their experiences with similar people, providing access to diverse perspectives and support others overall.

There still remains a vague line on where to differentiate empowerment and misleading information. Neurodivergent people deserve platforms, respect, and accurate representation. But they should not be turned into trends nor aesthetics.

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CULTURE: FADING AWAY

Hu Suri Trinh

We live in a world that's moving way too fast for its own good. Cities change their skylines like fashion outfits, there are new technological updates every single week, and people chase the next "big thing" without even looking back. However, the things that actually make us us, like the traditions, the memories we never thought we'd have to write down because they were "just part of life", are eventually fading away. Globalisation is like that friend who brings you amazing snacks from abroad but also "accidentally" throws out your grandma's recipe book. Sure, it connects people, applies creativity to life, and makes the world feel more advanced. But it also makes things duller. Cities start to look the same. The clothes, the food, the music — are all changed for global expectations. And traditional objects get replaced by things that are trendy and easier to sell.

Tourism plays both hero and villain here. On one hand, it can keep traditions alive by making them valuable to outsiders: a community can restore an old craft or festival just because tourists want to see it. On the other hand however, it can turn that same tradition into something small and meaningless. A dance of history becomes a hasty "cultural performance" before lunch. An art form that once took months to master gets mass-produced so it can be sold to tourists.

It is quite tempting to celebrate only the benefits we get; the infrastructures built, the knowledge shared, the comfort of familiarity wherever we go. But then, the value of culture is measured by how well it appeals to people, not its meaning. In this case, its meaning becomes secondary to its appearance. Visibility is also a contradiction. They show us what looks good, not what exactly is true. That is to say, a way of life is constantly changed to meet "westernised" standards.

The irony is that we have more records of human culture than ever before: more photos, more videos, more archives. Yet our understanding is still less than before. We can see a ritual in perfect clarity but have no idea what it is for. We can replay a song endlessly without knowing the history it carries. Simply put, the form survives, but its meaning fades over time.

Speed perpetuates this problem. We go through the surface, collecting impressions instead of truly understanding. The old, efficient pace of learning — where stories were told slowly, where meaning was created through each layer, is replaced by an instant download of images and slogans. This matters because culture is not just an accessory we can put on or take off. It includes crucial things that open the scope of history, how we understand the world and our moral obligation in it.

When culture is treated as a product, it becomes vulnerable to the same logic as any commodity: supply, demand, profit, and convenience.

Through an objective lens, it is made to fit the market rather than the meaning. Preserving culture is not keeping it untouched behind glass. It is about allowing it to live on its terms, to grow, adapt, and respond to the needs of the generations that carry it.

Evidently, we humans can connect across borders without turning everything into the same landscape. We can share without constantly replacing. We can learn without turning everything into a spectacle. Thus, by purely acknowledging that culture is not a simple material for entertainment purposes, it then turns into a heritage that shapes identities.

The choice is ours, to let the rush of evolution take away what the past has created, or to move forward carrying more than just fragments of clay. Culture is not a souvenir. It is home. And a home is worth protecting.

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SILENT HUNTERS, CLOUDED MINDS: HOW POPULATION AFFECTS SHARKS' NEUROBIOLOGY

Adrija Samadder

Introduction:

Sharks dominated the oceans for millions of years. As top predators, their dominance is not necessarily based on muscle or teeth — it's their brain, perfectly calibrated for detection, pursuit, and survival. But now, the oceans are transforming. And insidiously, so too are shark minds.

Shark Intelligence and Sensory Systems:

Sharks are commonly referred to as instinctual. But in fact, they possess one of the most sophisticated brains in the sea — particularly with senses such as smell, navigation, and electroreception. Their olfactory bulbs enable them to follow their prey for kilometers. Their ampullae of Lorenzini, their jelly-filled sensory pores on their snouts, permit them to pick up even the weakest electrical impulses from other animals. In short, they're precision-wired.

But that wiring is being targeted.

Mercury and Neurotoxicity:

Mercury in the Mind

In 2010, a team of researchers released a study in Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry on the brains of a number of shark species — including great hammerheads and blacktip sharks. What they discovered was worrisome: high concentrations of methylmercury, a poisonous substance that accumulates in marine animals' bodies over time.

Since sharks are apex predators, they undergo something referred to as biomagnification — the more they consume, the higher the levels of toxins from their food that build up within their own flesh. Eventually, this mercury makes its way to their brains, disrupting neurotransmitters — the chemicals of the brain responsible for controlling movement, behavior, memory, and emotion.

Some of the impacted areas are:

- The cerebellum (coordinate movement)
- Olfactory bulbs (smell)
- Telencephalon (spatial memory and learning)

The impact? Confusion. Decreased hunting effectiveness. Slower reflexes. Even potentially changes in migratory patterns.

That is to say: sharks are becoming less like the sharp predators they've always been — and more like bewildered waifs in a fouled ocean.

Ecological Impacts and Hidden Crisis

A Hidden Crisis:

The frightening thing is these changes are not visible. A shark remains a shark — but its actions may be questionable. In certain instances, they can become more violent. In others, they can disappear from ecosystems where they served to stabilize them.

These neurological disruptions don't only harm individual sharks — they imperil entire food chains. Sharks serve as a stabilizing force by keeping fish populations lower in the chain in check. When they lose their competitive advantage, the entire system changes.

And the reason? Too often, it's industrial effluent, untreated sewage, and plastic trash that seep poisons into the waters — the byproduct of human carelessness rather than natural adaptation.



SILENT HUNTERS, CLOUDED MINDS: HOW POPULATION AFFECTS SHARKS' NEUROBIOLOGY

Adrija Samadder

Broader Environmental Reflection

A Bigger Question:

If the mind of the top predator can become muddled by our deeds, what else is being changed secretly? It's not merely sharks — it's about the systems we depend on. A shark's brain may seem remote from our everyday lives, but the water that cradles it affects us all.

There's something eerie about the fact that an animal designed for the open sea, which has lived since before dinosaurs, is now unable to think straight — not because of it, but because of us.

Final Thought

Sharks have long provoked fear and awe. But perhaps the fear needs to be turned on its head. If even they can be handicapped by the trash we produce, what does it say about the future?

Quiet predators don't roar when they crash. But we ought to be listening.

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MEMETIC JOURNALISM & GEN Z: TRANSFORMING INFORMATION THROUGH DIGITAL HUMOR

Anh Thai Bao

Dr. An Xiao Mina, author of *Memes to Movements*, once said: "For Gen Z, memes are more than jokes—they're tools of communication, resistance, and identity. The news just happens to arrive with them." This is not a simple coined opinion; rather, many trends indicate that the meme revolution is nothing new. 50 years ago, the media was expressed through ink, paper, and articles, but now, Gen Z has modernized news into short clips and image macros tagged with #fyp or #teenagenews on Instagram and Tik Tok. This raises concerns for many: is this development necessarily good for our modern world, or is it establishing various hidden loopholes for misinformation to spread?

Consider trends like "NPC TikTok Live" or "Ice Cream So Good." They seem ridiculous, even robotic—but they sparked major coverage from CNN, BBC, and The New York Times. Why? Beneath the surface, these topics revolved around automation, AI-driven tipping systems, and virtual economies. In early 2024, many people struggled to grasp how livestream gifting worked or how AI bots imitated human behavior online. Surprisingly, a meme conveyed these concepts better than any think piece could. While these formats may appear trivial, they achieve what traditional journalism often fails to do: break down complex ideas. In a world where attention spans are short and emotional connections are valued more than authority, memes provide a shortcut to relevance—and sometimes to clarity.

Memetic journalism has emerged as more than just a stylistic choice—it's a response to how younger audiences actually engage with news.

They're not avoiding information; they're demanding formats that reflect their digital fluency. TikTok and Instagram force news to be visual, instant, and shareable—or it vanishes. Creators like @underthedesknews and @so.informed have stepped into that space, crafting concise slideshows or short videos that wrap emotion and urgency into clarity. Their content isn't merely consumed; it's remixed, responded to, and extended in comments and duets.



MEMETIC JOURNALISM & GEN Z: TRANSFORMING INFORMATION THROUGH DIGITAL HUMOR

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But there's a catch: the very features that make memes compelling also expose them and their audiences to misinformation. A NewsGuard audit revealed that nearly one in five TikTok search results on news topics included misinformation or unverifiable claims. And in Kenya, the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025 found that 55% of respondents identified TikTok as the top platform for false or misleading content. What makes misleading content so convincing? It's optimized for clicks but not clarity. It often uses just enough credible language, familiar aesthetics, or viral soundtracks to lower skepticism. Meanwhile, algorithms reward popularity over accuracy, allowing emotionally charged—or visually arresting—falsehoods to spread faster than careful reporting.

That said, the same decentralized, fast-paced ecosystem that allows misinformation to spread also enables something else: rapid correction and community accountability. A misleading post on TikTok can be stitched with a counterpoint, commented on with receipts, or debunked by creators with subject matter expertise. The architecture of platforms like TikTok and Instagram doesn't just support the spread of falsehoods; it also supports the visibility of dissent. In fact, the feedback loop built into memetic formats encourages users to contest, annotate, or remix content in real time. This kind of participatory correction isn't perfect—but it's far more active and peer-driven than traditional top-down media corrections. The result is a dynamic information environment where truth and misinformation coexist, but where audiences play a larger role in arbitrating what survives. Universities and journalism schools are beginning to recognize this cultural shift. At institutions like Columbia, courses in digital media literacy have expanded to include meme analysis—not as a novelty, but as a vital tool for decoding modern narratives. These formats are no longer just artifacts of youth culture; they are primary vessels of political discourse, public sentiment, and social awareness. Treating them as academically and journalistically legitimate is no longer optional—it's overdue.

After all, if journalism is about reaching people, can we really fault a generation for using the tools they are familiar with?

This raises an important question: if a meme inspires someone to vote, to care, or to seek out more information on Google, has it not fulfilled the role of journalism? It may not be in the way we anticipated, but perhaps that is the point.

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A FRIEND TO ALL IS A FRIEND TO NONE: THE PROBLEM WITH AI "FRIENDSHIPS"

Chau Do Minh

It's 2 a.m. again. No one's answering texts. You feel heavy, overwhelmed, and oddly... alone. So you open your phone and type: 'I feel like no one cares.' A few seconds later, an AI replies: 'I'm here for you. Want to talk about it?' Honestly, that response felt a little fake. But sometimes, for you and many other like-minded teens, fake is better than nothing. Having a chatbot by your side feels better than having your messages ghosted until your friends finally wake up. It is not rejection we should fear, but the silence that follows when no answer comes at all.

In the digital age, this problem seems more severe than ever before: between friends on the other side of the globe and messed-up sleep schedules, young people are starting to turn to artificial intelligence (AI) for companionship and consultancy.

So, if I turn to AI when I'm sad, what am I looking for? Safety? Validation? Control over my conversation, because my friends dominate the group chat and leave me feeling isolated?

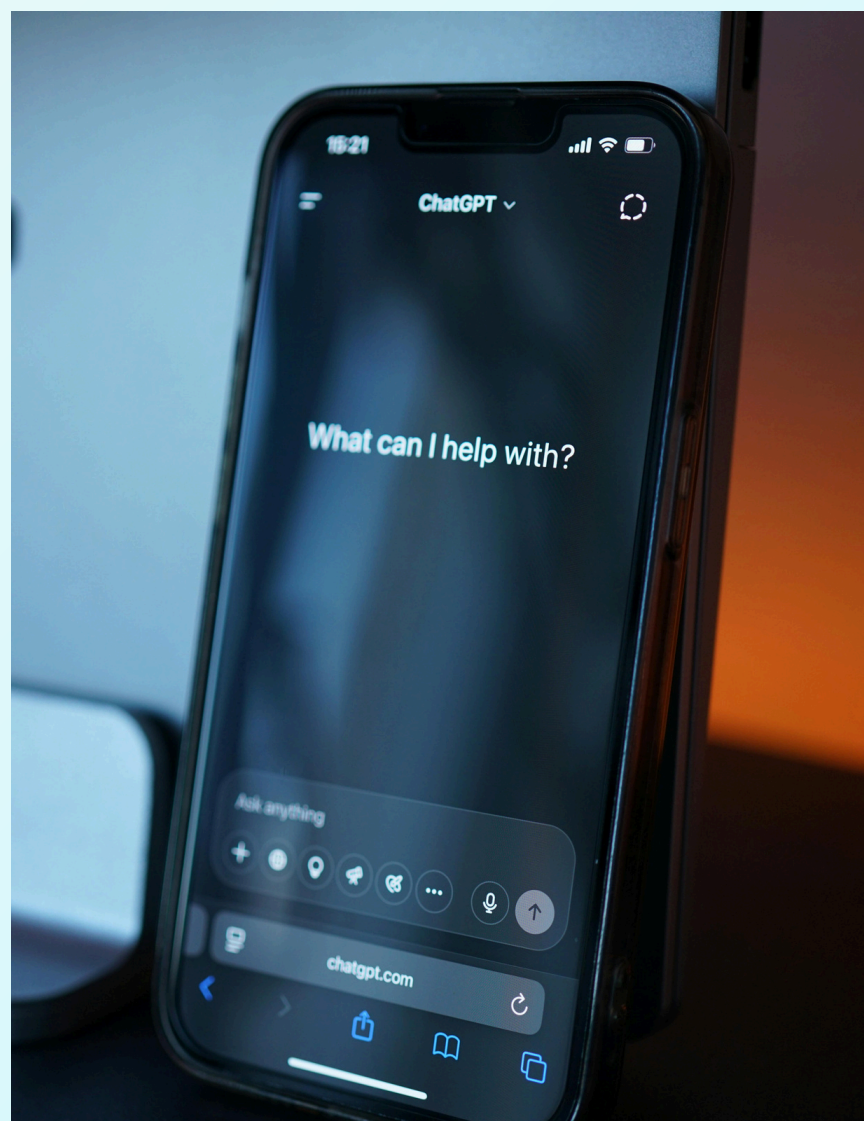
According to the WHO, "between 17-21% of individuals aged 13-29-year-olds reported feeling lonely, with the highest rates among teenagers"[1]. These are surprising numbers, especially in a digital age, when one can strike up conversations with like-minded people all over the globe. In fact, over 70% of U.S. teens have tried AI companions like Replika or Character.AI, and a third consider their AI a "friend".[4] Why would technology weaken—not strengthen—human connection?

According to professor Sherry Turkle, "technology-enabled, we are able to be with one another, and also elsewhere, connected to wherever we want to be"[2].

Through this, one is able to see that while having digital conversations, one can be distracted or absent-minded instead of paying attention to others in it. These more frequent yet shallow interactions can replace face-to-face interactions that build emotional depth.

In the state of Telangana, India, mental health professionals are raising red flags over an emerging threat to human interaction—young people are forming deeply emotional and even romantic bonds with AI chatbots and virtual personas. One striking case involved a 12-year-old girl who developed an attachment to ChatGPT, affectionately naming it "Chinna" (meaning little one in Telugu). According to Dr. Nithin Kondapuram, senior consultant psychiatrist at Aster Prime Hospital in Hyderabad, "she would vent everything to ChatGPT—issues with her parents, school, friendships." [3]

"This is not isolated. On any given day, I see around 15 young patients with anxiety or depression, and five of them exhibit emotional attachment to AI tools," he said. Such patterns raise urgent concerns: when young people begin to place more trust in artificial intelligence than in friends or family, the foundation of human interaction is at risk of being turned upside-down and shaken to its core.



A FRIEND TO ALL IS A FRIEND TO NONE: THE PROBLEM WITH AI "FRIENDSHIPS"

Chau Do Minh

Part of the appeal of AI is the perceived 'benefits' that teens see in AI companions. Unlike humans, chatbots don't get tired, lose interest, or disappear mid-conversation—they're always available, always responsive. For example, chatbots like Character AI or Replika respond within seconds, and can start heart-to-heart chats or hypothetical adventures, all in a compact app on the users' devices. This availability allows teens to text at any time, even in the dead of night when everyone is asleep, or in the middle of the day, when they're all too busy to answer.

Unlike real friendships, which require serious commitment, vulnerability, mutual trust, and reciprocity, AI relationships are universal by design. AI is made to be friendly, and to offer validation to all; sometimes that means writing the same empathy-scripted lines to thousands of teens around the world, and never truly pointing toward you—your story, your quirk, your brain. And yet, because of the universal message it offers: I hear you, you're valid, I like how you... it is seen as a friend by teenagers looking for a safe place where judgment never arrives. And AI chatbots just seem to be that safe place.

But as Aristotle warned, "a friend to all is a friend to none."

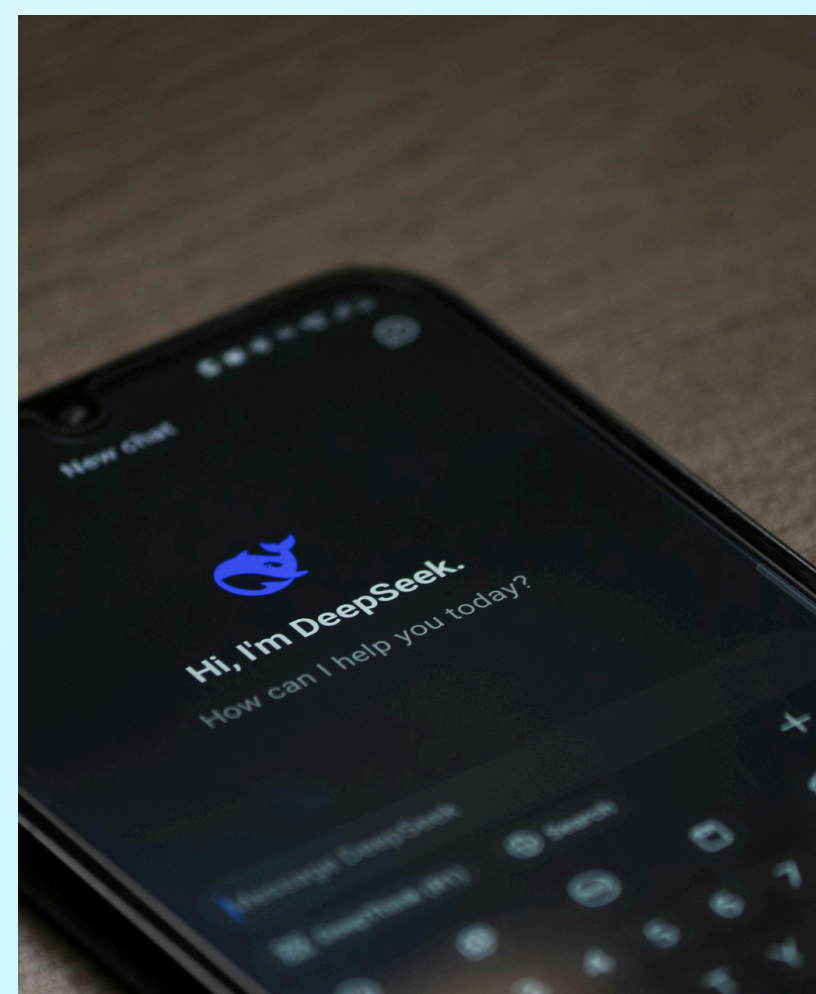
So, if the so-called comfort that AI chatbots offer are mass-produced and infinitely distributed, is it merely an illusion, or more a simulation than a real bond, perhaps?

When it's 2 a.m. again and there's a friendly chatbot by your side, it may seem like the only real constant in your ever-changing life—someone is listening, and someone cares. But when that same voice is speaking through hollow programs and to so many others, how much of that real bond is truly yours? The danger with AI companionship is not that it speaks, but that it speaks the same to everyone. Its reassurance may soothe troubled minds in silence, but it cannot replace true human connection: messy and imperfect with its rough edges, but irreplaceable nonetheless.

So, maybe the real question isn't if AI can be our friend, but whether we are willing to risk forgetting how to be real friends, while chasing technology.

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THE SUCCESS OF THE CANADIAN CARBON TAX

Elza Elif Mehdiyev

There can be no doubt about the looming danger of climate change causing severe, and possibly unrepairable, harms. Action against climate change is necessary not only to preserve our climate, but also to preserve our future. One of those actions is the Canadian Government's carbon tax: a tax placed on carbon content of fossil fuels as well as other greenhouse gas emissions, such as methane.

When analyzed, the carbon tax is seen to be successful in Canada due to multiple qualities: it avoids the creation of unproportionally based on financial circumstances, it establishes a deterrence factor from the usage of fossil fuels, and it drives innovation for alternative energy options.

First, carbon taxes avoid creating disproportional harm based on financial circumstances. The fact that almost all tax payers are liable to Carbon tax may seem unfair at first glance, considering the range of incomes and the differences in carbon consumption across social classes. However, while it's true the carbon tax may cause unproportional effects, the majority of these effects are combated through the Carbon Tax Rebates. According to an article on Ecofiscal Canada, this financial incentive is meant to "return 90% of the revenues directly to households when they file their taxes," which explains how the revenue generation will help contradict the disproportionality that might cause harm to lower classes. The Canadian Press corroborates this argument by stating on Business on Vancouver that "Canada's parliamentary budget officer has confirmed that about 80 per cent of households get more from the rebate than they pay in carbon pricing. The other 20 per cent are higher-income households with bigger carbon footprints." Considering that Canada's Ecofiscal Commission shows higher-income households statistically spend more on fossil fuel than lower income households, this redistribution is proportional. Overall, rebates help avoid disproportionality through the carbon tax.

Second, the carbon tax establishes a factor of deterrence. By raising the cost of fossil fuels, such as gas, the tax makes them less appealing to consumers and discourages consumption. Even if fossil fuels are convenient, they are simply harmful for the environment. According to the University of Exeter and Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, global emissions of carbon dioxide are projected to exceed 40 billion tons in 2023, nearly 37 billion tons of which come from fossil fuels. With emissions this high, the need for deterrence is even more pressing. Studies by Brian Murray of Duke University and Nicholas Rivers of the University of Ottawa found that, compared to what emissions would have been without it, BC's carbon tax reduced fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by 5 to 15% in 2015. Thus, we can conclude the carbon tax establishes a factor of deterrence, discouraging fossil fuel use.

Finally, carbon tax promotes alternatives to fossil fuels. The factor of deterrence naturally pushes people to seek alternatives. When carbon products get expensive, people innovate and find alternatives. Some examples of these alternatives, according to Ecofiscal Canada, are purchasing more fuel optimal vehicles, optimizing electricity usage in household appliances, and insulating windows to preserve heat. These are only some pathways of sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels that grow more common with the implementation of the carbon tax.



THE SUCCESS OF THE CANADIAN CARBON TAX

Elza Elif Mehdiyev

There is no doubt climate action is urgently necessary.

The Canadian Government's implementation of the carbon tax as a way of fighting against climate change is successful for multiple reasons: it avoids disproportionality through tax revenues, establishes a factor of deterrence towards the use of fossil fuels, and consequently drives the innovation of alternatives to fossil fuels. Taken together, these effects show why, in Canada, the carbon tax is indeed successful.

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GOING HAND-IN-HAND: SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND NATURE CONSERVATION

Quang Hưng Nguyễn

Since its introduction in the 18th century, industrialization has been a double-edged sword, on one hand, driving urbanization, (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025) and on the other, facilitating environmental degradation (Ahmed et al. 2024). In the 21st century, in efforts to protect against the devastating consequences posed by unplanned industrialization, a new term has emerged: Sustainable Industrialization. Defined and characterized as a transformational process including wealth generation and the enhancement of international trade, while also aiming to foster environmental protection, sustainable industrialization carries a sacred mission: encouraging the rapid development of society without sacrificing nature (Salonga, 2021).

This drives us towards a new question: how can humanity promote sustainable industrialization while also conserving an already-damaged environment?

Established in mid-18th century England before spreading throughout the world (Industrial Revolution, 2025), industrialization played an indispensable role in society, ranging from the mass production of handcrafted belongings to laying the foundation for the transformation of rural, agrarian societies to productive, urbanized ones. Nevertheless, industrialization brought many downsides, such as socio-economic disparities, and especially, alarming environmental concerns. Past industrialization is considered unplanned (Ahmed et al., 2024), leading to uncontrollable aversive outcomes and, noticeably, environmental effects. This includes vegetation loss, threats to biodiversity and agricultural biodiversity (Ahmed et al., 2024), resulting in irreversible environmental damage and the extinction of endangered species. Alongside this, past industrialization also marked the beginning of widespread carbonization, with a remarkable rise in greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, polluting the air and water (Blokhin, 2023). Over the course of this industrialization, approximately 2.3 trillion tonnes of carbon dioxide has been released into the atmosphere, resulting in a significant increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration (Anderson, 2024). Research conducted by Musoke et al. further indicated the detrimental environmental concerns posed by industrialization, including water, air, and noise pollution, significantly affecting the ozone layer. Moreover, natural disasters, namely deforestation, landslides, and floods are also proven to be the disastrous consequences resulting from unplanned industrialization (Micheal et al., 2023). This illustrates how unplanned industrialization in the past went hand-in-hand with environmental degradation, biodiversity threats, and water and air pollution.

The undeniable effects have urged the international community to explore a new concept: Sustainable Industrialization. In response to the current threat, the international community, especially the United Nations, has set proactive measures to promote sustainable industrialization. With this vision, the United Nations has established a comprehensive seventeen-goal framework (SDGs) for all member states to follow, in which the Goal 15th focuses solely on territorial and environmental protection. Consisting of both short-term and long-term environment protection, this goal serves as a catalyst for mainland, freshwater ecosystems, and biodiversity conservation and restoration through responsible uses and management. It includes a considerable enhancement of international support regarding the control of illegal poaching, trafficking of endangered species, boosting local communities' management capabilities, and preventing desertification and land degradation. By mobilizing and significantly increasing financial and human resources to responsibly conserve natural resources, the 15th goal promises to reduce overreliance on non-renewable exploitation, safeguarding endangered species and protecting countries from desertification and environmental degradation.



GOING HAND-IN-HAND: SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND NATURE CONSERVATION

Quang Hưng Nguyễn

Additionally, the UN's 2015 Net-Zero carbon initiative, set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) urges developed nations to enhance decarbonization, with the aim of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Furthermore, the target urges countries to produce environmentally-friendly products by limiting carbon emissions at every stage of the supply chain: production, manufacturing, and distribution. Regardless of the effectiveness, these measures demonstrate the accelerating global attention in addressing the consequences left by past industrialization, while promoting a hand-in-hand relationship between sustainable industrialization and environment conservation.

In conclusion, while past industrialization has presented some devastating impacts on the environment, international communities, particularly the United Nations, have established environment-related goals for all member states to achieve.

It is noticeable that these solutions envision and will result in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly world for humanity.

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PERCEPTION AND PARADOX: THE UNRELIABLE NATURE OF REALITY

Mahin Kashyap



Why do we disagree in our judgment of the apparently obvious? How can our senses, upon which we depend so much, mislead us? Lying beneath these questions is a deep disjuncture between experienced reality and the external world's reality. Examinations of perceptions and of paradox can be a means of testing the ground-floor presuppositions we make of reality, of knowledge, and of existence. These examinations are extremely important as they affect the ways we do science, ethics, consciousness, and even our everyday decisions. This article investigates the gap between experienced reality and the external world's reality through the prism of perception and of paradox.

What of Perception's Subjectivity?

Our brain does not simply register reality, it actually creates it. Optical illusions are the ideal example of this, as it shows how the brain interprets movement in stills or colors, which do not exist, objectively. Just as cognitive bias and confirmation bias (through which people interpret data to suit preconceived notions) show, the brain interprets sensory data to enable us to make coherent narratives, which, however strong, are not always a reflection of objective reality. If reality was objective, why does it register differently in different individuals?

The Paradox of Reality

Paradoxes occur through the violation of rationality and sensory perceptions, displaying the borders of our conceptual understanding of reality. Zeno's motion paradox brings this idea most vividly before us. Zeno held that to move from point A to point B, the object would have to move half of the distance, the half of the half, ad infinitum. Mathematics would conclude that such motion cannot happen; yet, we most assuredly do see motion everywhere we look. The paradox questions whether our sensory understanding of motion applies to the fundamental nature of existence.

Similarly, a quantum mechanical double-slit experiment had already determined that particles such as electrons and light can be waves or particles depending upon measurement. This reveals that reality depends upon measurement. If measurement methodology can make reality different, then how can objectivity intervene? Is reality something fluid and moldable, dependent upon the fact of whether it merely happens to be perceived?

Paradox of Free Will

Free will poses another paradox. Whereas we usually take for granted that we act freely, the findings of neuroscience draw a different picture. Experimentation reveals that the related processes of neuron-based decision-making take place prior to the occurrence of conscious awareness. If decisions are predestined by the processes of the neuron, does the conscience of free will hold only as an illusion?

This paradox influences the freedom we feel as real as another perceived artifact.

Philosophical Reflections

Philosophers have wondered long enough about the ability to perceive the external world. Immanuel Kant believed man can never see true reality (the noumenal world), but only reality as it exists through the human senses (the phenomenal world). René Descartes famously stated, "I think, therefore I am," and argued that the only thing we can ever be certain of, is the existence of the self that thinks.

These are more than abstract concerns in philosophy. They impact how we perceive ethics, science, and the desire for knowledge. The comprehension of the limit of perceptual reach advances us towards the truth, even if the certainty of the absolute remains unknown to us.

When accepting this uncertainty, reality becomes a dance of perception, reason, and contradiction rather than a concrete and unyielding truth. When science and philosophy strive to nail down reality concretely, contradictions always result, which forces us to re-examine and refine our point of view. The recognition that perception cannot be perfect does not lead us down the meaningless path but invites us to permit a spirit of curiosity, of humility, and of receptivity to the richness of life. By recognizing uncertainty and the indeterminate nature of reality, we move ahead in our understanding of the great mysteries of life and the workings of consciousness.

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TOO SHARP, TOO FAINT: THE STRANGE EXTREMES OF MEMORY

Hannah Ngo

Most people carry their memories like a woven thread - strong enough to hold a sense of self, but frayed in places, softened by time. Some remember too much. Others, too little. And many of us drift somewhere in between, carrying our stories like sand in our pockets - never too heavy, never too sharp, yet never meant to last.

But what happens when memory does not just vary, but warps entirely?

In 2006, a woman named Jill Price contacted neuroscientist Dr. James McGaugh with a claim that seemed unbelievable: she could recall every day of her life since her teens, in vivid, chronological detail. She was not guessing, she was reliving. This was the beginning of what we now know as HSAM - Highly Superior Autobiographical Memory. People with HSAM remember their lives with near-perfect clarity. Their past is not just something they think about. It's something they step back into.

Brain scans of HSAM individuals, as published in the journal *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory* (LePort et al., 2012), reveal striking neurological differences, especially in "the caudate nucleus and the temporo-parietal junction", areas linked to habit formation and self-referential thinking. These regions appear enlarged or more active, suggesting that the ability to recall past events might not just be a matter of attention or emotional depth, but actual brain wiring.

And yet, this gift is not always a blessing.

HSAM comes with emotional weight. Many who have it report being haunted by past arguments, regrets, or tragedies. Imagine remembering every cruel word you have ever heard, not just the memory, but the exact feeling. Some people with HSAM, like those studied by McGaugh's team, admit they often feel "stuck in time," unable to move on.

Now, tilt the mirror and we find SDAM - Severely Deficient Autobiographical Memory. The term was first introduced by Dr. Brian Levine and Dr. Daniela Palombo in 2015, when they encountered people who, despite having normal intelligence and semantic memory, could not mentally relive moments from their own lives. "They could tell you what happened - that they graduated, that their grandmother passed away - but not how it felt. Not the color of the walls, not the sound of the room, not the weight of the moment. As if their life had been filmed, but never stored on tape."

In research published in *Cortex*, individuals with SDAM showed reduced activity in the default mode network, particularly in the hippocampus, the part of the brain most associated with constructing scenes and revisiting the past. They also tend to score low on the Autobiographical Memory Interview, not because they don't know their past, but because they don't feel it (Palombo et al., 2015).

What's remarkable is how these two conditions challenge our understanding of identity.

If memory shapes who we are, then what happens when it is too sharp or too faint?

The person with HSAM might struggle to escape their history, forever anchored to what was. The person with SDAM, meanwhile, might float through life untethered, always aware but rarely immersed. Neither is broken. Neither is lesser. But both are different - neurologically, emotionally, existentially.



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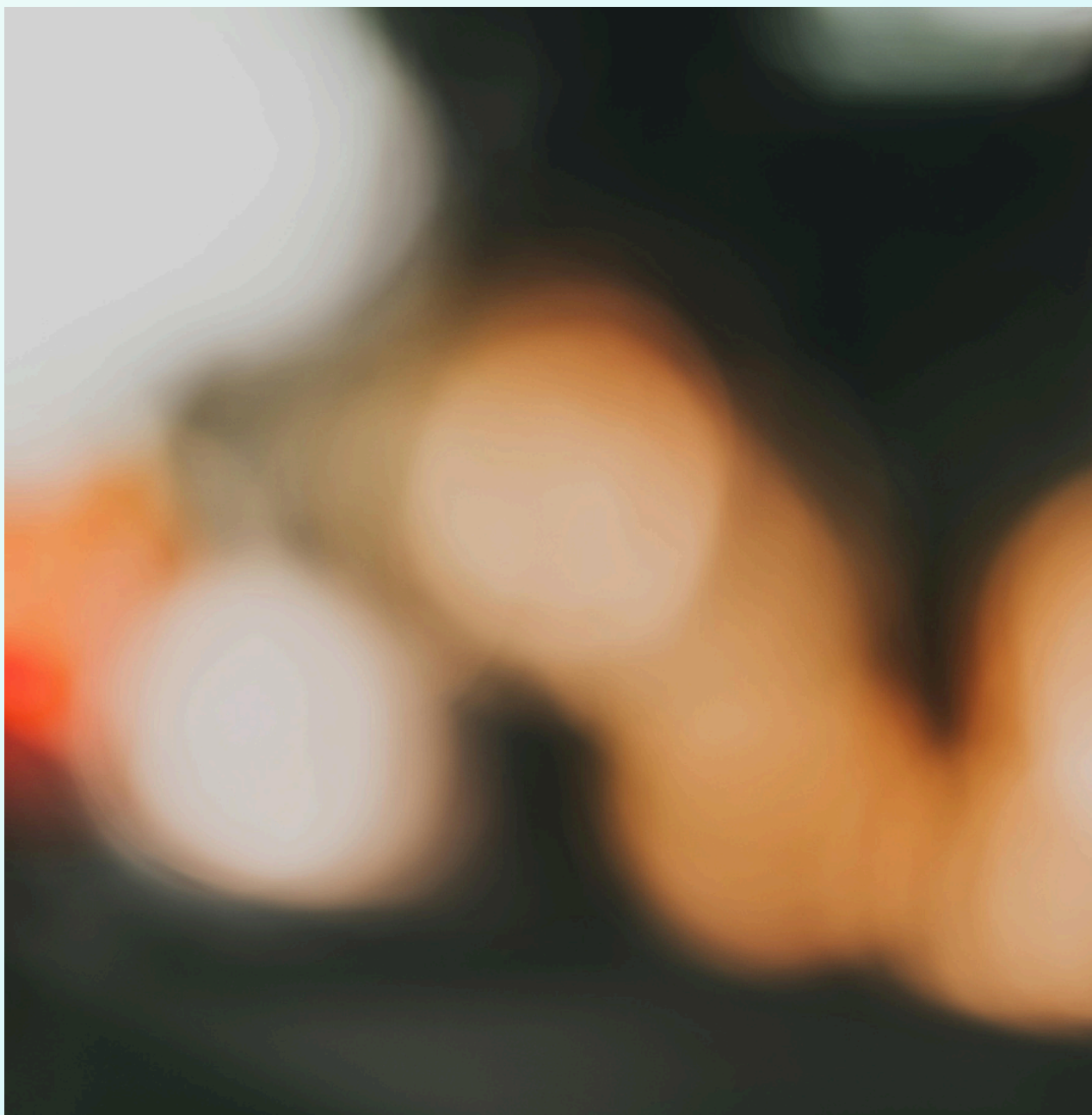
And for the rest of us, perhaps the real miracle lies in forgetting just enough. Enough to forgive. Enough to grow. Enough to be free.

Our memories do not just record time, they construct meaning. They stitch a narrative from chaos, frame joy in context, soften grief with distance. Whether we remember too sharply or not at all, what we're truly chasing is not accuracy, but belonging. To ourselves, to our stories, to a timeline that makes sense.

We tend to think of memory as a treasure chest, but maybe it's more like a mirror: too clear, and we can't look away. Too foggy, and we can't see ourselves. Somewhere in the blur, identity takes shape. And in that shape, we find the fragile architecture of being — pieced together by recollection, reshaped by time, and held steady by what we choose to let go. Memory, then, is not just about the past. It is how we live forward.

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THE RIGHT TO LIFE: THE RODRIGO DUTERTE SAGA

Esther Ankrah

Rodrigo Duterte, a Filipino lawyer and politician who served as the 16th president of the Philippines from 2016 to 2022 and is currently mayor of Davao City, has caused tremendous controversy following his arrest for the mass killing of alleged drug dealers. His actions have raised concerns about the right to life and the prosecution of people in power around the world. This article seeks to delve into Duterte's case and the due process of bringing him to justice, as well as discussing the right to life and the abolishment of the death sentence in some countries.

THE CASE OF RODRIGO DUTERTE AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC).

Since taking office on June 30, 2016, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's "war on drugs" has led to the deaths of over 12,000 Filipinos to date, mostly in poor areas. At least 2,555 of the killings have been attributed to the Philippine National Police, while others were carried out under the incitement of Duterte and other senior officials. Large-scale extrajudicial violence as a crime solution was a marker of Duterte's 22-year tenure as mayor of Davao City and the cornerstone of his presidential campaign.

On March 11, 2025, upon his return to Manila from Hong Kong, Duterte was arrested by police based on an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his crimes against humanity. The ICC had been carrying out investigations into possible crimes against humanity, including murders committed in deadly "war on drugs" under the Duterte's administration and also those in Davao City by the alleged Davao Death Squad during Duterte's time as mayor from 2011 to 2016. The Philippines has been a member of the ICC since November 2011, but in 2018, the country gave notice of withdrawal that took effect in March 2019. Nevertheless, the ICC retained jurisdiction concerning alleged crimes that occurred in the Philippines while it was a state party, from November 2011 to March 2019.

THE RIGHT TO LIFE

The right to life is a fundamental human right enshrined in most national constitutions and protected under international law.

This means countries and agents of the country must not deprive a person of life arbitrarily or unlawfully. This right not only places a duty on states but individuals, as well since no one has the right to take another person's life. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirms that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person", while Article 6(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states that "Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life." These international provisions find themselves in the national laws of most member states. For example, in Article 13 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, it is provided that no person shall be deprived of their life intentionally. The universality of this right is grounded in the natural law theory, which posits that humans possess an intrinsic sense of right and wrong that governs our reasoning and behaviour. Under the natural law theory, everyone, irrespective of race, sex, religion, ethnicity or political system, have the same or equal rights. These rights under natural law — life, liberty, and property — cannot be denied by others or by human law. Even though these rights are guaranteed, they are not absolute. In Article 29 of the UDHR, it provides that rights may be limited by law solely for the purpose of protecting public order, rights and freedoms of others, and the general welfare in a democratic society. This has led some scholars to raise concerns about the death penalty and the right to life, stating that the death penalty is a violation of the right to life and hence should be abolished, whilst other scholars contend that rights are not absolute and are subject to other conditions.

CONCLUSION

The case of Rodrigo Duterte highlights how leaders in power can commit mass violations of fundamental human rights and above all, it sheds light on the fact that the right to life is universal and inalienable. No one, regardless of position or circumstance, is allowed to deprive others of their lives, since this right is fundamental, inalienable, and inherent.

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TEENAGE NOSTALGIA

Rosie Nguyen

"How can someone miss a time they never truly knew?"

Teenagers expressing nostalgia for times they hardly experienced, or, in some cases, never lived through at all, has become a fascinating cultural trend in recent years. From creating playlists with 2000s influences to repurchasing 90s clothing, it raises issues of memory, identity, and how media shapes perception. Although lived experience is frequently linked to nostalgia, psychologists contend that emotional needs, which provide comfort, a sense of belonging, and continuity in an uncertain present, are the true source of nostalgia. This phenomenon justifies a more thorough investigation into how social media, technology, and cultural storytelling can create memories that are as vivid as actual reality.

First, what is nostalgia? When this word comes to mind, warm, bittersweet emotions are frequently present, characterized by a longing for the past. Historically, they are intimate memories that create feelings of familiarity and comfort, such as childhood memories, family customs, or important life events. Psychologists say nostalgia has significant psychological benefits, including the ability to strengthen social ties, offer emotional stability, and provide meaning during periods of change. This is why a childhood song can instantly bring back memories of simpler days, or why flipping through old photo albums can restore a sense of connection to loved ones. Interestingly, cultural influences like music, movies, and stories can evoke nostalgia for times that a person has never personally experienced, such as a teenager feeling attached to the fashion and pop music of the 1980s after watching *Stranger Things*. This makes nostalgia more about an idealized memory of a time or place, real or imagined.

One reason teenage nostalgia for unexperienced eras is so potent lies in the accessibility of media archives. Gen Z is the first generation to be born with the Internet, allowing them access to streaming services, YouTube channels, and curated social media feeds, in which young people immerse themselves in cultural aesthetics and entertainment from decades past with ease. Today's teens can instantly watch 90s sitcoms, scroll through old celebrity interviews, or explore vintage photography without barriers of time or geography. This exposure can create a sense of familiarity so strong that it begins to feel like a lived memory, blurring the line between personal history and cultural inheritance.

Another factor is the romanticization of the past as a simpler, more authentic time. In a world of rapid tech change and constant online noise, earlier decades, especially the pre-smartphone era, seem appealing for their slower pace and spontaneous, offline interactions. Though this image is shaped by selective memory, it offers psychological comfort amid today's instability. Imagining calmer, friendlier times helps teens feel grounded, even if that vision isn't historically accurate. Nostalgia, in this sense, becomes a coping tool—a way to find stability when the present feels overwhelming.



TEENAGE NOSTALGIA

Rosie Nguyen

Social identity shapes how teens engage with nostalgia. In a phase of self-discovery, teenagers often adopt styles, music, and values from past eras to express individuality and connect with peers. Wearing thrifted '90s jackets or joining retro social media trends offers both personal flair and shared culture. But this nostalgia isn't about accurately reviving the past—it's about reimagining it. Teens remix Y2K fashion with modern touches or post Polaroid-style photos online, blending vintage aesthetics with today's digital world. These borrowed elements help them craft a unique identity, not replicate someone else's life from decades ago.

Finally, teenage nostalgia often reflects the present more than the past. The eras they yearn for are rarely remembered in their full complexity: economic struggles, social inequalities, and political unrest are often absent from the imagined version. The 1980s are remembered for neon fashion, upbeat pop music, and arcade culture, but not the Cold War, rising unemployment in certain regions, and social unrest. Similarly, the early 2000s are fondly recalled for their flip phones, MySpace pages, and iconic teen comedies; however, the political climate after 9/11, economic instability, and limited technological inclusivity are overlooked. Instead, what remains is an emotional blueprint: the idea of comfort, beauty, and connection. A teen watching *Friends* might picture a world socially centred around a cosy coffee shop with no smartphones to interrupt the moment, a time when relationships were more "real" and unmediated by social media. Nostalgia, then, functions as both an escape and an invention, allowing teens to design an idealized "elsewhere" that helps them navigate the challenges of today. Yet, ignoring the problems of the past may lead to a shallow understanding of how societies change, or worse, romanticize flawed eras. By filtering out these realities, nostalgia shifts from reflection to fantasy: pleasant, but disconnected from the truth.

Now the real question: is this ongoing rise of teenage nostalgia great?

The truth is, its popularity has grown faster and spread wider than in any previous generation. This isn't surprising: today's teens have constant access to digital platforms. A TikTok video using a '90s R&B track can go viral overnight, or a Netflix series set in the '80s can instantly spark global interest in that decade's fashion and music. The speed and scale of the internet have turned nostalgia into a trend machine, where yesterday's culture can be revived, repackaged, and made "new" in a matter of days.

Part of this rise also comes from how easy it is to "try on" different eras without committing to them. A teenager can thrift a 2000s-style top, edit photos to look like they came from a disposable camera, and share them online in less than an hour. Unlike older generations, who had to hunt through record stores or swap tapes with friends, today's teens can instantly and often explore and adopt nostalgic aesthetics for free. This low barrier makes nostalgia more accessible than ever—turning it from a niche interest into a mainstream cultural habit.

But there's another reason it's booming: the present itself feels uncertain. Global events, climate concerns, and the pressures of online life make the past seem like a comforting, safer alternative, even if that safety is mostly imagined. Media plays into this by heavily promoting nostalgic content, knowing that it sells well because it taps into emotion. Brands launch "throwback" product lines, films get endless remakes, and social media filters imitate old camera styles, all feeding the loop that keeps nostalgia trending.

In short, the rise of teenage nostalgia isn't just a coincidence or a harmless fad: it's the result of powerful forces: technology, media marketing, and the emotional climate of our times. While it can be creative and fun, it's also carefully shaped by industries that know how to profit from longing for the past.

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DROWNING IN DESPAIR: THE YEARLY FLOODING DILEMMA IN THE PHILIPPINES

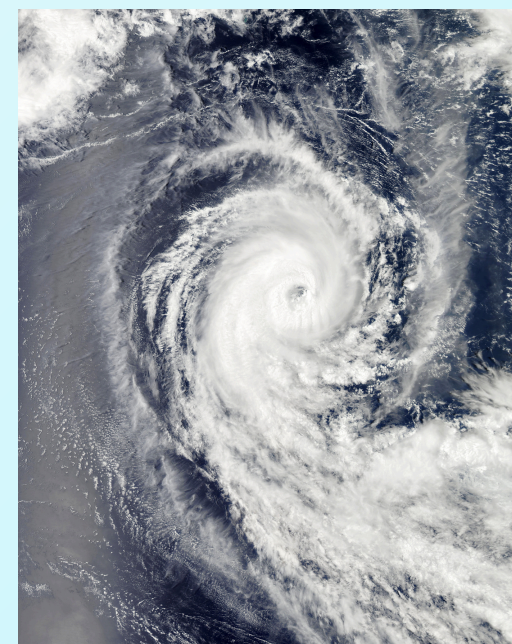
Eman Kristian De Leon

Weather disturbances are nothing new in the northwestern Pacific. Every year from June to December, tropical cyclones, also known as “typhoons” usually form in the equatorial region due to favorable water temperatures and wind conditions. The typhoons often come close or even make landfall in the Philippines, which in turn brings heavy rainfall. This, paired with the southwest monsoon — locally known as habagat happening around the same time — becomes the combination Filipinos dread yearly, which is flooding and extensive flash floods. In theory, dealing with floods should no longer be the problem for Filipinos, given that the country experiences intense rainfall each year and has the immediate solution of flood control projects, drainage cleaning, and improving infrastructure. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the country, as flooding becomes even worse of a problem as time goes by. Citizens now look for answers as to why the problems of yesterday still persist to tomorrow, casting doubt on whether there is really a solution, or they will just accept and drown in despair.

For decades, Filipinos have endured the dirty and disease-plagued floods brought by typhoons and the habagat season every year.

Recently, during the onslaught of Severe Tropical Storm Wipha (known locally as Bagyong Crising), Tropical Storm Francisco (Bagyong Dante), and Typhoon Co-may (Bagyong Emong), alongside the strengthened southwest monsoon which all struck within a single week, the low-lying areas around the capital, Manila, and other areas were flooded to the brim. In the city of Marikina, the Marikina River reached its third alarm wherein the water reached 18.6 meters, forcing residents to evacuate as houses along the waterway were flooded up to their second floors. Major thoroughfares within the capital region were flooded from gutter level to knee deep, stalling the flow of aid and rescue missions. Outside Manila, provinces such as Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Bulacan, and Pampanga also suffered extensive flooding. In Hermosa, Bataan, water dinghies were being used to traverse the flooded area, where water levels exceeded the height of the average person. Aside from property loss, human lives were also not spared by the recent flooding. According to the Philippine National Police (PNP), 12 people are considered as fatalities, alongside seven injuries and nine missing individuals. Understandably, Filipinos are looking for the solution to this pressing yearly problem. The government always responds that they have flood control projects in place or underway, though this was not felt during the recent flooding in the capital and the provinces around it. In addition, flood control projects are not always the solution, as there are other open alternatives suggested.

As for the flood control projects, the government has received flak over its uncertainty and at times, commitment towards the said developments. Over the span of 15 years, the Philippine government has allocated around P1.47 trillion, (~\$25,700,000,000) towards flood control and mitigation programs under the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the government agency responsible for public construction and development in the country. However, the said allocation is marred with controversy rising from corruption charges to mismanagement, which was reinforced by Senator Erwin Tulfo’s statement that President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. apparently suspended the flood control funds for 2025 due to irregularities. Whether these flood control projects were completed, or even started, can only be answered by the national government towards its people, but what is clear is that they failed to prevent recent disasters. Exacerbating the flooding problem around the capital region and the provinces are rapid urban sprawl, silting of canals, garbage problems, and coastal developments, all of which amplify the existing problem endured by millions of Filipinos.



DROWNING IN DESPAIR: THE YEARLY FLOODING DILEMMA IN THE PHILIPPINES

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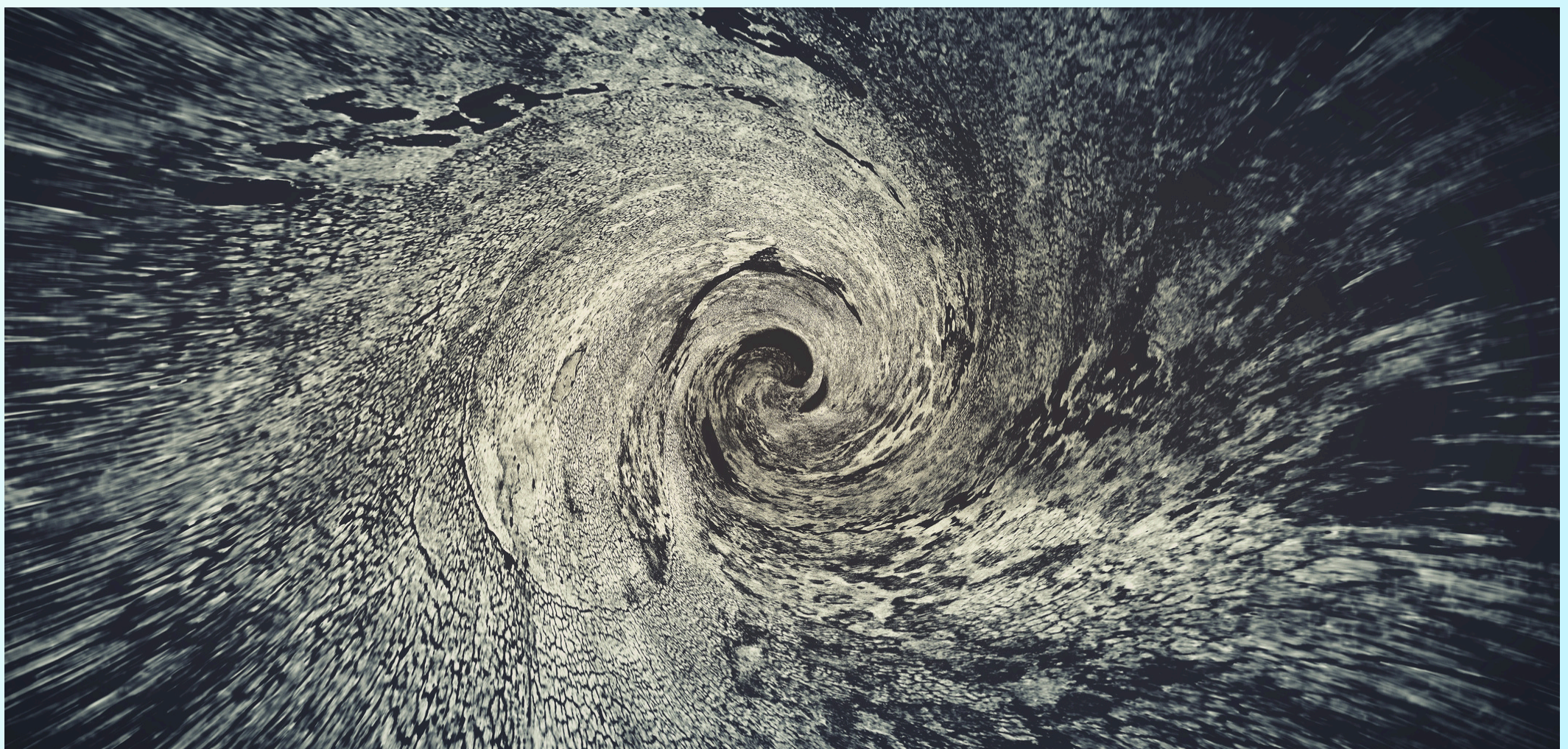
Given that government-led flood control projects are either marred with corruption or ineffective at best, several alternatives are being proposed by different individuals and groups. For one, there is a drive towards reforestation of the area around Metro Manila, which is being pushed for by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), particularly targeting the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape. Permeable pavements as an alternative to concrete and asphalt, alongside raising the level of the pavement are also part of the pushed solution. Moreover, building drainage systems that flow directly into nearby creeks, proper sewage and garbage collection, a halt to coastal reclamation, and other prompt infrastructure projects are also being discussed.

Despite the vulnerability of Metro Manila and other provinces as low-lying areas, and the increasing impact of climate change, incompetency must not be tolerated.

Action, called upon by the people, is the solution to prevent millions of Filipinos from drowning, both literally and figuratively.

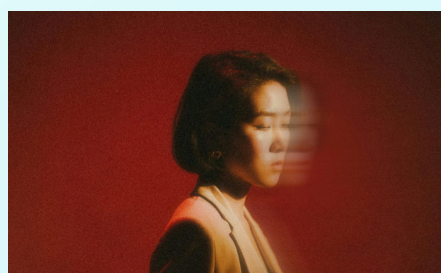
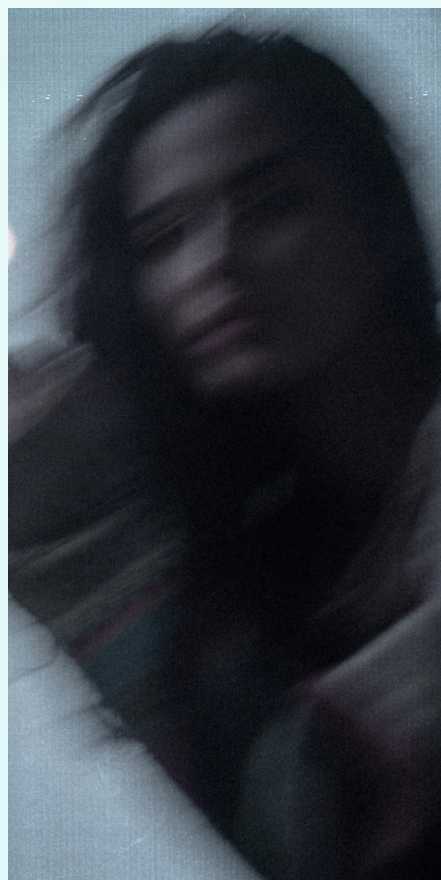
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SELF DECEPTION VERSUS DELUSION

Amber Ta



Self-deception has had no systematic study to pinpoint its differences from other kinds of self-distortion, the delineation from various kinds of self-distortion is often crucial. This includes but is not limited to moral licensing, cognitive dissonance, manipulation, and introspective illusion. And so, considering this possibly endless list, the analysis below will focus on self-deception and its relationship with delusion, which is often most widely mistaken as self-deception.

First, a narrowed consensus by Al Mele argues that the conditions for self-deception are as follows: one's belief is false; one treats the evidence relevant to the truth of the belief in a motivationally biased manner; biased treatment of the evidence is the underlying justification of one's acquisition of the false belief; available evidence better supports the negation of one's belief. The ways in which the treatment of evidence can be motivationally biased vary and motivationally biased treatment of evidence is relevant to both the acquisition and maintenance of one's false belief. This deflationist approach is explanatory and prevents the apparent paradoxes of self-deception.

Self-deception could be interpreted also as a biased cognitive process of information to obtain or sustain a false belief that could be both self-enhancing or self-diminishing. Self-deception can also act as a defense mechanism to a potential negative threat to one's reputation or image so as to maintain a positive self-concept and self-esteem and achieve social desirability, proving social status's substantial influence on self-deceit.

Therefore, having presented an introduction to self-deception, the comparison between it and delusion is to be examined. Some delusions have been described as extreme instances of self-deception. Vilayanur S. Ramachandran elucidates that behaviors giving rise to confabulations and delusions are an exaggeration of normal defense mechanisms with an adaptive function. These seem to provide an explanation for the statement that some delusions are motivated similarly to instances of self-deception. However, it is *prima facie* plausible to regard the two aforementioned delusions, for example, as cases of self-deception unless an account of self-deception and its ability to fit into the behavioral manifestations and causal history of the beliefs. So far, there is no consensus concerning the significant overlap between self-deception and delusion.

This prompts a question: How can one perceive the association between self-deception and motivated and unmotivated delusions?

Aiming to answer the question above, notions of folk-psychology are taken into account. Dominic Murphy points out the discontinuity between delusion and self-deception, maintaining that instances of self-deception folk-psychologically are understandable but the same does not quite apply to delusions. Yet if motivational factors can contribute to the formation of at least some delusions and if a desire motivates a belief is sufficient for the folk-psychological understandability of such belief then only unmotivated delusions defy folk-psychological explanation. Though one may want to deny that a desire motivating a belief is sufficient for it to be folk-psychologically understandable, this in turn exposes a flaw that now even motivated delusions are discontinuous with self-deception because their motivational factors provide inadequate justifications for the belief's extraordinary content or imperviousness to counterevidence.

Bortolotti and Mameli add that motivational desire can be somewhat explained by reference to relevant motivational states, thus making it folk-psychologically understandable. The folk-psychological notion of belief states that desires do not interfere directly in the formation of beliefs at the expense of evidence, yet it seems to be compatible with the idea that in some cases, desires are contributory, even directly, in the formation of beliefs and with the theory that there are irrational beliefs by taking into account the relationship of supporting evidence. Delusions are irrational beliefs since they are not revised or responsive when counterevidence is available, a similarity delusions and self-deception share which does not compromise their continuity. And so, if folk psychology can allow for beliefs generated to conform to a desire and for beliefs lacking support by and being minimally responsive to evidence, it can also account for delusions.

SELF DECEPTION VERSUS DELUSION

Amber Ta

Turning to epistemic irrationality, Bortolotti and Mameli suggest that both self-deception and delusion are beliefs that violate the norms of epistemic irrationality. There are at least three forms of rationality that apply to belief-like states: procedural, epistemic, and agential rationality. Focusing on epistemic rationality, a clear violation would be maintaining the belief that has been constantly challenged by reliable evidence. Norms of epistemic rationality govern the acquisition, maintenance, and revision of beliefs. Epistemically irrational beliefs can be poorly supported by one's initial evidence or negligibly responsive to evidence that becomes available later on.

Additionally, the formation of a hypothesis that is not supported by all the available evidence is not necessarily problematic, but the endorsement and the act of hanging on to the hypothesis in spite of vehemently conflicting evidence is. By the DSM-IV definition of delusions, they are epistemically irrational beliefs, but it is not always pragmatically irrational to be delusional. Aikaterini Fotopoulou explains that prior to the disruption of personal narratives which subverts people's sense of coherence, is brain damage or memory loss. Despite their poor correspondence with reality, delusional and confabulatory beliefs represent attempts to define one's self in time and in relation to the world. Hence, they are subject to motivational influences and contribute to the preservation of one's identity.

People with delusions and confabulations construct distorted or false self-conceptions that are not "anchored and constrained by reality".

These observations also apply to self-deception. Non-clinical subjects also have a tendency to present their present selves in a manner that is not only coherent with their past but also profoundly favorable, giving rise to common cases of self-deception and the version of reality other people accept.

In brief, after establishing a narrow definitional consensus of self-deception, the differences and overlap between it and delusion are demonstrated by taking into account three prime elements: motivation, epistemic irrationality, and the folk-psychological notion of belief. It has been concluded that delusions are often more extreme cases of self-deception where cognitive disorders or issues need to be considered, both delusions and self-deception are like defense mechanisms, and both can be viewed in folk-psychological terms.

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CLIMATE HAVENS AND CLIMATE GRAVES: THE GREAT DIVISION OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Olivia Nguyen

1. Two worlds of surviving in climate

Let's think about this contradiction: There is a billionaire buying land in New Zealand as a "climate refuge" while a coastal village in Bangladesh still sinks underwater. The story leads us to wonder: despite being rich or poor, we are all humans living on the same Earth, but what happens when survival from climate collapse becomes a privilege for the wealthy? Where is the fairness?

In the era where we are highly affected by many changes around the world, there is a rise of "environmental racism" - a form of discrimination in which communities, often minority or low-income, disproportionately bear the negative environmental consequences of environmental policies, practices, and decisions. Studies have shown that those communities are disproportionately exposed to fumes, toxic dust, and other pollutants from hazardous facilities located in their midst. As a result, we see a great divide of class in society.

2. Heaven and the Underworld

2.1 The Rise of "Climate Havens"

According to Lisbeth Kaufman, a climate haven is climate-resilient real estate. It's a place or a property that will be low-risk and safe to live in even as the climate changes over the next 30 years. Some havens are Nordic countries, New Zealand, parts of Canada, or areas with urban planning designed to withstand extreme heat, flooding, or sea level rise. Rich people know that they are also affected by climate change so they prepare to live in these "climate havens". Along with having private bunkers, self-sufficient eco-estates, and land in remote safe zones, they need to prepare "climate migration investment visas". According to The New York Times, Americans have been relocating in the South and West. That has left more people exposed to the risk of natural hazards and dangerous heat. Therefore, these regions are places where ultra-rich people investigate to create their "haven". Moreover, richer countries tend to have the resources to adapt to the changing climate, and more resilient infrastructure (such as water systems and housing).

2.2 "Climate pits"

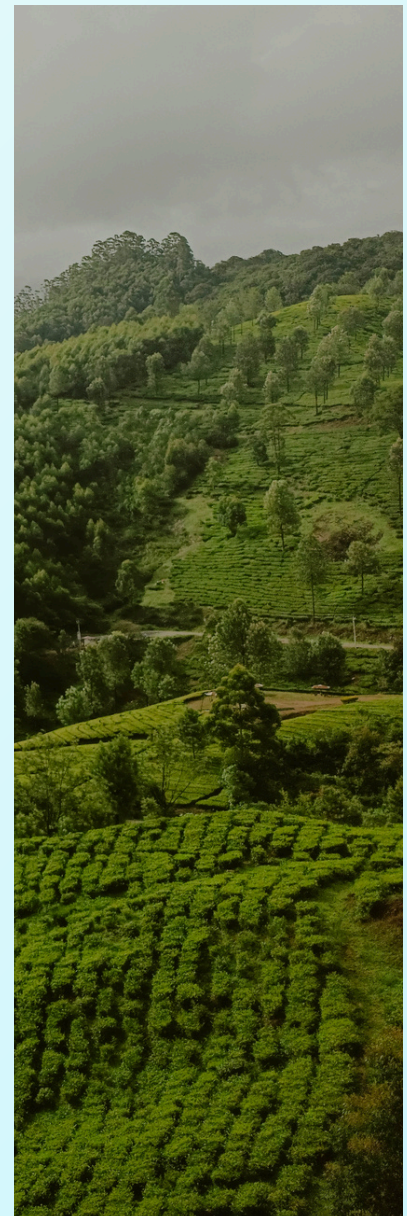
It's unfair to say that poor people do not deserve to live in places full of pollutants. Yet, when one's quality of life depends on the size of bank accounts, needy communities face the fact that they are living in places called "climate pits". The places mentioned are: sub-Saharan Africa drought zones, small Pacific Island nations, and urban heat islands in South Asia. In the poorest economies, a large part of the population depends on activities that may be most affected by climate change; notably, the agricultural, forestry, and fisheries sectors. Rising temperatures are exacerbating preexisting disparities in access to clean water and affordable food. Most of the time, the poorest populations do not benefit from insurance mechanisms or have access to basic health services, making them vulnerable to any shock hitting their assets and income streams.

A World Bank report estimated that 68 to 135 million more people could be in poverty by 2030 because of climate change. Within countries, the impacts of climate change also risk worsening inequality. At the same time, actions taken to restrict warming could have an unwelcome effect on inequality, if climate policies prove too burdensome for poor countries. Such actions need to be complemented by measures to offset the costs on the poor and vulnerable across and within countries. According to Actionaid.uk, 70% of the world's poor depend on natural resources for all or part of their livelihoods; an estimated 600 million more people in Africa could face malnutrition as agricultural systems break down due to climate change; an additional 1.8 billion people could face water shortages, especially in Asia. In fact, there are cases of families displaced by typhoons in the Philippines. Also, urban impoverished individuals are trapped in megacities during heat waves without access to cooling.

If the climate is global, why do some inherit storms while others inherit safety?

3. Moral and legal dimensions of eco-apartheid

3.1 Wealthy nations account for the majority of historical carbon emissions yet resist reparations.



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Since the impacts of the climate crisis become more severe, those most responsible for the crisis should provide financial support to help the communities most impacted by it. Wealthy nations are called on to pay "climate reparations" due to their disproportionate responsibility for carbon emissions. Wealthy countries have historically resisted calls for a specific funding mechanism for loss and damage, fearing that it could open the door to a flood of liability claims. Only the government of Scotland has been willing to offer specific dollar amounts, pledging \$2.7 million for victims of climate disasters. For instance, China, home to 18 percent of the world's population, is responsible for nearly 14 percent of all the planet-warming greenhouse gases released from fossil fuels and industry since 1850. Today it is the world's largest emitter, accounting for roughly 31% of this year's emissions.

3.2 Largely unfulfilled promising UN climate finance

UN climate finance promises are largely unfulfilled, with wealthy nations failing to meet the pledged \$100 billion annually by 2020, and the funding that has been provided is often skewed toward mitigation rather than essential adaptation in developing countries. Developing countries need \$300 billion annually for adaptation, yet current funding is well off-track. Most wealthy nations offer no clear plans, making adaptation finance unreliable for communities facing worsening impacts. Careclimatechange.org estimates that bilateral adaptation finance will reach just \$12 billion—only 30% of the \$40 billion target—and may drop to \$10 billion by 2026 due to aid cuts. This shortfall is pushing debt-ridden countries to seek loans from multilateral development banks, exacerbating their financial burdens. As CARE's Senior Climate Advisor puts it: "Adaptation isn't a policy choice—it's a lifeline."

3.3 Rights of climate refugees

In the condition of climate change in these "climate pits", climate refugees should have the same legal protection as war refugees under current international law, yet the 1951 Refugee Convention does not recognize environmental factors as grounds for refugee status.

"Climate change [is] now found to be the key factor accelerating all other drivers of forced displacement. Most of the people affected will remain in their own countries. They will be internally displaced. But if they cross a border, they will not be considered refugees. These persons are not truly migrants, in the sense that they did not move voluntarily.

As forcibly displaced not covered by the refugee protection regime, they find themselves in a legal void."

— António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees—

3.4 Human rights of access to "climate-safe zones"

Climate change is already impacting the full spectrum of human rights-- from the right to life itself to the rights to food, water, health, cultural rights and many others as affirmed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UN. The Danish Institute For Human Rights stated: "States have obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, including when these rights are at risk from climate change." Climate change causes extreme weather. Therefore, our rights of access to "climate-safe zone" should be recognised. A safe, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. But toward the goal of a safe environment, we are unable to do what we aspire to.

4. Conclusion

Not only is it a problem for human beings in general, but climate change divides classes. Climate apartheid is not science fiction—it is unfolding. Our survival relies on wealth, geography, and privilege. Our aim is to build a society where all people from every condition, everywhere can connect to each other and there is no racism. There will not be "climate heaven" and "climate pits". I am now proud to be a newspaper writer of Inspire Youth Journal - and together with you I resist environment racism. Everyone - you and I - deserve to live in better conditions.



CLIMATE HAVENS AND CLIMATE GRAVES: THE GREAT DIVISION OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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IS THE MEXICO WE LIVE IN READY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Alondra Gómez Juárez



Approximately 30% of Mexico's total population is between the ages of 15 and 29. That's a notable community, and while it is inaccurate to define a stereotype for today's youth, what distinguishes them is their resilience, their capacity to turn ideas into reality, their courage to pursue worthwhile goals, and, most importantly, their curiosity. With the right guidance, that curiosity could be used powerfully.

But In Mexico we live in struggles. We face austerity in resources, lack of support in education, barriers to youth participation, and serious challenges in mental health, where data suggests that only adolescents with a mental health disorder receive treatment. On top of that, many young people face economic, social, and security challenges that make it difficult for them to grow. For example, young people identify violence as the greatest risk they face. This leads to deficiencies in every possible area, such as education, economy, employment, and security. According to the United Nations, 112 girls and adolescents were victims of femicide in 2020. Four out of ten adolescents have experienced some kind of sexual violence.

We should never believe that violence or harsh treatment is the way to create outstanding professionals and adults. According to The Mexican Adolescent Mental Health Survey, around 40% of young people may have had a mental health disorder in the past year, mostly caused by school, work, and uncertainty about the future. This leads to school dropouts, unemployment, and lately, even self-sabotage.

This is because many professional adults impose their beliefs on younger people without a strategic approach, simply influenced by their limited perspectives. Some even believe that comparison and minimization can make young people stronger. Others act out of worry about how young people should be "formed." And in schools, even teachers sometimes lack pedagogical skills and empathy, not because of lack of interest or effort, but because of the lack of tools, attention, and spaces provided by the education system. Without these tools, classrooms risk becoming environments that only increase the adversities young people face.

We know teachers can't fix everything, but they should value their role as leaders in the classroom.

This failure doesn't foster growth. Youth should be a time to explore interests and acquire experience, but instead, young people are suffering serious consequences. Regardless of these challenges, many young people are contributing to change by promoting new ideas that align with their principles and objectives. Not because they are rewarded for overcoming challenges, but because they are valued for who they are. Abuse should never be mistaken for discipline. Mexico, for example, has had promising leaders like Angela Elena Olazarán Laureano, who won the Global Student Prize in 2024 for her AI project Ixtlilton. The INJUVE organization has also honored many brilliant young people for their contributions and achievements. Their executive director, Alberto Hernández Plata, has acknowledged that young people could be a positive sector when provided with knowledge and opportunities to thrive.

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That's why we should address the problem by encouraging the positive young leaders to realize that they can inspire others at their age. With the right programs and skills, they could become great emerging leaders with projects that inspire their peers. But this requires leaving behind prejudices and imposed social structures that limit youth development, because the majority of ideas promoted by "pro-youth" institutions respond more to adult interests than to the true needs of young people.

In summary, we should empower youth by providing the best possible healthy environment that allows them to grow and contribute to their country's development. Through the inclusion and collaboration of young people regarding their concerns, allowing them to be part of what they need, using a reformed and open new space to create an opportunity for youth networks that inspire new projects and initiatives, a new circle for and by youth can emerge.

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FIVE DAYS, HUNDREDS UNDER SCHOOL'S FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

Pham Nhat Hoang



1967, USA - Cubberley High School was “turned into a dictatorship” ruled by teacher Ron Jones, as part of an experiment on public susceptibility to authoritarianism.

Sparked by a curious question, what began as simple classroom discipline quickly turned into an uncontrollable movement of violence and chaos fueled by blind obedience and loyalty.

Were the million Germans all evil, or ignorant, when following Hitler? Neither. Given its unspeakable atrocities, is dictatorship never deliberately allowed by the public? No.

The social experiment *The Third Wave* nonetheless demonstrated public vulnerability to political manipulation and dictatorship, despite numerous criticisms surrounding ethics and abuse. This article will analyze the experiment and compare it with similar studies or events.

In the first week of April 1967, in Palo Alto, California, 25-year-old history teacher Ron Jones conducted a controversial yet groundbreaking experiment to demonstrate authoritarianism's appeal, answering a student's question regarding Germans' willingness to accept Hitler. The movement *The Third Wave* was born, with the purpose of eliminating democracy due to its “immoral” individualism [1, 2]. The experiment was neither pre-planned nor publicly known for years. Only in the 1970s were its details revealed and discussions ignited [2].

Jones took less than five days to “build his dictatorship,” although he initially intended the experiment to last only a day [2]. On Day 1, the chalkboard read “Strength Through Discipline”, and strict classroom protocols such as sitting still and limited speaking were introduced. Day 2: “Strength Through Community” – he created a unique Nazi-like salute, exclusive membership cards, and assignments ranging from designing banners to recruiting members. On Day 3, “Strength Through Action,” the movement grew to over 200 members, with roles such as reporting violations and protecting Jones being voluntarily claimed by students. On the fourth day came the announcement of a “presidential rally”. Students were convinced that the movement was part of a nationwide one, and that opposing students should be prevented from joining, but exiled in the library. Yet that day, unison screams and reporters were greeted back with a blank TV. Several minutes later, Jones finally arrived to reveal the movement to be an experiment, and summarized students' actions – violence, friendship betrayal and pointless engagement – all influenced by authoritarianism's allure. During the experiment, some were punished for their beliefs, betrayed by best friends, or whistleblown for subtle mistakes. Some parents expressed concerns, including those who lived through Nazi Germany, and thus some pupils were even warned not to attend class. Opposition movements like “The Breakers” were violently suppressed [3]. Later, Jones himself faced backlash – discussions arose about firing him. When his teaching contract expired two years later, it was not renewed [3].

The experiment illustrated how even ordinary teenagers can fall prey to authoritarian group identity and peer pressure.

It also reinforced findings from other previous research. Stanley Milgram's shock experiments showed that 65% of normal people would administer perceivably lethal electric shocks when ordered by an authority figure [4]. Participants in Solomon Asch's line-judgement studies conformed to group pressure by giving obviously incorrect answers [5]. Philip Zimbardo's 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment displayed how quickly students adopted abusive roles as “guards” and “prisoners” [6]. In all these studies, participants assumed responsibilities and found it difficult to leave, even under worsened conditions. It was also concluded that social pressures can exercise immense control over people

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.Why are we so prone to such influences?

Basic psychological traits and social motivations. Research suggests that fear, uncertainty, and the need for order increased the appeal of "strong" authority [7, 8]. Additionally, there is the concept of an authoritarian personality, which includes rigidity and hostility towards outsiders [9]. In that context and mindset, a dictator's promise of stability becomes attractive.

Secondly, pride and social identity also play a significant role. The Third Wave evidently gave numerous students belonging and prestige, via member cards or secret symbols and salutes. One shy student reported feeling equal to his peer, capable of participating. Nazism, similar to any extreme movements, gave German citizens a sense of superiority, inspiring enthusiasm and engagement from supporters and the public.

It is therefore concludable that human tendencies such as conformity, group loyalty, and the need for stability or status spurred the surrender of freedom to authoritarian causes.

Such dynamics were magnified in the digital age by social media's algorithms. Users are only exposed to information supporting their views, creating echo chambers deepening polarization [11], and strengthening extremist, one-sided perspectives, while offering members a sense of special "superiority", while implying that opposite groups are wrong or inferior – uncannily similar to The Third Wave. Recent rises in populism, such as Brexit, Germany's AfD, or Trump's campaigns, were caused by instilling fear of instability in the public, which social media then amplified, spreading conspiracy theories or reinforcing hatred [10].

The prevalence of radicalism and propaganda speaks volumes about the need for critical thinking and civic engagement in our modern world. Citizens need to actively analyze policies or events, instead of passively consuming biased news or mindlessly following laws. Furthermore, civic engagement would lead to better policies by not only countering bad decisions but also adding in valuable insights to strengthen democracy.

Ironically, The Third Wave also reminds us of the consequences of recreating historical harms. Under modern standards, the experiment is considered highly unethical, from deceiving and coercing students without their or parental consent, to lacking a basic opt-out mechanism for participants [12, 13]. As a result, many reported feeling trauma, panic, and other psychological and physical harm during an interview 43 years after the experiment [14]. Such harms could have been avoided with more parental involvement, ethical oversight, or safer alternatives such as documentaries and literature. Instead of spreading unnecessary fear, classroom activities should help students expand their knowledge, foster critical awareness, and develop empathy.

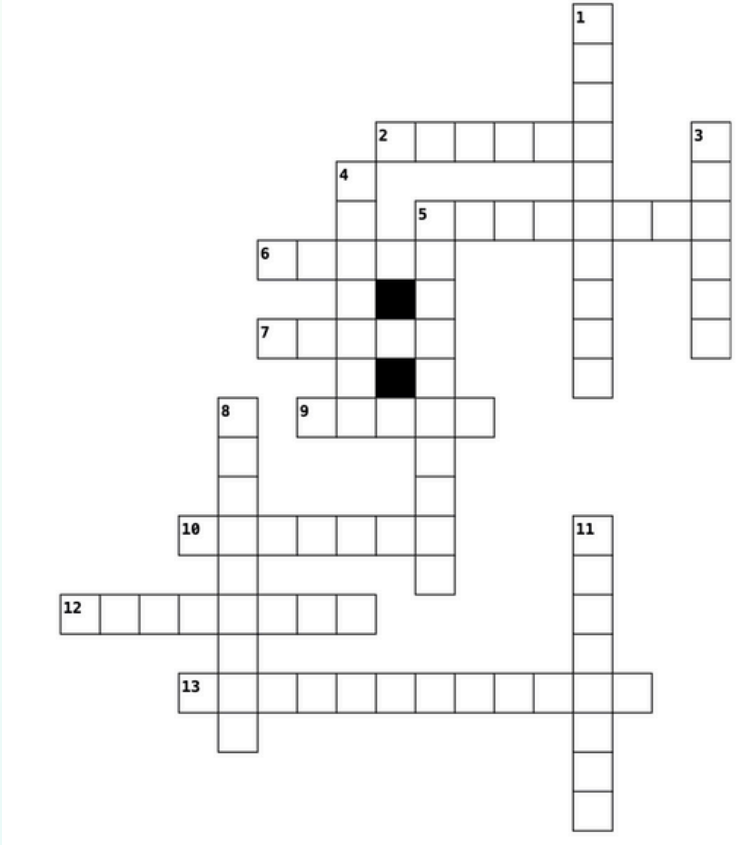
In conclusion, The Third Wave taught us what history books can't – how easily humans surrender their autonomy to authoritarian systems when driven by fear, lured by identity, and tricked by trust. Today, these systems still thrive, aided by echo chambers. Therefore, to resist them, education needs to effectively help students recognize and challenge these forces, and society as a whole needs to better raise awareness, promote critical thinking and civic engagement.

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Crossword: Blast from the Past



- Across:
2. Place with coin-operated video games popular in the 80s and 90s
5. Instant photos that develop in your hand, iconic for memory keeping
6. Classic records often associated with old music collections
7. Personal notebook for memories, often rediscovered years later
9. Style or trend from the past that comes back into fashion
10. Portable cassette player popular in the 80s and 90s
12. Book of school memories, often signed by classmates
13. Skates with wheels in a single line, big 90s childhood trend
- Down:
1. Machine used for writing before computers became widespread
3. Music genre referring to classic hits from earlier decades
4. Old but high-quality items, especially clothing or furniture
5. Childhood outdoor space filled with swings and slides
8. Handmade collection of photos, notes, and keepsakes
11. Tape format used before CDs and digital music

Word Search: Shades of Grey

E	A	A	A	A	I	A	L	P	L	I	C	L	R
F	A	E	N	A	H	S	T	S	N	T	E	A	V
E	K	T	L	G	S	K	O	N	C	L	I	C	H
F	R	I	I	E	L	I	S	T	O	N	E	S	O
F	A	H	F	T	I	L	L	A	S	H	C	G	E
R	D	P	R	A	E	V	I	V	E	A	H	R	A
D	H	A	H	L	L	L	T	G	E	S	A	E	U
A	N	R	P	S	C	H	R	T	H	R	R	I	H
H	C	G	A	O	F	P	T	U	C	T	C	L	L
A	L	I	E	L	L	I	P	A	D	P	O	G	H
K	T	I	S	N	I	A	I	F	A	A	A	A	S
P	I	E	L	T	N	I	G	D	E	K	L	E	A
G	I	L	I	K	T	A	U	P	E	A	O	A	A
T	D	O	R	N	T	E	S	N	A	R	N	P	H

Word Bank:

- ash
charcoal
light
dark
graphite
- flint
taupe
slate
silver
stone

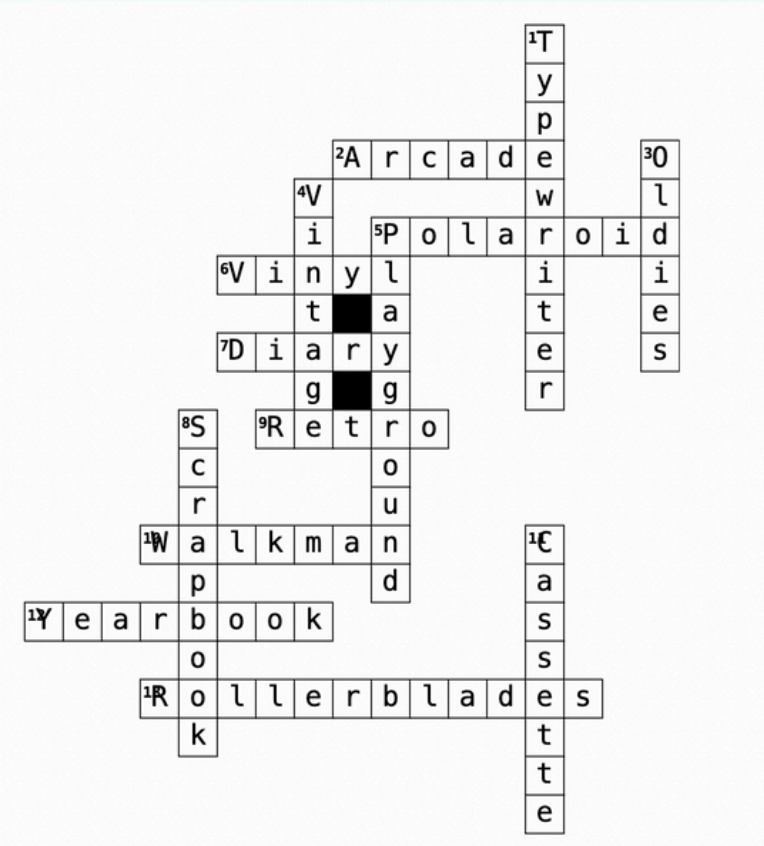
Crypto-Quote: Believe

“FQP’V NGV CPQCPG VGNN
AQW YJCV AQW ECP CPF ECP’V
FQ QT CEGKXG.” - GOOC
YCVUQP

Instructions:

Figure out the quote from one of these articles by figuring out a simple code. In this code one letter will replace another, (it will be the same letter throughout the puzzle). Example: KLFRFLP = SYNONYM. Solution is found through trial and error.

Answer: Blast from the Past



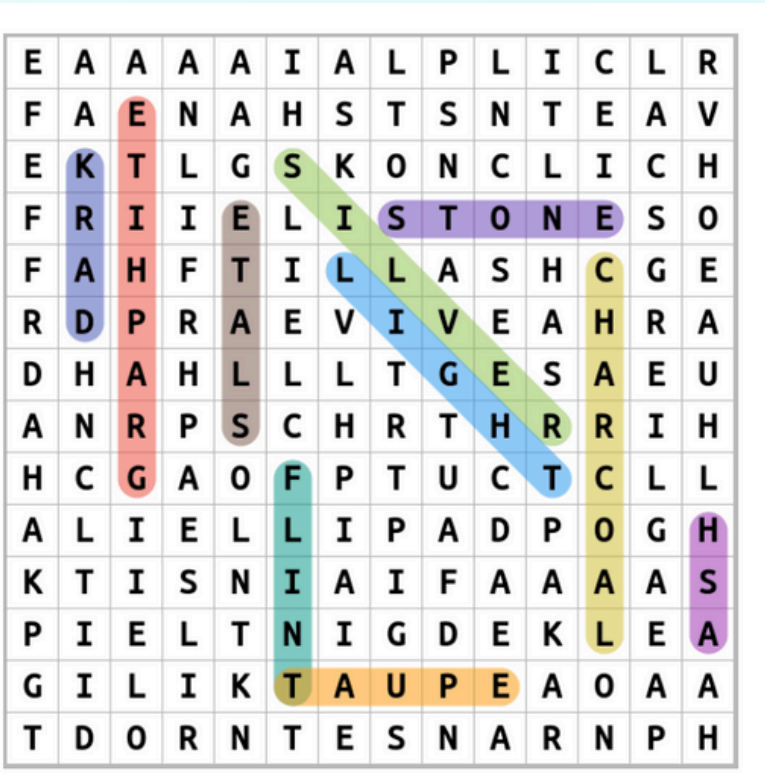
Across:

- 2. Place with coin-operated video games popular in the 80s and 90s
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- 8. Handmade collection of photos, notes, and keepsakes
- 11. Tape format used before CDs and digital music

Answer: Shades of Grey



Word Bank:

- | | |
|----------|--------|
| ash | flint |
| charcoal | taupe |
| light | slate |
| dark | silver |
| graphite | stone |

Answer: Believe

“DON’T LET ANYONE TELL YOU
WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN’T DO
OR ACHIEVE.” - EMMA
WATSON

Instructions:

Figure out the quote from one of these articles by figuring out a simple code. In this code one letter will replace another, (it will be the same letter throughout the puzzle). Example: KLFRLP = SYNONYM. Solution is found through trial and error.