

Tales Told near Tsmebrovht-5

by strannikov

“—and so it turned out, not simply that they found electricity to be capable of all kinds of useful and superfluous applications, but that electricity was neuro-physically addictive to their organisms.”

“—but although we've catalogued instances of this on other planets, it seems never to've led to the global outbreak of psycho-phrenias and neuro-pathologies as those that plagued the Tiānxiàns!” someone observed from the back row.

Professor Vumhksgranzh nodded in agreement. “Don't forget, though, that on their planet, in the era when the harnessing of electricity was just beginning, mortality commonly occurred in individuals well before even one of their centuries had elapsed. Lifelong exposure to unannealed electricity thereafter, of course, aggravated the development of succeeding generations as younger and younger members of the species were exposed to it earlier and earlier. Had their somatic organisms been capable of greater longevity at that historical moment, the innate electrochemistry of their brains and somatic systems likely would have been able to attenuate or diffuse the intensity of electromagnetic attractions that ubiquitous electrical appliances and electronic devices began to pose. Thereafter, as we have seen, once the attraction and the convenience of electricity was recognized by their technical classes, the propagation of electrical and electronic devices became central to maintaining and growing their economies to greater and greater scales, since a by-product of their technological prowess consisted in a rapid surge in global population and—at least briefly—to subsequent extensions of life spans.”

A voice asked from somewhere in the middle ranks of the auditors. “How extensive can we believe their species' addiction to the force of electricity to have become?”

The Professor continued. "By the end it seems to have afflicted the population of the entire globe. At first, electric appliances were designed both to augment and to replace physical labor. Soon enough, taking advantage of hydro-electric, nuclear, solar, and wind-turbine power generation, their industrial output and their manufacturing facilities became dependent upon the availability of electricity. From powering simple communications apparatuses and machines, they began using it to power illumination and thermal regulation devices in their homes, both in cities and across rural areas. They devised and fabricated more and more machines to run on electricity, to every conceivable purpose. Electricity was soon being used to regulate calculations of chronometry and to propagate vacuous entertainments and serious arts alike . . . not that electricity ever did anything to enhance their meditations on aesthetics," and here the Professor allowed the polite laughter and twittering to subside. "They began to elaborate the use of electricity in complex communications networks, in personal transportation and in commercial shipping, in the service of all manner of economic transactions, in children's toys and games, in data transcription and in all kinds of printing and graphic reproduction, in auditory transmissions and in audio recordings and reproductions, in food preparation and storage, in the provision of medical services, in provision of education and information dissemination, in their astronomy and physics studies as in their biological and mathematical science studies, across all of their sciences, in military weapons systems, of course, and even in their executions of criminals. Refer to the comprehensive inventory in Pulksgarl's summary for further details, but the provision of electricity and its generation for practically every economic and social function on the planet was permitted and encouraged to become ubiquitous. Their addiction was manifest globally in less than one of their centuries."

Silence reigned momentarily in the outdoor auditorium. Wind passed through gently and steadily, rippling folds of garments

no matter how heavy or light the fabrics. Another voice finally rose on the back row.

“In other words the Tiānxiàns had poorly developed somatic systems in a non-conducive environment. —but didn't they also give themselves over to enhanced neurological stimulation with cultivated and manufactured pharmacological substances that augmented the electrical stimulations to which they were already exposing themselves?”

The Professor nodded again. “You've been studying Duyviwld's account, apparently. He was the astronomer who first intercepted and analyzed the contents of their late assistance beacons—I need not mention the cosmic irony that their desperate radio signaling entailed considerable expenditures of generated electrical energy—but of course by that late date, as we now know, we would have been by their reckoning tens of millennia too late in responding anyway, their planet is as dead today as it's been for thousands of our chrons. —but to your point, yes: pharmacological properties inherent to several floral species only served to augment—to exacerbate and exaggerate and intensify, that is, with the refinements that the chemicals were subjected to—the neuro-electrical stimulations they were deriving otherwise from their ubiquitous electrical devices and electronic appliances.”

An auditor on the front row now spoke. “So, in effect, the demise of proto-intelligent life on the entire planet was due primarily to the propagation of planetary exposure to electrical energy?”

“In its raw, unannealed form, yes,” Professor Vumhksgranzh clarified as he stood up, gathering himself in his robes. “They seem never to have mastered or to have noticed the importance of quantum dynamics in handling electricity, until some interval after they'd finally begun investigating quantum states of biological organisms, by which time it was too late to extrapolate to the macro conditions outside their laboratories. Duyviwld seems to have intuited their unfortunate situation from his first encounter with their cries for help, but by that time ‘spontaneous

combustions', as the Tiānxiàns metaphorically termed the physiological and social conditions of neuronal and synaptic overload, had begun breaking out planet-wide."

As the Professor began to retreat completely into his dark matter recess, he instructed his auditors: "In the next chron we will consider the case of baryonic planet Yapoy-3 and the risks its proto-intelligent occupants assumed in their daring flirtation with Technogenic Climate Change. Be sure to have consulted Gubhwldjag's account and both the primary and secondary analyses from Professor Vuljoxphnrv's studies before we meet."

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