

Re109: *TikTok (app), Tik-Tok (novel), and Low-Power Mode* (Day 7, AIMA4e Chpt. 7)

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An observation of AI in action (TikTok), a decision (Low-Power Mode), and a coincidence (Tik-Tok).

TikTok as addictive spying tool; Tik-Tok, the novel; changes in technology vs. lack of changes in human wants and needs; creeping totalitarianism, illiberty, war, climate change, Artilect War, superintelligence; the gorilla problem; making a living, making a difference; AIMA4e, Retraice, audience; low-power mode.

Air date: Saturday, 7th Jan. 2023, 10:00 PM Eastern/US.

Prediction: default doom

Consider TikTok (the app), built on AI, ultimately controlled by the Chinese Communist Party,¹ on which millions of Americans have been made addicted to pure amusement, and *Tik-Tok (the novel)*, yet another warning about the bleakness of a robot's would-be life, and the robot's power to respond.

It seems the ever-increasing power of technology is not being tracked by any obvious change in human desires.² If so, it's reasonable to be pessimistic and expect that worse forms of previous bad things will happen because stronger technology makes them possible:³

- **Creeping totalitarianism, illiberty:**

See, for example: [Strittmatter \(2018\)](#); [Andersen \(2020\)](#).

- **Normal war:**

Add, for example, 'slaughterbots'⁴ to the otherwise familiar current methods of war.

- **Climate change:**

The generalized doom scenario is that we can't adapt quickly enough to the changes we're causing, by use of technologies, in the environment (changes that go beyond just average temperatures)—see H6 of the hypotheses in Re17, [Retraice \(2022/03/07\)](#).

- **Artilect War:**

A 'gigadeath' conflict between two human groups who anticipate AI surpassing human abilities. One group is in favor (cosmists), the other opposed (terrans). [de Garis \(2005\)](#).

- **Superintelligence:**

[Bostrom \(2014\)](#). I.e. super-human AI with its own purposes, causing what [Russell & Norvig \(2020\)](#) call "the **gorilla problem**: about seven million years ago, a now-

extinct primate evolved, with one branch leading to gorillas and one to humans. Today, the gorillas are not too happy about the human branch; they have essentially no control over their future. If this is the result of success in creating superhuman AI—that humans cede control over their future—then perhaps we should stop work on AI, and, as a corollary, give up the benefits it might bring. This is the essence of Turing's warning: it is not obvious that we can control machines that are more intelligent than us."⁵ We might add that there are worse fates than death and zoos.

Preferences: competing goals

- making a living;
- making a difference—to us, working to decrease the likelihood of the above 'doom' scenarios.⁶

Retraice was meant to make a living and a difference. It's doing neither, and only has hope of doing one (difference).

Two things are obvious at this point:

1. Continuing with [Russell & Norvig \(2020\)](#) (daily investing even *more* time) is more likely to make a difference and a living.
2. If Retraice has an audience out there, we have no way of finding it—and it's much smaller than we thought it would be.

It also seems clear that *completely* stopping Retraice is wrong, because we like doing it. And it still has a chance of making a difference, given enough time and luck.

¹"TikTok's Chinese parent company, ByteDance, is required by Chinese law to make the app's data available to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). From the FBI Director to FCC Commissioners to cybersecurity experts, everyone has made clear the risk of TikTok being used to spy on Americans." [Rubio, Gallagher Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Ban TikTok](#), Dec. 13th, 2022.

²[Durant & Durant \(1968\)](#) p. 95: "Since we have admitted no substantial change in man's nature during historic times, all technological advances will have to be written off as merely new means of achieving old ends—the acquisition of goods, the pursuit of one sex by the other (or by the same), the overcoming of competition, the fighting of wars. One of the discouraging discoveries of our disillusioning century is that science is neutral: it will kill for us as readily as it will heal, and will destroy for us more readily than it can build." Cf. [Simler & Hanson \(2018\)](#), [Stephens-Davidowitz \(2018\)](#).

³One or more of these might be "a [Great Filter](#)—an evolutionary step that is extremely improbably—somewhere on the line between Earth-like planet and colonizing-in-detectable-ways civilization." [Bostrom & Ćirković \(2008\)](#) pp. 131–132, citing [Hanson \(1999\)](#), which is probably the same as this (1998): *The Great Filter - Are We Almost Past It?* [Robin Hanson](#), Sep. 15, 1998.

⁴"The video was released onto YouTube by the Future of Life Institute and Stuart Russell [co-author of [Russell & Norvig \(2020\)](#)]." —<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slaughterbots>. The video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CO6M2HsoIA>.

⁵[Russell & Norvig \(2020\)](#) p. 33.

⁶We use this abbreviation of our mission statement: "FindTFtMtF-BtPaMtCKaMbTests (find the fundamentals that make the future better than the past and make them common knowledge as measured by tests)." Cf. [Retraice \(2022/12/31\)](#).

Decision: low-power mode

The new Retraice plan:

- **Time on AIMA4e:** more;
- **Time on podcast:** less (something like changing from daily ‘podcast’ to short daily ‘transmission’);
- **Money on podcast:** less (the equivalent of keeping one light bulb on, the bare minimum in costs and expenses).

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