

# Elon Musk says empathy is threatening civilisation. He?...

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Elon Musk says empathy is threatening civilisation. He's wrong. He is that threat. What's worse though is that his threat is totally consistent with neoliberal economics.

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This is the transcript:

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I care and Elon Musk doesn't, and that is the big difference between us.

Let me explain. Elon Musk said in the course of a podcast interview during the course of the last week, that empathy was the threat that he perceived to Western civilization.

Let's be clear what I mean by empathy. It is the ability of a person to stand in another person's shoes and understand that person's situations, fears, hopes, aspirations, joy, whatever it might be.

It is our comprehension of other people that we can embrace to therefore influence our own behaviour.

And Musk is embracing instead the thinking of neoliberal economics.

Neoliberal economics is a philosophy that is so corrupt that it has no relationship to human behavior at all. It says that we, as economic agents, should only be interested in our own wellbeing and not that of anyone else, and that we should maximize our worth at cost to everyone else without having to worry about the consequences.

Well, we can see that being played out in Elon Musk's life.

Of course, he was born in South Africa.

He was born into privilege based upon the exploitation of most of the population of that country at the time under the apartheid regime. And his ability to exploit has continued ever since.

He's a man who literally probably doesn't care because he's never learned how to care because he was never taught how to do so.

But the vast majority of us were. We understand that caring matters.

We have causes and people for whom we have sympathy.

When a friend is really ill, we lend a hand.

When we go and do a run, we quite often get sponsorship for a favourite charity and we raise money for it.

Or we make a regular donation.

Or we give away goods for recycling to a charity shop. There are loads in the high street, not far from here.

All of those are indications that we care.

We can imagine that we want to support the person with cancer or with mental ill health, or who's suffering in some other way because we know that there, but for the grace of God - to use a phrase - go all of us.

None of us know what is going to happen, and that is the fundamental philosophical point that I adopt. Because none of us know what might happen we should behave as if anything could happen to us. And as a result, we should care about the fact that everybody gets access to what they need because one day we might want whatever it is that they need now.

That is a political philosophy based upon the idea that I care.

Elon Musk has a political philosophy that is based upon the idea that he does not care

and doesn't want to care, and doesn't care that he doesn't care.

That, in my opinion, is callousness.

It is indifferent.

It's actually inhuman because as far as I can see, we are essentially made to live in society. We have to have people around us. We cannot live in isolation. We need to cohabit with others in order to survive. We must therefore care. That is the normal state of human nature.

And he's trying to deny that.

He's trying to run a whole government on the basis that this is not true. He says that empathy is the threat to Western civilisation that he needs the defeat. And yet empathy is synonymous with civilisation because it is exactly because we care that we are civilised.

Indeed, one of the first examples that there was ever found of civilisation was when a preserved bone was discovered of a human or a pre-human being, which had both been broken and clearly set. In other words, one person had cared sufficiently about another many thousands of years ago to actually reset their bone, so that they survived having broken it. That was an indication of care. And at that point you can say civilisation began because we were able to imagine ourselves in the position of the person with the broken bone and we did something about it, or rather our ancient ancestor did. And ever since we've done the same.

But Musk doesn't want us to do that, and to me that is truly terrifying.

A government that doesn't care, a civilization that doesn't care, a population that doesn't care led by people who do not care is the very antithesis of everything that I believe society should be about. Musk is the threat to Western civilization. Empathy is not, and we have a choice about which we want to support, and I would suggest that if you support Musk you've got something very serious that you need to think about, about your own wellbeing, your own attitudes, and how you care for others.