Uniquity IV

Nobody asked but …

The biggest obstacle for general artificial intelligence (GAI), where machines can actually learn from external stimulus, is that humanity is networked imperfectly but is unique in each of its nodes. Humanity is a giant, fallible information system. It is difficult to see something like this because of its scale. I first became struck with the idea at the Knoxville World's Fair in the 1970s. The most popular exhibit was that of China. I don't remember where we stood with regard to Nixon's overtures to this vast Asian culture, but to my generation the network in that part of the world had been no man's land since FDR had handed China to Mao. Suffice it to say that the China exhibit in Knoxville was ripe with the shock of the new to us Americans. The thing that struck me most of all was the exquisite attention to detail (a skill that most Westerners had underdeveloped because of the demand for speed in productivity). At the time the population of China was said to be above 800 million, whereas we Yanks were still between 100 and 200 million. The oriental attention to detail was possible because there were so many more Chinese engaged in so many facets of productivity. The specific objects which fascinated me were paintings on the inside of small bottles. Somewhere among 800 million possibilities, someone would come up with the idea of painting on the inside of a bottle. Then the idea spread in some degree among the nodes of a relatively isolated network. The same calculus applies to Chinese acrobats, if you have ever seen them. With such vast numbers of possibilities the chances of there being people who could concentrate enough to become great acrobats was exponential. Creators of GAI are small in number, so the question is whether there will be enough innovation, networked in an auspicious way, to produce GAI. While this is a problem with quanta, the nature of the predicted result must depend on qualia from the possibilities of billions of unique units. I have tried in this series to interest you in the vast uniquity, every unit is unique. GAI is predicated on the idea of a vast sameness.

— Kilgore Forelle