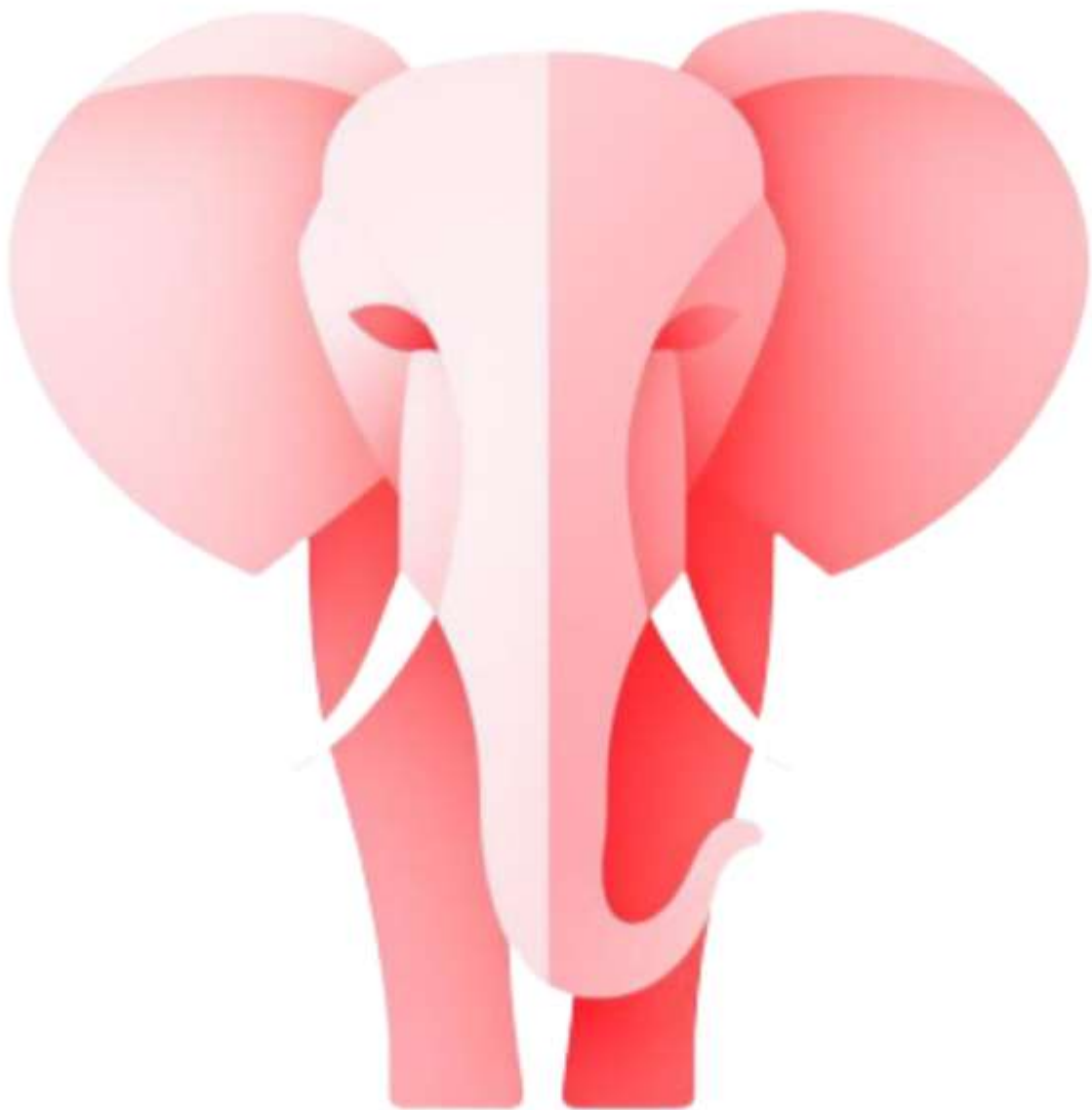


The Parable of the Pink Elephant



“My God! Look at that eye sore,” the man said to himself as he walked to work.

Through the mass of humanity, his eyes fixated on a giant poster of a giant pink elephant. Not just any pink elephant. A comically large, facsimile of shapes that should have been an elephant but lacked the form and function to convey a living quadruped.

A political automaton pointed a megaphone in the man’s direction and dictated edicts from The Party of Logic and Reason. The man’s countenance contorted grotesquely as it basked in unwanted sound waves.

“Ha! A political party of logic and reason? An oxymoron maybe? A joke of the sickest nature? I’ve never heard of such a thing in my life. We already have two political parties, and now a third? Good Riddance!” the man exclaimed, then spit in annoyance as he pushed through the crowded rally.

The simple man continued down the predetermined path to his simple job. There he would perform simple, mundane work of a repetitive nature and return to his simple but persistent life. There was, however, a gnawing feeling of dread. A hopelessness that heralded the harsher times yet to come.

On the small island of Pathos in the Pacific Ocean, this feeling was shared among its inhabitants. Life had been particularly difficult and tumultuous in the last year. A tsunami had pulverized the port cities, blight and disease ravaged the mainland, and rampant inflation led to pandemonium and instability among the population. The island was ideologically divided in half, and the two political parties were named for their respective geographic origins. The East Party stood for what The West Party was

against, and opposed the ideals that the other party supported. The West Party stood for what The East Party was against, and rejected what the other party accepted. As either side was only for what the other was against, they collectively stood for nothing and were against everything.

The two parties had equal representation in government, which resulted in perennial political gridlock. Nothing could be, or was done. The vacuum of inaction was soon filled by a third political group. A party that subsumed emotions and transformed them into actions. A party that disregarded party-line principles and replaced them with pragmatic resolutions. A party symbolized by a heinous-looking, unctuous, bubble-gum pink elephant. The Party of Logic and Reason.

Every day on his way to work, the man noticed more political rallies and more support for the The Party of Logic and reason, colloquially known as The Party of Pink Elephants. Yet day after day, in spite of his utmost struggle, the man could not stop thinking of pink elephants that invaded his thoughts. Pink elephant posters were plastered on buildings, nailed to flyers, put on websites, and posted on message boards. Every news agency reported on the Pink Elephants. He overheard conversations about them everywhere he went. He was so enraged one day that he leaned over to his co-worker George to unleash his wrath.

“Why in the world would a political party choose a pink globular elephant as a logo? Have they not done their market research! What’s wrong with these imbeciles?”

“Let me ask you a question,” George said. “Can you stop thinking about pink elephants?”

“Of course not. That’s why I’m irate,” roared the man.

“Then that’s your answer,” George replied.

“Ok, genius, if you’re so smart, tell me how I can remove this thought from my mind. How can I get rid of this pervasive pink elephant plaguing my brain?”

“You can do no such thing. Nothing in the universe can be removed. Things can only be *moved*. Matter and energy is conserved. It cannot disappear; only change forms,” George expounded.

“Now you sound like a physicist,” the man said.

“I was a physicist at Apatía Corporation for 7 years. The holding company that acquired them decided it was better to tell customers the product they made was good, rather than to actually make it good. They divested their R&D department, at which point my employment was no longer needed.”

The man disregarded George’s statement but continued to look rather irritated. Suddenly, he grabbed George’s pen and threw it in the trash.

“Ha! I removed your pen.”

“You *moved* the pen from the desk to the trash can. You have only changed its orientation in space-time. I can assure you that the pen still very much exists,” George explained.

A ghastly scowl crossed the man’s face. The man then snatched George’s bus ticket, produced a lighter, and gleefully lit the paper on fire, smiling while it burned to a crisp.”

“Voilà! I made your paper disappear.”

“No, the paper is still there; it has changed into ash and smoke,” George said.

The man became angry. *He would show the physicist who's right.* He thought long and hard, then finally responded: “Surely you must agree that our division has cut costs? Cost of goods sold were reduced ten percent year to date. We have literally removed cost. What do you say to that Einstein?”

“I say we have not literally removed anything. When a good is sold, the object and the ownership transfers from the company to the entity buying it. The sold object would then be replaced on the shelf with another object. Cost is information associated with the good. The cost information from the previous good and the new good are both stored in the system. No information or objects have been removed,” George responded.

The man could think of no reply, became furious and stormed out of the room, slamming the door in his wake. *I was intellectually defeated by a man with no intellect, and emotionally beaten by a man with no emotions...never again will this happen.*

In the following weeks and months, the island had reached the pinnacle of political turmoil and civic strife, although it didn't necessitate immediate change since the system had become quite profitable for all involved. Pundits fused fidelity with fiction to propagandize their preferred candidate. Politicians spouted spite and derision, which the public used to fuel the flames of division. Large conglomerates ran marketing campaigns of pseudo-

moralistic activism while selling the personal information of their customers behind their backs.

As time went on, it soon became clear that public enthusiasm for the rival political parties was at an all-time low. The East Party decided to drum up excitement by hiring 10,000 people to dig holes. The leader of The East Party proudly stood on the podium, boasting they had created 10,000 new jobs. Not to be outdone, The West Party took notice and announced they would also create 10,000 new jobs with even higher pay and hired 10,000 people to fill in those holes. Some people wondered why holes were being dug. Others wondered why those same holes were being filled in. Some wondered who was paying for this. Others didn't wonder at all.

The Party of Pink Elephants declared pork barrel spending and claimed the labor of hole diggers and hole fillers amounted to zero production subsidized with taxpayer money. The East Party accused The Pink Elephants of spreading hateful misinformation and being "anti-government." The West Party accused The Pink Elephants of spreading dangerous disinformation and being "anti-job."

Although the opposing East and West parties could not agree on almost anything, the one thing they did agree on is that there should not be a third party. The East Party was skilled at suppressing pertinent information. The West Party was adept at creating legislation that could not be procedurally overturned by the courts. Together, the parties worked quickly to pass a cascade of statutes that would seek to eliminate all sources of funding for the Pink Elephants while quelling their media presence.

The East and West Parties wasted no time in colluding with tech and media companies to develop a plan to systematically

make it impossible to text or type any mention of the horrid elephant symbol. Any use of the color pink would be deemed illegal. Data networks would automatically remove any text or email transmission of the words “pink” or “elephant.” Jail time would be established for those caught speaking those words in public. Networks would electronically monitor banned words over phone lines and disconnect the call before the words reached the recipient. Nearly every form of communication correlated with The Pink Elephants was legally banned.

The East and West parties quickly realized it would be faster to pass new laws if they had a political monopoly. The parties drafted legislation to join together to become a single entity. The notion that this was constitutionally illegal provided only a small hurdle since they had the unanimous votes to quickly and easily amend the constitution. The newly rebranded East-West Party announced they would begin implementing The Communication Commission’s master plan to remove all traces of The Pink Elephants. Excitement was at an all-time high for these officials, who were confident their plan was foolproof.

The censorship plan worked shockingly well for the first two days, but then people began to have ideas. The citizens resented being notified that they could not say words such as “pink,” so they would substitute another color in protest. They disliked being informed that the word “elephant” was outlawed, so they replaced it with other animal names. Every time a new word or phrase was censored, they would simply replace the banned words with new ones. Language generation became so pervasive that it was assumed that if a person heard a gibberish word, it was a substitution for a banned word. The citizens carried on communication as if there was no censorship at all.

The East-West Party was surprised people were so easily able to get around their steadfast censorship. The more radical elements of the party considered a systematic ban on all non-government speech and communication; however, it was quickly realized that this would result in mass starvation since almost all of the island's food was imported or produced by private companies, which needed to communicate to function.

The tech CEOs were beside themselves. They could not contemplate how their staff of PHD-educated neural network engineers coding algorithms running on computers performing quadrillions of calculations per second, could be easily outsmarted by uneducated dock workers. The artificial intelligence they created had to be trained with censored words to be able to identify them. People were creating new words at such a rapid pace that the neural networks could not keep up. One tech CEO was caught crying when he realized the number of words a human could create was countably infinite, and the system that could predictively censor all future speech was non-deterministic and fundamentally not computable. The artificial general intelligence systems they had invested billions in turned out to be specifically unintelligent.

As the simple man walked home one day, he happened to be in the right place at the right time, muttering caustic words while walking by a group of East-West Party lobbyists. The lobbyists saw in their sights the perfect pawn. *Why hire an actor to feign anger against The Pink Elephants when we can get the real thing?*

After a short period of time, the man was employed as the spokesperson for the Anti-Hate umbrella organization, which would collect funds to remove the presence of anything related to The Party of Pink Elephants, The Party of Logic and Reason. After all, the party was now an official government symbol of hate, and illegal hate must be legally removed.

Shell companies were established to collect donations from corporations and private citizens. New Anti-Elephant curricula were circulated in all school systems. Corporations ran ads disavowing the dangerous Party of Pink Elephants.

The East-West Party implemented a rating scale that would be applied to all companies in order to determine their compliance with disavowing The Party of Pink Elephants. Only companies above a certain score would be eligible for a tax break. All companies complied, as they would have to file bankruptcy if they didn't, due to the exorbitant fines for non-compliance.

The Anti-Hate group commandeered the island's small supply of reserve helium. This was used to fill balloons to promote visibility for anti-hate rallies, which were used to collect more donation money. The donated money was then used to pay salaries of the workers and to fill more balloons for more rallies, which collected more money to fill more balloons. The Party of Pink Elephants said the extremely limited supply of helium should not be wasted on balloons, as it was literally going up into thin air in the upper atmosphere. They said the helium should be reserved for use in MRI machines in hospitals, as they cannot function without it. The East-West Party said this was *mis* and *dis*-information.

In a short amount of time, thousands of citizens were hired to remove all posters of pink elephants and replace them with posters of an elephant with an X through it. Flyers were also

posted explaining the criminality of associating with this hate group, detailing the maximum jail sentence for such offenses, which happened to be equal to the minimum jail sentence for those offenses. Spreading misinformation, or that deemed to be untrue by the party in power, was a jailable offense. Spreading disinformation, or that which the party didn't like, was a jailable offense. Spreading malinformation, or that which was deemed to be true but could promote dangerous "party compliance hesitancy" was the worst offense and punishable by death.

After months and hundreds of millions of dollars spent to remove any and all presence of The Pink Elephants, it became very clear that their plan was actually increasing awareness of them. Whereas before, only a select few hundred people knew of The Party of Pink Elephants, now millions of citizens were deeply aware of their existence. The master plan had spectacularly failed by many magnitudes of order, as focusing on the thing they were trying to decrease directly led to its drastic increase.

The man was well aware of this as he passed the physicist on a side street one cloudy day looking dejected.

"Hello," said George as he approached. "How have you been?"

"Terrible," the exasperated man mumbled. "I don't understand why our plan is failing. We spent ungodly amounts of money to remove all presence of those dastardly Pink Elephants. We hired an unfathomable number of people to make sure no one could mutter a single word of their existence. We even made it illegal to usher any support in any way to their organization. But yet, the plan fails. Why?"

"It failed because things in the universe can only exist. Thinking a thought brings that thought into existence. Creating

anything brings that thing into existence. Nothing can ever be removed because nothing can ever un-exist.”

“But what can I do to get rid of the bad?” the man begged.

“You can do nothing of the sort. You can do and think of things that are good. As more good is created, it will crowd out the bad, and the bad will occupy a smaller and smaller portion of existence. You are trying to remove things you don’t want. You can only succeed if you focus on things you do want.”

The man did not understand and had no counter-point. But he did have a counter-hand. The man slapped the physicist in the face as hard as he could. He could see George was disoriented as blood trickled down his nose. The man smirked as he walked away, supremely satisfied.

I have physically humiliated the physicist. Now I will mentally humiliate him. I will show him that I am the one who decides what exists and what doesn’t. I will decide what is good and what is bad. I will decide what will be, and what is to be wiped off the face of the earth.

The man returned to the party of lawyers and lobbyists that now exclusively paid him. A long meeting commenced. It was explained that the lobbyists were not concerned that their plan to remove The Pink Elephants from the sphere of public perception had horribly failed, nor were they concerned why it failed. The constant torrent of donations to their Anti-Hate organization had been reduced to a mere trickle over time, and they had moved on. The Pink Elephants would be ignored, as they were no longer financially viable to squeeze. A much grander plan was in the works. They had found something new. They had found something that was universally hated and despised among all humans—the bane of existence for any decent person. They

planned to rally against this and use it to collect an infinite stream of donations, hire more people, run more ads, change more minds, implement stricter control, and increase criminal charges to a level never seen before. It was a foolproof plan.

The man left the meeting more driven than ever, with a new sense of purpose. He licked his gnarled lips with enthusiasm and thought to himself: *The physicist is wrong. We have a new master plan. We will remove something. No one can oppose us. We will remove something from existence.*

The man took an oversized black marker and moved towards the government-approved poster that displayed the words:

“ANTI-ELEPHANT”

He crossed out the word ELEPHANT.

He wrote in the word:

“RACISM”



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