

Humanity's Predicament

Humanity's "predicament" is the inevitable consequence of a self-terminating causal relationship in which we *Homo sapiens* unwittingly ensnared ourselves during the mid-18th century, as we transitioned from agrarianism to industrialism. Since that time, what we have done to enable our existence has simultaneously undermined our existence...

There exists a great deal of controversy and confusion regarding the origins, nature, and prospective outcomes pertaining to the myriad political, economic, and societal (including environmental) problems that currently confront humankind.

Human cultural deterioration – i.e., political instability, economic fragility, and societal unrest – is ubiquitous, and ever-increasing. Yet, owing to our prevailing anthropocentric (human-centered) perspective, most people have failed to grasp the fundamental cause underlying our deteriorating cultural circumstances – humanity's predicament.

Humanity's Predicament IS NOT...

Humanity's predicament IS NOT rooted in "political ineptitude", "economic profligacy", and/or "societal decay". Selecting competent political representatives, becoming economically responsible, and/or implementing "enlightened" social policies, WOULD NOT resolve our predicament.

Humanity's predicament IS NOT rooted in "<fill in the blank> inequality" and/or "<fill in the blank> injustice". Eliminating human inequality and/or human injustice WOULD NOT resolve our predicament.

Humanity's predicament IS NOT rooted in "pollution", "climate change", "planetary degradation", and/or other human environmental transgressions. Eliminating pollution, eliminating green house gas emissions, "going green", and/or becoming exemplary stewards of our planet, WOULD NOT resolve our predicament.

Humanity's predicament IS NOT rooted in "human overpopulation", "human overconsumption", and/or our alleged quest for "infinite economic growth on a finite planet". Stabilizing or even reducing our global population level, our aggregate consumption level, and/or our global economic output level, WOULD NOT resolve our predicament.

When viewed from the broader ecological (Nature-centered) perspective, the preceding examples of flawed human behavior, while real, are merely symptoms of humanity's predicament – metaphorically, they are the fever, not the disease.

And addressing the symptoms of our predicament affords only temporary and superficial benefits, at best. Such efforts cannot possibly cure the underlying disease, nor should they be construed as incremental steps toward curing the underlying disease – which is human industrialism.

Humanity's Predicament IS...

Humanity's predicament IS rooted in human industrialism, our existing way of life, which we *Homo sapiens* seek to perpetuate and propagate – a way of life that is inherently unsustainable and that threatens the very existence of our species.

More precisely, our predicament IS rooted in the terminally unsustainable Earth resource utilization behavior that enables human industrialism – i.e., our enormous and ever-increasing exploitation of Earth's finite, non-replenishing, and increasingly scarce NNRs (nonrenewable natural resources).

Simply put, what we do to enable our industrial existence simultaneously undermines our species' existence. This causal relationship is the basis for **our predicament: we are doomed if we attempt to perpetuate our industrialized way of life, and we are doomed if we do not – human industrialism is a self-inflicted, self-terminating trap.**

(Note that from the ecological perspective, human industrialism and industrial humanity are neither "good" nor "bad". They simply exist, and they are unsustainable – period.)

The Evolution of Humanity's Predicament...

Viewed from the ecological perspective, we *Homo sapiens* are in the latter stages of a geologically-based evolutionary process – industrialization – which has been enabled by our persistent and ever-increasing exploitation of Earth's finite and non-replenishing fossil fuels, metals, and nonmetallic minerals since the mid-18th century.

During the mid/late 20th century, the process transitioned from our "old normal" of geologically-enabled abundance (Nature's stimulus) and accelerating human prosperity, to our "new normal" of geologically-imposed scarcity (Nature's squeeze) and faltering human prosperity.

Since that time, our deteriorating global natural environment – as manifested by increasingly pervasive global NNR scarcity – has been causing our deteriorating global cultural environment – as manifested by increasing political instability, economic fragility, and societal unrest.

As our cultural circumstances have deteriorated, increasingly large segments of our global population have become marginalized or disenfranchised, and have consequently become increasingly frustrated, angry, and violent – a trend that will intensify going forward.

The Resolution to Humanity's Predicament...

Regrettably, there is no "solution" to our geologically-based predicament – that is, there is no future scenario that will culminate in a favorable outcome for humankind. There is only a "resolution" to our predicament, which is humanity's catastrophic reversion to sustainability.

The precondition for species sustainability is sustainable Earth resource utilization behavior. (We uniquely ingenious *Homo sapiens* managed to temporarily circumvent this natural law – to our immense temporary benefit – by learning to exploit Earth's nonrenewable natural resources on an industrial scale.)

Industrial humanity must and will, therefore, transition to a sustainable non-industrialized way of life, in which an infinitesimally small human population will subsist exclusively on renewable natural resources (RNRs) – water and naturally occurring plants and animals. At issue is whether we will transition voluntarily or involuntarily.

Given our anthropocentric perspective and our resultant lack of awareness regarding our predicament and its implications, it is not surprising that we have already made our choice – by default.

Despite the fact that a voluntary transition to sustainability is the least horrific of our available options, we will instead pull out all the stops in an increasingly desperate and futile attempt to perpetuate our industrial existence – until Nature's squeeze causes us to crack.

As global NNR scarcity becomes increasingly pervasive during the coming decades, we will resort increasingly to conflict as the means by which to allocate remaining NNRs – and RNRs – initially through increasingly debilitating “us versus them” resource wars, and ultimately through a species-threatening war of “all against all”.

Like a snowball rolling downhill, humanity's unraveling will gain momentum, as negative feedback loops driven by increasingly frequent and severe local, regional, national, and global systemic failures exacerbate our deteriorating circumstances.

As extensively depleted and irreparably damaged Earth resource reserves become permanently unproductive, industrialized nations – irrespective of their political ideologies, economic systems, and societal orientations – will collapse, taking the aid-dependent non-industrialized nations with them.

Global human prosperity will peak and enter terminal decline, a scenario that will quickly devolve into permanent global societal collapse – species collapse – almost certainly by the year 2050.

Under the best case post-collapse scenario, a few million *Homo sapiens* will eke out a subsistence level existence by scavenging among the remnants of Earth's once abundant resources. Under the worst case scenario, our species will become extinct through warfare, starvation, pestilence, and disease.

We Passed the Point of No Return Centuries Ago...

Humanity's fate was sealed during the mid-18th century, with the onset of our industrial revolution. The NNR genie was released from the bottle and could not be put back.

We remained ignorant of our inevitable fate during the 19th and 20th centuries, by misconstruing our windfall of temporary NNR abundance as permanent NNR sufficiency. We must now pay the price for our ignorance.

We will soon discover that we are not “exemptional” – having somehow transcended the laws of Nature that apply to all “lesser species” – but that we are merely the extraordinarily fortunate beneficiaries of a one-time, rapidly depleting, natural legacy; and that we are the unwitting and unfortunate victims of our own ingenuity.

And, we will soon discover that humanity's self-terminating experiment with industrialism represents a mere 300 year “blip” along the three million timeline of human history.

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For additional information regarding humanity's predicament and its implications, visit www.readblip.com.

