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So, They Think the Problem is Climate Change....?

Well, yes, climate change is unquestionably a major problem. But is it the *root* problem? Or is it, perhaps, too many people? Well there certainly are lots of us: 7.8 billion and counting...Which is a lot. Although someone calculated that the mass of all the social ants on the planet outweighed the mass of all the people on the planet. Incredible. No, really, *unbelievable*...

The social insects, however, live in balance with their local environment. If they find that they are expending as much energy gathering food as the food itself supplies, then they ‘up-sticks’ and establish a new colony, hive, etc., and start again in some new environment—or die out.



Famine in ancient Egypt

There is only one social animal on the planet that does NOT do that: humans, *homo sapiens*, we smart social apes. We inherent hunter-gatherers husband (and import) our cattle, sheep and pigs to avoid *hunting*, and we grow (and import) cereals, root vegetables, fruit, etc., into the local supermarket to avoid *gathering*. Which, of course, positively encourages population growth. Without limit.

It hasn't always been like that. Scroll back to ancient Egypt, during the Pyramid Age, and the population rose and fell in line with the annual Inundations of the Nile, which - in a good year - deposited rich silt on the banks, giving good harvests,

sometimes two or three a year. However, a succession of poor Inundations saw famine and death stalk the land, and the population fell... keeping in natural balance with their environment.

I was at a meeting of systems thinkers a while back. We were thinking about the potential to eradicate malaria—which seems like a good idea. In 2019, an estimated 409,000 people died of malaria—most were young children in sub-Saharan Africa.

One of the thinkers pointed out that if all those people were suddenly NOT to die, that would create a major problem of feeding them in a place where food was already in short supply. This observation raised an outcry. But, she had a point—there was a balance between the local human population and their environment, based on *both* the limited food resource *and* ‘predation’ by mosquito. Curing malaria would upset that balance. By no means insurmountable, but a more complex issue than it first appeared...

The richest one percent of the world's population are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the 3.1 billion people who made up the poorest half of humanity during a critical 25-year period of unprecedented emissions growth.

So, is it the number of people on the planet, or their lifestyles, that is the root problem? Or is it, perhaps, the lifestyle of some of them, but not all? Oxfam's new report, '[Confronting Carbon Inequality](#),' (Ref A) is based on research conducted with the Stockholm Environment Institute and is being released as world leaders prepare to meet at the UN General Assembly to discuss global challenges including the climate crisis.

The report assesses the consumption emissions of different income groups between 1990 and 2015 – 25 years when humanity doubled the amount

of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It found that the richest one percent were responsible for 15 percent of emissions during this time – more than all the citizens of the EU and more than twice that of the poorest half of humanity (7 percent).

Tim Gore, Head of Climate Policy at Oxfam and author of the report said: “The over-consumption of a wealthy minority is fuelling the climate crisis yet it is poor communities and young people who are paying the price. Such extreme carbon inequality is a direct consequence of our governments decades long pursuit of grossly unequal and carbon intensive economic growth.

“...a recent study found that the richest 10 percent of households use almost half (45 percent) of all the energy linked to land transport and three quarters of all energy linked to aviation. Transportation accounts for around a quarter of global emissions today, while SUVs were the second biggest driver of global carbon emissions growth between 2010 and 2018.”

So, it looks like the root problem may be the lifestyle of a small, wealthy minority...or is it? That last statistic referred to households, but you get a different view if you look at the countries that are the greatest polluters:–

Top 5 Most Polluting Countries

1. China (30%) The world's most populated country has an enormous export market...
2. United States (15%) The world's biggest industrial and commercial power...
3. India (7%) ...
4. Russia (5%) ...
5. Japan (4%)

China has the world’s largest population at 1.44 billion. India’s population is about 1.38 billion, but rising rapidly and expected to overtake that of China by about 2027... Yet, currently India creates much less of the world’s pollution

than China — 7% to 30%. The difference, of course, is that by comparison, much of India is really not that industrialised. But they have ambitions...

Again, there is more to it. Why has China's population growth almost levelled-off? Well, it seems that, with more of their population becoming affluent and replete with all the latest social technologies, they no longer feel the need to have large families. The more usual limit now is about two children... So, does industrialisation mean stable population? Perhaps it does...

If so, then the route seems to be: *industrialisation; established affluent middle class, enjoying the benefits of the latest social technologies for entertainment, travel, communications, etc; reduced need/desire for large families; stable population; maintained/increased industrialisation.*

Could we be getting closer to the root? Could it be our human drive to create, experience and enjoy the fruits of modern social technology that is largely to blame? Let's face it: *the current boom in pollution coincides with the advent of digital technology, starting back in the 60s.* I'm just saying...

Well now, that is interesting. Did you know...there are some 5.27 billion cell phones globally?, so, *67.8% of the global population has a mobile device.* And, of course, we are all urged to replace our current cell phones after only one year, to keep up with the advances in technology and performance that are dangled like carrots in front of our eager donkey-noses. So, annual sales of smartphones top 1.55 billion! And smartphones increasingly use rare minerals in their manufacture, and to provide colour to their metallic exteriors...it seems that very little of these rare minerals is recycled, making them rarer still, and the mining of them more demanding and more damaging to their source environments.

A new phone every year means *manufacturing* 1.55 billion. Where? How much energy required? How much carbon discharged into the atmosphere? How much mineral resource depleted? And all for an essentially *unnecessary*

convenience? With serious, globally-antisocial consequences? Really? Do me a favour...

The mobile/smartphone/cell phone industry alone has to be responsible for a significant part of the annual carbon generation. But we have to have smartphones; else, how could we keep up with our essential, *antisocial* media?

How did ‘the old folk’ manage, how could the world have conceivably operated, back in the 50s and 60s, without smartphones. Those poor, pusillanimous troglodytes...uh, sorry, grandparents and great grandparents... who, in today’s pseudo-cultural terms, are racists, prejudiced, senile and unworthy of any respect...fit only to be packed off into homes—now, how did *that* social *volte-face* come about?

And that is only part of the story, with ever increasing use of washing machines, dishwashers, air conditioning (to counteract global warming), etc., our homes are increasingly furnished with ever more sophisticated technology, soon to be tied together with the Internet of Things so that it may be controlled remotely, or better yet, operate automatically. How long before the fridge “knows” which commodities are running low, automatically orders fresh supplies from the supermarket, which automatically delivers and restocks them? Great, eh?

And all of this happening worldwide. Spare a thought for all of the manufacture involved: white goods, brown goods, TVs, games consoles, laptops, desktops, tablets, hi-fi, digital photocopier/scanner/printers, air conditioning, for every digital home. And, of course, we have to have our holidays abroad travelling by air: its so quick and so cheap.

We can afford it. Our old folks may have holidayed at home in beautiful Scotland, the Orkneys, gorgeous South Wales, or wherever. But, face it, they thought that the Channel Islands and the Isle of Wight were overseas. Poor old souls. Don’t suppose they knew any better... Air pollution from flying? *Not my*

problem, mate. I've got my rights. My human rights. But there are thousands of us, millions, doing it every year, with the ever-present temptation of going to more exotic sites, more remote locations, to make us feel smug, self-satisfied... Oh! And deliciously suntanned, too, of course...

So, I think maybe I am getting nearer to the root cause of global warming. It's us, you and me, living a lifestyle that humans were never intended to live, one that is—essentially—not for humans, social apes that we are. Meanwhile, some of us, a very few in less developed parts of the world, are still living as Nature intended.

We come across them from time to time. “Lost” tribes in the Amazon jungle. Bushmen of the Kalahari. They live in balance with their environments. And we find, to our astonishment and disbelief, that they are happy, well-adjusted, intelligent, people. Interestingly, shaman-like, they are respectful of their prey, and careful not to over hunt. They are comfortable with their lifestyle, and not at all envious of ours. No population explosion for them; and they have existed like that for thousands of years.

They have no medical care, other than that they get from local plants and herbs. They may not live quite as long as we do, on average, but they don't seem to suffer from any ‘civilised’ diseases: “...they do not mutilate themselves, masturbate, attack their offspring, develop stomach ulcers, become fetishists, suffer from obesity, form homosexual pair-bonds, or commit murder.¹” Nor do they experience the usual ‘herd’ diseases: chickenpox, measles, rubella, etc., largely because of their isolation, presumably. No pandemics for them.

No point in wishing us all back to Neolithic, or better yet, Mesolithic times. Instead, we might wonder what is to become of humanity in the future. Or, indeed, if we have much future...

¹ Extract from ‘The Human Zoo,’ Desmond Morris, 1994

The Chinese approach, industrialisation on the grand scale, seems to be working for them, in controlling their overall population. At the expense, of course, of producing vast amounts of carbon, much of it from coal-fired power stations which they are continuing to commission. From their point of view, this no doubt seems fine, and it furthers any ambition they might have to be *the* global superpower. And besides, as they would point out, Western nations have already become heavily industrialised, and population-controlled, so its only fair...China needs time to catch up.

India and Africa seem destined to follow China's example: population explosion—industrialisation—pollution—population control. It's only fair...And, then, of course, they could be followed by some South American countries...and it would only be fair for them, too.

Of course, following this domino route will lead very rapidly to global warming disaster for everybody. Which you might well regard as yet another example, *possibly the last ever*, of the infamous Tragedy of the Commons.

And there may be other issues ahead. We humans seem determined to automate everything, to eliminate any human involvement in manufacture, distribution, retail, transport, even agriculture. Oh! And most importantly, in defence, by which we probably mean attack, but never mind the semantics. That would include intelligent robot soldiers, unmanned aircraft for reconnaissance, interdiction, even air defence; unmanned ships and submarines, and swarms of all of the above. Which would rather increase the prospect for global conflict, but with fewer human casualties; and, prolonged conflict with no prospect of submission by either side—submission would have been a human response, had there been any. Humans, that is...

So, we may look ahead to a time, not too far distant, when there is no need for human employment, except perhaps for a few engineer-types to repair

defective machines, and scientist types, to conceive and design new automated systems. And even they may be dispensed with by AI machines.

Exaggeration? Not a bit of it. Look what has happened already to our banking industry. What about our High Street shops? And automated cars are under test right now...Think about it. An automated world with no jobs, no employment, no need... Inconceivable? Well, we had better start conceiving, because it is almost upon us...

So, Cassandra. What else have you to say? Oh yes! That we may find clues to humanity's future in the current trends:

- We are wedded to an ever-increasing development and use of digital technology to automate and to allow very few humans to do things that would once have required very many humans
 - As a result, very few people (<<1%) will control a very wide spread of activities, formerly undertaken by myriad humans displaced by intelligent, automated technology.
- We cannot continue to afford the globally-spread and expanding use of short-lived social digital technology for much longer, owing to the pollution created in their manufacture, and to the scarce resources in some parts which will soon run out...
- As a species, we *appear* to be evolving *en masse* towards a eusocial super organism, not unlike the Hymenoptera (honeybees, wasps, etc.), termites, naked mole rats, etc., but with a distinctly human variation, as previously described in these pages: “Post Pandemic, Post Human” (Ref B):
 - “Humans are already exhibiting many of the signs of becoming eusocialized, with mounting confusion and blurring of sexual identity and male/female rôles, female demands for equality with

males, societal disregard for family, and by racial and cultural tensions.

- “Humanity is also marked by a continuing reduction in male potency and female fertility, and by an apparent rising tide of sexual uncertainty, and mental instability.”
- All of which may be the result of psychological “crowding, ” brought about by living in large city monocultures, and being umbilically connected to billions of others through our mobile technology and social media...

So, it seems inevitable that humanity will divide into two groups:

- A.** A very small elite of rich, powerful individuals in control of the intelligent automotive facilities, armies, industries, healthcare, etc., through which they effectively rule their parts of the world—which will eventually aggregate into mutually-opposing power blocs.
- B.** The rest of us, the vast majority of humanity, will live in efficient, eusocialized monocultural villages, towns and cities.

B is way more interesting. We ‘Bs’ will be busy, with jobs—looking after one another. As in any eusocialized society, there will be castes, or professions, including:

- midwives, and paediatricians, to monitor and assist with births and perinatal care
- teachers, who will raise the children from nursery thru’ college
- GPs and nurses
- builders who build and repair houses, roads, etc.
- suppliers of energy, communications, newspapers, etc.,
- food and water distribution
- sanitation

Indeed, everyone will have a caste, and a job, complementing the other castes in maintaining the community as a whole. However, there will be very few fertile females and even fewer fertile males. *All will be sexless workers*, looking after each other in their respective castes, as is the eusocialized way....

Children will be borne to local “queens,” the only fertile females. Queens may bear up to, perhaps, 15 to 25 children in their lifetime. Perhaps more. Queens will produce children only if there are enough resources to support them. Thus the population, be it city, town, village, or whatever, will exist in balance with its environment. After suckling, babies will be handed over to teachers for rearing.

Eusocialized humanity will form into groups of genetically related humans around their respective queens—in much the same way as honeybees are all sisters, having come from the one Queen. Only with humans, being mammals, group size is more likely to be of the order of, perhaps, 300-500, rather than thousands as in a hive. And these human aggregations will butt up against similar groups in the monocultural city, town or village, creating ‘neighbourhoods.’ And neighbourhoods will, no doubt, develop distinct characteristics, and may be disinclined to mix, so creating natural barriers to herd diseases and pandemics.

There will be no sex change surgery—it would be meaningless. There will be no LGBTQIA+ communities, nor sexual dysphoria. No in-vitro fertilisation (IVF). No plastic surgery to delay signs of ageing, or change sex—and ‘gender reassignment’ will cease to have meaning; again...

There may be competitive sport. Football, most likely, but with players being chosen for ability, since ‘male’ and ‘female’ will have no meaning. There will be no sexual dimorphism. Terms such as “gender” and “love” and “marriage” will no longer have meaning. (Let’s face it, these terms are already debased in our current, weirdly dominated Californian counter-culture.)

And, we will no longer think for ourselves. Because there will be no individuals, in the same way as there are no individual honeybees in a hive. So, no objections, no protests, no disagreements. We will ‘think’ as a group. We will be “The Borg,” but hopefully without the neurological implants...though you never know. Biological cell-phone implants might be just the thing...

Of course, the foregoing is speculation. But, it is speculation based on carrying some current trends towards their natural fulfilment. And, interestingly, if it were to happen, it would reduce the risk of global warming and thermal runaway. Moreover, it would rein in human population growth, and eventually reduce it to sensible proportions by making each centre of population stay in balance with its local environment. So saving the planet... (unless of course, Group A, the rich and powerful elite, had already gone to robot war and decimated the planet and everything on it...)

Unfortunately, however—or fortunately, depending on your viewpoint—we would no longer be *homo sapiens sapiens*. Just as cockroaches evolved into social termites, and bees evolved into social honeybees, we humans would have evolved into...well, *homo sapiens socialis*, perhaps. Or *homo sapiens gegaria*? But...hey, what’s in a name? We won’t know anything about it...or care.

References

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