



Is Man a Plague Upon the Earth?

First there was the anti-Western Westerner, the hate-America-first crowd, and the self-loathing white person. Now we have the anti-human human, who, like General Ursus in *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, seems to think that “the only good human is a dead human!” Of course, the Kum-Gaia-singing misanthropes don’t actually say that; rather, as David Attenborough recently opined, they assert that man is a “plague” whose burgeoning population threatens to do to the planet’s resources what the feds do to the treasury. Now, I already pointed out in a [recent piece](#) that Attenborough is factually wrong: The world will in the foreseeable future likely face a population *implosion*, not an explosion. But he is philosophically wrong as well.



There is no doubt that we should be good shepherds of the Earth. We have a responsibility to conserve resources when possible and should cherish God’s creation. And while we can acknowledge that we all too often fail in that regard, it is quite another thing to call man a “plague,” which clearly implies that he is a troublesome life form deleterious to something more important. Yet the issue here isn’t just that some ascribe greater value to the Earth than to man, or at best equal value. It is the larger questions of why they believe the Earth has *any intrinsic value at all* and the basis on which that value is assessed.

If you were a Christian, you’d presumably believe that the world had value because it was a gift from God; you would also likely believe that man had greater value and had been given a mandate to subdue the Earth. This is clearly not the position of the man-as-plague (MAP) crowd, however, which tends to operate under a worldview of atheism, either stated or implied. A corollary of this is that “man is the measure of all things,” which, of course, means that man is the only agency around to ascribe value. What follows from this is that the Earth, that curious arrangement of atoms, has no intrinsic value; it is only that man happens to value it. This is precisely, by the way, why some philosophers explicitly say that absolute intrinsic value doesn’t exist.

Of course, some think man-as-measure judgments carry weight; many will go so far as to say that man’s



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preferences for behavior are significant, and they even will sometimes label these tastes writ philosophically large as “morality.” So, okay, let us accept for argument’s sake that the Earth has “value” because man says it does. A logical extension of this is that if man didn’t exist, the Earth would have no value; thus, it *derives its value* from man to begin with. And this brings us to a relevant question: How can what is valued be more valuable than what can, with credibility, value it?

After all, if we can rightly be a yardstick that can determine the value of the Earth, we must be above it. And then it is ridiculous to subordinate man to it and describe him as a “plague” upon it.

This leaves the MAP crowd with little room to maneuver. One argument they could conceivably put forth is that God exists, but He is nothing like the God of the Bible; rather, He deems that the rest of His creation is above man or, at least, that it has certain “rights” which can be violated. Yet theistic worldviews are generally anathema to the materialistic MAP crowd, and thus the preceding is an argument they don’t propound. Then, truly grasping at straws, I suppose the “anti-speciesism” folks might say that the animals would value the Earth. But to “value” (verb) is a phenomenon of the intellect, something animals don’t possess. Beasts may instinctively grasp and hoard, but they don’t ascribe “value.”

Of course, a less philosophical reaction to the MAP crowd is one I’ve often heard: Why don’t they lead by example and off themselves? “Suicide is painless,” as that depressing song says. But if you hold your breath waiting, you’ll be leading by example because these people certainly do value themselves. For while they tend to believe “man is the measure of all things,” they perhaps more often believe this is true of just *some* men: themselves. Either way, it is a dangerous mentality.

The argument about the nature of right and wrong presents the question, what is the value of what we call “values”? Are they really morals, which have a basis in Absolute Truth and thus are real? Or is the term just an example of putting lipstick on the pig of man’s preferences, of using a word that obscures the meaningless reality that all we’re talking about is man’s tastes? Likewise, with respect to the worth of things, what is the value of value? Is it real or imaginary?

Whether or not you think the Christian belief that man is a divine creature, reflecting God and possessing a soul bestowed by Him, is true, it certainly has a practical effect: It engenders respect for human life. People consider that such status lends authentic, unassailable value. Yet what is the value of man if there is no God, if man is, in essence, just some pounds of chemicals and water? He is then but a cosmic accident. He is a mere material thing, like a rock — or that larger rock called Earth.

Of course, implicit in this atheistic worldview is that nothing has real value, and man, the universe, and everything occupy the same value-neutral plane. Yet this reality won’t limit the MAP crowd’s, or any other atheist’s, behavior because there is something that is certainly real — and compelling: emotion. And absent any transcendent, divine yardstick for guiding behavior, that will be all people have left to guide them. And then they can value the Earth more than man because that feels right, while also valuing the plague bacteria they see in the mirror more than either because that feels right. They feel; therefore they do.

And the rotten fruits of this dislocation from objective reality abound. Just recently, for instance, Mary Elizabeth Williams at Salon.com wrote an [article](#) titled “So what if abortion ends life?” She passionately avers:

I know that throughout my own pregnancies, I never wavered for a moment in the belief that I was carrying a human life inside of me. I believe that’s what a fetus is: a human life.



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[Yet] all life is not equal. ... a fetus can be a human life without having the same rights as the woman in whose body it resides. She's the boss. Her life and what is right for her circumstances and her health should automatically trump the rights of the non-autonomous entity inside of her. Always.

...If by some random fluke I learned today I was pregnant, you bet your [**s] I'd have an abortion. I'd have the World's Greatest Abortion.

So there you have it. Williams concludes her piece by writing that an unborn baby is a "life worth sacrificing" — if, I suppose, it feels right. For whether in the name of personal convenience or Gaia, it seems that some plague bacteria are more equal than others.



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