



Are Humans Extinction-Level Creatures, wired for Self-Destruction?

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Abstract

This article explores the existential threat humanity poses to itself through a combination of destructive behaviors and neglect of critical environmental factors. The accumulation of nuclear stockpiles, the unchecked production of greenhouse gases, and the disregard for the cyclical nature of Earth's glacial-interglacial periods are examined as extinction-level challenges. Through a provocative analogy comparing waste management in human life to the broader sustainability crisis, the article argues that current approaches merely slow the path to destruction without addressing its root causes. The conclusion suggests that humanity, by its very nature, is designed for self-destruction, incapable of recognizing or averting its own inevitable extinction.

Introduction

Have you heard of nuclear stockpiles? Of greenhouse gases? Of Earth's glacial-interglacial cycle? Where do these come from? Nuclear stockpiles stem from humanity's dedication to mass destruction—humans acting as their own executioner, constantly toying with the possibility of self-annihilation. Greenhouse gases are byproducts of the things humans make and use to meet their daily needs, with little to no attention given to the waste these processes generate. The glacial-interglacial cycle reflects Earth's alternating environmental states, each offering vastly different conditions for human life. What do these have in common? They all share the potential to drive humanity toward extinction. Today, sustainability efforts marginally address the wastes of production, such as greenhouse gases, but even these initiatives focus on reducing, rather than halting, the growth of waste production. What does that really mean?

An Analogy of Reduced Growth

Consider the waste the human body produces urine, carbon dioxide, sweat, and feces. Now, imagine a scenario in which the concept of a "bathroom" does not exist. In this world, people dump their waste into the corners of every room in their homes. As the piles of waste grow, so does the risk of these piles toppling over, burying the inhabitants beneath their own filth. In response to this threat, people decide to reduce their caloric intake slightly—from 2,500 calories to 2,350—hoping this will slow the growth of the waste piles and decrease the risk of being overwhelmed. Yet, the waste continues to accumulate, and the real problem—lack of proper waste management—is never addressed. This thought experiment mirrors the current approach to sustainability. Organizations focus on slowing the growth of waste, not on finding real solutions. No one is searching for the "bathroom-equivalent" solution to manage the overwhelming environmental waste.

Discussion

One would expect that educational institutions would focus on nuclear stockpiles, waste management, and preparing for the next glacial Earth, which may arrive at any time. But such topics are largely absent from curricula. At best, there is talk of “reducing the growth” of greenhouse gases, but as our analogy shows, this is not a solution. Humans are deeply attached to their current way of life. They build, maintain, and expand nuclear arsenals, they continue producing and consuming goods with little regard for waste, and they remain oblivious to the coming glacial Earth, which will bring an environment without rain, rendering rain-based agriculture impossible. The shift to a glacial Earth could happen at any moment, and without preparation, food production will collapse, leading to inevitable extinction. Of course, one might argue that nuclear stockpiles will lead to human extinction long before the glacial Earth does.

Conclusion

The behavior of humans regarding nuclear stockpiles, waste, and the Earth’s glacial-interglacial cycle suggests that humanity,

by its very nature, is an extinction-level species. Humans seem incapable of recognizing extinction-level threats until they are directly facing them, experiencing the endpoint. In their societal “house,” humans live surrounded by piles of waste, with walls lined with nuclear explosives and foundations resting on the fault line of the glacial-interglacial transition. At any moment, this precarious balance could collapse, leading to both explosion and environmental catastrophe in the extinction-dominated life. Humans are, in essence, as “extinction-level creatures,” designed for self-destruction. No matter how their societies are organized, they remain blind to the fact that they are extinction-level creatures, forever in search of their own endpoint.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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