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Earth's Worst Plague

“An organism that lives in or on another organism (its host) and benefits by deriving nutrients at the host's expense” describes the nature of humanity and is also the definition of the word *parasite*. Even as many believe humans arrived on this planet purposefully in line with a divine plan, it cannot be denied that people are inhabiting the planet at its continued expense. It is common knowledge that humanity has an enormous detrimental impact on the environment. While people are contributing to the degradation of the planet in innumerable ways constantly, the most costly habits can be placed in the categories of soaring overpopulation, irresponsible overconsumption of Earth's resources, and the popularity of disregarding sustainable technologies.

The first of these destruction practices is the rapidly expanding, unrestrained population of humans. Since the dawn of industrialization in the nineteenth century, man's numbers began to climb hastily, more so than at any other point in human history. This was due to many factors, mostly that technological developments allowed for better sanitation and healthcare. The most advanced nations of the time began to go through what is known as demographic transition. Demographic transition begins with very high death and birth rates in a population, attempting to keep each other balanced. Once a nation becomes further developed, the death rates decline, and in the time it takes birth rates to follow, the population rapidly increases. This occurs until the rates are once again balanced, leaving the population much larger, but with fewer people overall

dying and being born. The problem with this is that once concern shifts from only scrounging for scarce necessities to meeting needs easily enough to collecting gadgets that ease one's life even further, the amount consumed by individuals soars. The countries whose citizens consume the most are viewed as the places with the most opportunity, the optimal lifestyle. As a result of this, less-developed countries that do not consume as much see others' ability to over-consume as a goal to reach toward. All environments have a set amount of resources they can supply before the population within it takes too much, ruins the ecosystem, and eradicates itself. This is known as the environment's carrying capacity. It has been estimated that with all the resources Earth contains, its carrying capacity for human life is around ten billion. There are already over seven billion humans weighing on this planet, and that number is still climbing at an ever-increasing rate. If humanity does not begin to take serious measures to limit growth in numbers, Earth will do so naturally, one scenario being that we simply no longer have all the resources to meet the basic survival needs of every person.

The second most-taxing practice humans take part in is consuming Earth's resources at continually growing, unsustainable rates. One essential law of the universe is that matter is neither created nor destroyed, that it simply transitions between the states of matter. Therefore, every resource that a planet contains is the finite amount that it ever will have, assuming alien objects do not interfere with its environment. Humans, when searching for effective resources, stopped once they found the resources, without considering the future consequences, assuming Earth has and will always provide. For instance, when man was searching for fuels, resources such as coal, petroleum, and natural gas were found to be very effective. This made them coveted by those who wished to profit off something in high demand. These resources, however, are nonrenewable, meaning there is a limited amount available. Modern citizens of developed

places rarely have to come face to face with just how much of the nonrenewable resources they gorge on or waste in their lifestyles. Whatever is no longer desired can be put on the curb and hauled forever out of their sight. Water is carried down pipes once used, with no thought afterwards to where it goes. Gases are burned and spew through various flues, so they are out of sight, out of mind. In general, man constantly craves more, never considering the fact that many resources that are being used cannot be replaced.

Although advances in technology have allowed mankind to slow the ruination of the planet, people often ignore or outright oppose utilizing these sustainable alternatives, the third way humanity devastates Earth. Most likely because of greed, the demand for raw materials is constant; those in charge of collecting and distributing these resources can, therefore, charge whatever they desire for these things, and people will pay because they think these items are modern necessities. On the nonrenewable route, very wealthy, powerful men can simply maintain their long-used system and keep collecting cash until a resource is completely depleted, which likely will not be in their individual lifetimes. On the renewable route, however, these wealthy men would have to invest in entirely new technology, completely alter their whole business, hoping all the same customers transfer over, while even if they did, still losing a lot of profit from the initial transition. Either way, tycoons of the resource industries are almost all in the later part of their life, so they won't see repercussions or benefits from either route. They are left with the decision between continuing what they are doing, reaping the same profits, and not caring about the outcome or shifting to help the environment, taking an initial big financial loss, and still not caring about the outcome. Man, being inherently selfish and greedy, seems to always choose the former option, at least here in modern America, where politicians can be swayed by the fat checks of these tycoons into never instigating or mandating change to

preemptively avoid disastrous results.

Many argue that man has existed for millennia, and since Earth has always prevailed, it always will. While it is true that Earth will recover and rebalance itself no matter what humans do, the same cannot be said for humanity as a species. This turning of one's head to any issues not right at one's doorstep yet is causing catastrophic consequences already and will continue to if left unrestrained until the arrival of an apocalypse. People continue to reproduce irresponsibly. Uncontrollable rising population is humanity's first plague on Earth that should be concerning. Secondly, it should be considered where every product consumed came from, and where it will end up once used, to avoid gross abuse and tainting of the finite resources people were given. The third issue facing mankind should not be controlled by greed. All of the resources, technology, and manpower to allow all people in current and future generations to thrive healthily and prosper in their environment already exist. If man would simply stop asking the questions "who will pay for it?" and "why do they deserve that?" before taking any action, we could unify our species onto one path towards prolonged sustainability.