



The Anthropocene: Is it *Homo sapiens'* ultimate opportunity to 'come of age'?

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1. What are we?

A species that's accomplished:

- Literature, Art, Philosophy...
- U.N. Declaration of Human Rights...
- Science and Technology...



...and yet even all those of us who are lucky enough to be above the poverty line, still generally live discontented and insanely busy lives - *Homo insanus*



2. What have we come from?

A 3.5 billion year evolutionary heritage of selection for base and then additional, more advanced, traits:



Like all other species, our behaviour is influenced by genetically-endowed fundamental base traits for Competition, Resource accumulation, Reproduction... Furthermore, our uniquely advanced intelligence and consciousness traits resulted in associated traits such as Escapism, Delusion, Denial, Individualism, Ego...

3. What can Biology tell us about our future?

For all species, growth in populations depletes vital resources, and produces associated wastes. The eventual resource scarcities and environmental degradation often result in population crashes that allow for regeneration of resources and evolution toward alternatives. Such adaptive cycles reflect the fundamental biology underlying *all* species. Therefore, the trait-driven increases in human populations and resource use per capita (from our technological developments) make it seemingly inevitable that an earth-wide environmental crisis and an 'Anthropocene' would ultimately result.



Fig. 1. The environmental sustainability crisis has 2 major causes: **Population size** (wheel thickness) and **Lifestyle resource-use intensity** (wheel spinning speed). Over the 20th century, global population increased x4, resource use/economy (G.D.P.) x40.

4. But the environmental crisis is only part of our predicament – Humanity faces many inter-related problems that share the same fundamental biological root cause – How we (choose to) live

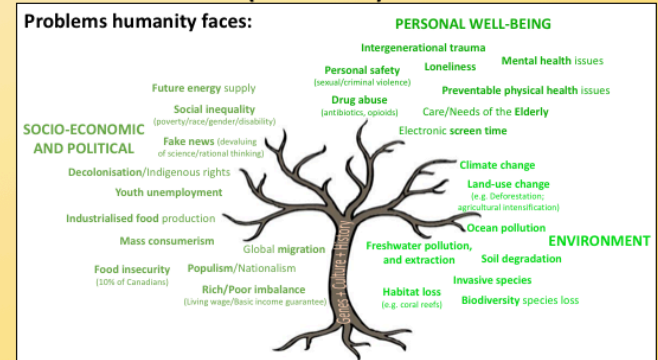


Fig. 2. Humanity's problems can be represented by leaves on a tree, most of which are strongly **interconnected** (e.g. climate change – tropical deforestation – industrialised food production – preventable physical health issues). The tree's hardwood represents the ultimate cause of many of these problems: Our genetic plus cultural heritage that influences our current behaviour – i.e. How we (choose to) live

5. Could the four realizations highlighted above catalyse our Anthropocene civilization toward cultural evolution of a fundamentally different and more sustainable way of living?



Here we are, together, all of humanity, on the edge of a planet, spinning around in the middle of nowhere....

Our strong consciousness trait provides us with a unique capacity not just to be aware of our activities' impacts, but also the root biological causes, as well as the inherent suffering and impermanence of each human existence.

Consciousness therefore potentially provides us with the capacity for a radical paradigm shift in how we choose to live, and what we choose to really value in life. By acknowledging and embracing the fundamental realities of our biology and of our existential predicament, it could lead us to suppress the influences of our more base genetic traits so as to live in a more environmentally and socially sustainable (and possibly more contented) way.

6. How can we move toward more mature living, and truly live up to our species descriptor, *Homo sapiens* (wise humans)? See handout leaflet!