

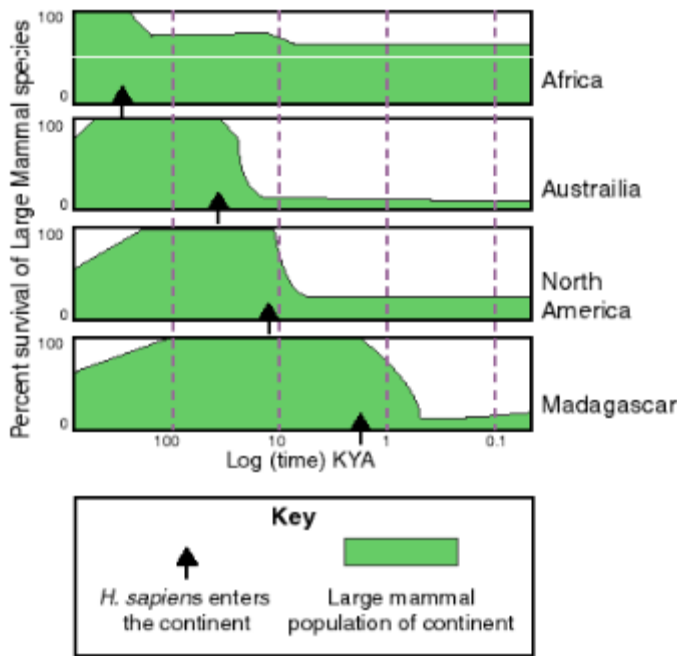
# A VHEMT Solution<sup>1</sup>

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The Ordovician–Silurian extinction, the Late Devonian extinction, the Permian–Triassic extinction, the Triassic–Jurassic extinction, the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction—These are the five mass extinctions, the most prolific of about twenty–four extinction events. The first of the five mass extinctions occurred around 450 megaannus<sup>2</sup> (cue laughter).<sup>[1]</sup> The causes of these include, among other things, rapid climate change, asteroid or comet impacts<sup>3</sup>, and volcanism, all three of which are unfathomably devastating and near-absolute events that saw to the extinction of a majority of Earth’s species. A mass extinction has not been completed since the fifth mass extinction 66 Ma. <sup>[2]</sup> However, a sixth mass extinction is underway. The cause of this extinction event

wasn’t another natural disaster or asteroid impacting the Earth, the cause of of this particular event is anthropogenic, and, by the fact itself, is often called the Anthropocene extinction<sup>4</sup>. Deforestation, hunting, urbanisation and industrialisation that destroys local ecosystems<sup>5</sup>, overfishing<sup>6</sup>, ocean acidification and destruction, animal agriculture<sup>7</sup> pollution, soil infertility, introduction of invasive species, transmission of zoonotic diseases, and anthropogenic climate change are all means by which humans are voluntarily fueling this mass extinction. It is true that similar climate trends have been occurring for the duration of Earth’s existence; the stand-out, and

Figure 1:



“The % of megafauna on different land masses over time, with the arrival of humans indicated.”

<sup>1</sup>VHEMT stands for “The Voluntary Human Extinction Movement”.

<sup>2</sup> *Megaannus*, usually abbreviated Ma, means “million years ago”.

<sup>3</sup> One of which was the Chicxulub impactor (a comet or asteroid 6 miles in diameter that left a crater 110 miles in diameter) which is considered to be the cause of the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event that saw the extinction of nonavian dinosaurs and other species. <sup>[3][4][5]</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Humans are also hypothesised to be the cause of the Quaternary extinction event.

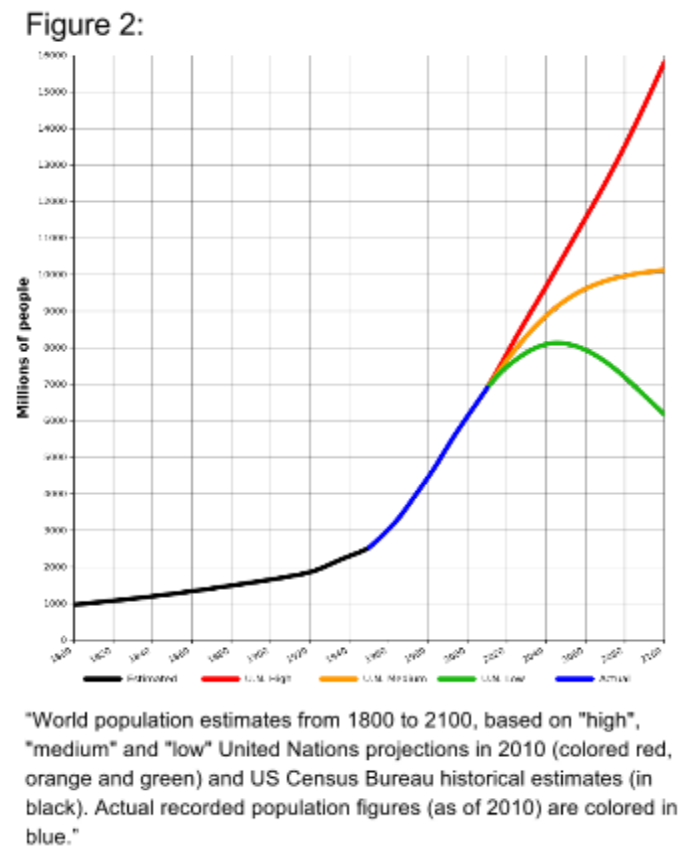
<sup>5</sup> 4 percent of Earth’s ice-free land is destroyed and used for this. <sup>[6]</sup>

<sup>6</sup> It’s projected that by 2048, all species (taxa) of oceanic commercial fish will be extinct, among other things. <sup>[7]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Animal agriculture uses 26 percent of non-ice land for pastures. <sup>[6]</sup>

relevant, feature of this anthropogenic climate change is the rate at which it occurs<sup>8</sup>, which significantly increases the severity. The rate is unprecedented, and organisms do not have sufficient time to adapt to the rapidly changing global climate, which will<sup>9</sup> result in an extreme loss of biodiversity. [8][9]

The meat, dairy, and animal product industries (including animal agriculture) have been proposed as the main cause of greenhouse gas emission, contributing to 51 percent entering the atmosphere.<sup>10</sup> [10][13] These industries are responsible for 65 percent of nitrous oxide emissions<sup>11</sup>, 91 percent of Amazon deforestation<sup>12 13</sup>, and 80–90 percent of freshwater use in the United States<sup>14</sup>. [15][16][17][18] In addition, animal agriculture sees the slaughter of 56 billion (a conservative number) non-marine animals, and 2.1 trillion marine animals *per year*. [19]



The number of humans is increasing exponentially, with an estimated world population of 9.1 billion by 2050. [20] An average 360,000 people are born every day, 15,000 per hour. The global population is already more than three times higher than the sustainable level of two billion. [21] A 1994 study found that a person born in the United States will be responsible for, on average, 22 million pounds of liquid waste, 2.2 million pounds of solid and atmospheric waste, 4,000 barrels of oil, 1.5 million pounds of

<sup>8</sup> The degree at which it is occurring, and the potential longevity, are significant as well.

<sup>9</sup> And is.

<sup>10</sup> Compared to the 14 percent caused by transport. [11]

<sup>11</sup> A greenhouse gas 250+ times more destructive than carbon dioxide. [12][14]

<sup>12</sup> Which is responsible for the extinction of over 100 animals per day.

<sup>13</sup> Deforestation is the leading cause of species extinction. [14]

<sup>14</sup> It takes around 2,500 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of beef.

minerals, and 62,000 pounds of animal products that will entail the slaughter of 2,000 animals. [22]

Despite this unsustainable collective lifestyle, humans have done little to combat these effects, and even less to prevent potential ones. If you're justifiably a cynic, what little has been done may be attributed to attriteness.

Aside from these ecological and environmental effects, there's another considerable effect of human existence—human suffering. This is sometimes met with the contention that the good in the world outweighs the bad. After all, who would argue that there is anything better than holding your newborn in your arms for the first time, a roadtrip with the love of your life, or receiving a puppy on Christmas day? But also, who would argue that any of these things can hold a candle to the psychological and physical distress caused by holding your recently deceased child against your breast, looking over and seeing your loved one's head caved in from a head-on collision, or a puppy being skinned alive for fur? Who would argue that the brief happiness evoked by a family dinner amounts to the months (in some cases, years) of psychological suffering caused by the loss of a close relative? Who would argue that the feeling of a massage or orgasm is more pleasurable than reflex sympathetic dystrophy or cluster headaches are painful? What of the millions upon millions of people killed in wars, all so that one man—to steal words from Sagan—can be the momentary ruler of a fraction of a dot<sup>15</sup>? The human inclination to lie and deceive? Sadists and psychopaths? Even if one is to unjustly grant the claim that there is more good in the world than bad<sup>16</sup>, the accumulated severity of the bad greatly outweighs the good.<sup>17</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer analogises it this way: “Whoever wants summarily to test the assertion that the pleasure in the world outweighs the pain, or at any rate that the two balance each other, should compare the feelings of an animal that is devouring another with those of that other.” [23]

Schopenhauer is also an adherent of antinatalism, a philosophical position that opposes natalism and states that humans ought to desist from reproducing. Antinatalism seems to be the only voluntary and permanent solution to anthropogenic environmental destruction and human suffering. For most, this may seem an extreme solution, as it did for me—at least initially. But the sound of it is all that is absurd, for upon contemplation, this unfounded aversion may be mitigated, or removed entirely.

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<sup>15</sup> The full quote [here](#).

<sup>16</sup> A lack of both is more common than either.

<sup>17</sup> Think of a moviesque family picnic on Easter Sunday, and then think of the invasion of Iwo Jima (an invasion debated to be unnecessary). If you had to prevent one from occurring, which would you choose?

David Benatar, philosophy professor and author of *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*, identifies two approaches to antinatalism: the philanthropic approach and the misanthropic approach. The philanthropic approach is one that supports antinatalism because of the effect of suffering that comes with procreation, while the misanthropic approach supports antinatalism because of the cause of that suffering.

The misanthropic approach wants to prevent people from causing environmental destruction and suffering by ceasing reproduction. Humans, being the primary cause of the world's problems, are looked at as parasites<sup>18</sup> (not always in a derogatory way) that would clearly benefit each other and the Earth with our absence. The philanthropic approach, however, emanates from the desire to prevent the suffering that humans will face at the hands of procreation. The voluntary generation of existence, while not malicious, is inherently evil. It's indirectly inflicting unnecessary pain.

*"The hubris it must take to yank a soul out of non existence, into this, meat. And to force a life into this, thresher."* -Rust Cohle<sup>19</sup>

With high rates of depression, high rates of suicide, plagues, disorders, diseases, infections, poverty, wars, starvation, death of relatives, psychological suffering brought on by countless events, the philanthropic antinatalist is altruistic; she wants to prevent the unnecessary suffering caused by existence. [\[24\]\[25\]\[26\]\[27\]](#) The philanthropic antinatalist just wants the environment and its inhabitants to no longer suffer.

The sound of ceasing reproduction and allowing our species to go extinct sounds absurd; it sounds radical. But the period where there are still children will see a marked, or complete, drop of children in need of adoption, humans will be able to live out their lives naturally, and once they're gone the Earth will revert to her healthy self, one with no more anthropogenic climate change and no more Anthropocene mass extinction. There would be no more human suffering. Who gets harmed? Who is negatively

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<sup>18</sup> Perhaps justifiably so. "Parasite", as defined as "an organism that lives on or in another organism, deriving benefit from living on or in that other organism, while not contributing towards that other organism sufficiently to cover the cost to that other organism," indubitably includes humans if you are to anthropomorphise and grant the Earth the [metaphorical] designation of an organism (don't be mad, [Nietzsche](#)).

<sup>19</sup> The "soul" here is to be taken metaphorically, for Cohle was a staunch physicalist.

affected?<sup>20</sup> Everything related to a living thing, including the lack of a particular living thing, will reap benefits.

David Benatar forms it thus:

- (1) The presence of pain is bad.
- (2) The presence of pleasure is good.
- (3) The absence of pain is good, even if that good is not enjoyed by anyone.
- (4) The absence of pleasure is not bad unless there is somebody for whom this absence is a deprivation. [\[28\]](#)

Any being brought into existence will experience unnecessary suffering, but any being not brought into existence will never suffer. This makes it our moral obligation to not reproduce.

*"I think the honorable thing for our species to do is to deny our programming. Stop reproducing, walk hand in hand into extinction - one last midnight, brothers and sisters opting out of a raw deal."* -Rust Cohle

## Figure Sources

[Figure 1](#)

[Figure 2](#)

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<sup>20</sup> If you're to claim that the potential humans, beings that do not yet exist or have experiences, will be harmed by not getting a chance to exist, one might ask why you aren't an advocate of a [antechinus](#)-like sex life, and why you're not an opponent of masturbation.