



Peter at 60 : Confessions of an Unapologetic Misanthropist

Peter C. Lind, Ph.D.

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misanthropist

noun

1. A misanthrope.
2. A [misanthrope](#); a person who hates all mankind; a person who hates the human species.
3. Someone who dislikes people in general.

– <https://www.wordnik.com/words/misanthropist>

July 8, 2025. Brighton, Ontario, Canada. A rural township in Eastern Ontario, not far from Kingston, and not far *enough* from Toronto. Today I am lucky enough to reach 60 years of age. I am lucky because I can think of many people I have known who did not reach such an age, and indeed, many who never made it to 30. So, I am lucky, and I am thankful.

There are more years behind me than ahead of me, as the saying goes. To come so far and *not* be willing to reflect on the past would be neglectful. Hence, I sit typing on a keyboard, joining letters into words and words into sentences, looking back on the past six decades, as I glance, from time to time, out the window, watching with objectivity as the gathering storm approaches.

This treatise is a long, rambling, badly organized and incomplete collection of my thoughts as they stand in mid-2025. I have been studying the subject at hand (near-term human extinction) since around 2010. I am an academic by nature, which means that I *think about things* – endlessly – and try to get to the very root of a subject in some sort of effective manner. I earned my Doctorate of Philosophy (McMaster University, 1998) in this way; it is a somewhat silly-looking but official piece of paper that attests to my ability to delve deeply into any given subject. Throughout my studies, I remain neutral, and allow the facts and the “data” to lead me to the truth. But in doing so, there is no guarantee that one

will *like* the final outcome. Indeed, I am personally most displeased with what I have learned. But, facts is facts, and the truth, although hard to swallow, is the truth nonetheless.

At the outset, as the title of this essay states, I am an *unapologetic misanthrope*. If you read any further, or even manage to read the entirety to its gloomy end, you will perhaps come to understand my misanthropy. In the case of the latter, I make no apologies to anyone for being so. I do not care if you agree or disagree, whether you believe or disbelieve anything encountered hereafter. I do not care if my musings upset you – indeed, I hope that they *do* upset you. I presume that you would expect nothing less from me than that I should unhesitatingly shout “fire!” when I discover that the house in which you sleep is currently ablaze. Time will tell whether what I say hereafter is accurate or not. If I was a betting person, I would place all my money on “Peter was right”, but if ever I was happy to be wrong, it would be now. You are free to take heed, to ignore, to scoff, or to dismiss outright. Time will tell. Just don’t ever say that I didn’t try to warn you. *Chicken Little herself has seen better days*.

Well, if you are ready to fight the fire, or at the very least to acknowledge the smoke and the impending peril, and are at least willing to *try* to flee the burning house, then read on...

But, I make no apologies. And I don’t care what people think.

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Part I. The World According to Peter

Have you noticed, yet, that *things* seem to be getting worse? Have you noticed that lately, with each passing day, even with each passing hour, the world seems to be coming undone, with the best laid plans of mice and men unravelling onto the floor in a great, tangled mess? If you have *not* noticed this great undoing of things, then either you are deluded into disbelief, or you are too distracted by the noise of the modern world to see it happening. They say that Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned.

What instrument are *you* playing, as our world burns?

Here is the crux of the predicament, condensed into two points:

1. The world in which we exist (the planet, the biosphere) is *dying*.
2. Human beings (*Homo sapiens*, “us”, “we”) are actively *killing* it.

To elaborate on either of these points would take pages of details (cf. Figure 1), involving esoteric terms like “carrying capacity”, “peak extraction”, “resource depletion”, “ocean acidification”, “microplastic contamination”, “endocrine disruptors”, “forever chemicals”, “ppm CO₂”, “methane clathrates”, “topsoil loss”, “sea ice albedo”, “blue ocean event”, “self-reinforcing feedback loops”, and on and on and on. Search for any one of these terms on “Goofle” (and help Goofle’s profit margin at the same time), and you will (if you continue digging) quickly discover that you are standing on the tip of an immense iceberg, floating in the waters of the world, and melting rapidly. Do any amount of research beyond the trivial, and you will see that there are numerous, rapidly growing problems. (I have

attached a bibliography to the end of this essay, and you are encouraged to investigate for yourself, if you dare.) Additionally, every one of these issues interacts with many of the others, causing amplification of all the problems. They all feed on each other, and combine into a much larger, much more dangerous mega-problem. But, actually, this “mega-problem” is not a problem at all; it is, instead, a predicament ... A mega-predicament. (A *problem* implies a *solution*, but the issues of the mega-problem have degraded far beyond the point where solutions might exist, let alone be feasible, and so the mega-problem is more of a *predicament*, a situation that is difficult or even impossible to escape.)

Yet, whatever one chooses to call this – a mega-problem, a mega-predicament, a conspiracy-theory, a huge shit sandwich – it would be foolish to ignore the myriad, mounting signs that *something is wrong* in the world at large. Not only that, but whatever-it-is is getting worse. Day by day, hour by hour. If you doubt this assertion, just ask the poor little girls at summer camp in Texas that just got swept away by an immense flood of conspiracy theory and fake news. Their spirits will assure you that there truly *is* a mega-predicament, and that it is getting *worse*.

Do you find it at all strange that these things – climate change, flash floods, extreme heat waves, etc. – have all just suddenly reared up out of nowhere to ruin our day? Why now? Why so fast?

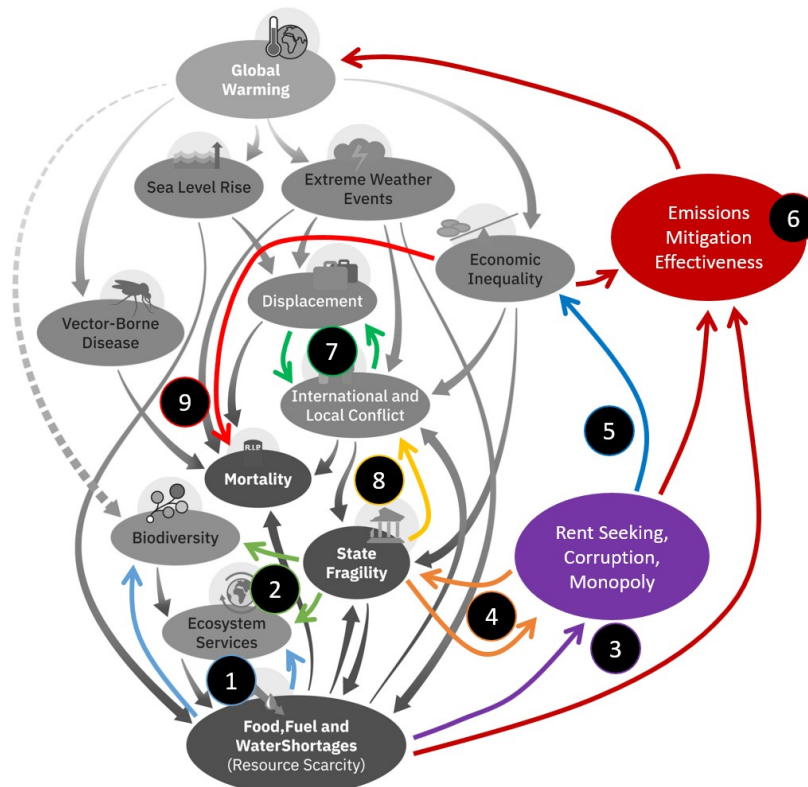


Figure 1. Climate Catastrophe Loops

Well... Here is a picture that indicates the underlying cause of all of these problems that comprise the mega-predicament:

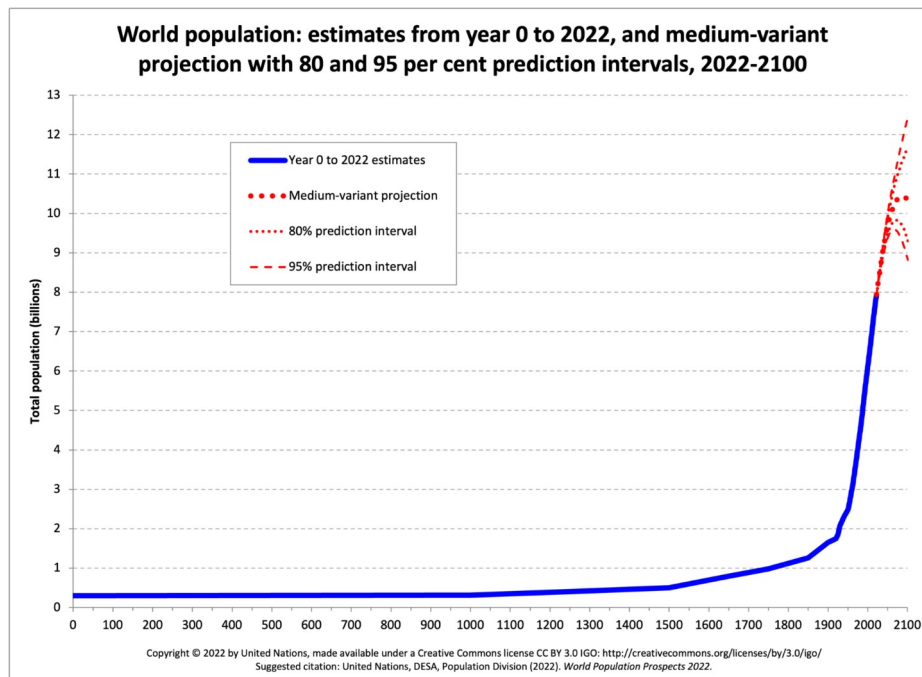


Figure 2. The hockey stick from hell (a.k.a. human beings *are* the problem).

As this chart shows, sometime around 1900, but arguably as early as 1500, human population went from slow and steady (i.e. close to being a flat, horizontal line) to rising rapidly and out of control (i.e. close to being a vertical line). This is called “exponential growth”, and it is a bad thing. Various sources make efforts to predict future population, claiming that population will peak sometime soon, and then decline. Indeed, this is almost certainly true, because it is impossible to have an unlimited number of people living on a planet whose resources are finite. Technotopians (*Goofle that*) say that there is no problem – human beings will simply move off-planet and spread to other places to set up shop. Well, maybe... (But, don’t buy your ticket on Elon’s rocket to Mars just yet...)

So, what is the problem with exponential growth of human beings? Why is this a bad thing?

It is a bad thing for the simple reason that each and every human being – whether already dead, currently living or yet to be alive – seeks to consume more than they contribute. This is part of our “nature”, in the sense that it is a trait that our evolution has bestowed upon us. Indeed, it could be argued that all living things have this same trait, to consume more than they contribute. So, what’s the problem? This is just natural. It’s not our fault.

Well, our “big brains” have betrayed us. Without our intelligence (whatever *that* means), we would still be living in caves, or trees, or wherever, eating grubs and fruit, and maybe a woolly mammoth once in a while. We evolved our intelligence just like every other living species evolved its traits, so it’s Nature’s fault that we are so smart. Yes and no. Evolving to be “smart” (whatever *that* means) is a natural thing, a product of evolution. But, being smart, on its own, only goes so far. (There are, after all, many animals that demonstrate high levels of intelligence, and none of them are actively destroying their habitat.) When it comes to human beings, somewhere in the past, we crossed an invisible line, and our intelligence switched from being a benefit to being a detriment. At some point in time, human beings became *too smart* for their own good, and, as it turns out, too smart for the good of the entire

world at large. Some people claim that this happened with the discovery of fire, or the discovery of agriculture, or the domestication of animals, or the invention of the wheel. Whatever. Pick your favourite. All of these milestones are merely bumps – inflection points – on the our ever-upward journey of “progress”. So, in that sense, it makes no difference exactly when we crossed the line, or what invention crossed the line. The line was crossed, whether with one step in an instant, or with many steps gradually over time. Once the line was crossed, we ceased to be just another one of Nature’s natural creations, and took the wheel of our own fate. Biblically-minded people would say that this occurred when God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden to fend for themselves. Cast out of Eden because our innocence was lost from eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Quite an apt tale.

Knowledge, as it turns out, is a double-edged sword. Knowledge unlocks an infinity of possibilities, promising that every day to come will be better than the day before. Ingenuity and hard work are our ticket to the stars. Alas, that is only the first edge of the sword – the edge facing outward. The *other* edge, the one facing inward, holds all the negative aspects of knowledge, poised, so it seems, to cut our throats at the slightest misstep. But, what are these negative aspects? Indeed, there are as many negative aspects to knowledge as there are positive ones. In Chinese philosophy, there is the concept of “yin and yang” – positive and negative, black and white, good and bad, forever in a state of balanced flux. The negative aspects of our knowledge are all the things that tend to get dismissed, swept under the rug, deferred to a later date, dumped overboard at sea to sink below the waves.

Our gain of knowledge, powered by our intelligence, and cycling into a machine with our ingenuity, has brought us, in our time on the planet, to a point where we know how to do an immense number of things. It seems that our state of mind and our capability knows no bounds. We can do *anything* (regardless of the question of whether we *should* do anything). Sometime fairly recently, we began to realize (but not accept) that our choices have consequences, that our actions have repercussions. We cut down too many trees, and the forest dies. We burn too much oil, and the atmosphere becomes too polluted. We haul out all the fish, and the ocean dies. The examples are endless, but they all tell us the same thing: We take more than we give, and this cannot continue indefinitely. There are too many swimmers urinating in the pool. There are too many consumers, consuming too much of the smorgasbord. We have become an oil-powered, technological consumption machine, and this machine is churning its way across the entire planet, consuming everything in its path. Into its yawning, cavernous maw goes the beautiful world, and out of its back end flows an ever-growing pile of toxic waste, empty soda cans, used latex condoms, millions of no-longer-cool smartphones, and mountains of plastic... ever more mountains of plastic.

The colossal machine of consumption clanks and belches, and will leave no stone unturned. Its speed and appetite increase unchecked, as does the ocean of waste that it expels. It seems unstoppable in its cross-planet rampage of consumption (commodified destruction), but at some point (perhaps quite soon), it will run out of raw materials to ingest, and will come to a sudden, screeching and grinding stop. After that, we will all just have to get off and walk home, picking our way through the piles of garbage.

And, the salient thing, here, is that *we knew better*.

We knew that we were polluting the world, and over-exploiting its resources, and burning too much oil, and putting too much CO2 into the air, and we knew that all of these things were “bad” and that they

would be a problem some day, and that we could not continue to party as if it was always going to be New Year's Eve, and that the champagne would never run out.

Well, the party is now winding down for *Homo sapiens sapiens* on planet Earth, and we have nobody to blame but ourselves. The party is over. Its time to go home – back to our caves, back to the jungle, back to the Garden of Eden. Yet, we will find that it is too late to go back, indeed to go *anywhere* at all. There is nothing to go back *to*, because it has all been consumed. There is only a monumental pile of our own garbage, a pinnacle that we can sit atop and survey the damage below, all-encompassing and total.

We knew better, and we chose to continue anyway. That will perhaps be our epitaph, if anything or anyone is left alive to chisel the words into our collective tombstone.

*'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*
– Excerpt from 'Ozymandias',
Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1818.

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Part II. Unapologetic Confessions

So here, at last, are my confessions, as an unapologetic misanthropist at the age of 60, and at a time when only the blindest of the blind can continue to deny the colossal pickle that we are in...

I have come to realize that:

1. Human beings are the worst thing that has ever happened to Planet Earth. We have conspired to rape and pillage a once beautiful and pristine planet (perhaps the only such place in the entire universe), all in the name of a purported manifest destiny that we should climb ever higher, in ever greater numbers.
2. The sooner that all of us are gone, the better.
3. The planet will, possibly, eventually recover from all the harm that we have done, but it will take millions of years.
4. The damage we have done may prove to be too great for the planet to recover from; in which case we may succeed in killing off all life on the planet. (A runaway greenhouse condition is one distinct possibility.)
5. It is the personal choice of every living person to decide whether or not to make alterations to lifestyle so as to mitigate (or worsen) the ongoing destruction of the planetary biosphere. Easy choices

include such things as: reducing consumption whenever and wherever possible; travelling only when absolutely necessary; having few or no children; refusing to take part in the modern lifestyle of conspicuous consumption for virtue signalling and acquisition of social status; rejection of mass media (the conduit for the endless advertising to convince the masses to buy things they do not need).

Personally, I have chosen to do the following things:

- No air travel under any circumstances (too unpleasant, too polluting, increasingly unsafe, too expensive).
- Stop eating beef (almost) entirely. Of all the food animals, beef is the most environmentally costly to raise.
- Stop eating “seafood”. The oceans are dying from over-fishing, acidification (from increased CO2 levels), eutrophication (oxygen depletion) and pollution (runoff from human activity, including micro-plastic).
- Drive car as little as possible. Keep car well maintained. Do not buy a new car.
- Stop buying of unnecessary items as much as possible.
- In general, consume as little as possible.
- Although it is too late for me (I created two new human beings before I learned of the peril), encourage young people to consider not having children, or having no more than the replacement number (1-2 children per couple).

6. Human beings are inherently selfish, over-indulgent, greedy and materialistic. Any given individual may be more or less like this than the average, but overall, as a collective whole, we are a plague and a blight on this world.

7. There is no “good” group of human beings. All individuals of the species are equivalently bad, because such is in our genetic composition. In this case, “bad” is intended to mean “bad for the rest of the world”. Any group of human beings, when left to their own devices (pun intended) will eventually multiply to fill all available biomes and consume all resources. In this sense, it makes no difference whether it is the “whites”, the “Chinese”, the “Indians” or whatever; any group of human beings – even as little as a single breeding pair – will be enough to destroy the world eventually. This is a consequence of our inherent nature: we consume more than we contribute, and reproduce without limit.

8. Technology will not save us. Green energy is a lie. Energy transition is a myth. Sustainable growth is an oxymoron. It is futile to assume that some new technology will be invented / discovered that will “save us” from our current mega-predicament. Technological advances invariably just add a patch onto the existing pile of patches, growing the mega-predicament larger without *solving* anything. The mega-predicament – which is a product of our technology to date – cannot be remedied by adding more technology onto the existing edifice of technology. A technological “solution” is going in the wrong direction. Instead, what is needed is *simplification*: We need to down-size, reduce, eliminate. We need

to return to a way of living that is far less destructive. We need to return to a pre-industrial level of existence, with a drastically reduced population.

9. If we (continue to) do nothing to reduce our numbers and consume much less, then Nature will take over at some point (indeed, is already doing so), and we will be *culled*. Mother Nature will be all too happy to sweep us into oblivion, if only for the betterment on the rest of the planet and its remaining inhabitants.

10. There is no God looking after us. We have only ourselves to look after us. There are no higher beings that have made unfathomable plans for us; claiming so is only trying to escape responsibility for our actions by claiming divine rationalization.

11. Things are going to get much, much worse before they get any better (if at all). Expect any combination of the following within your lifetime (with increased likelihood the younger that you are):

- Increased frequency and severity of weather-related disasters (more hurricanes, more tornadoes, more floods, more droughts, more forest fires).
- Increased, widespread and persistent famine. If you don't know how to grow your own food yet, best to get started as soon as possible. Self-sufficient people will survive (longer) than those that rely on getting their food from a grocery store.
- Increased collapse of the biosphere. Species of plants and animals are going extinct at an alarming rate, due almost entirely to human activity. The current species extinction rate is something like 100-1000 times the "normal" (pre-human) rate. Human beings are killing off other species at such a rate that it is quite likely that the web of life on the planet will cease to function. When the biosphere dies, so do we.
- Increased occurrence of diseases and epidemics. As the industrial world declines, so too will modern healthcare (which is already breaking down on its own due to spiralling costs). Learn first aid and the basics of germ theory, for starters.
- Increased migration of desperate people, especially moving away from equatorial regions towards temperate regions as climate change worsens).
- Increased racial violence between groups of "locals" and "immigrants".
- Increased regional conflict, and World War III. We are currently a hair-trigger away from all out (nuclear) war between the "West" and Russia/China et al., including the never-ending conflict between Israel and Islam. Either of these struggles could easily morph into a global war at any moment.
- Collapse of economy: The banking crises of the past will seem like picnics compared to the financial crash that is coming. Cryptocurrency? Forget about it; when the power goes out, crypto is done. Investment portfolio? Wealth management? If you don't hold your wealth in your own hands, forget about it. Your money was gone the moment you sent it off to get invested. If you are lucky, you might see a return on your investments before

the crash; but once the crash happens, your investments will vanish.

- Increased governmental oppression: A tendency towards police state and martial law as living standards decline and people become less happy and more desperate. The governments will do virtually anything to maintain power and control over the population. Likewise, a decrease in civil liberties, elimination (or ignorance) of basic rights and freedoms. Increased surveillance of citizens. Increased control over money supply (e.g. forced adoption of digital currency, limitation or elimination of physical cash, prohibition of owning physical wealth such as precious metals, seizure of land from owners, etc.).
- Collapse of large-scale institutions. The larger the organization or institution, the faster it will fall apart. As collapse proceeds, survival will propagate down to the smallest levels, involving local organizations, institutions and enterprises.
- Degradation of civil amenities such as reliable electricity, water supply, emergency services, etc. As the cost of civil services increases, these amenities will decline, and eventually cease altogether.
- Civil unrest. Popular culture loves stories about zombie apocalypse, with the undead brain-eaters rampaging through the poor hapless humans. The zombies of the future will not be infected by a brain-controlling fungus or a supervirus. Instead, they will simply be millions of starving, desperate people that will stop short of nothing to stay alive. Get out of the cities (large population centers) while you can (and buy some arable land to grow your food). At some point, when *everyone else* wants to flee the cities, it will be too late. They will eat you.

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Part III. Waiting for Godot

Despite all that I have written up to this point, my final confession is that *all is futile*. There is no solution to the mega-predicament, except for the final solution of eradicating all human beings from the planet (and, indeed, in ensuring that none of us manage to escape from this planet to spread our plague of ill elsewhere in the universe). This is a shocking statement, to be sure. But, if one goes so far as to acknowledge that there *is* a problem here, then it only takes a little more thought, a little more introspection, and a little more of a leap of faith, to reach the obvious conclusion that we human beings *are* the problem. Once one realizes this, and admits to it in both heart and mind, then the rest becomes easy: The problem will solve itself when the last of us is dead and gone. Until that time comes, we will surely just continue rocketing along on our chosen trajectory towards our collective doom, buying a lot of crap, attending destination weddings, racing Lamborghinis through the streets of Dubai, allowing our minds and our souls to be numbed by incessant commercial advertising, drinking a lot of sugary drinks, getting fat in our gluttony, and lying unconscious in pools of our own filth. Personally, I think we deserve nothing less than the full force of what is coming.

Jean-Paul Sartre (ca. 1944) writes that *hell is other people*. I agree with this to the letter, and imagine a time (perhaps in the not too distant future) when the poor, beset world is *devoid of all people*. Once the infestation of *Homo sapiens* has run its course, the world will be able to breathe a sigh of relief; it will shrug off our abominations, like a dog shaking its fur after a bath; the world will get back to life the way it was before we existed, and the sun will still shine. The surviving creatures, if any, will quickly forget that we ever existed, and after a time, the winds and the rains will gradually erase even the faintest of traces that we were ever here. I call this time to come the “beautiful silence”: It will be silent because all of the infernal machines of mankind will have ceased their noisy business of planet eating; and it will be beautiful because the air will be filled with the thrum of countless beings, going about their daily chores, no longer assailed and exploited by the fearless rat-monkeys that once called themselves the “wise apes”.

So, here I sit, on a park bench, watching the birds and smelling the flowers. I am thankful for all I have seen, all I have heard, all I have felt and everything I have experienced. I am enjoying life.

I sit now, quietly at peace; *waiting for Godot*.

Off in the distance, I can hear the rumbling, ominous sounds of an approaching storm. Somewhere nearby, I hear a woman scream, or perhaps it is a baby crying. There is a storm coming.

What instrument do you choose to play as our planet burns?

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