

# On the Brink of Extinction

by [Jon Mills](#) (June 2024)



Apokalyptische Landschaft (Apocalyptic Landscape) –Ludwig Meidner, 1912

**Are we on the brink of human extinction?** Is civilization destined toward self-annihilation? We must not underestimate the risk of the possibility that we may become extinct fairly soon. Let us examine some cold sober facts: We are facing a planetary ecological crisis due to global warming, despoliation of our natural resources, mass scale industrial

pollution, desertification, deforestation, widespread collapse of ecosystems, and extreme climate change. World overpopulation is nearing a record tipping point, where food and water scarcity will bring about more famine, drought, pestilence, and death. Human violence and aggression in concentrated pockets are on the rise worldwide, with every inhabitable continent in turmoil, civil uprising, military conflict, or war. Unbridled capitalistic exploitation of consumer masses by corporate conglomerates, financial institutions, Big Pharma, and insurance sectors are unprecedented, with obscene disparities in wealth and poverty to the point of social implosion. Global catastrophic hazards have escalated due to the environmental crisis, encroachment by man, destabilized markets, hegemonic national politics, collective ideologies, corrupt governmental policies, deranged despots, nuclear threats, terrorism, religious fundamentalism, internet espionage, cyber hijacking, space wars, threats to public health, bioterror, pandemic infectious diseases, and psychological self-interest driving everything from vain desire to the local economy and international relations, not to mention the anathema of evil, abuse, trauma, criminality, greed, and the psychopathology of everyday life. Regardless of the degree of threat we assign to these calculated risks, we cannot ignore the ominous dread hovering over a wishing humanity.

All these issues leave us in a profound and compounded predicament of future survival. And with the projected statistical prediction of adding another billion people to the world population every decade, our lot in life hangs by a hair. As our world economies are in flux and tumult, hence threatening the availability, price, and affordability of basic human requirements for sustenance, such as water, food, shelter, and medicine, as well as education and valued commodities that nourish the physical, emotional, and spiritual lives of the masses, we are likely headed for calamity. But we dissociate these realities, because they are

not happening to everyone at the same time and in the same place. We can no longer afford to bury our heads in the sand.

As if the despoilment of our globe is not enough to worry about, we must continuously face the prevalence of human aggression. All occupied continents are engaged in military battle, with no foreseeable end in sight. World superpowers, rogue nations, dictators, tyrants, revolutionists, insurgents, and international politics fuel existing warfare, hence leading to repetitive cycles of death, despair, transgenerational trauma, and systemic ruin. Global economies have been shattered, social infrastructures effaced, and daily ways of life destroyed, where entire communities have perished. Whole societies have been displaced, historical traditions broken, established customs nullified, and cultural identities lost. Diasporas, mass-scale refugees, asylum seekers, and the walking wounded scurry to neighboring territories, often herded at their borders. Chaos, uprisings, and revolt over impoverishment, maltreatment, and retaliatory aggression lead to further warfare, civil disorder, violence, and crime.

In today's world where every form of transgression enjoys a psychological motive, rational justification, legal defense, and/or pastoral forgiveness, the limits of evil seem to be standing on a crumbling precipice. Once deemed the unequivocal antithesis to moral absolutes, evil has acquired a new form of acceptability. From commonplace cheating on university entrance exams, income tax evasion, fraud, and economic bleeding of consumer society, to partisan lobby manipulation, bribery, corruption, breach of trust, political illegalities, and military campaigns that couldn't care less about collateral damage, we have entered into a techno age of anonymity, facelessness, digital zombification, and disposable objects where dehumanized alterity becomes the projection, displacement, and denial of our own interiority: in other words, the evil within.

When people feel abused and experience no sense of justice, it violates a universal ethical principle, one that is shattered with the realization that there are no universal ethics, that is, no metaphysical dispensary of the "good and right" watching over them. From anarchy and ochlocracy to nihilism, the human animal becomes a machine of violence. Aggression begets aggression, a simple iteration as repetition compulsion. Tempestuous human relations lead to further social discord, animosity, and bellicosity with no hope in sight of reversing this discernible pattern.

Developmental traumas and attachment pathology besiege the plight of the human being, hence hampering the ability to have healthy relationships, to feel genuine love and intimacy, and to have empathy and compassion for others, where normativity is colored by pathos. Child abuse in all its odious forms is a primordial scab on humanity: it becomes the bedrock of suffering in every society where children are held hostage in emotional concentration camps by their parents or culture, victims who themselves have been abused, oppressed, subjugated, and demoralized. Here the enemy lies within our families and community cryptically threatening our sense of refuge, well-being, and safety at home.

Disease, migrant prejudice, refugee influx, child slavery, ground ghetto fighting, mass execution—barbarian style—and the drop or rise in black gold sustain our attention every night while watching the daily news. The world has become a very dangerous place. Whether we admit it or not, we all live in fear of being assaulted, mugged, or raped. Road rage, purse snatching, abduction, and home invasion are common occurrences. Anyone could be targeted or murdered for the change in their pockets, where safety is sought in gated communities, rural isolation, or in owning firearms for self-protection. From random crime to gangs, the mafia, drug cartels, the sex trade industry, child soldiers, and human trafficking, no one is immune from danger even if they own a

Glock.

The internet has become a prominent global weapon: cyber spies and computer hacking can derail technical operations anywhere, which can endanger the safety of nations and kill people at whim. With the manipulation of a computer mouse, one can readily steal, obstruct, and infect information programs with viruses that cripple corporations, banking systems, communication networks, and world economies, not to mention dupe the ignorant masses with false information. Rapid advances in technology, persistent distortion of facts by news outlets and through social media, and generative artificial intelligence (GAI) compound our existential risks.

Deregulation of industry and the push for privatization of business under the auspices of free democracy, open markets, neoliberalism, and global capitalism only leads to systemic corruption, for without regulation, checks and balances, and central oversight, every modality of dishonesty, venality, exploitation, and vice will enjoy its swindling moment or else pay a parasitic lawyer to find a legal loophole. Banksters and the mega-financial sectors have become too big to jail.

Human nature is replete with psychopathology. We are not warm, loving, gentle creatures by disposition; rather, those qualities are developmental achievements due to domestic socialization practices inherent to a civilization process. We can easily regress to animality when hard times hit, the underside of evolution. The way we aggress, abuse, oppress, and use others as throwaway objects speaks to the dark shadow side of the psyche: family cruelty, sexual molestation, physical abuse and intimidation, crime, sadism, murder, human trafficking, sex trade, baby buying, children sold into slavery, and so on, become the new abnormal. Although I claim no call to Armageddon, unlike the cult crazies, conspiracy theorists, doomsayers, and religious fanatics, we may be hard-pressed to ignore an obvious question: Are we living in the end times?

Before jumping to conclusions, we would do better to study the situation soberly. If we get caught up in reactionary polemics or emotional hyperbole, it becomes way too easy to lose rational perspective. It is not incumbent upon a philosopher or psychoanalyst to solve the world's problems, yet perhaps it is sufficient to point them out. Although I do not profess to resolve this planetary crisis, I would consider myself modestly lucky to be able to reframe the issues in such a way as to offer a foreboding warning to humanity. What sets my analysis apart from others is simply this: our *unconscious* remains the primal threat to our collective existence. Until we become aware and reverse our trajectory toward self-annihilation, humanity will teeter on the edge of extinction.

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