

A Response to the Voluntary Human Extinctionists

F.S.

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"Thank You for Not Breeding" and Voluntary Human Extinction

We are living in a time of unprecedented global destruction on the planet at the hands of the majority of one species (although, in my mind, there is a disproportionate level of responsibility, determined politically and economically, weighing heavily on the various positions of institutional power). It is hard to imagine that everyone doesn't already understand this, no matter what their particular response may be. Some attempt to put forth evidence and reactions steeped in denial and continuation of the status quo because they can think in no other terms or because of their own short-term gains, others offer a technological "solution" to the problem (from cyborgs and genetic engineering to "green" technologies), and some offer reactionary ideological positions with virtually no real praxis. Deep Ecologists, while typically espousing an understanding of profound connections and patterns in life, tend to fall into the last category. Generally misanthropic in their outlook, they tend to see humans as either no longer capable of being part of the "web of life", or never really quite belonging. A reaction to the anthropocentric (human-centered) world-view, many tend to be aligned with a skewed version of biocentrism (life-centered).

Biocentrism, I believe, can be part of an engaging way of approaching relationships, and is similar to the approach seen in various uncivilized and less ritualizing indigenous perspectives, and from an anarchist perspective, places humans in an egalitarian and symbiotic relationship with all other beings.

The problem for some who espouse a biocentric perspective is that they have resigned humans as no longer worthy of this status with life. Their "solution" is a world without humans. Now this reaction, given the track record of civilization and the lack of much faith in humans as a whole to change is somewhat understandable, but it misses some key elements and offers really no solution other than global genocidal extermination of humans, something which is not only difficult to achieve, but also pretty fucking deplorable.

Thank You for Not Breeding (TYFNB) and Voluntary Human Extinction (VHEM), are two projects which espouse a deep ecologist position with an interesting twist.

They are both very articulate and convincing of the extensive havoc caused by the industrial materialist culture we live in and are well-constructed projects of propaganda with high comedic value, but both contain fundamental flaws and virtually no practice. Thank You for Not Breeding (TYFNB) is a video produced several years ago, and contains numerous brief vignettes and Voluntary Human Extinction (VHEM) is a group (although it seems to be mostly this guy named Les U Knight) which tables at events, does speaking gigs, has a website and newsletter, and produces some funny bumper stickers. Their motto is "May we live long and die out." The two projects overlap and their politics and propaganda are basically identical and use what they term as "facts" and humor to solve the world's problems by promoting an antibreeding agenda.

Both the TYFNB video and VHEM literature acutely and amusingly describe the horrific devastation that modern humans are unleashing on the planet and themselves,

but the problem they miss is essentially cultural, not biological. I do not believe, nor have I ever seen anything that might lead me to believe, that humans are inherently flawed, intrinsically and solely self-referential, or naturally destructive to their environment (although we are capable of it, as we can overwhelmingly witness). It is how we think and how we organize ourselves, or more precisely, how we are organized, which creates most of our problems (overpopulation, war, domination, species extinction, environmental destruction, etc.). To uncritically equate humans to cancer cells (as both projects do) which need to be eradicated is a frightening thought and line of reasoning, and one that does not get to the root problem, how we view the world.

To project how modern civilized humans act onto the history of humanity is a mistake and a discredit to those who did/do not live this way for so long. To equate civilization to a cancer cell makes more sense (this is not hair splitting in the least), because of its structure and logic, and because there are still healthy human cells that civilization has not metastasized to, and because there is still the possibility for cells to become healthy again (going feral).

Breeding (the utilitarian description these ammeter scientists like to use to describe conceiving, giving birth, and nurturing young ones) is seen as a crime against the planet by these folks, or at least an ignorant error in judgement. These people must pay a shrink a lot to get over the loathing and antipathy they hold towards their parents for bringing their vile and depraved bodies into this world, not to mention their self-hatred for staying around. Last year, when tabling at an environmental conference with my 3 month-old little girl, I was arrogantly informed by Les (VHEM's figurehead) that he had no aversion to either her or me, and that "we all make mistakes". He came pretty fucking close to reducing the human population by one that day. Anyway, the abstract separation and disconnection from life that projects like these, and the Deep Ecologist tendency in general, exhibit more clearly the reason the world is in this mess to begin with. They view the world as an economist views the stock market, removed from and materialist in their outlook, it comes down for them to resources and consumption rather than beings and behavior. The old number game will never change our situation, no matter how you crunch them. I prefer to deepen my connection with the world and the life that inhabits it rather than draw arbitrary and absolute lines. I begin this exploration and activity in my daily life.

Those who would criticize this choice are criticizing life itself and the beauty of creation. Obviously, bringing children into the world is just one of many ways to go about connecting to the webs of life, but it is a significant one that many environmentalists are willing to discard and criticize in a knee-jerk reactionary fashion.

Looking around the world, I do wish a lot more people had decided to have an abortion, but looking around our scenes, I wish more were open to the possibility of having kids, rather than giving up on ourselves.

If the TYFNB and VHEM folks (and those who agree with their analysis and rhetoric) actually believe what they are saying, why are they still around? Why are they immune to their final solution? Why do they see another 50 or so years of their self-

described cancerous life as acceptable? Is it because it is just a naive and catchy project? If they believe we are fundamentally flawed, then what good are they? Why don't they follow out their logic? Think Globally Act Locally: Voluntary Human Extinction begins at home, but maybe they're just not the volunteering type... (FS)

Disclaimer: If it was somehow indisputably revealed to me that humans are not actually of this planet and are in fact an invasive species from another celestial body, then I might be down with a more vigorous and less voluntary version of their project, but since it is impossible to prove such a thing, and a very doubtful prospect, I will continue to attempt to destroy the cultural aspects of the dominant varieties of our species, and persist in my attempt to connect to my wild self and others with such dreams.

Thank You for Not Breeding (TYFNB)

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