

Suppose we considered the present condition of the earth and its creatures as an illness – a sickness. Imagine the earth as a sick child. When the indications are serious enough we bundle up the child and head for the Doctor's office or the Hospital. Once there we would be looking for a diagnosis. In seeking this diagnosis there are a number of options; conventional or alternative medicine, a single malady or multiple disorders, systemic condition or transient illness. And this is only in terms of Western practice. If we were residents of an Eastern culture or members of a fringe or primitive society the options could be different. But let's stay with the Western model and see where it leads us. After all, it appears that the source of earth's disorder lies more likely with Western civilization than with Eastern. In any case the diagnosis would include a physical examination, maybe an x-ray, and some tests.

I am being treated for several conditions involving doctors from both conventional and alternative medicine. The maladies are mainly systemic – that is they're imbedded in my system from long term factors like diet, strain, toxics, or infections. My maladies include high blood pressure, skin cancer, hardening of the arteries, and inflammation. Conventional medicine treats my blood pressure and skin cancer; alternative medicine treats my arteries and inflammation. Non-systemic maladies are transient and managed on the spot. The flu or a broken bone would be examples of transient medical conditions.

We'll ask the easy questions first. Is the malady affecting the earth systemic or transient? The child has been ill for awhile. We've tried the usual home remedies and some over-the-counter stuff, but the fever persists and there has been some loss of function. We've been to the doctor but either the diagnosis has not been complete or the treatment was not focused or broad enough. It looks like the child has a persistent systemic malady.

The next question is whether the malady is the result of a single condition or from multiple causes. The answer to this question requires at minimum a physical examination. In the broadest terms here is what we find in our physical examination of the earth.

1. The earth has a fever. The temperature of the earth is rising and there is no indication that it is going to cool down any time soon. The consensus of the scientific community is that the warming is caused by greenhouse gases – particularly the combustion products of fossil fuels.
2. There is cancer. Cancer is an anomalous growth of cells that interferes with the functions of the body. Unbridled growth of the cities is like cancer on the face of the earth.
3. The earth's arteries are congested and clogged more and more often. The slowing circulation of traffic is pandemic and no amount of additional lanes, mass transit or bus routes has cleared the arteries.
4. The earth's lungs are being decimated. The trees and plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. That is breathing. The great forests of the world are being removed at a faster and faster rate.
5. Parts of the earth's makeup are disappearing in what we call extinctions or depletions. What the consequences of these depletions will be is anybody's guess, but in your body you would be concerned about the loss even of your tonsils or appendix.

From the physical exam it would certainly appear that multiple maladies are showing up in planet earth. Now on to the lab tests.

The lab tests show that the earth is being poisoned in varying degrees by the products of industrial production. In certain localities the air we breathe is unhealthy. The localities we speak of include Los Angeles, the east coast of the U.S., portions of Europe, and

certain urban areas in less developed countries (Mexico City comes to mind). In Los Angeles the culprit is the climate and the combustion of fossil fuels. Aside from the notorious smog that has affected the lungs of every person who lives there a new study reveals that 50 new cancer cases per year are due simply to the diesel fumes from Long Beach and LA Harbor activities. The east coast air contains residues from the combustion of petroleum fuels and of coal for the production of electricity. Mercury is the particular poison in the combustion of coal although the other air contaminants are there in quantity. The mercury poisoning is especially troublesome when we consider that almost every U.S. State is planning new coal-fired electric plants.

The tests on water show similar long-term poisoning from the whole catalog of industrial chemicals and in some instances from radioactive components.

Emotional and psychological conditions are not as open to precise measurements. However, there is little doubt in people's minds that were around for the experience that a wholesale depression resulted from the assassinations of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. A broad spectrum of persons in the U.S. and abroad describe a general malaise – a depression - and loss of hope following the loss of these men. And the condition persists to varying degrees to this day because there has been no closure and no treatment. Never mind the conspiracy theories. How can anyone believe that these bright charismatic leaders were simply wiped out by isolated chance occurrences?

The mood following the events of 9/11 suggests a kind of paranoia. The Muslim extremists are out to get us. We had better eliminate them before they can hurt us again. The response seems to be completely out of scale to the crime. Granted, no one wants to

see 2500 innocent workers of the Twin Towers lose their life. But millions lost their life in the Second World War and tens of thousands of our young men died in Vietnam. No, the response seems to be more about the symbolic loss of financial assets and security than about people.

So the diagnosis is we've got a sick puppy on our hands. Specifically, the diagnosis includes inflammation, cancer, clogged arteries, emphysema, mutilation, and poisoning - complicated by the disturbance of depression and paranoia.

Given this list of conditions I find myself wondering how to proceed. I know from personal studies that many good people are hard at work on solutions to one or the other of these disorders and others I'm not smart enough to identify. I also know from personal studies that the indications are generally in decline not in abatement. It seems to me that what is needed is a "holistic" treatment – something that treats all the symptoms together instead of each in isolation. There is also a field of practice that says a little change, chosen correctly, can affect a large improvement. This tends to be counter intuitive, but the sensible alternatives do not appear to be working.

If you are being treated for a cancer in conventional medicine the options are removal of the cancerous tissue or annihilation by chemical or radioactive agents. I go to my dermatologist every six months to have any cancerous skin removed that may have shown up since my last visit. Others with a more invasive type of cancer get to have chemotherapy or worse. In alternative medicine cancer is treated with organic substances that assimilate the cancer cells or by treatments that raise the immune system. The elevated immune system is then able to combat the cancer cells in a natural way. Could any of these methods of treatment be applied to the unbridled expansion of urban development?

We are probably not going to annihilate any strip malls or irradiate any subdivisions. But the idea of strengthening the immune system – that is, the controls and balances that guide development in terms of adequate infrastructure and quality of life aspects – just might have a chance.

The earth is heating up. Where is all this heat coming from? Two places. An increase in the combustion of fossil fuels releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The increased carbon dioxide traps the sun's rays and heats the air, which is why a greenhouse interior is hotter than the outside air. We are trading fuel of all kinds for electricity. The combustion required to produce electricity is hot and the uses of the electricity (stoves, lights, fans, etc.) are hot. The medical treatment of inflammation is increase of fluids and control of the inflaming agent – generally a bacterium. A temporary lowering of the food intake is also warranted. The only element from this scenario that appears to of use to treating an inflamed earth is to stop feeding it – i.e. stop producing so much electricity using fossil fuels. This is a well-known solution but the dose must not be great enough yet.

In a number of maladies the difference between health and non-health is the activation of bacterium. Pneumonia is the result of a spurt in the growth of pneumococcus bacteria. Medical researchers have found that stomach ulcers result from bacterial infection and now say some heart diseases also. Tuberculosis is the illness caused by a particular microbe infection. Leprosy is the result of a bacterial infection as is staph infection, strep throat and typhus. What if the earth's maladies can be traced to the action of a runaway growth of a more complex bacterium – us?

The analogy of us as bacteria may have some merit in formulating a holistic solution to the list of earth's maladies. Many types of inflammations result from a bacterial infection;

clogging of the arteries may be rooted in bacterial infection; leprosy results in loss of tissue; some cancers are caused by bacterial infection and other cancers may not be directly related to infection but the stress on the immune system could be a secondary source; and poisoning may not be a direct result of bacteria but the natural “cleanup” systems may be impacted by rapid bacterial growth.

Bacteria are numerous and ubiquitous; the bacteria that exist now are the single-celled critters that did not evolve into multi-celled creatures like animals and humans. Bacteria are held in check by antigens in the higher organisms. We make antigens all the time, but sometimes the bacteria that invade our space are too powerful for our immune system or our immune system is depleted in some critical respect and we fall ill. In worst case scenarios, the illness is fatal. The bacterial life cycle is simple – they eat for awhile, divide a few times, and then they die. When there is plenty to eat, their numbers expand and they can literally take over a biological host. The bacteria are not smart enough to avoid diminishing the host organism. In fact there are no good bacteria or bad bacteria – they are all just being themselves. They don’t have newspapers or folklore to give them feedback on the consequences of their unbridled expansion.

Applying the analogy under consideration, humans are multiplying and filling the earth. Actually, we should say we are multiplying and *overwhelming* the earth. As long as there is food and shelter we are going to continue to reproduce unmindful of the condition the earth is in. Nine months after the Indonesia tsunami the birth rate skyrocketed. The famous babyboomer generation dates to nine months after the return of the survivors of World War Two. If we have a bacterial infection, the doctor may prescribe a type of drug known as anti-bacterial. We do not have the option of removing over-consumers from our society; perhaps we can only educate and hope for the best. But education does not seem to be helping and more than government regulations or religious prohibitions. What to do? What to do?

In formulating an approach to the “overwhelming” of humans, there are a few preliminaries to dispense with. Firstly, none of our best efforts so far have succeeded. The newest news from the Center of Disease Control is that after 20 years and billions of dollars in expenditures flu shots for the elderly have not slowed death and hospitalization rates for that segment of the population. On the same day marine scientists report that tuna has dangerously high concentrations of mercury. Enormous efforts by State and local governments have failed to slow land development growth in the slightest. Schools are failing to teach, kids are getting heavier and slower, and traffic congestion continues to take up more and more of our personal time. Granted there are pockets of improvements. However, these are only the select few you see and hear about. Maybe 10% of the population can boast of the best and the brightest while the other vast majority is going downhill in a handbasket.

The reason for mentioning the lack of success is not to be pessimistic but to impress upon the reader the necessity of adopting a radical approach. And that does not mean ethnic cleansing, genocide, assisted suicide or any such draconian measures. We are not going to advocate coercion, brainwashing, or threats of any kind to accomplish social ends. Only voluntary assent can be acceptable to anyone who recognizes our highest function in our ability to freely choose. (The reader can also appreciate this free choice approach to traffic congestion as outlined in my monograph “Voluntary Traffic Reduction”).

The “overwhelming” has to stop. If there were another way and you can show that it is working I would be the first to jump on the bandwagon. Until then, population growth has to stop. This recommendation goes against everything I have believed in. I’m a self-made man with an innovative professional practice. I have strong conservative leanings; I believe in measured fiscal responsibility; I believe in freedom from oppressive

government control and the right of any individual to make his or her mark as long as the field is left open to anyone else who wants to try; I believe in a Higher Power, and I believe we as individuals have access to this Higher Power through human and spiritual intermediaries; I believe in family and the value of social institutions. Progress is my middle name and hardly a day passes when I am not considering ways to build more and better. But quantity is not quality and all I see ahead is quantity. In order to restore quality we are going to have to lower quantity.

I'm a father and participated through pregnancy, birth and child-raising with two wives (not at the same time of course – it was sequential). I don't think my personal experience is so unusual; both women – though quite different personalities – wanted babies. Birth control; no birth control: married; not married, it didn't make any difference. They wanted babies and the power of that force was unstoppable. My children have children. What can be done that will effectively slow the birth rate that is not oppressive like China's program some years ago? The only thing I can think of is to take a pledge, like Marines or recovering alcoholics. I may get some argument with this but I believe it should be women who take the pledge. Men do not generally have this biological urge to have babies; women do. The pledge event could be prepared by a boot camp or by attendance at 12 step meetings. Hi I'm Jennifer and I want to make babies.