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We've Let Capitalism Kill the Planet

By Christian Sorensen
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The headlines in the first three months of 2017 have made one thing clear: capitalism is killing the planet. Capitalism, the governing structure of nearly every society on Earth, puts profit above all other considerations. The consumer cycle is indifferent to proper disposal or reprocessing of discarded resources because such actions do not maximize profit.

Oceans suffer greatly. They cover over seventy percent of Earth's surface and are integral to the prosperity of all known life. Anthropogenic climate change is killing fish stocks and fundamentally changing marine ecosystems. Human activity is depleting oxygen in the oceans. Plastics are everywhere. Humans route roughly 150 million tones of plastic into the oceans each year. Microplastics from the likes of synthetic fabrics and vehicle tires choke ocean life and thwart marine diversity. Approximately 46,000 pieces of discarded plastic of varying sizes occupy any given square mile of ocean. They work their way up the food chain.

Extinctions are commonplace. Critical areas of land, including wetlands and forests, are vanishing at astonishing rates. Earth has lost roughly ten percent of her wilderness since the 1990s. Humans threaten over sixty percent of the world's primates with extinction. Harsh agriculture practices, tourism, and construction are rapidly killing grasshoppers across Europe, a critical food source for many animals including reptiles and birds. The middle class is going extinct as well. The world's richest eight humans have as much money as the poorest half of the world's population, and the richest one percent of the entire human population possess as much wealth as the rest of humanity.

The aforementioned examples are just a drop in the bucket. These are not anomalies. Pollution is capitalist routine. Pollution is profit. Razing forest for profit is humdrum. Extinction is progress. Asphyxiating Earth is good for big business. Capitalism, the maximization of profit at the expense of animal and planet, is a plague of our own creation. The planet will eventually recover after humanity is gone or once humanity collectively agrees to prioritize the health of our only home. Humans are ill and capitalism is our collective infection. It must end.