

Scientists Warning that Nationalism or Militarism Ideologies Block the Urgently Needed Planetary Consciousness

Antonio Sarmiento Galán¹

Luis Tamayo Pérez²

Abstract: Humanity, today, faces enormous threats: it is not only about anthropogenic global warming, the sixth extinction of species and widespread pollution; many nations around the globe are being affected by war and internal conflicts which, by their nature, are urgent to solve and leave the important socio-environmental crisis for later. In this essay we will show that nationalism and associated militarism constitute major obstacles against the construction of urgent planetary consciousness, which is essential to respond correctly to the civilizational collapse that we are already experiencing.

Keywords: Global warming, Nationalism, Militarism, Environmental consciousness

I. Introduction

Humanity is a curious species. It puts the best—most intelligent and committed—of its members to work in solving the main problems that concern its civilization and later, it chooses to ignore them, vilify them and even imprison them simply for presenting the results of the research that the same society had entrusted to them. Thinking is not something that occurs easily in the majority and the consequence of this is clear: more and more regions of the globe suffer because of the new four horsemen of the Apocalypse that attack humanity: Anthropogenic Global Warming, the Sixth Mass Extinction of Species, Widespread land pollution and Fratricidal war.

In this essay we show that the phenomenon at the root of all these problems is human narcissism—and anthropocentrism on a social scale. We show that wars and socio-environmental disasters derive directly from a humanity that historically, has been overvalued and divided, generating the loss of solidarity and human cooperation and the loss of respect for other species on earth.

Finally, we show that only a humanity capable of overcoming its differences—that is, leaving behind all sectarianism, nationalism and militarism—will be able to build the necessary planetary consciousness and thus overcome the terrible obstacle that constitutes the looming Civilizational Collapse.

II. Our civilization is in crisis... and we had been warned

At the beginning of the 70s of the last century, the Club of Rome with a decisive support from MIT, maintained that before the middle of the following century, that is now, a socio-environmental crisis of planetary dimensions would begin³, most of the world's decision makers ignored it or decided to consider it to be an exaggeration. Years later, when scientists associated with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Copernicus Marine Service (CMS), the Stockholm Resilience Center (SRC) or the Potsdam-Institute für Klimafolgenforschung (PIK), just to mention a

¹Researcher, Unidad Cuernavaca, Instituto de Matemáticas, UNAM, Chamilpa 62200, Morelos.

²PhD, Catedrático del Posgrado en Filosofía, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM, 04510 CDMX.

³Donella and Dennis Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William Behrens III (The Club of Rome), 1972.

few, reiterated the warning of the Club of Rome, most of the leaders once again ignored them. And when the evidence and catastrophes associated with the phenomenon were so overwhelming and clear that they could no longer be ignored, they simply diverted attention to other more urgent phenomena. Among all of them, the most important is war and the associated insecurity.

Nowadays, much of the world is at war, both internal and international. And this has important consequences: for example, due to the disaster of the Russian-Ukrainian war, towards the end of May 2022, the German chancellor managed to obtain the support of his Parliament and allocate 2% of GDP to the rearmament of his nation, the largest amount since World War II⁴. As not all nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allocated such a percentage to their military spending, the Republican candidate for the presidency of the USA, Donald Trump, maintained in February 2024 that he would “encourage” Putin to attack his NATO partners who did not fulfill their commitments to that organization⁵.

In late February 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin made a terrible threat: he indicated that his country's nuclear arsenal could hit targets in the West if they continued to support Ukraine⁶. In response, Emmanuel Macron, president of the French nation, responded that France was also ready to use its nuclear weapons against Russia⁷.

Meanwhile, in the first days of May 2024, Israeli troops attack Rafah, one of the last strongholds of Hamas in Palestine, causing terror among Palestinian citizens –the vast majority of whom are children and adolescents– who find themselves trapped between crossfires and with no possibility of escape⁸.

The Middle East is once again under very high pressure and the conflict has begun to spread to neighboring nations. That is why some experts indicate that in our days, the Third World War has begun... but we have not yet realized it⁹.

But war is not the only threat. The climate crisis is gradually becoming a socioeconomic crisis. On January 12, 2024, NASA reported that the year 2023 was the warmest year ever recorded¹⁰. It happened that way because, from June 2023 to the first months of 2024, the meteorological phenomenon known as El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has caused a disproportionate increase in the frequency and intensity of all hydrometeorological phenomena: droughts, wildfires, floods, hurricanes and heat waves, which have been much worse than those that occurred in previous years¹¹. This has affected millions of citizens and caused increasing numbers of environmental refugees; it has also damaged, sometimes irreversibly, the ecosystems where they live.

The poles have suffered a gradual decrease that not only threatens the habitat of Inuit people and polar species but has also begun to slow down the thermohaline current that circles the earth. In a February 2024 paper, Van Westen, Kliphuis and Dijkstra show that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) could collapse if humanity continues to emit such enormous amounts of Greenhouse Gases as it does now. Researchers show a positive correlation between overheating of the seas and the decrease in the extent of the Arctic and the ice caps of Greenland and Siberia, all of which cause a huge increase in fresh water in the region. This reduces the salinity of the North Atlantic, causing not only the slowdown of the AMOC but has also moved

⁴<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/03/world/europe/germany-russia.html>

⁵<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-68266651>

⁶[https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-warns-west-risk-nuclear-war-says-moscow-can-strike-western-targets-2024-02-29/#:~:text=%22\(Western%20nations\)%20must%20realise,get%20that%3F!%22%20said%20Putin](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-warns-west-risk-nuclear-war-says-moscow-can-strike-western-targets-2024-02-29/#:~:text=%22(Western%20nations)%20must%20realise,get%20that%3F!%22%20said%20Putin)

⁷<https://www.20minutes.fr/monde/ukraine/4088644-20240427-guerre-ukraine-arme-nucleaire-francaise-service-defense-europeenne-macron-pret-ouvrir-debat>

⁸<https://www.amnesty.org.au/israel-occupied-palestinian-territories-all-states-must-pressure-israel-to-immediately-halt-its-ground-operations-in-rafah/>

⁹<https://time.com/6336897/israel-war-gaza-world-war-iii/>

¹⁰<https://plus.nasa.gov/video/2023-was-the-hottest-year-on-record/#:~:text=2023%20was%20Earth's%20warmest%20year,we%20even%20measure%20global%20temperature%3F>

¹¹Climate Prediction Center, 2023.

further south the turning point of the current. The essay indicates that the slowdown of the AMOC has caused the loss of two thirds of the strength it had a century ago and could lose 90% of it during the next 25 to 50 years¹². This would turn a good part of Europe into a frozen subcontinent since the AMOC is part of the thermohaline current that runs through all the seas of the world, bringing along its path, heat, humidity and different nutrients from the equator to the poles. The European subcontinent gets its temperate climate thanks to the heat and humidity coming from the equator. This planetary problem will not stop there: the tropical forests of Central and South America will have less rainfall than now and undergo a process of desertification; the Indian subcontinent will lose the arrival of its' monsoon, seriously affecting their agricultural production and generating a terrible famine. If humanity does not stop its greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, in a very few years the agricultural and industrial production of almost the entire world will decrease globally and will make countless regions and cities uninhabitable, places which are today not only very rich but also very populated. In the future it will not only be Kiribati, Tuvalu and other South Sea nations that will have to be abandoned due to their uninhabitability. So will Berlin, Oslo, Stockholm or Moscow, just to name a few.

Aware of this, the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres indicated on July 27, 2023, that we are no longer in the era of global warming but: "we have entered the era of global boiling"¹³. Some years earlier, the 6th Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021), indicated that if humanity intended to avoid exceeding the 1.5°C limit increase with respect to pre-industrial times (the Paris Agreement), it was essential to half greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 and eliminate them in 2050; let us never forget that the Paris Agreement was signed in 2015 by 196 nations¹⁴.

The Club of Rome in its essay *Earth for All* (2022), adds that if humanity continues with the socioeconomic dynamics of recent decades, shortly after the middle of this century a socio-environmental catastrophe will begin on a global scale, because although the amount of emissions of some greenhouse gases will decrease in volume, the worst ones –CO₂ and CH₄– will continue to accumulate in the upper layers of the atmosphere, increasing Anthropogenic Global Warming. Consequently, droughts, heat waves and wildfires will become increasingly frequent in various regions of the world and floods will become increasingly severe. The production of grains and other land products will decrease while the human population will continue to increase. In poor countries, both population and economic growth will slow down, employment will be lacking, poverty will persist, famines will occur, authoritarian governments will appear, the ecological footprint and pollution will increase, and biodiversity will be further lost. Meanwhile, in rich countries, it will be inequality that will destabilize them. In China, India and other eastern nations, air pollution will decrease thanks to the implementation of energy from renewable sources, but the average surface temperature of the earth and the level and acidity of the oceans will continue to increase due to continuous emissions of greenhouse gases. Large regions of the earth will be uninhabited as the outside temperature will exceed human tolerance and the Social Stress Index will increase.

Cults will flourish in an increasingly chaotic world and environmental catastrophes will occur daily: towards the end of this century, the melting of the ice in Antarctica and Greenland will cause extensive coastal flooding and cover low regions of the earth; droughts and heat waves will make equatorial land and regions uninhabitable. After the middle of this century, climate refugees will number in the millions because of social breakdown, since civilization "will have lost its main base: a stable and resilient Earth-System" (Dixson-Declève, *et al.*, 2022: 42). The consequences of all this are clear: as wars and conflicts occupy the attention and squander capital of all nations, it will be impossible to establish agreements and take the planetary measures necessary to stop, or at least mitigate, a global phenomenon. Consequently, the socio-environmental catastrophe will begin shortly after the middle of this century, when the population reaches its peak at just over 9 billion inhabitants and the average temperature of the earth reaches 2°C. And since the measures against the phenomenon will be too few and will be taken too late (the Too little, Too late scenario of the Club of Rome 2022 study), the catastrophic 2.5°C

¹² Van Westen, Kliphuis and Dijkstra, 2024.

¹³ The Guardian, 2023.

¹⁴ United Nations, 2015.

average sea temperature and even higher values will be reached by 2100, when the human population will have decreased drastically due to the consequent socio-environmental crisis and generalized violence. In the coming century, while rich nations will squander resources in internal conflicts derived from inequality, the people of poor nations will simply not understand what is happening to them and will blame their rulers or their neighboring nations for famine and lack of resources, increasing conflicts in a vicious circle that in the end, will finish all human civilization.

III. A blind humanity

Despite all the above human-created problems, today's humanity prefers not to notice the looming catastrophe, describes those that result from global warming as "natural phenomena" and most humans remain stupid with drugs, religions and/or wars.

In many schools, young people strive to study for a future which will lack the stability that made possible the current civilization and has nothing to do with the absence of a future one. At the limit, many of the best and most prestigious schools on earth are complicit in the problem because they do not adequately educate their students to successfully face a civilizational collapse that many of the directors and teachers barely understand.

Human civilization lives blinded by its anthropocentrism, by considering itself the "summit of creation", the "chosen people", the "superior race" and other nonsense phrases that only have led it to the predation of other humans or other species¹⁵.

Humanity loves to differentiate itself... and believe itself as superior to those from whom it differs. Throughout history, humanity has been divided in multiple ways: Christians and pagans, nobles and commoners, bourgeois and proletarians, patriots and foreigners, communists and capitalists, left and right, humans and animals. The others have therefore been many things: competitor, opponent, enemy, different, corrupter, deceiver, and even an unnecessary entity.

Anthropocentrism is a type of ideology that denies the unity of *Dasein*¹⁶ with the world and leads those who suffer from it to consider themselves superior to the other species on earth.

Therefore, it is allowed not only to exploit nature but to ignore, exploit or exterminate the other species that share its existence.

Anthropocentrism is the ideological foundation of extractivism and consumerism and is a serious disease because as Heidegger (1927) indicated, given that the world is consubstantial to us, completely consuming a mineral or exterminating an animal or plant species we do nothing but affect our own world.

To avoid civilizational collapse, humanity must have been cured of anthropocentrism and its surrogates: extractivism, consumerism as well as nationalism and militarism, that is, as shown later, humanity has to realize its unity with the other and the world.

IV. Anthropocentrism and its pathologies

Anthropocentrism, as a pathology of the mundanity of *Dasein*, presents itself in various forms, first as extractivism, that is, through the pure and simple overexploitation of nature (biosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere or lithosphere). Second, as consumerism, that is, as that behavior that leads humans to acquire countless products, many of them unnecessary and that fill the residences of the wealthiest: from clothing and accessories to toys, books and cars. In third place is scientific arrogance, which a good part of the techno-scientific community suffers from and reflects the behavior promoted by irresponsible and greedy businessmen, where scientists present technical solutions to their production problems without clearly knowing the effects of medium or long term that the proposed substances or processes may have. In fourth place is evasion, which describes the pathology suffered by those who, faced with a specific threat (such as that represented by Anthropogenic Global Warming or the Sixth Mass Extinction of Species), choose to escape through cults, drugs, video games and so on; evasion allows us to live in comfortable virtual worlds... while the planet collapses. In

¹⁵ <https://clarionherald.org/news/pope-benedict-faith-and-science-work-together>

¹⁶ As Heidegger stated, *Dasein* is, in each case, myself ("das wir selbst je sind", 1927, §2, p. 7).

fifth place is nationalism, a behavior that makes us believe ourselves superior to others because of the place where we were born. Such pathology is at the basis of militarism and has given rise to countless conflicts and wars, to a great deal of death and destruction. Finally, we cannot fail to mention one last pathology, the desire to save, which consists of the belief that, individually, one is such a powerful entity that one has the ability to protect nature. In truth, we are nothing more than one of nature's species, its power exceeds us and, rather, we should recognize its power and learn to respect it. By exceeding one's own capabilities, the desire to save usually leads to frustration and inaction, to "I can't do anything" or "it's too complex". The narcissism of those who suffer from the desire for salvation prevents them from noticing that it is human civilization itself that is at risk and not nature, which will be reborn when humans stop being dominant.

The concept of nation is, like that of language, the result of the creation of a form of subjection of the inhabitants of a region and although there are antecedents of the word, its current form is very recent (end of the 18th century) and it has not been consolidated as a unique concept (each culture has its own definition). The best-known examples are the division of countries, where the Basque Country stands out separated into two parts, one in France and the other in Spain, and the amalgamation of various ethnicities in the kingdom of Belgium (57% Flanders, 42% Wallonia's and 1% Germans).

Throughout the 18th century, the previously vague concept of nation experienced a definitive change in scale and content, fundamentally as a consequence of the dissemination of the modernizing principles of the Enlightenment. This is how *nation* and *homeland* are defined in a rationalist and contractual way, although without the previous meanings disappearing.

The greatest influence on this came from Jean Jacques Rousseau when he developed the concept of *national sovereignty*. With the French Revolution of 1789, the concept of *nation* acquired its full modern meaning by opposing the sovereignty of the citizens (of the nation) to the absolute power of the king. Thus, the *nation* is defined as the set of former subjects of a monarch, who have become citizens and hold sovereignty over a territory and, therefore, it is up to her to determine the laws that must govern its inhabitants.

V. To Justify the unjustifiable

In her study *Justifying War*, Dr. Teresa Santiago refers to the long tradition of western intellectuals who, starting from Herodotus, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas, have attempted to provide reasons to establish the "just war doctrine":

Saint Augustine sees in war a means through which men are punished for the injustices and sins they commit and, on the other hand, the possibility of returning to the path of good (Santiago, 2001: 23).

An idea that has been expanded within canon law since the Decree of Gratian (1140 AD):

Physical violence exercised against other human beings is justified when it comes from a "principle of benevolence", *i. e.*, when it is an act that is carried out for the benefit of the guilty party, even if it is against his will. Wars waged from this principle of mercy serve to free the sinner from evil; This is where its moral justification lies (cited by Santiago, 2001: 34).

There are countless dictators, both in the East and the West, who have relied on this type of ideology to justify the worst abuses and atrocities, genocides and wars.

Only until such wars end, some of the survivors still with blood on their hands, do realize the futility of their actions and are able to recognize that those they exterminated, that those "enemies" or "others" were nothing more than his mirror, his companions or even his brothers.

The urgent issues detract from the important ones

Wars and their trail of death have always been a dominant factor in human history. Some even pretend wars to be short-term: the shorter a war lasts, the better. However, the most impressive achievements of humanity, from the pyramids to the cathedrals, from the Chinese wall to the national parks, have been the work of several generations, have been achieved thanks to human beings who dedicated their lives to initiating works that –they

knew it well—would never be able to see them when completed. The great goals of humanity are achieved by following a way of thinking that cannot be classified as “competitive” or “individual” but as “cooperative” or “special”, that is, where the human species itself cooperates. A form of transgenerational thinking that we find in all social species—from insects to mammals—and is not motivated by selfish motives or personal recognition, but rather aims at the common good, the well-being of all.

War, in fact, relies on such a cooperative spirit of the human species, but perverts it. It makes people forget a brotherhood that should be privileged, that is, it corrupts human solidarity and sends humans to attack their brothers, forgetting that it is thanks to them that we have managed to prosper as a species.

When Carl Schmitt proposed his “friend-enemy criterion”¹⁷ he simply made clear the human forgetfulness of unity with the other, that which Heidegger (1927, §26, p. 117) maintained when indicating that the concepts of *Mitsein* or *Mitdasein* (Being-with another) are existential, that is, qualities of the being of each of us: the isolated human being does not necessarily exist; to “become what she/he is” requires a community of others who humanize her/him. And its nature is not limited to the interhuman bond (*Mitsein*) but includes all of nature: *Dasein*, that entity that each of us is, is also *In-der-Welt-sein* (Being-in-the-world)¹⁸. And Heidegger placed hyphens between the terms to express their absolute inseparability: I am world as a bio-psycho-socio-mundane entity, *Daseinis* capable of building a planetary consciousness. Achieving it, however, means leaving behind the burdens of anthropocentrism, nationalism and militarism.

VI. The urgent... and giant leap into the void

We are in the year 2024 and, consequently, we still have a small window of opportunity to mitigate the worst effects of anthropogenic global warming. But wars and other conflicts close that possibility.

Furthermore, the corporate neoliberal economic model, dominant in today's global world, causes humanity to be unable to notice the urgent and necessary changes. As corporations only seek the increased and quickest possible return on invested capital, they have no qualms about promoting extractivism, consumerism and techno-scientific arrogance.

In corporate neoliberalism the other became someone despicable, a competitor or a stupid and cheatable consumer. In our days, greed, dispossession, compound interest and corporations are dominant.

As Bakan (2005, 2020) indicates, the modern corporation is a type of enterprise created at the beginning of the last century in the USA with the aim of evading responsibility. The corporation is a “legal person” and has full rights to acquire assets, hire workers, obtain loans, establish lawsuits, increase its assets and even go bankrupt. The only difference from a human person is that corporations cannot go to jail. Such is the huge advantage that allowed corporations to become the dominant economic entity.

The modern transnational corporation is not a mere commercial legal figure, it is a kind of alien—an unconscious, incomprehensible, devastating and deadly extraterrestrial—that threatens everyone: the corporation is one of the main expressions of the death drive¹⁹.

Corporations are not businesses. Companies retain responsibility and owners can go to jail for harming their consumers or for the externalities they produce. Because they were created with the sole objective of evading responsibility, corporations perhaps constitute the worst idea that humanity conceived: not only have they appropriated practically all of humanity's capital²⁰ and continually cut back on labor and social achievements, but they have covered the air, the soil, the seas, rivers and lakes with their toxic waste. Corporations also poison and stun the souls of the masses with superstitions, virtual realities and “entertainment programs”.

Separating from the currently dominant socioeconomic model implies taking a leap outside oneself, a leap into the void... and such a leap is possible because the other is part of me.

If our word resonates with the other, with our reader, then we can realize that the other is part of me.

¹⁷Schmitt, 1999: 58ss.

¹⁸Heidegger, 1927, §12, p. 52.

¹⁹Tamayo, 2021.

²⁰Vitali, Glattfelder&Battiston, 2011.

Recognizing *Mitsein* is the key element for humanity to be able to take the giant leap proposed by the Club of Rome to overcome the crisis in which we find ourselves.

The Giant Leap requires a humanity that acts in a unified manner against the present socio-environmental problem, that fights against poverty and inequality, empowers women, obtains energy from renewable sources and uses regenerative agriculture for food production. It is also necessary for industry to be electrified as much as possible, environmental technology to be transferred from developed countries to poor ones, and the improvement and implementation of renewable sources to be significantly increased (Dixson-Declève, 2022: 44ff).

Unfortunately, such a wonderful scenario seems very unlikely due to national and religious divisions, as well as wars and other factors that divide humanity. And... the window of opportunity is closing quickly!

Being able to carry out the Giant Leap scenario seems quite unlikely, unfortunately due to omnipresent nationalism and growing militarism.

VII. Conclusions

Nationalist and militarized humanity is absolutely incapable of even understanding the possibility of planetary consciousness. Nationalism and associated militarism are tangible obstacles to the preservation of a civilization that took a lot of effort to build. As Ugo Bardi, also a member of the Club of Rome, points out in his essay *The Seneca Effect, why decline is faster than growth* (2011), it will be much easier to destroy our quite comfortable and refined civilization than it took to build it.

It is difficult for humanity to be able to overcome its differences and thus recover what made it the dominant species on earth: its cooperative spirit, its unity with the other. It's not hard to imagine that when the first Sapiens were kicked out of the trees and forced to walk bipedally on the then-dangerous ground, they had to cooperate to survive. Since cooperation requires interhuman coordination, precise language became essential. Consequently, only those who were able to cooperate were able to prosper. In cooperation the life drive (the impulse to build increasingly larger units) is dominant and has allowed us to establish complex societies.

It was cooperation that allowed the first symbiotes²¹ to establish social technologies such as *Potlatch* (I am richer when I give more), *Ubuntu* (I am as others are) and *Tequio* (collaboration: "today for you, tomorrow for me")²².

As the centuries passed, and especially because of the industrial revolution, cooperative institutions became unnecessary and fell into oblivion, opening the way to interhuman conflicts and wars. Consequently, whoever was previously the brother, the cousin, the uncle, the nephew, became the different, the foreigner and even the enemy.

Recovering our humanity involves leaving behind the war against others and the world, the fierce competition and the desire for dominance. Overcoming the coming collapse requires that we be able, as Jorge Riechmann (2022) indicates, to fly like starlings, in compact groups where, naturally and to escape danger, each one responds by following what Surowiecki, in *One Hundred Better Than One* (2005) calls the intelligence of the masses.

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²¹Riechmann, 2022.

²²Many indigenous peoples—such as those in Bhutan, the Amazon, and some in Latin America—continue to preserve these ancient practices.

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