

Humans: The Ultimate Goal

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The Earth is estimated to be about 4.54 billion years old. Among complex organic species on Earth, the Homo genus arose only about 2 million years ago with modern humans [Homo Sapiens] emerging about 300,000 years ago. Complex life on Earth has gone through at least five mass extinction events – each one eliminating between 75% and 97% of all life forms. The last of these mass extinctions about 65 million years ago extinguished the great reptiles and freed mammals to evolve in many directions including toward modern humans.

In this big picture, the “rule” is that all life forms eventually go extinct, and, importantly, complex terrestrial life forms like humans are especially vulnerable. So, at a minimum, humans on Earth are waiting their turn for termination.

The ultimate goal of all species – including humans – is survival. So, to achieve truly long term survival, humans on Earth will have to find other planets to inhabit, and beyond that, planets in other solar systems. This is no small task as humans depend on very specific ecological conditions on planet Earth, and these conditions are geologically very recent and have existed for a very short time period. Locating approachable extra Earth locations that can provide the very specific ecological requirements of modern humans is very unlikely – even if we discover water based life forms on other planets in our own solar system.

Escaping Earth is not enough to assure human species survival! It is going to take the application of genetic engineering to produce alternative human forms that can thrive in the carefully selected alternative ecologies of other selected planets [or moons of planets]. And in the longer term, it is going to take the ability to either place some of these life forms in a state of suspended animation for very long periods of time or achieve time travel to reach distant habitable locations.

Humans are naturally presentistic – concerned with “What’s Happening NOW” in our families, communities, and nations. But while everyday survival is necessary, it ignores our longer term species survival challenges – first on Earth and then beyond. Fortunately humans are capable of anticipation and long term planning. If we take the longer species survival view, we would act much more cooperatively and much less competitively – at ALL scales, ALL the time – including the present. And at a minimum, we would absolutely respect the fact that our relatively “short term” survival on planet Earth depends on our working diligently to respect and sustain the very specific set of ecological conditions that favor our current, continued existence – conditions that are far from the “norm” on our planet!