

“Saving the Planet,” by George Carlin



I'm not one of these people who's worried about everything. You got people like this around you? Country's full of them now: people walking around all day long, every minute of the day, worried... about everything! Worried about the air; worried about the water; worried about the soil; worried about insecticides, pesticides, food additives, carcinogens; worried about radon gas; worried about asbestos; worried about saving endangered species.

Let me tell you about endangered species all right? Saving endangered species is just one more arrogant attempt by humans to control nature. It's arrogant meddling; it's what got us in trouble in the first place. Doesn't anybody understand that? Interfering with nature. Over 90% - over, WAY over - 90% of all the species that have ever lived on this planet, ever lived, are gone! Pwwt! They're extinct! We didn't kill them all, they just disappeared. That's what nature does. They disappear these days at the rate of 25 a day and I mean regardless of our behaviour. Irrespective of how we act on this planet, 25 species that were here today will be gone tomorrow. Let them go gracefully. Leave nature alone. Haven't we done enough?

We're so self-important, so self-important. Everybody's gonna save something now: "Save the trees! Save the bees! Save the whales! Save those snails!" and the greatest arrogance of all: "Save the planet!" What?! Are these people kidding me?! Save the planet?! We don't even know how to take care of ourselves yet! We haven't learned how to care for one another and we're gonna save the planet?! I'm getting tired of that rap! I'm getting tired of that! I'm tired of Earth Day! I'm tired of these self-righteous environmentalists; these white, bourgeois liberals who think the only thing wrong with this country is there aren't enough bicycle paths! People trying to make the world safe for their Volvo's!

Besides, environmentalists don't give a crap about the planet. They don't care about the planet; not in the abstract they don't. You know what they're interested in? A clean place to live; their own habitat. They're worried that someday in the future, they might be personally inconvenienced. Narrow, unenlightened self-interest doesn't impress me.

Besides, there is nothing wrong with the planet... nothing wrong with the planet. The planet is fine... the people are screwed! Compared to the people, THE PLANET IS DOING GREAT: Been here four and a half billion years! Do you ever think about the arithmetic? The planet has been here four and a half billion years, we've been here what? 100,000? Maybe 200,000? And we've only been engaged in heavy industry for a little over 200 years. 200 years versus four and a half billion and we have the conceit to think that somehow, we're a threat? That somehow, we're going to put in jeopardy this beautiful little blue-green ball that's just a-floatin' around the sun?

The planet has been through a lot worse than us. Been through all kinds of things worse than us: been through earthquakes, volcanoes, plate tectonics, continental drifts, solar flares, sunspots, magnetic

storms, the magnetic reversal of the poles, hundreds of thousands of years of bombardment by comets and asteroids and meteors, worldwide floods, tidal waves, worldwide fires, erosion, cosmic rays, recurring ice ages, and we think some plastic bags and aluminum cans are going to make a difference? The planet isn't going anywhere... we are! We're going away! Pack your stuff, folks! We're going away and we won't leave much of a trace either, thank God for that... maybe a little styrofoam... maybe... little styrofoam.

The planet will be here, we'll be long gone; just another failed mutation; just another closed-end biological mistake; an evolutionary cul-de-sac. The planet will shake us off like a bad case of fleas, a surface nuisance. You wanna know how the planet's doing? Ask those people in Pompeii who are frozen into position from volcanic ash how the planet's doing. Wanna know if the planet's all right? Ask those people in Mexico City or Armenia or a hundred other places buried under thousands of tons of earthquake rubble if they feel like a threat to the planet this week. How about those people in Kilauea, Hawaii who build their homes right next to an active volcano and then wonder why they have lava in the living room?

The planet will be here for a long, long, LONG time after we're gone and it will heal itself, it will cleanse itself cause that's what it does. It's a self-correcting system. The air and the water will recover, the earth will be renewed, and if it's true that plastic is not degradable, well, the planet will simply incorporate plastic into a new paradigm: The Earth plus Plastic. The Earth doesn't share our prejudice towards plastic. Plastic came out of the Earth! The Earth probably sees plastic as just another one of its children. Could be the only reason the Earth allowed us to be spawned from it in the first place: it wanted plastic for itself, didn't know how to make it, needed us. Could be the answer to our age-old philosophical question: "Why are we here?" PLASTIC!!!

So the plastic is here, our job is done, we can be phased out now, and I think that's really started already, don't you? I mean, to be fair, the planet probably sees us as a mild threat; something to be dealt with, and I'm sure the planet will defend itself in the manner of a large organism. Like a beehive or an ant colony can muster a defence, I'm sure the planet will think of something.

What would you do if you were the planet trying to defend against this pesky, troublesome species? Let's see... what might... hmm... viruses! Viruses might be good. They seem vulnerable to viruses. And uh... viruses are tricky; always mutating and forming new strains whenever a vaccine is developed. Perhaps this first virus could be one that-that compromises the immune system of these creatures. Perhaps a human immunodeficiency virus making them vulnerable to all sorts of other diseases and infections that might come along and maybe it could be spread sexually, making them a little reluctant to engage in the act of reproduction.

Well that's a poetic note and it's a start and I can dream can't I? See, I don't worry about the little things... bees, trees, whales, snails. I think we're part of a greater wisdom that we won't ever understand, a higher order. Call it what you want. You know what I call it? The big electron... the big electron. It doesn't punish, it doesn't reward, it doesn't judge at all. It just is and so are we... for a little while...