Occam's Razor and Human Society

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1 Introduction

Keep it simple. Occam's razor is an eloquent principle attributed to William of Ockham (England) in the 14th century. In explaining a phenomenon, William of Ockham suggested that one should use the minimal number of assumptions required, thus eliminating assumptions that have not been shown to have significance to an explanation. This principle has been expressed in Latin as "*lex parsimoniae*" or the "law of parsimony" (succinctness). Thus, Occam's razor asserts that assumptions should not be multiplied beyond need. The simplest solution that covers all the facts is often the best and most accurate. It is the best guide for life and for future research efforts.

There are many equally effective ways of expressing Occam's razor. If one is challenged with competing explanations, theories or solutions, and they are equal in all other respects, selecting the explanation that contains the minimal number of assumptions is the best approach. This remains true unless it is

shown that greater complexity is required. This age old principle has been enunciated as the keep it simple, stupid (KISS) approach. It applies to our complex world: to human societies, our environment and our biosphere.

What is the connection between Occam's razor and our present day common biospheric problems? A simple solution, perhaps the simplest solution, to resource consumption, pollution and global climate change (which really represents the totality of all anthropogenic pollution of our water, air, soil and biosphere) is education and universal free birth control. This is the one solution that can reduce our human population below its current estimate of 6.6 billion. It is even more critical when it is recalled that our population is increasing at a rate of about 75 million people annually. Conservation, the development of alternative sources of energy, increased food production and putting the brakes on global warming can be best achieved with this one simple solution—a decreased human population. Conservation measures will then have a chance to be part of a successful solution for the most severe problems that face humanity.

An increasing human population MEANS increasing hunger, increasing pollution, and continually decreasing non-renewable resource bases, including our energy reserves. An increasing number of countries with minimal to no infrastructure will find it increasingly difficult to provide for their people as populations increase. Even in those countries with the more advanced social structures, infrastructure will

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deteriorate as international resources are depleted. Without organized social structure, complex human societies can not continue to exist.

What are the expected perils of population growth and the loss of infrastructure? Infrastructure is essential to the maintenance of human health, education and research efforts. The availability of potable water, and agricultural products also depend on infrastructure. Transportation and communication, essential for international cooperation, are dependent on national and international infrastructure. Even

human rights, a system of justice and constitutional governance that protects the individual above the state, depend on infrastructure.

So why do we need more humans on our planet? Every far-sighted conservation-minded individual knows that we do not. We need just the opposite. The KISS method, applied to our current situation is screaming out to everyone—universal birth control is essential for the survival of humanity. Occam's razor is required. It is an aid to rationality. Without it, we are doomed.