

JUNE 7

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We live at a change of epochs, a hinge point of history. We have entered the first century in the 45 million centuries of life on Earth in which one species can jeopardize the planet's future. From this point on, culture more than nature is the principal determinant of Earth's future.

For some this is cause for congratulation, the fulfillment of our destiny as a species. We enter a new era: the Anthropocene. For others this is cause for concern. We worried throughout much of the past century that humans would destroy themselves in inter-human conflict. The worry for the next century is that if our present heading is uncorrected, humans may ruin their planet and themselves along with it.

Paradoxes and challenges confront and confound us. Although we congratulate ourselves on our powers, humans are not well equipped to manage the sorts of global-level problems we face in this new era. Yet, this wonderland Earth is a planet with promise. If we are to realize the abundant life for all time, both policy and ethics must enlarge the scope of concern. We are Earthlings. Our integrity is inseparable from Earth's integrity. The ultimate unit of moral concern is the ultimate survival unit: this wonderland biosphere. We can and we ought to get humans put in their place. Our best hope lies in global convictions that for the richest human living we do not want a denatured life on a denatured planet.

—Holmes Rolston III,
university distinguished professor of philosophy at Colorado State University (USA),
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