

Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

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Summary:

This essay is trying to comprehend today's situation. It shows the complexity of that situation on the recent examples of the oil prices development and the global warming problem. The author thinks based on those two topics that making serious statement and policy is too controversial and he sees living on the edge as just another part of human nature. Thus the only way of improving society's well-being is changing in people's thinking which could prevent wasting important resources.

Essay:

Recently, there have been articles in the newspapers filled with news about food crisis, increasing amount of days with extreme weather, oil resources shortage, increasing demands for energy, etc. It really seems we are facing crisis which cannot be compared with any other in the whole history. Is there any way of avoiding it? And is there any actual crisis coming?

In order to properly understand the situation we are facing, we must see „the bigger picture“ – we must comprehend the way how our civilization has come into this position. And it is exactly correct evaluation of the causes which can bring some solution.

In the last few months, front pages of newspapers have been filled with reports about new economical crash which could be even bigger than the Great Depression in 1930s. However, it might seem uncertain; some aspects of this economical recession have tight connections with our topic. One of the basic commodities that are traded on the market is without any doubt oil. Its price hit the top in the late July 2008. It seemed our civilization finally reached the famous Oil Peak but instead a big change happened. In the last half a year, the price has constantly dropped below 50 USD per barrel. And suddenly, it looks we still have enough oil.

Another important today's world theme, which apparently does not leave anyone calm and cool, is the problem of global warming. It's a clear example how bad the junction of politics and science can be. Based on one scientific theory, our governments have made a decision that influences lives of everybody, while ignoring voices opposing that theory. The outcome of this is making laws, which try to use so called renewed resources and which eventually result in using agricultural soil as a place for growing fuels or even burning food in power plants.

Those two examples show one important thing in human nature: ego-centrism. It's probably this quality which gives us fuel for seeing desperate situations. And based on those situations we try to save the day and bring solutions that can do more harm than good.

Since the dawn of mankind, some people have prophesized the end of the world, the judgement day. And there is also an audience to listen to those oracles; those stories are pretty and dreadful at the same time. And people love catastrophes. But it is our very own nature making us see the omens of the doom in our times. At the same time our logic teaches us one important thing – our era is not very special, there is no reason why it should be different.

Jean-Christophe
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Some people argue we reached the time when we are destroying our planet and whole life on it and the fate of it is at stake. Yes, we have weapons that can evaporate the greatest cities of this planet in the flash of light brighter than a million suns within a second but it is not our planet whose fate is at stake, it is again our nature's selfish part which makes us think that.

The analysis of development of human population gives us information that people are not so much different from other animals – it has some needs for space and of course for food. And because our species does not have any natural predator, we are limited only by diseases and food. Increases in resources cause higher birth rate, higher birth rate makes more pressure on resources. Agricultural revolution in the Neolithic age freed our ancestors from the dependence on hunting and human population for the first time in history recorded real growth.

And ever since the first crop was harvested, there have been the never-ending struggles between the needs of our civilization and the abilities of fields to feed increasing number of hungry people.

And with the development of our civilization we learned how to use more dowries on this planet. We learned how to obtain metal from rock, how to domesticate animals and finally, how to convert one type of energy to another. And needs for energy are basically the same as for food, increasing demand for energy forces us to find new resources.

So far, we have been escaping the limits on growth, first sketched by T.R.Malthus in the end of the eighteenth century. But does today's food and energy crisis mean we have finally reached the limits? According to some newspapers we really have.

We have supplies of oil for the next thirty years but in 1970s we had supplies of oil for the upcoming thirty years as well. The Stone Age did not end because of stone shortage, as well as we did not stop using steam machines on account of lack of coal. Why should it be different this time?

We can only speculate what might be our next energy resource, some hope for fusion reactors, some believe in next generation fission reactors and some in solar energy. One thing is certain; no matter how hard we try, there will be always something threatening our civilization, something pushing us to the edge. And we shall eventually reach our limit and our civilizations will end; we are not different from any other animals and we cannot break the basic principles of our universe. Nobody can say when the day comes – tomorrow as well as in a million years

We should be sceptical about accepting catastrophic predictions; it can do more harm than good and we should always be aware of the fact that every solution has two faces – a good one and a bad one. Only better understanding of today's world problems and its development in history can prevent us from accepting those solutions which can eventually just waste our precious resources without any improvement. It is not an invention that can save the world; it is only a change in human thinking. And I am sceptical that it can be ever done – as Albert Einstein once said – "Two things are infinite: the Universe and human stupidity. And I'm not sure about the universe."