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Abstract: Environmental Sustainability: Aristotle and the Anthropocene

I will review the state of the planet at two points in time; my birth, at the beginning of the Anthropocene, and today. To summarize some major trends, the human population has more than tripled, we have lost half of our natural forests, and only partially replaced them with “managed forests” that are essentially tree farms. Sea levels have risen, atmospheric CO₂ has increased by 33%, and methane (CH₄) has climbed up 63%. In theory, “development” has surged forwards, in that the world’s GDP has increased nine-fold, with *per capita* GDP increasing three-fold. This sounds fine, until we adjust for inflation, which reveals that the *per capita* GDP is a quarter of what it was in 1950. Another snag is that the distribution of that wealth has become more and more skewed; the Gini coefficient has increased significantly, placing more and more of the planet’s wealth in the hands of the few.

Debates on the rate and causes of “Climate Change” tend to focus on whether we humans should be accepting responsibility, and addressing the problem. Aristotle offers us a powerful tool to clear up any confusion, and turn towards developing solutions.