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In his book, *The Beginning of Infinity*, the prize-winning Oxford University physicist David Deutsch writes,

“...let me first return to Earth, and consider the Spaceship Earth metaphor, in its straightforward physical version.

“...I am writing this in Oxford, England, where winter nights are often cold enough to kill any human unprotected by clothing and other technology. So, while intergalactic space would kill me in a matter of seconds, Oxfordshire in its primeval state might do it in a matter of hours... There is a life-support system in Oxfordshire today, but it was not provided by the biosphere, it has been built by humans... Nearly the whole of the Earth’s biosphere in its primeval state was likewise incapable of keeping an unprotected human alive for long. It would be much more accurate to call it a death-trap for humans rather than a life-support system. Even the Great Rift Valley in eastern Africa, where our species evolved, was barely more hospitable than primeval Oxfordshire. Unlike the life-support system in that imagined spacecraft, the Great Rift Valley lacked a safe water supply, and medical equipment, and comfortable living quarters, and was infested with predators, parasites and disease organisms. It frequently injured, poisoned, drenched, starved and sickened its ‘passengers,’ and most of them died as a result.

“...The biosphere only ever achieves stability – and only temporarily at that – by continually neglecting, harming, disabling and killing individuals. Hence the metaphor of a spaceship or a life-support system, is quite perverse: when humans design a life support system, they design it to provide the maximum possible comfort, safety and longevity for its users within the available resources; the biosphere has no such priorities....

“Today almost the entire capacity of the Earth’s ‘life-support system for humans’ had been provide not *for* us but *by* us, using our ability to create new knowledge. There are people in the Great Rift Valley today who live far more comfortably than early humans did, and in far greater numbers, through knowledge of things like tools, farming and hygiene. The Earth did provide the raw materials for our survival – just as the sun has provided the energy, and supernovae provided the elements, and so on. But a heap of raw materials is not the same thing as a life-support system....

“So the biosphere is incapable of supporting human life. From the outset, it was only human knowledge that made the planet even marginally habitable by humans, and the enormously increased capacity of our life-support system since then (in terms both of numbers and of security and quality of life) has been entirely due to the creation of human knowledge. To the extent that we are on a ‘spaceship,’ we have never been merely its passengers, nor (as is often said) its stewards, nor even its maintenance crew: we are its designers and builders....

“The ‘passengers’ metaphor is a misconception in another sense too. It implies that there was a time when humans lived unproblematically: when they were provided for, like passengers,

without themselves having to solve a stream of problems in order to survive and to thrive. But in fact, even with the benefit of their cultural knowledge, our ancestors continually faced desperate problems, such as where the next meal was coming from, and typically they barely solved these problems or they died. There are very few fossils of old people.

“The moral component of the Spaceship Earth metaphor is therefore somewhat paradoxical. It casts humans as ungrateful for gifts which, in reality, they never received. And it casts all other species in morally positive roles in the spaceship’s life-support system, with humans as the only negative actors. But humans are part of the biosphere, and the supposedly immoral behavior is identical to what all other species do when times are good – except that humans alone try to mitigate the effect of that response on their descendants and on other species.”

The natural world is quite cruel, and that has been the case long before humans were on the scene. From the website “Uncommon Descent”: “You want to talk about suffering in nature? Watch a video of an antelope being eaten by an Anaconda. Every time the antelope breathes out, it is constricted more, forcing air out of its lungs. The death is long, and most definitely painful. To look at nature and say it is without cruelty is to only look at its best half. For every beautiful act of nature there is an equally cruel one. For every miraculous and awe-inspiring birth there is an equally gruesome death.” And from the website “ReducingSuffering”: “and while there may be little humans can do now to address the problem, we should remember that it matters. The pain endured by a fish afflicted with parasites or a rat swallowed alive by a snake is no more tolerable than the 'natural' suffering of humans due to malaria, cancer, or starvation. Both deserve our attention.” The paleontologist Richard Dawkins writes, “The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation. During the minute that it takes me to compose this sentence, thousands of animals are being eaten alive, many others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear, others are slowly being devoured from within by rasping parasites, thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation thirst and disease.”

The idea that we have been blessed by God with some sort of idyllic environment simply does not correspond with the evidence before us.