

## Invoking the Apocalypse: A Promenade with Pentti Linkola

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*“A democracy where there is freedom of consumption is the worst thing possible”*

*“The worth of an individual is smaller when there are a lot of humans”*

*“Force and oppression are needed because life as such is a value”*



Pentti Linkola is a Finnish fisherman and ornithologist. He was born in Helsinki in 1932 and lives in a 30 square meter wooden cabin in Sääksmäki (Ritvala).

We visited him together in March 2011. Despite our awareness of some general gossip about his temperament, he kindly attended to us for several hours. During this time we talked and took a walk. As a curious anecdote, he seems to have a particular notion of order and disorder. On the wall of his cabin hangs a sign that says: ‘a house which is not dirty is not a home’.

Linkola has two daughters and until not so long ago he had no electricity at home. He lived from what he earned, selling on horseback the fish he caught in the lake Vanajavesi. His father, Kaarlo Linkola, was Rector of the University of Helsinki and his grandfather was Chancellor there too. Regardless, he chose to leave his zoological and botanical studies after one year in that same institution.

For a long time, his family lived in the main building of Kaisaniemi's Botanical Garden, which was

planned as a castle for the king of Finland in 1918. Nevertheless, most of the family heritage that Linkola received he donated to the Finnish Natural Heritage Foundation, an NGO created by him to preserve the forest for the Finnish society. He has also been writing for Finnish journals with a certain frequency; added to which he has published nine books in Finnish and a book in English compiling some of his articles ([see here](#)). As a curiosity, he asked during our interview which of his articles were translated into English (one search engine reveals over 180,000 hits when entering his name).

Linkola is not totally isolated there in Sääksmäki. He appears occasionally on TV and from time to time he visits his family in Helsinki or goes to listen to certain seminars (for example about Dostoevsky). He is also known for his legendary expeditions -walking for weeks throughout the forests of Finland or riding a bike in continental Europe (he has never gone lower than the Pyrennees). Besides literature, one of his favourite hobbies is to study the migration routes of water birds.

Linkola encourages the concept of an integrated nature of life, besides the intrinsic value of nature. For that he proposes a set of radical measures: to return to a smaller ecological niche, to reduce human population (licensing procreation), to abandon “the quasi religious” pursuit of economic growth implanting subsistence economy, and to abolish democracy and the distribution of energy (electricity, gas, oil, etc). To sum up, Linkola takes the idea of environmental balance as a base for the organisation of society (we should turn from anthropocentrism to eco-centrism).

Q. How is your health as you are already quite aged?

PL. Well, a good month ago I was young and strong and in excellent health, but then my back crumbled and I have just managed to get rid of the pain with strong painkillers. But I guess it will never become good again, apparently the discs have collapsed.

Q. When I said to some people in Helsinki that I would meet Pentti Linkola, all of them showed respect towards you, somehow, some people told me that you are like a hero for them. So are you conscious of that and how do you understand yourself, as a reference to something or not?

PL. Well yes, I am aware of some kind of fame, but most of all I am aware of the fact none of the things I have written about have become true, that I have really written in the wind in that way.

Q. Is it absolutely necessary to reduce the population? Is it not enough to change the way of living?

PL. Oh no it is not enough. This gigantic surplus, it is just too much. The living layer of the earth cannot endure this. You can see everywhere that drinking water is finishing and the climate is changing and sea-levels rise and drown land and the fish of the oceans are becoming extinct and it is all... after all you bump into this everywhere, the only problem is that there are too many people. There is nothing else, all other problems are a consequence of this.

Q. How would it be possible to reduce the population?

PL. Well first and foremost by regulating the birth rate globally. Among others one child per fertile woman – right away, today.

Q. How do you explain that the human worth is relative, that the more people the less is their human worth?

PL. Well I do not think it really needs any explanation, I think that it is clear that the worth of an individual is smaller when there are a lot of humans, than when there are few humans. Actually the value of the human is negative as long as there are too many people. And there are too many of them till the end, everything's end will come.

Q. If there were too much of some other species, their value would diminish too?

PL. Yes, but this is not the case. They belong in this system where they always face hunger, which defines the size of the population; after all they do not constantly swell like the homo sapiens, a billion after the billion.

Q. You propose a program that is almost like returning to the middle age way of living...

PL. Yes that is not so relevant, what would be important would be reducing the population. For example what would be essential is that if in some part of the world it is not possible to produce enough food for the whole population and there are people starving, there should be no food brought to them, doing that is extremely wrong, they should of course starve to death, this is axiomatic. If there is not enough food then you die of hunger, you should not bring there wheat and other foodstuffs from the other side of the world. The same thing goes if you run out of drinking water in some place. Water should not be brought there, like there are these crazy options to transport icebergs, they are towed to the Mediterranean sea and a part melts on the way and a part arrives and you get drinking water out of it. It is obvious that if you run out of drinking water then you must die of thirst. Both of thirst and hunger. And specifically die.

Q. But regarding this change of lifestyle, do you think people would change their lifestyle out of free will?

PL. Well we have had edification for I do not know how long already... But the reaction is that once

a person is aware of this avalanche of 'eco-catastrophes', they react so that they have three words: "as long as". As long as we still can we will still travel more and more to far-off countries and India and the Maldives and to the Dominican Republic and we will shop as long as it is possible, we will buy more cars and build larger apartments, in other words natural resources are constantly used up, or what is left of them. The result is contrary, very strongly contrary, because people react very strongly like this, they do not start to save but consume more and more because they know that this will not last long, one must go to town now. So in that sense you can say that if I have written against this world destruction, then I have had a negative impact because I have sped up destruction, just like everyone else, starting from Rachel Carson.

Q. Well do you regret then having written so much, if it has had such a negative impact?

PL. Well...no I cannot, a human writes and thinks how he thinks, he cannot do anything about it, I cannot do anything about it that I have written something like that, although with destructive consequences. I mean that I have sped up. Of course this end of the world, the disappearance of the human species that is, it is very close in any case, but this speeds it up still, that life has even less time when humans react this way.

Q. Why do you dislike democracy and what would you propose instead?

PL. Well I have written about this too, that any dictatorship is always better than democracy because people are kept under control then. A democracy where there is freedom of consumption and freedom of production, it is the worst thing possible. But the more draconian the dictatorship, the better, a person is captive like that and cannot cause so much destruction.

Q. What could we do to change, or at least to delay the collapse? Should we change the behaviour as an individual, should it be the community acting or do we need a more global approach?

PL. Well on community level of course. I mean there are these things such as the UN and international conferences in which you do not talk about any essential things, for example these climate conferences, if they do not start about cutting down the birth rate, then I do not follow them at all, I do not read about them, they do not matter, it is complete junk, one must begin with the birth-rate and nothing else is really needed for stopping the climate change and this extinction wave of animals and plants and fungi and all of this. It is the only thing. And what is related to that, like I already said, that in any case help from outside should not be brought to areas that are suffering from hunger, because these people are meant to die of hunger when there is not enough food, as what happens in the creation.

Q. So the agendas or meetings have no worth then if...

PL. Unless they do not touch this population question or take it as the only subject of discussion.

Q. It has to be the only one?

PL. Yes, because everything else depends of that. And such organisations like the Red Cross, they should be brought to an end, that once again, these earthquakes and volcano eruptions and such, which are nature's way to, you could say, put humans under control, that each person there in Japan is meant to die and Finland and other countries should not, the Red Cross should not go there to bring tents and medicine, I mean it is greatly irresponsible and terrible. It is really about not understanding what it is about, that the more Japanese that die the better, like everywhere else too, regardless of if you die of hunger or earthquakes or a tsunami or such. Because these aid measures of course reduce natural resources too, there is so much material and energy put into that.

Q. You have said that everything we have developed over the last 100 years should be destroyed. Was the 20th century that bad for the Earth?

PL. Well this has really been negative development since the stone-axe, but now it has sped up so immensely, for example the use of electricity, yes it is a huge catastrophe, just huge.

Q. What do you think was the worst invention in European culture?

PL. Well electricity and its appliances.

Q. Why do you think the Soviet Union disappeared and what was the mistake of the Soviet system?

PL. Well these leaders were not strong enough, they passed up the raging people and they did try to prevent these Western shopping paradises from being shown on TV but they did not succeed and the people saw this shine of plastic and neon-lights in other parts of the world, then it cracked, as long as they had a strong leadership it was a great system. And the people were under control. But when we talk about the individual's freedom and human rights, then the game is over. I have once seen in this forest conference, where they showed a column chart of the forest reserves in the Northern hemisphere; for Finland there was a tiny column, Sweden's was twice as high, then Germany, in Germany they discuss in a completely different manner, it was three times as high, Canada was this size (shows with his hands) and then the Soviet Union, it rose there high up, to the skies, because there they still had forest, now they are being gnawed by Japan on one side and Europe on the other, but at the time, during the Soviet Union it was brilliant how natural resources were not robbed, there was some robbing but what was great too was that the pollution landed into the factory towns where they belonged, whereas in the Western countries for example in Finland we have these long pipes due to which the pollution spreads all over to the country-side, it descends only there whereas the city where the factory is stays clean, which is of course as absurd as possible. Yes it was, with all its conditions and faults, the Soviet Union really was great compared to Western societies.

Q. But they were really exploiting natural resources and not respecting nature.

PL. To some extent, but like I said, they had 20-times more intact forest than on the whole of the Northern hemisphere. Well they did of course dig for oil and those oil pipes leaked and there were large areas like that, but it was small compared to the Western countries that have destroyed their whole surface area, their whole land, like Finland. But what I would like to say is that the individual's liberty is simply the liberty to destroy the world. It is the human's liberty and that is how he uses it.

Q. Then you believe it is legitimate to use violence to end democracy and establish a dictatorship?

PL. Yes. In short, by saving life. Because of the population explosion; these kinds of figures are impossible, there should be five billion people less and then there would be some hope of continuation. But in any case good concepts are discipline, forbiddance, force and oppression. Without them it is not possible to think about the human being, for long I mean, that life would continue on Earth.

Q. So in a way, the human being is always harmful then?

PL. It is of course, the evolution's basic misfortune is that this kind of species has evolved, one that destroys its own foundation, it is completely new, there have been these world-wide extinction-waves, but they have been caused by meteorites and such, but is this now the sixth I believe very rapid extinction-wave, which is due to one of evolution's species. It is just that within this species there are so many individuals, there is some dispersion, there are some who do not destroy, just like these cultures that stay within boundaries, and in all communities, for example in Finland there are a few of those grannies living in a cabin who have a small potato field and once every two weeks they walk or cycle to a village to buy a package of coffee. It is of course imported and should not be bought but this is still extremely minor what these kinds of people consume. They have a tiny cabin that is a hundred or two hundred years old, sometimes the roof is a bit repaired, but they do not consume much more natural resources than a bird couple. That nevertheless these people do exist as a small minority, that in that sense it is just as wrong that the world will be destroyed and they will be destroyed simultaneously, it is just as wrong that nature, animals, fungi and plants are destroyed because of human, a small part of the people are innocent or will die innocently.

Q. Why is immigration so harmful in your opinion?

PL. One should not come here where the individual burdens and consumes more. If a Finn moves from here to a clay cabin in Africa to a lower standard of living, that could well be argued, but not so that a poorer person comes to a richer country, which only means using up faster the natural resources.

Q. Is there still something you would like to add or comment on?

PL. Force and oppression are needed because life as such is a value, not only human life, all nature meaning animals and plants and fungi. And what is valuable in human life, in short it is science, art, sets of values and civilisation. But their volume too should not be too large, that regardless how precious the jewels of music are, we still have too many orchestras and too many composers and too many theatres and painters, that there should not be more of even them than what the planet can take, not even culture, although the value [of the human] is only in culture. That a normal human being, this kind of person who does not differ from an animal in any way, only if it produces food and distributes food to culture-people, there is its value, but it has no more intrinsic value than a chaffinch or a squirrel or a jaybird, a human is born, he develops, has offspring which then have offspring which then have offspring and so forth and like that his life is exactly the same as a squirrel's life, but culture is the thing that justifies, but no more than there really is space for, that not a single animal, fungus or plant species must diminish. That the monstrous human can take for the use of culture only a small part of the earth, most of the earth should naturally be untouched by humans.



*Pentti Linkola on lake Vanajavesi from where he earns his living.*

**IMAGES** 'Photos taken by F. Martínez & L. Vanamo in Sääksmäki (Fi) in March 2011'.

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