

Charles Darwin wrote, “It is not the strongest of the species that survive, not the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.”

Does that mean responsive to changes in our man-made world? The way we adapted to cell phones that also take pictures, and get and write email? Or how quickly we adapted to “text messaging,” immediately shortened to *texting*: U C I CN RITE. Do we still read books? We adapted to saving a million poor quality pictures because we can, and ignore portraits and paintings. Yes, we are good at adapting to the world we invented. Make money, be happy, don’t worry. All we care about is living in a nice house, nice neighborhood, nice dogs, nice nice ...

We adapted very easily to one car per person, and dryers, computers, and “news” from all over the world -- ignoring that what we think of as news is meant to be entertaining. Six seconds for a war, 12 seconds commercials, a minute about a country, “in depth” (the opinion of one woman) about the situation in Inner Mongolia. You may not know where to find it on a map, let alone on a globe, but it is somewhere out there. Snapshots of snapshots of the world. News?

I became clear about something important. *Adapting* to the man-made world requires changing the way my brain works, changing the way I see.

If all I know about nature is what is shown on TV, or in the National Geographic, or -- heaven forbid -- a Disney movie about cute animals, I only know colored, two dimensional moving pictures that someone has made and edited to make a point, to influence me. A long time ago I saw two National Geographic movies, a week apart. The first was called Predators, an hour and a half of chases ending in the tiger or lion or bear killing the prey and beginning to eat it before the prey was dead. The second week was a different editing of obviously the same miles of film, This one was called Prey, about how fast and clever the prey were, at the last minute just barely escaping and how a whole troop of zebras zigzagged over the field, to confuse the hyenas. From the same footage, edited to make the Wild simple. But that is very different from an actual experience of animals in the wild. An experience is first hand, has substance, depth, smells, reality. What I “learn” from a movie is second hand, flat. What modern Man knows about the planet is simplified.

But the planetary ecology is not simple. Nature is not divided in two categories, predators and prey. That message was a lie, misinformation. But millions of humans have been systematically “educated” to see an illusionary reality -- to which we then, of course, have to adapt.

My problem is that I must adapt to both of these realities. Much of the time I see nature around me, a rich, alive ecology of plants, animals, rocks, water, all interacting, growing, living, dying. I am intimately familiar with a few acres of my immediate environment that is alive to all my senses. The local ecology is an experience that makes me part of all there is (here).

Another reality is being forced to be aware of noisy traffic on our little road that was recently paved, moving much too fast for a narrow road with no shoulders. Suddenly we are no longer country but a suburb of the nearest (small) town, 15 miles away. A reality where I need money, a calendar, and clocks. The two realities seem to move farther apart every day.

For long periods of my life I have lived where there were two different cultures, having to speak two different languages to people who lived different lives, and saw the world differently. That is always a challenge, but I knew how to adapt to both cultures from my earliest childhood. My mother told me that when I learned to talk I knew which language to speak to people of different cultures. Very young children are open to learn anything. That leaning continues, even in adulthood.

But the two realities I must adapt to now are not different cultures. The difference is existential. The reality of the man-made world is rooted in a denial of the natural reality humans knew for the first hundred thousand years of our existence as a species. Now I feel as if living in the natural reality, trying to approach the wide awareness of original Man, is *illegal* in the reality of straight lines (that do not exist in nature), and steel, cement, and coal or oil to drive our elaborate needs.

The man-made world is rooted in the concept of control. Control of the land, domesticating or “genetically manipulating” plants, tightly controlling the very existence of animals, and finally ourselves. Earliest Man, I learned, laughed at the idea of control. They knew themselves part of the richness of their environment. Damaging that environment would be damaging oneself.

Control, at first, may have been in the hands of the strongest, most ruthless person(s).. In “civilized” countries control now is in the hands of those most ruthless in amassing money, with which they buy politicians who then control people and resources. That is how it is on paper. Our man-made world is full of dysfunctional connections and gruesome ideas promoted as solutions. We accept that we must control nature; we can and do destroy nature.

Global warming, climate change, is telling us that “In fighting nature man can win all battles except the last,” (Thor Heyerdahl). Global warming is not even a battle yet.

I don’t doubt that the financial/economical meltdown is real. Everybody agrees that something needs to be done. But the only thing those who are in charge can think of is restoring the financial/economical system to what it was before: making money with borrowed money, and always *growth*. More. More consumers, more producers, more money, more rich people and very many more poor people. More control.

Global warming is just as much of a reality. Climate change is a radical change of the global atmosphere, a system of constantly balancing an infinity of elements, conditions, and connections.

But money is a fiction, not connected to anything real: not gold, but “value” that, we now know, is what is yet another illusionary concept determined by evaluators who can be bought.

It seems obvious to me that the growing imbalance of the planetary ecology is more dangerous to our survival than the collapse of an imaginary financial system. Reducing the carbon dioxide, and other, more dangerous, gases spewing into the atmosphere can, -- perhaps, but doubtfully -- influence the *effects* of global warming, but not the process.

It’s a lot easier to hocuspocus billions of currency to effect a financial system of trillions, than it is to change the overblown human superstition about money as a necessity and a reward.

The new Administration has promised to stimulate and support new “green” industries: windmills, solar panels. and other magic when we invent it: *renewable* resources. Nice. But green economies based on *MORE* can never be a solution for global warming, climate change.

China, India, South Korea, Singapore, Brazil, and probably other countries are telling us, loud and clear, that they have just as much right to have all the goodies that Europe and America have: fast trains and tall buildings, cars, food imported from everywhere, using huge amounts of energy, however generated -- in short, *MORE*.

I’m fairly certain that the planet does not have the resources, space, or tolerance, for seven, eight, ten billion humans with ecological footprints as large as ours in “the West.”. For many ages Man’s footprint smoothly fit into the wholes we were a part of: in snow and ice, deserts, mountains. We knew ourselves part of the local whole. But, over the last few hundred years some of us have blown ourselves up to heroic sizes with enormous footprints. Making ourselves, in a few generations, a life style that Emperors even a hundred years ago could not have dreamt of. Our country (4% of all humans) is responsible for 25% of the poisons injected into the atmosphere. It is our footprint that is so huge that it is disturbing the planetary ecology.

Naturally, other people want what we have.

And just as naturally, the planetary ecology must restore a severely disturbed balance by tweaking a few parameters.

It is not the great majority of humans, living simple lives, that destroyed the atmosphere, but the small minority that held that Man owned the planet because he is so special, different from all life. Who imagined that Man could create himself and select what life he wants around him.

One thing leads to another. We are doing things to the planet that have consequences that have consequences that now threaten our survival. So, what is the smart thing to do?

We, so proud of our smarts, *do the same thing that caused the troubles* -- but smarter.

How about stop doing it? How about reducing our life style?

It seems clear that the financial meltdown tells us that we in the West cannot have our big footprint any more. Evidently we cannot hear that message.

The only sustainable future I can see is adapting to, not controlling the planet to satisfy our unquenchable hunger for *more*. We do not need three huge car manufacturers in the US even if they could design smaller and more economical cars. We need fewer cars. We do not want an expanding economy but a shrinking one; probably more local systems of providing for human needs on a more modest scale. We do not need a military-industrial system that has to make wars to make more money while policing (controlling) other people. We don’t need *any* army or navy or air force. Our bloated so-called health system serves perhaps half our population reasonably well, a quarter of the population partly, and another quarter not at all. It is by far the most expensive in the world because we insert between me and my doctor a crazy bureaucracy of insurance and other industries that have to make big profits.

We talk “sustainable” but do not know how to live sustainably.

If we want to survive as a species -- and that should be a prime motive -- we need to prepare ourselves for less, not more. Considerably less. Very much less if we are honest.

Who are we, homo sapiens sapiens (aware that we are aware)?

We believe illusions that are created in front of our eyes; educated to deny the real world. For at least thirty years we denied global warming. Now it is obviously too late to prevent climate change (do we know whether that is the only effect of global warming?) Too late probably to do much to prevent the changes scientists already know will happen, and ignorant of other changes that undoubtedly will emerge unexpectedly.

Brazil continues to destroy the Amazon rain forest (half of it already gone), even though we know that tropical rain forests are among the prime elements that maintain a moderate climate.

The most damaging factor are coal fired installations to produce electricity. China continues to add one every week.

Second worst perhaps is millions of airplanes. Of course airlines are in trouble financially, and planes are built that pollute slightly less. But we continue to think it a sinecure to fly halfway around the world for a vacation.

I don't know what the third and fourth worst polluters are, but it is safe to say that our life style is the cause of the damage done to the biosphere: our inefficient buildings, land smothered under concrete, the energy we need for the gadgets we think we cannot do without.

Is it so hard to accept that there is a limit to everything? There is no never-ending *MORE*.

Now add the fact that all rich nations and a few not so rich countries have nuclear arsenals. Knowing current human nature and the politics humans imagine themselves slaves to, it is inevitable that one of these days some country will make a nuclear “event.” Then, of course, another country will have to answer force with greater force.

How does one adapt to nuclear winter?

The only adaptation that makes any sense is adaptation to a much reduced standard of living. Now. Immediately. If we don't think “less” now, it is not difficult to foresee a world-wide meltdown of our man-made systems. Not only the financial-economical system, but the food system, the availability of water, scattered medical systems overwhelmed with world-wide epidemics. When the crunch comes, first will be massacres all over the globe because we have seen to it that everyone is fully armed with the best of modern weapons: the most lethal.

Survivors of Armageddon will be forced to fit into (adapt to) a world with no coal-fired energy plants, no airplanes, cars, trains, no dryers, no dishwashers -- no food, water.

The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth -- such as it is, after....