

I must not fear-- two

As most of us, I received many wishes for a good year, a happy year, a better year, let's hope... No, 'hope' is not in my vocabulary. Hoping seems a selfish concept. Who am I to wish a life, a world, a reality for my own particular taste? The world, nature, my 'fate' if you want, is as I find it, wherever and whenever I am.

I can see the trends as we all can. When I followed all that happened, and what did not happen, in Copenhagen last month, it became very clear that if humankind makes changes in how we live, and how we use and abuse this planet, we must do it down here locally. Not countries, not governments or armies, not treaties, not even the U.N. can (or is willing) stop or change a planetary process. Some people have put their *hope* on so-called geo-engineering, scientific ways to cool the atmosphere. That sentence needs a 'because': because they cannot imagine changing their own life style, doing without the conveniences and riches we think we cannot do without. Geo-engineering would allow us we think (hope) to continue to live our totally unsustainable lives. Some geo-engineers talk about injecting enormous amounts of sulfur dioxide (which volcanoes spew) high into the stratosphere where it is known to reflect sunlight and so cool our climate. When mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted it cooled the global atmosphere for a year.

I fear more meddling — even scientific meddling — into a process that involves the planetary ecology. We are in this 'trouble' because we humans have acted, credentialed scientists have acted, without knowing consequences. It is not scientists who should change the earth; it is we who must change our ideas, our thinking. Imagining that there is always more is, to put it plainly, stupid. Growth requires death. What we, humans, call a growing economy cannot be other than stealing, creating more and more inequality. Richer rich and poorer poor.

It is evident now that our governments, led by global corporations that exploit all the resources of the planet, are not going to lead the way. Our leaders, politicians, the Media, all have too much invested in the societies we have created to seriously consider radically simplifying the way we live today.

To me that means that climate change is not only happening but will accelerate. Global warming is a process that can, and very likely will, have 'tipping points', points in time when major change happens suddenly and irreversibly. All ecologies, and so too our planetary ecology, are balancing mechanisms but they do not work like scales. In the scales that blindfolded Justice holds each ounce you add makes one scale go down a little, the other scale up. Ecologies balance an enormous amount of aspects and energies constantly, but there are situations where the whole equation changes with often unexpected consequences. It is called positive feedback, the same ounce added suddenly opens a gate we did not know about. One of those tipping points might be the release of methane when permafrost melts. Methane in the atmosphere acts much as carbon dioxide, but more so.

Melting of permafrost is already happening in Siberia for instance. I've seen a clip where someone made a hole in the swampy soil and then lit the gas that erupted.

Why hope that nothing drastic will happen; why not face facts. Small changes will happen, large tipping point changes will almost certainly happen. Change happens all the time anyway.

Remember that we always knew how to adapt to very different environments. We must adapt locally because the effects of global warming, climate change, are local. Some areas will get hotter, others colder, some wetter, others dryer. We have always adapted to the earth as we found it. Perhaps the changes we have to adjust to will demand us to change very much in a short time. That is hard. But individually many of us have done that all our lives.

My life has been a series of major changes in how I lived, acted, thought, planned or let go. Each change is a challenge and many of us have done that all our lives. Many people all over the world have done this. Millions have moved physically, refugees and immigrants. Many of us have moved to different climates, adapted to different customs, languages, religions. All of us have changed our life style in the last ten years. Humans adjust. That is what we are good at. If/when the climate changes we will adjust. Some of us better than others; even that is what has always been.

Over the years, changing continents, climates, cultures, I have learned a few things. For instance to live *today* as it is *here*. Here, today's noon temperature is 29° C (84° F), a degree or so less than yesterday. The heat has become a hardship for me. I grew up in the tropics and have lived in Hawai'i half of my life, but now I have trouble adapting to hot. Old age probably. Or, is it that the wind comes from the 'wrong' direction? Hawai'i always had 'trade winds' that kept us cool. But now heat is what is. I don't want air conditioning, using more electricity. It may be unpleasant but I cannot change it; I adapt as long as I can.

Hoping that it will rain tomorrow won't bring rain. Yes, some say "I create my own reality." No, not true. That's why we have global warming because a few powerful people had ignorant ideas about using the land of the rain forests of this planet for their own enrichment—without thought or care of consequences to the life forms that lived in those forests, nor of the effect such enormous eradication might have on the planet as a whole. The reality man is so proud he created is utterly unsustainable.

Before we invented civilization we adapted to the environment as we found it where we were. Beautiful to our eyes wherever we were. Now we imagine ourselves so big, important, powerful, that we adapt nature to our ever wilder wants. That turned out to be dangerous interference in the planetary ecology.

Nature, the planet, is now talking back.

We must listen and humbly adapt as we always have...

robert wolff, 8 january 2010