

CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 2

Guess Who's Driving the Evolution Bus?

In 1963 the writer Ken Kesey, with his earnings from his very successful novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, bought a bus. He invited a group of friends (they called themselves "The Merry Pranksters") to go on a trip to explore the world. But it wasn't an outer world of land or territory. It was an acid-fueled inner world to explore and share their LSD experiences.

I thought of this trip while recently reading an article¹ by [Brian Swimme on evolution](#) (My mind takes its own strange trips.) Swimme, a mathematical cosmologist, pointed out that the Anthropocene Age, now replacing the Cenozoic Age that began sixty-five million years ago with the extinction of the dinosaurs, was forcing us to re-think our whole understanding of evolution.

We came into existence as a species 2.6 million years ago and emerged through the process of evolution. But we didn't think much about the process. It was just something "out there".

To use our analogy, we were passengers riding along on the evolution bus looking out the window. But with the coming of the Anthropocene we are no longer just passengers. Because of our superior consciousness and our highly successful, science, systems and technologies we have been shaping not only our own future but the future of Earth. We've been driving the bus and determining where we are going and how we are going to get there.

Our life depends upon Earth. So how are we doing so far?

Not very well when we see the damage done to Earth's ecosystems, the impacts of climate change, the loss of habitats, the destruction of species, the poisoning of oceans and rivers, the rapid over-population... to name just a few. I suspect that many of us don't like what we are seeing. So what do we do about it?

First we must begin by realizing evolution has already been "taken over" by a relatively small group of individuals. They don't think of themselves as involved in evolution but they do think of themselves as controlling the future of Earth's resources. I'm talking about some powerful and wealthy members of large corporations, especially resource

¹ "Cosmic Directionality and The Wisdom Of Science" in *Science and Religion in Search of Cosmic Purpose*, ed John F. Haught, Georgetown University Press 2000 p.91-104

development corporations, supported by governments. Much of our first task as conscientious evolutionists is to undo the damage that is being done,

Second, we must learn how to drive the bus. We can never go back to a time when we take our hand off the wheel and let Earth drive the bus by itself. It is too late for that. We must have the courage to work with Earth in a way that is mutually enhancing. We are earthlings. Our future is directly related to Earth's future. This task will be difficult. Our species has never been down this road before and there are no road maps. We know much more about what we have to stop doing than what have to start doing.

Third, we can't just walk away from what exists without alternatives and transitions. I'm speaking about triage work. We must save what can be useful for our evolutionary task and get rid of what is causing the damages. I'm speaking especially about developing new living economic and political systems that can exist and thrive within a living Earth. Triage work is always difficult because of our strong emotional attachments. But we must reject those positions like neoliberalism which demand that business and corporations make a two or three percent profit on an annual basis.

Fourth, we must recognize that we are being called to this mission. To use a Biblical term that has been borrowed by some management gurus, we must experience a *metanoia* (a transliteration of a Greek word that that means transformative change of mind and heart, an inner spiritual conversion, a reformation).

Fifth we must recognize that our mission and its challenges are for the long haul. I believe the best way to develop a sustainable and mutually enhancing relationship between our species and Earth is to think in terms of family and community cultures that will last for generations.

To conclude, we are facing a challenge the likes of which we have never dealt with before. Often we will not know what to do. It will be a trial and error process, but we must accept the challenge.

As Ken Kesey put it years ago, "You are either on the bus or you are off the bus."

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