







CHAPTER 37

CRITICAL THINKING, THE COMMON GOOD, AND THE NEW NORMAL GLOBAL CLIMATE

 ***“CRITICAL THINKING IS A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS FOR SEPARATING TRUTH FROM FICTION. IT PROVIDES TOOLS OF THOUGHT FOR CARVING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE FLOOD OF INFORMATION THAT YOU FACE EACH AND EVERY DAY. IT DOES BEAR MANY RESEMBLANCES TO THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD, BUT IT IS MORE APPLICABLE TO THE VAGUE AND INCOMPLETE INFORMATION ONE FACES IN DAILY LIFE.”¹***


 **“THE GREAT CRISIS AMONG US IS THE CRISIS OF THE ‘COMMON GOOD,’ THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY THAT BINDS ALL IN A COMMON DESTINY — HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS, THE RICH AND THE POOR. WE FACE A CRISIS ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD BECAUSE THERE ARE POWERFUL FORCES AT WORK AMONG US TO RESIST THE COMMON GOOD, TO VIOLATE COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY, AND TO DENY A COMMON DESTINY.”²**


-  Discussion of the common good is usually centered on one species — *Homo sapiens*.
-  All life on Earth is intimately associated with the present Biosphere and dependent upon it.
-  Therefore, nurturing the present Biosphere serves the common good for the millions of species with which *Homo sapiens* shares the planet.




BRACE YOURSELF — THAT WEIRD WEATHER YOU HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING, READING ABOUT, OR VIEWING ON TELEVISION “... WILL BECOME THE ‘NEW NORMAL’ FOR MOST OF THE COMING CENTURY.”³

- 🌍 If anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase at present rates (or even if they stabilize at present rates), climate change will almost certainly continue.
- 🌍 Even at present levels, serious damage is being done to the US infrastructure. *“From highways in Texas to nuclear power plants in Illinois, the concrete, steel sophisticated engineering that undergird[s] the nation’s infrastructure are being taxed to worrisome degrees by heat, drought and vicious storms.”⁴*
- 🌍 How will this damage be repaired on a continuing basis?

 **“THOMAS PAINE ACTUALLY DESCRIBED TODAY’S SITUATION [CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS] VERY WELL. AS AMERICA FOUGHT FOR ITS INDEPENDENCE, HE SAID: ‘IT IS AN AFFRONT TO TREAT FALSEHOOD WITH COMPLAISANCE.’ YET WHEN IT COMES TO THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, THE FALSEHOOD OF TODAY’S NAYSAYERS IS ONLY MATCHED BY THE COMPLACENCY OF OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM.”⁵**


 ***“Yet today, the naysayers escape all accountability to the truth. The media hardly murmurs when a candidate for President of the United States in 2012 can walk away from previously held positions to announce that the evidence is not yet there about the impact of greenhouse gases on climate.”⁵***

 **Such action is not even a gesture toward critical thinking or the common good.**





**“...TRULY, SCIENCE IS THE
THREAD THAT WEAVES US ALL
INTO THE FABRIC OF REALITY.”⁶**

- The rejection of science is a major factor in the denial of climate change and the attacks on scientists and their evidence — humans are, because of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, causing Earth’s climate to change.
- *“The consequence of this inattention [to climate change] is an irreversible commitment to dangerous climate change.”⁷*
- *“... even if greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere could be held steady at 2005 levels, scientists . . . have calculated that global temperature would rise by 2.4 degrees Celsius.”⁷*
- A 2.0 degree Celsius increase in global mean surface temperature is *“the threshold between ‘dangerous’ and ‘extremely dangerous’ climate change.”⁸*


 **NO HUMAN LAWS CAN NEGATE OR REPLACE THE UNIVERSAL LAWS OF PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY, AND BIOLOGY. NOR IS IT POSSIBLE TO SUPPRESS SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE IN A FREE SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY ONE WITH FREE AND OPEN NEWS MEDIA.**

- 🌐 *“A new law in North Carolina will ban the state from basing coastal policies on the latest scientific predictions of how much sea level will rise, prompting environmentalists to accuse the state of disrespecting climate science.”⁹*
- 🌐 *“If your science gives you a result you don’t like, pass a law saying the result is illegal. Problem solved.”¹⁰*
- 🌐 *“. . . a plank from the 2012 platform of the Republican Party of Texas . . . reads as follows: ‘We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (values clarification), critical thinking skills and similar programs that are simply a relabeling of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (mastery learning) which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student’s fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.’”¹¹*




 **“CLIMATE CHANGE IS STARING US IN THE FACE. THE SCIENCE IS CLEAR, AND THE NEED TO REDUCE PLANET-WARMING EMISSIONS HAS GROWN URGENT. SO WHY, COLLECTIVELY, ARE WE DOING SO LITTLE ABOUT IT?”¹²**

 ***“We have trouble imagining a future drastically different from the present. We block out complex problems that lack simple solutions. We dislike delayed benefits and so are reluctant to sacrifice today for future gains. And we find it harder to confront problems that creep upon us than emergencies that hit quickly.”¹²***




 **Worst of all, humanity acts as if it were immune to nature’s universal laws.**


 **Even catastrophes (e.g., Fukushima) do not produce a wake-up call.**



THE FATE OF THE EVER INCREASING NUMBERS OF HUMANS WILL BE MISERY UNTIL MORE CRITICAL THINKING ARISES ON POPULATION/CONSUMPTION/RESOURCE REGENERATION.

-  **A free, open, and civil discussion of these critical, interrelated issues is, at present, almost impossible to achieve.**
-  **Non-critical thinkers take an egotistical view of the world: (1) they take their facts as the only relevant ones, (2) they take their own perspective as the only sensible one, (3) they take their goal as the only valid one (http://www.criticalreading.com/critical_thinking.htm).**
-  **Exponential human population growth cannot continue on a finite planet with finite resources. Critical thinking requires that this fact be acknowledged.**

INACTION ON THE POPULATION/CONSUMPTION/ RESOURCES PROBLEM ENSURES MORE MISERY, STARVATION, DISEASE, AND DEATH.

-  **Inaction does not serve the common good.**
-  **Inaction means natural laws will reduce the human population to or below Earth's carrying capacity.**
-  **Climate change and exponential human population growth are interactive crises.**

 **FOR ANYONE WHO DECIDES TO
BECOME INVOLVED IN THE
POPULATION/CONSUMPTION/RESOURCES
CRISIS, TWO RECENT PUBLICATIONS
ARE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED.**

-  **Paul and Anne Ehrlich¹³ provide a concise, readable overview of the complex population/consumption/resources problem. Both ecologists have been involved in global population issues since Paul Ehrlich authored *The Population Bomb* in 1968.**
-  **The article “Climate Change and Moral Judgment”¹⁴ discusses the six psychological challenges posed by climate change to the human, moral judgment system.**

Acknowledgments. I am indebted to Darla Donald for transcribing the handwritten draft and for editorial assistance in preparation for publication and to Paul Ehrlich, Paula Kullberg, and Karen Cairns for calling useful references to my attention.

References

- ¹ Wiggins, A. Undated. What is critical thinking? <http://dusk.org/adam/criticalthinking/whatis.php>.
- ² Brueggemann, W. 2010. *A Journey to the Common Good*. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, USA.
- ³ ScienceDaily. 2012. Chronic 2000-2004 drought, worst in 800 years, may be the “new normal.” 29Jul <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/07/120729142137.htm>.
- ⁴ Wald, M. L. and J. Schwartz. 2012. Weather extremes leave parts of U.S. grid buckling. New York Times 25Jul <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/26/us/rise-in-weather-extremes-threatens-infrastructure.html>.
- ⁵ Kerry, J. 2012. On eve of Rio + 20, an honest assessment of climate change. 19Jun <http://www.kerry.senate.gov/press/release/?id=99bb3f7a-cf20-4c1d-ae59-b9baedda1cb1>.
- ⁶ Greene, B. 2003. *The Elegant Universe*. Vintage Books, Random House, Inc., New York, NY, p. xi.
- ⁷ Brulle, R. J. 2012. Conspiracy of silence: the irresponsible politics of climate change. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 31Jul <http://thebulletin.org/web-edition/op-eds/conspiracy-of-silence-the-irresponsible-politics-of-climate-change>.
- ⁸ Anderson, K. and A. Bows. 2011. Beyond “dangerous” climate change: emission scenario for a new world. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 369:20-44.
- ⁹ Harish, A. 2012. New law in North Carolina bans latest scientific predictions of sea-level rise. ABC News 2Aug <http://news.yahoo.com/law-north-carolina-10bans-latest-scientific-predictions-sea-165416121--abc-news-topstories.html.10>
- ¹⁰ Colbert , S. 2012 as quoted in A. Harish, New law in North Carolina bans latest scientific predictions of sea-level rise. ABC News 2Aug <http://news.yahoo.com/law-north-carolina-10bans-latest-scientific-predictions-sea-165416121--abc-news-topstories.html.10>
- ¹¹ Pitts, J., Jr. 2012. Texas GOP wages warn on thinking. McClatchy Newspapers 23Jul <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2012/07/22/156979/commentary-texas-gop-wages-war.html>.
- ¹² Gardiner, B. 2012. We’re all climate-change idiots. New York Times 21Jul <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/opinion/sunday/were-all-climate-change-idiots.html>.
- ¹³ Ehrlich, P. R. and A. H. Ehrlich. 2012. Solving the human predicament. *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 69(4):557-565.
- ¹⁴ Markowitz, E. M. and A. F. Shariff. 2012. Climate change and moral judgment,” *Nature Climate Change* 2:243-247.