

Climate Change: Is Gaia mad at us?

By Jeff Salzman

Hey folks and welcome to the Daily Evolver. It's July 12th, 2013 and today I want to talk about climate change, which is a topic that causes a lot of consternation and even alarm among, at least the progressive segments of society, including a lot of integralists.

What is most up in the news these days, at least in the States on this topic, is Obama's speech at Georgetown a couple of weeks ago, a major policy address on climate change, and also his impending decision on the Keystone Pipeline. Which we will get to in a minute. But before we do I want to just do what we always do in integral and contextualize this story in a bigger picture.

That bigger picture is just the relationships that human beings have with nature and have always had with nature since the beginning of human kind in a series of evolutionary stages. Each of which brings forth new layers of complexity and ever increasing impact of humanity, and each has a particular quality and flavor that lead us to where we are today, where we find ourselves today in human relationship to nature.

Now one of the fundamental principles of integral theory of course is that evolution is happening in all three major dimensions of life, first person, second person, and third person. First person is "me", "myself" my own interior consciousness. Second person is "we" the space between us and amongst us, our cultures which also evolve. And then the third dimension is the great "it" the great natural world the great chain of being out of which we arise. And that is an important point because we are nature, we are the latest expression of nature, we are essentially, and this is the big evolutionary step, we are nature becoming conscious of itself. And it is this self-consciousness that separates us from the animal kingdom and sets us off on this great human adventure. Which moves us into the first stage of development called archaic. And this is really early human beings where there is a new level of thinking, of self awareness, of tool making, of being able to think about time and the future but still very very instinctual and infused with nature. As for our impact on

the environment, it was pretty minimal because we had no means, no tools, we were hunters and gatherers. But being human we did what we could to optimize our circumstances even instinctually, the search for shelter, reproduction and food and the technologies that we had available were mainly interior ones. That is working with the spirit world and placating the evil spirits and petitioning the good ones. Now does this work? Of course in modern times we sort of scoff and look at this as a childish, primitive belief but in integral we actually want to take it seriously and rehabilitate what is right and good and true about having a spiritual relationship with nature. We will get to that in a minuet but to just look at the continuing trajectory of human evolution we move from hunter gather subsistence to horticulture, which is using a digging stick, to agriculture, which is using beasts of burden and this is the move up the altitudes of development from infrared to magenta to red and in each case there is an increasing impact of humanity on the environment. Like early humans we seek to maximize, that is not new, but now we have tools to do it. The results can be quite dramatic and the development of the Americas, North and South America is a great lesson here.

Today archaeologists talk about the pristine myth, the idea that Native Americans lived here for maybe 12,000 years, they lived in small isolated groups and had little environmental impact, so that when the Europeans arrived in 1400's the place was mostly wilderness. The new thinking and isn't it always the case, but the new thinking here in archeology is that first of all the Indians were here for a lot longer, there were also more of them than we originally thought and by that I mean 20 million plus. And that they had dominated their environment in very important ways. The Spanish talked about the beautiful Aztec cities with wide boulevards and sewage and networks of canals to farm fish, there are theories that large parts of the Amazon itself were cultivated by early Americans. There are millions of acres of tresses throughout the Andes Mountains. In North America the mid western prairie was created and maintained by fire. Native Americans had basically turned this land into vast buffalo farms. White settlers would take boats up the river to watch the annual fall burnings like we would watch fireworks. And indeed since those times forest has re-established itself in Wisconsin and Nebraska and even Texas and this works well until it doesn't. And humanity eventually runs into some limits whether it

is that they have killed off all of the large mammals in a particular ecosystem, or as in the case of Easter Island, a very limited ecosystem they basically used up everything. Which was chronicled in Jared Diamond's great book called *Collapse*. And this is a basic component of humanity's relationship to nature, is running into limits.

This came home to me last year when I visited Williamsburg, Virginia the old colonial town and it's beautiful of course, its Virginia its green there are beautiful old trees everywhere, old chestnut trees, but this wasn't always the case. Back in the late 1700's when some much America history was being made there were no trees, it was of great consternation to the community that all of the trees had been cut down for fire wood, in fact they had all been cut down within fifty miles of the city. At the same time the population of whales in the Atlantic had been decimated because whales provided whale oil, which is what people burned in their lamps. The whalers were going around South America into the Pacific to find whales at that time. And again this is the story of humanity you see it throughout the globe. Great Britain was largely deforested at this stage of development and has re-forested. And so human beings continue to impact nature, to optimize their circumstances to the best of their technological abilities. And then we reach modernity. And modernity of course created an exponential increase in human beings technological ability to impact their environment, so we are no longer talking about horses but horsepower, and my little prius has 162 of them which is just amazing to me. But we are talking orders of magnitude in life span, which has tripled. Regarding food production or calories, in most countries the problem is there are too many of them. Cities, skyscrapers, they endorse themselves, just the idea that we have some freedom from the elements, from predators from lice. But when we think about the great leaps forward of modernity we have to keep in mind that there are a billion or so people on the planet who have not reached modernity. And they're going to want to. Why? Because people want to optimize their circumstances. And as we have seen that works until one runs up against limits. And that is what is happening. One of the successes of modernity is that it becomes worldcentric. We can actually see the planet, we can see, particularly in the exterior, how to mine bauxite in Argentina and rare earth minerals in china and bring them all together to create our

high tech equipment, and manufacture it here and ship it there and it's a complex system that is spectacularly productive and capable of creating immense wealth, all over the globe, wherever modernity is installed. But it also has consequences of befouling the nest.

I remember growing up in the '70's in the valley of western Pennsylvania and nobody ever thought about swimming in the rivers, you just didn't do it, you didn't even touch river water, you didn't think of it being healthy, it wasn't. I remember being in Youngstown Ohio in the late '70's in a basement apartment having just graduated from college and every morning around four or five AM they would release the cook ovens, they would open these great big ovens in the steel mills of Youngstown and a cloud of sulfur would crawl along the landscape about two to three feet thick and pour into my basement window and I would have to get up and close it, I could literally see it. And this was happening all over the country, the LA smog the Denver brown cloud and indeed all over the modern world and continues to as long as modernity reigns supreme. Modernity is about growth, about more, about better, and through the problems caused by its very success and indeed excesses it calls forth the next stage of human development, which is post-modernity, or the green altitude.

Now like all new stages of development, green brought in radically new ways of thinking: the sexual revolution, feminism, pluralism and indeed ecology, the idea of creating a sustainable world because we see global limits to growth. Remember modernity is about growth, the big move into green, to post-modernity is the move from growth to sustainability. And we saw this first brought into America through a most unlikely source, the republicans, Teddy Roosevelt who started the national park system. Currently a third of the United States is owned by the federal government and of course there is the great green heros Richard Nixon who signed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

And so green consciousness, a sustainability consciousness, uses tools to solve the problems of modernity and indeed the air and the rivers in most of the developed world are cleaner then they were thirty or forty years ago. And we see this pattern of the emergence of green ecology wherever modernity is mature. People living

modern lives whether it's in Mexico City or Rio De Janeiro or Shanghai they don't want to wear face masks, they don't want to keep their kids in doors, they want to live in a good clean, healthy world. And we can see this as the first stage of environmentalism, the moves to just stop befouling the nest.

Now as green continues to emerge and a worldcentric view continues to come online the nest is just seen as ever bigger until eventually we see that the whole world is our home. And we begin to see the impacts of human development on the global system itself. So not it's not just about a particular polluted river or city but a polluted planet and we have about 90% consensus among scientist that because of the burning of fossil fuels and the release of green house gasses into the environment that we an increase in temperature over the years of a degree and a half Fahrenheit, which has caused all sorts of changes and reeked havoc. And that we have an ocean that is increasing, and has increased seven to eight inches over the last eight years as well. So this is where we are, a certain consensus of progressive elites throughout the world that is a green sensibility of environmental awareness and environmental action that is fueled and really brought to clarity by modern technology. And this is the sweet spot that Obama was trying to reach in his speech and what he did was he, in his speech that Al Gore said was the best address on climate by any president ever, so that is high praise from Al, but Obama made a promise to use executive authority to mandate reductions in carbon emissions from the power plants particularly coal, to reduce fluorocarbons and methane, to increase funding to help cities and states adapt to sea level changes and more extreme weather, to make buildings more efficient, to open US lands to alternative energy projects and to fund those projects. So you know good policies in that sweet spot of modern to post-modern. The actually policies can be seen as a continuation of what has been evolving already in the lower right, the world of technology. And that is we have been getting more efficient, cars are more efficient, buildings are more efficient, carbon dioxide emissions are down, currently down to 1992 levels and of all new energy that is coming online half of it is solar or wind, so we are moving and this speech moves us further. What is remarkable is that Obama is promising to do all of these things by executive action instead of by legislation because there is no chance that virtually any of this could be passed by congress at this stage.

What's changed from the days when republicans, the days of Richard Nixon when republicans were environmentalists is that virtually no republicans are now or certainly would vote for environmental legislation. And indeed most of the country is different to that. Global warming, climate change is low on the list of priorities of the American people; it's as simple as that. In terms of the last election, Obama and Romney where there was a clear choice I think it was six, seven, eight on the list of things that people voted about. Now I see two reasons for this, one is that the first stage of the environmentalism is the success, we have cleaned up so much, people don't perceive air and water pollution in the same way that we did in the '50's, and '60's, and '70's. As for the global environmental problems, first of all for amber traditionalists, that are conservative republicans, they are not worldcentric yet. So they literally don't see them. In fact they see these global institutions such as the UN or any kind of treaty on carbon reduction as being a means of what the rest of the world, the lesser nations are doing to bring out great and obviously superior nation down a peg. Now orange modernists are an evolutionary stage up from this, there are some worldcentric so they see the problems but they just think that it's futile that there is another seven billion people out there who want the goodies that we have and they are going to get them sooner or later. Also orange modernists want to continue to have the goodies themselves, in fact they want more, more square footage, more money, more travel, more horsepower, whatever it might be, and they have no interest in constraining their lifestyle and arguments of small is beautiful really have not currency at this stage of the game. It's only when people get to the green altitude, post modern consciousness that they become deeply worldcentric and begin to see and feel into a care deeply about these global problems such as Co2 and warming and rising sea levels and so forth.

Now the problem for green is that amber traditionalists and orange modernists together make up about 70% of the population. So from that perspective the congress is doing the will of the people, which of course always galls greens' liver. And we can also see that Obama is doing his job as the national leader to make as big of tent as possible for his orange/green agenda to bring as many modernists as possible while he also lays out policies that please his green liberal base. Especially in preparation for what I think he is about to do, which is approve the Keystone

pipeline which will not please his base.

So welcome to democracy. Again the current field is populated by three stages of development, amber traditionalists who oppose any legislation on climate change, orange modernists who could be convinced but are basically indifferent or even resigned and green post modernists who are passionately committed to the cause and see it as such. Evolutionarily they are right on schedule as is the conflict they are having and even the animosity that they feel for each other. They don't trust each other's agendas; they don't trust each other's motives or sincerity. And I want to look at that for a minute.

Now we all know what liberals secretly think of conservatives and actually not so secretly in the salons of Boulder and the 415, using quadrant theory conservatives are, in the upper left, stupid, in the upper right, fat, in the lower left they are living in an echo chamber where no new ideas ever get in, and in the lower right it's all conceived of and underwritten by the oil companies and Koch brothers. Now as integralists most of us can relate to this because we ourselves are waste deep in green because green is the stage of development out of which integral consciousness arises. But being integralists we also see that the conservative point of view is better explained as being a predictable worldview of a particular stage of development, which sees the world as a battle between good and evil. Our country is being besieged by our enemies, the devil, and protected and favored by almighty God. And as long as people's consciousness is structured that way we will have conservatives whether or not we have the Koch brothers.

So ok, there is a lot to criticize about amber and orange, but let's look at green. That is more interesting to us integralists and more fruitful because again this is where most of us live a lot of the time. Like all first tier memes green has a particular vision of the world and of the way the world should be. And for green it's a sustainable world, a world where all living things have their place, people live in harmony, it's a beautiful vision. Local supply chains and happy children and people eating well and not being too fat and nobody being too rich and nobody being too poor and again essentially a paradise. Every first tier meme has some vision of paradise. For orange it's a world where everyone is free to pursue their own rational

self interests, for amber it's when everyone accepts Jesus Christ. For tribal it's when my tribe prevails and the land flows with milk and honey. So every first tier meme has a paradise story and a reason why we aren't there and who is to blame. So this vision of the world really deeply informs greens environmental views. I talked about phase one environmentalism, that is cleaning up the river making the air breathable. There is a phase two of environmentalism, which is the really committed green environmentalism which is a means to creating this sustainable egalitarian world. Now note that this vision is not shared by amber. For amber any kind of a one world situation is a kin to supping with the devil they don't want to hear it. For modernists it just seems woolly and wild and impractical and if nothing else a lot of government. And modernists have an allergy to government -- they are about freedom. But greens themselves actually have a problem with their own vision as well in that they don't really know quite how to get there. Not having an evolutionary view, and this is characteristic of the green meme is that they have allergies to the idea of progress, especially some kind of a metaphysical movement towards progress in the world. So if this is how you see things the only way forward is some version of going backwards to more pre-modern times. Green tends to romanticize earlier times in history and blames the rise of corporate greed and the corporate machine for wrenching us from the paradise of pre-modern existence. And this is where we can start to see some of the distinctions in green that Ken Wilber calls good green vs. mean green.

Every first tier stage of development thinks that their view is the only correct view and that other views are not only wrong but bad and evil and must be stopped. So the great story of climate crisis as told by green quite apart from the actual accuracy of it, and I want to stress that, but quite apart from the accuracy it has a tremendous religious potency and resonance. Humanity was in paradise, humanity fell from paradise, and we were cast out because of an infraction against the divine, in this case Gaia, Mother Nature. And furthermore we are headed to a great apocalypse a great flood or natural disaster. But there is a possibility of salvation through right thinking and right action and self-sacrifice and ensuing self interest and pleasure, it's essentially a secular version of Calvinism. It uses science and we can make a distinction here between hard sciences a predictive science. And hard science is like

for instance we know that the globe has warmed in the last 200 years and those two thirds of it have been since 1980. These are incontrovertible facts. We had thermometers then, we thermometers now. Same is true with how the sea levels have risen.

And then there is predictive science, which is where we feed assumptions into computer models that predict what is going to happen, or might happen or the odds of things happening. These are also tremendously valuable and we use predictive science in all sorts of ways. To predict terror activities this is part of what is going on with the privacy issues right now, and the data mining going on in the government right now -- this is predictive science. It's pretty effective. We use it to predict and prevent epidemics, for logistics, all sorts of things. And as computers continue to create computers that are exponentially more powerful, predictive science will get better and better. But they are not facts. We cannot say what is going to happen with anywhere near the predictability with what we can say has happened in terms of hard measurements.

For instance in the last fifteen years there has been no warming of surface temperatures. This is a fact that has become clear that has violated most computer models that showed temperatures rising pretty much in lock step with carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide has risen faster than expected but temperatures have not. Now there are theories that say that the heat is trapped in the deep ocean and still very much in the system and will come back to bite us and we will see but the point is that hard science, the measurement of the actual surface temperatures in the last fifteen years have defied the predictive science.

So as integralists I want to take these predictive models seriously but I also want to see how they serve the apocalyptic impulse. And in my lifetime alone it's been one apocalypse after another, none of which happened. Starting with the killer bees. I remember laying awake in the '70's thinking about the killer bees, and the population bomb and the swine flu and Y2K that was the biggest nothing of all and it was hysteria and scientists and technologists and experts and everybody predicting the end of civilization. I almost buried a generator in my back yard and bought a gun because of the imminent collapse of society because of the extra zero

in the computer codes for the year 2000. And in the climate world there is no shortage of doomsday scenarios; *Rolling Stone* is about to come out with an article called “American Atlantis” which is about how Miami will be under 20 feet of water in the next fifty years, scientists say. There are whole industries of books on the coming of crisis and collapse. I was on one website the other day of one of the writers who was bold enough to predict that “your children won’t live to see middle age” and of course as is true of any first tier theology it brooks no dissent or doubt. If you express any you are a heretic of one form or the other. You are a denier like a holocaust denier or some sort of corporate dupe and this mean green meme also shows a lot of antipathy for human ingenuity and they really don’t want to hear about any possible technological solutions such as carbon sequestration or safer nukes or putting sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere to reduce these kind of geo-engineering technologies that a lot of really smart people are working on and people like Bill Gates are funding.

But mean green isn’t really interested in technologies that help modernity survive. They are more interested in the real phase two of environmentalism which is to create their beautiful egalitarian world and to their credit a lot of them are very candid about it. Paul Gilding has a new book out called *The Great Disruption: Why the climate crisis will bring on the end of shopping and the birth of a new world*. I saw an OP-ED in The New York Times by Clive Hamilton who is a leading environmentalist and commentator in global warming and in his New York Times column he warned against the dangers of geoengineering and summed up his article by saying “in the end how we think about geoengineering depends on how we understand climate disruption, if our failure to cut emissions is the result of the power of corporate interests the fetish for economic growth and the comfortable conservatism of a consumer society then resorting to climate engineering allows us to avoid facing up to social dysfunction.” So his thesis is clear that corporate interests, economic growth, and the comfortable conservatism of a consumer society are social dysfunctions and any solution that merely solves the global warming problem is not going to solve these problems. Which are really what is at stake for greens.

Now I am actually sympathetic to this as somebody who is about 50% green on a

good day I get that mindless growth cannot continue and that we have to create a sustainable world. But you can sure see why amber traditionalists and orange modernists will never sign on to this and this is why the environmental movement has marginalized itself into the 30% of the modernist culture. Traditionalists and modernists can sign onto phase one of the environmental movement, clean up the rivers, but phase two create a new beautiful egalitarian world especially when it smacks of anti-modernism and an agenda to dismantle the technologies that have brought us the life styles that those of us in the developed world at least have become quite accustomed to.

Ok so this is the lay of the land in the States at least regarding the cultural response to climate change. We have the amber traditionalists, the orange modernists, and the green postmodernists all in the arena contending for their worldview. So what is an integralists to do? Integral being of course the stage of consciousness that is emerging out of post-modernity. Now I don't claim that I have *the* integral view of the climate debate but I have *an* integral view and it starts with a basic friendliness to the system as it is arising. Again amber, orange, and green get to be here they all have a piece of the truth and the engine of evolution that is actually going to move us forward is the tension and conflict among them.

Now I will admit I get extra annoyed by mean green because as an integralists I am pushing off of green just as green pushed off of orange and orange pushed off of amber, we are suppose to be mad at the stage that we are emerging out of. But I also see that all of these people, every voice needs to be in the system for the system to naturally emerge into new and better structures. As for the science I am in. clearly the earth is warming, the seas are rising and I hear this quoted often 85-90% of climate scientists agree that this is an anthropogenic warming, that is its caused by human activity, mainly the burning of fossil fuels. I buy that. I also have to say I am interested in what the other 10-15% of scientists say, the skeptics and no don't necessarily think that they are people of bad faith. And I trust science over time, it is a relentless truth machine and we will know more in a year than we know now and more in five years. I also believe in evolution and that there are new structures of thinking and acting and technologies that are potential game changers that are unpredictable from the linear extrapolation of current conditions. It's like the

population bomb. Yes populations increase exponentially until people hit modernity, at which time they begin to reproduce at roughly two children per couple, replacement levels, and at post-modernity they reproduce at less than replacement levels. So we are working our way and living our way into a smaller population and we will have trouble in the mean time.

I also trust human ingenuity and adaptability. People are not frogs in a heating barrel. We are not going to sit in Miami and let the water come up over our nose. As for policies I think that Obama who is as integral as anybody I know, in my opinion, has hit it pretty much right spot on, his all of the above strategy of cutting emissions and increasing funding for alternative fuel seems to be a good place to be. I also support a carbon tax for the simple reason that if the Sierra Club and Tom Friedman and the *Economist* magazine are all supporting it then it's got to be a good idea. I am also very interested and naturally sympathetic to geoengineering projects and research. I think that just as human beings have created the indoors this amazing environment where we can live in air-conditioned and heated comfort I don't think that it's unreasonable to think that in 100 years or 200 years that human beings will be affectively influencing the global environment. And this is a good thing not just because of carbon emissions and global warming but because of changes in the sun and natural conditions.

And finally I think there is a more spiritual, turquoise position that integralists can take and that is that we just don't know what is going to happen. Don't-know mind is actually a spiritual achievement, and all first tier memes want to clench around a story of what is going on and what is happening and what is threatening us and what we have to do and what we did wrong, and this shouldn't be happening. From an integral point of view we realize that this should be happening that human beings are a part of nature, that we are arising in a predictable, and again considering the conditions of the universe that we live in and the powers of emergence we are right on schedule just as we are. And Gaia is not mad at us, Gaia loves us, God loves us, which is not to say that there is not going to be an apocalypse. In fact we know there is, we are all going to die individually. And also the universe is going to die. We know that. At first tier this is a cause for alarm and we project this individual apocalypse on the whole world. At second tier this realization is actually a

liberation, which allows us to enjoy our life and enjoy the gift of our life, the gift of being human with other human beings at this time and place and to enjoy a beautiful warm day without it being terribly complicated.

Remember, second tier is motivated by being needs; first tier is motivated by deficiency needs. The quick vernacular for that is first tier is motivated by fear, second tier is motivated by love. So we love this life and we love this world just as it is, we see the problems but because we are not gripped by a world view that is in contention with other worldviews we actually have a better chance at solving them. So we need an integral, inclusive, flexible, consciousness brought to this great issue of climate change. And I hope I have been able to offer one here today.

I look forward to re-visiting this topic. It will continue to evolve. Thank you for listening to this installment of the Daily Evolver. Take care folks.