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Climate Stupidity and Human Survival

by Denis Rancourt / May 26th, 2015

This article accompanies a 2-hour public lecture I gave at the University of Ottawa on March 27, 2015, entitled “The science and geopolitics of climate change”: [VIDEO-LINK-Part-1](#), [VIDEO-LINK-Part-2](#). The physics calculations of Earth’s radiation balance described in Part-1 of the talk are from this paper: Rancourt, D.G., “[Radiation physics constraints on global warming: CO₂ increase has little effect](#),” [archive.org](#) (3 December 2011). Links to my articles and interviews about climate are [here](#).

The human animal has an instinct to identify potential dangers and to warn others. It is a built-in survival mechanism of any animal that lives in a group. And it is a strong and constant activity, re-enforced by environmental stressors.

This plays out on several time scales, from the immediate in the case of a potential physical assault, to the weekly in checking the weather forecast, to seasonal in preparing for winter, to life-long in planning for inevitable aging, to leaving good things for our grandchildren...

It is in our fiber to look ahead and to plan ahead, especially in the face of foreseeable or detected dangers.

The whole process can spin out of control when the danger is difficult to perceive, yet could be lethal. Think of baboons who are on the lookout for a stalking lion. The slightest shadow movement can make them scream and run for the trees. It’s a tense and highly volatile situation.

At this stage in our evolution we are faced with a pathological extension of our collective survival reflex, which is entirely fabricated by our high priests (government funded scientists and talking heads).

If these high priests were not here to tell us that the atmospheric concentration of the minor constituent CO₂ is increasing, and that “global mean surface temperature” has increased by some 0.5 C in the last 100 years, then we would never know about these imperceptible causes of our certain eventual collective death as a species.

The priests explain that our certain extinction will occur from a rising sea level and changing regional climates. That these changes will cause mass migrations, ecosystem collapses, agricultural failures, famines, and disease. They also inform us that those who will suffer most are the most vulnerable inhabitants of the planet, as though this were a new feature of the effects of natural disasters.

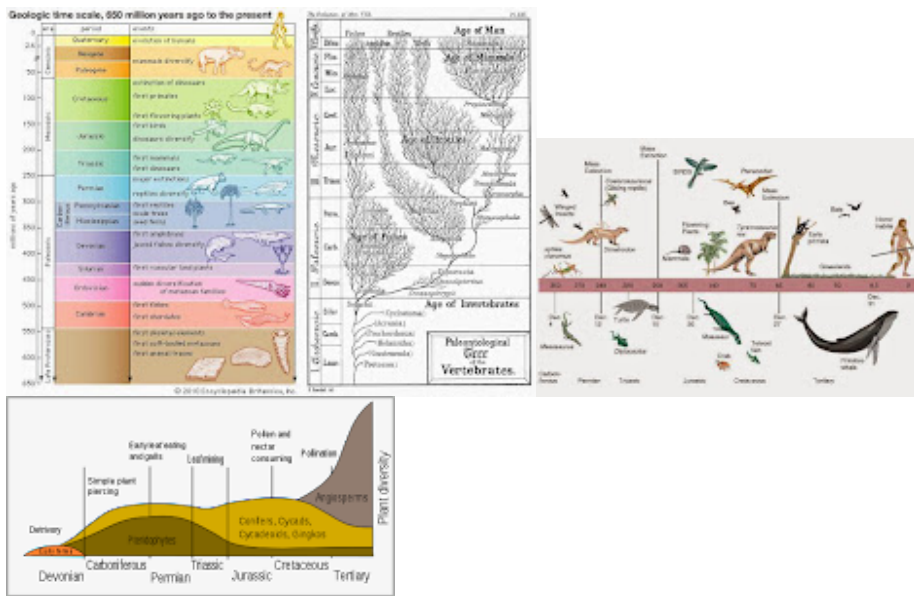
Therefore, they urge, we must tax carbon emissions, apply cap and trade, and create a global carbon economy to limit CO₂ in the atmosphere. And who better to coordinate it all than the World Bank, IMF, and such, given their stellar records in managing equitable development on this little rock. (Or is that economic enforcement of US regime supremacy?)

Forgive me for saying, but this all sounds rather nutso to me.

Nothing could be more like a religion than this crazy movement. We are expected to accept that an essential and growth-limiting plant nutrient (CO₂¹) is a toxic pollutant, that the world will be destroyed because of our collective and intrinsic wickedness of emitting CO₂, via floods no less.

Take a deep breath (exhale if you dare) and allow me to state a few facts that might help put things into perspective.

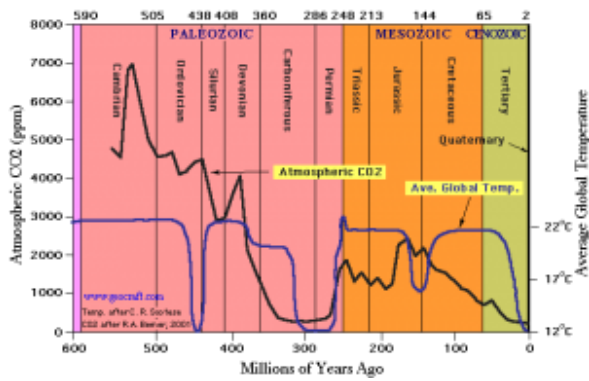
The planet has been teeming with life for billions of years.



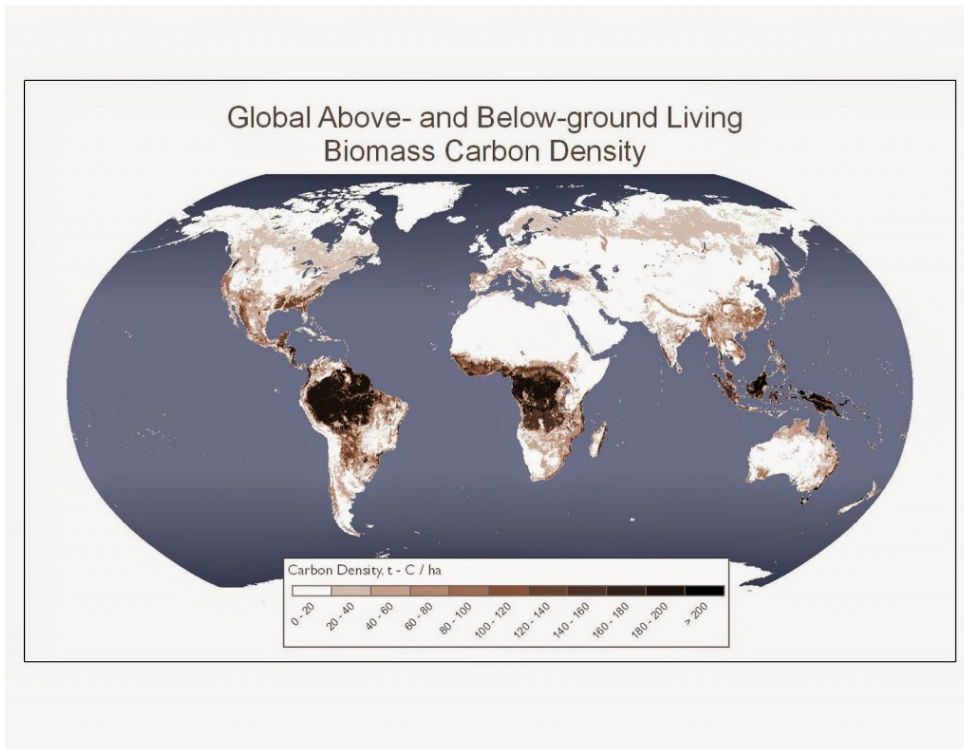
During that time, the global mean temperature has almost always been some 10 C higher than in the present geologic anomaly,² in a manner uncorrelated with CO₂ concentration.³ That is the history of this same planet that we live on. During that time, the CO₂ concentration has typically been 10 times higher than today's value, and it has rarely been as low as modern values, nor has it ever been lower than modern values.

There is no reason to believe that humans would not fare well on an Earth that is 10° C warmer, never mind 1° or 2° C. Land value would increase in the polar regions, and there would be intense reforestation and forest densification of the equatorial regions, with little possibility for controlling growth where it is hot and humid.

From what we know of our planet and the history of its biosphere, warming is not going to kill us off any time soon. None of the known mass extinctions (a relative term) in Earth's history can be reliably attributed to "sustained warming," whereas ice ages that have occurred recently (during human presence on the planet, in the last 1 M years) are expected to correspond to periods of decreased planetary life density, but saw mammals and human populations completely adapt. Basically, neither warming or cooling can kill us by any know mechanism ever observed. If anything, the opposite of "killer warmth" is observed on today's Earth, where both human populations and living biomass are concentrated near equatorial latitudes:



Atmospheric CO2 and average global temperature



Living biomass carbon density



World population density map

Therefore, we still have much time left to achieve human extinction by much more direct means than warming (or cooling) of any kind. We also have a lot of time and occasions to practice accommodating mass migrations caused by our wars and economic violence, in order to prepare for the “climate migrations”.

Somehow there seems to be more public-opinion, political, and lobbying effort in implementing and developing the instruments of a global carbon economy than in developing the instruments to

prevent wars of aggression, to cope with the consequences of natural disasters, to stop displacing and dispossessing local inhabitants, to enforce the Geneva Conventions, to stop the wholesale destruction of entire nations (Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran...?), to respect international law, ... not to mention reparations to the survivors of recent slavery, genocide, dispossession, and crass exploitation.

Rather than widespread vehement and actuated insistence on democratic control of local resources and institutions, based on individual realities on the ground, instead we have a sizable yet ineffective population of vocal do-gooders enthralled in spasmodic incantations against atmospheric CO₂ emissions, as part of a Gaia-inspired religion perverted by the Christian concept of original sin; all of which *de facto* supports the carbon globalization schemes engineered by the US regime to attempt to constrain their emerging competitors and extort a development tax.

When has “globalization” ever been about justice, or about anything other than economic predation? When have good-will global efforts ever had any significant positive impact?⁴

Why pollute local struggles and liberation of the individual with tenuous claims about imperceptible dangers? And why put so much energy into insisting that the danger from CO₂ is real? This seems like a classic example of seeking an overarching religious belief “solution” to real local problems that one cannot or will not confront.

“Climate justice” needs to be “justice”. The comfortable-middle-class fetish for carbon co-opts the analysis, defuses the thrust for defending identity-tied interests, and sends legitimate demands straight into the atmosphere. Or, at best, it is simply irrelevant to real struggles.

In the main population, if all the fanatics that are screaming that the sky is falling would scream to stop the war machine that occupies every corner of the globe, then we could start moving away from the real manufactured disasters that wash over the planet continuously, which don't require satellite spectrometers to detect.

Instead of asking whether we can detect warming, whether intense weather events are actually more frequent, whether species extinction rates can reliably be measured, and so on, why not address the obvious: Humans are exploiting and terrorizing other humans, human conditions are constantly being attacked, and natural habitat is being destroyed for corporate benefit by eliminating local sovereignty.

Why turn to sanitized and intractable up-in-the-air questions when injustice and actual destruction is all around us? And why, oh why, pretend that humans can manage global carbon fluxes, manage the radiation balance of the planet, and control climate?

It's a planet!

If we are going to have a global religion, why not believe that justice leads to both short-term and long-term safety? Not justice that is planned and given to us, but justice that we acquire through struggle and liberation.

On the other hand if you must be irrelevant and must have your carbon fetish, then at least put it into a planetary perspective⁵ :

- The present (2010) rate of fossil fuel burning (0.8×10^{13} kg-C/y) is 8% of global primary production (GPP)
- The latter plant growth (GPP) uses only 0.07% of solar light striking the planet
- Thus, fossil fuel burning represents 8% of 0.07% = 0.006% of solar energy rate of input (the sun is a sun and the Earth is a planet...)
- The CO₂ production from the burning of fossil fuel is approximately equal to that from human and domestic animal breathing
- The combined biomass of humans and domestic animals is 0.04% of Earth's living biomass
- Ants have transformed the planet's surface and its ecology far more than have humans

- The total amount of fossil fuel burned to date (historically to 2010) by humans is 3.7×10^{14} kg-C, less than half of the carbon contained in the atmosphere as a minor constituent gas
- Dissolved CO₂ in the oceans is 50 times more than the total amount in the atmosphere
- Living and dead biomass-carbon (in soils, sediments, plant-cover, etc.) is probably much greater than carbon as CO₂ in air and water
- Thus, the total post-industrial fossil fuel burned to date represents less than 1% of the planet's global bio-available and exchangeable carbon, not to mention geological sources
- As such, atmospheric CO₂ is readily exchanged with and buffered by compartments of labile carbon that are much larger than the atmosphere, via flux mechanisms that science is barely beginning to understand (e.g.,¹)

1. Keenan *et al.*, "Increase in forest water-use efficiency as atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations rise," *Nature* 499, 324-327 (18 July 2013); Donohue *et al.*, "Impact of CO₂ fertilization on maximum foliage cover across the globe's warm, arid environments," *Geophysical Research Letters* 40(12), 3031-3035 (28 June 2013). [[D](#)] [[D](#)]
2. Wikipedia article, "[Geologic temperature record](#)," accessed May, 2015, see "Overall view". [[D](#)]
3. Rothman, D.H., "[Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels for the last 500 million years](#)," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 99(7), 4167-4171, (2 April 2002). [[D](#)]
4. Rancourt, D.G., "[Some big lies of science](#)," *Activist Teacher* (8 June 2010). [[D](#)]
5. Rancourt, D.G., "[Is the burning of fossil fuel a significant planetary activity?](#)," *Activist Teacher* (21 August 2010); Rancourt, D.G., "[CO₂ emission from fossil fuel burning is not more than from breathing](#)," *Activist Teacher* (22 August 2010). [[D](#)]



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This article was posted on Tuesday, May 26th, 2015 at 2:57am and is filed under [Climate Change](#), [Extinction](#), [Justice](#), [Life/Animal Rights](#), [Science/Technology](#).

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