

CHANGE IS CONSTANT

Our universe is energy in motion. While this motion seems random, nature organizes it into clusters or systems that operate at various levels simultaneously, all towards the goal of developing “life everlasting”. For example, a human being is comprised of several systems: a digestive system, a cardiac system, a reproductive system, a neurological system and even a personality. Each of us is a system unto ourselves, but, at the same time, we are part of other systems as well. We are part of a family system, a community, a state, a country, and a world we share with animals and plants. Each smaller system grows to the extent that it adds value to a larger system. Processes that fail to add value, fade away.

The important point here is that the natural world is constantly changing and the cycles of change seem to be accelerating. I believe that life is all about how well we, or plants or animals, adapt to change.

Most human beings tend to be comfortable with routine, the familiar. We experience long periods of this as “normal”. When change comes quickly, it seems forced upon us, prompting resistance. Most of us will then pine for the “good old days”. We need look no further than the recent Covid crisis for examples of this. Wearing masks, getting shots, and keeping social distance were impositions on our usual routine. How many of us thought, if not said aloud, how much we wanted things to “just get back to normal”? But there is no “going back”. Nothing tomorrow will be the same as it is today, even if those changes are minuscule and escape human detection. Internal environments in systems are changing constantly as are the exter-

nal environments. This occurs throughout nature. Human aging is an example. Infancy is a period of rapid growth and development, which begins to slow during early adult years, and starts to wane during our senior years. Renewal comes in the form of population growth through offspring. Seasons change annually, rotating from periods of growth in the Spring and Summer to decline in Fall and Winter, followed by renewal once again.

Climate change is one of those external variables that threatens the cycle of growth and renewal on many fronts. There is no denying that the development of fossil fuel products has been a huge boost to human civilization, one of the backbones of commerce, agriculture, transportation, and housing across the globe. But have we begun a period of diminishing returns, where the byproducts of fossil fuel use threatens the cycle of growth and renewal? Storm systems seem to be increasing in variability and volatility. Agricultural patterns are changing due to new areas of drought versus heavy snow and/or rainfall. Water levels are rising in some places and falling in others. Water and air temperatures, likewise, are increasing in ways that are making it difficult to sustain plants and crops as we have known them. All of these things impact competition for basic resources. As populations shift, international tensions may rise, perhaps leading to military conflicts.

Politics is all about governance, i.e., the act of developing rules for living that provide guidance and direction for all of us. Though each of us is responsible for our own actions, it is the leaders

of our various organizational units that develop policies for our differing levels of society. Enlightened leaders plan for change, but that is the exception more than the rule.

Those who resist change tend to be older adults who have experienced the longest periods of stability and who benefit most from the current state of affairs. Those who embrace change tend to be younger adults, who gravitate to the newest in things like fashions and technologies. Unfortunately, those in positions of authority, who direct communities, corporations, and countries are the older group. Leaders of fossil fuel companies, for example, might be open to change, but are reluctant to risk their “bottom line”. Leaders of countries that continue to depend on these products as major parts of their economies, risk losing political power by change. Younger adults, who are inheriting the problems, are most likely to find new, more productive solutions, and they may lobby for change, but rarely are in positions to initiate these changes. This is the source of much of the political conflict over climate change. Planning for change requires viewing one’s self or organization as part of a system greater than yourself. Oil companies cannot afford to see themselves in the fossil fuel business, but, more generally, as members of the world community in the energy business. This will lead them to explore solutions that enhance the energy needs of the population but in ways that decrease the pollution of our environment. Being open to change allows individuals, communities, corporations, and countries to respond to changes, especially in these times when change is occurring so quickly.

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