The Eco Twins Have Arrived

Contributed by John Caris
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The Eco Twins are upon us, forcing us to re-evaluate our attitudes and correct our assumptions. In popular jargon they are at bat in the bottom of the ninth with no outs and the score is at the moment tied. Who are these Twins? They are the ever-present natural powers of ecology and social economy.
Ecology and economy -- what is their basic meaning? Both words are derived from the Greek: eco means house; logy, from which the word “logic” is derived, order or arrangement; nomy implies management.

So ecology designates the ordering or relationship of the parts to each other and to the whole house. And economy deals with household management. Obviously, we humans with all our fancy technology are failing in both areas. The more pessimistic argue that we have already turned the corner and cannot prevent disaster. The more optimistic contend that humans still have the opportunity to alleviate total disaster by acting now. Not tomorrow but now. Will we?

The first step is to let go of our arrogance based on the false notion that change is progress is improvement is desirable. If that were correct, then of course we would not be facing such a catastrophe. A specific type of technology is not inherently superior or inferior to other technologies. Here lies another level of our modern arrogance: contemporary technology is superior to all earlier ones. A false premise is that the latest or newest is the best. And of course if everyone is doing it, using it, what can be wrong with it? We believe we must help the less fortunate who don’t have the latest iPod, computer game, or gadget. Should we force these products on them so they can be like us, the superior ones? Yes, the greater the pride the harder the fall. And what will these "less fortunate" give up for the latest gadgets? Why, the only thing they have -- their natural resources and their social identity and culture.

A historical example will clarify the idea. Many cultures peopled the Americas in pre-contact times. Some have been dated as far back as twelve thousand B.C. and others may be even older. These civilizations were as brilliant and sophisticated as those in other parts of the world. In the United States the most significant cultures were the Chacoans in the Colorado Plateau region and the Mound Builders in the Midwest and South, centering along the Mississippi and its tributaries.

Many archaeologists have proposed that the Chacoans had developed the greatest civilization north of Mexico. From the mid-800s through the 1200s, Chaco Canyon, carved out by the Chaco River that flows into the San Juan River, embraced eleven large settlements containing buildings, some four stories high, with hundreds of rooms. The Chacoan great houses and large kivas utilized five different styles of stone masonry for wall structures built from sandstone. Besides the eleven large settlements, many small farming homesteads were scattered throughout the canyon. Hundreds of miles of wide roads leading to outlying districts radiated out from the Chacoan center. Chacoans devised an extraordinary celestial calendar that disclosed exact knowledge of solar, lunar, and stellar cycles. Buildings and roads were aligned to mark the passage of the heavenly movements.

Many other stone settlements with housing for hundreds were built throughout the Colorado Plateau region. Well-known ruins are located at Mesa Verde near the Mancos River, Aztec on the Animas River, Hovenweep north of the San Juan River, and Wupatki west of the Little Colorado River.

The residents eventually abandoned their settlements, though, and we are uncertain of their reasons; climate definitely played an important role. After a twenty year drought at the end of 1000s, a more severe drought, lasing fifty years, hit the area in the mid-1100s. Another drought occurred during the last twenty-five years of 1200s. Dry climate conditions, more or less severe, continued for another two hundred years or so. Drought has brought down many civilizations.

Contemporary Puebloan people living in the Colorado Plateau region are descendents of those who built the great settlements. And the Puebloan people have learned from their ancestors the art of survival in a rather dry environment. But what about the citizens of Phoenix, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and other metropolitan areas of the Southwest -- will

they learn in time to prevent disaster?

At the bottom of it all, the nexus of our existential condition is that the Eco Twins do not care about any of us humans, whether we are the superior ones or not. Our species is no more important than any other, perhaps even less. Do we really understand the thinking of the Eco Twins? Do we have a hot line to them? Are we their friends? What is our role as humans in the ongoing cosmic drama of existence?

We talk about a global village, a global marketplace, a global playground here on spaceship earth. Too often we forget that earth has limited resources and many of them are nearing depletion. The time is here to borrow and apply ideas and perspectives from all human cultures, past and present.

We can begin with our sense of self, an individual living as a part of a community; we are both single and connected. From this awareness grows self-responsibility. What we do affects us personally and the whole community. Native Americans speak about “all our relations.” We are all related: everything -- animal, plant, and mineral -- are linked together. We are all made from the same chemical stuff, as everything in the universe is. For those of us residing on spaceship earth with its physical boundaries we will survive together or not. True, some of our ancestral microorganisms, from which we evolved, may survive even if the more complex creatures become extinct.

Reality has areas, shadows, that we cannot see into and have little or no knowledge of. Ancient people were aware of these places and acknowledged their existence, even if their understanding from the modern view seems primarily fanciful. Today scientists studying the cosmos state that most of the universe is in the shadows, unobservable and so unintelligible -- dark matter that fills the universe. Ancient people, though without our contemporary technology, had ways of connecting to the shadows and accepting it as an important part of their reality. These anomalous ways of knowing, considered irrational or superstitious by some, have been used for thousands of years. If they are acknowledged at all, they are considered a personal gift of mental and physical power. When a society rejects large areas of knowledge as false and demeans those with extraordinary ways of knowing, can it survive with the Eco Twins in the ascendant and battering down the portal? Those interested in alternative forms of knowing should read Elizabeth L. Mayer’s Extraordinary Knowing, which investigates these inexplicable mental powers from a scientific viewpoint.

Technology groupies who place their faith in a technologic fix should remember their responsibility for the mess we are in. We all need to participate in the clean-up and repair: it’s our well-being at stake.

We are ending a twenty-eight year economic cycle that began in 1981. Based on Reaganomics, which some had called voodoo economics back in 1980, the global marketplace is in disarray. Its center is filled with foolish desires enhanced by greed. A gambler’s charisma has enveloped the marketplace, laying a mantle of reckless judgment upon our leaders. If the meltdown were not so serious, it would become a popular comedy on the cosmic stage. Supposed rational creatures built and managed the greatest economic superstructure the world has ever seen. It was thought natural, and although it would have its ups and downs, it would maintain itself indefinitely without serious harm. Famous economic prophets were dumbfounded, confessing their errors, when the system unraveled.

Nature has laws, limits, and regulations. Economic leaders have forgotten this basic fact. They were confused by the Gambler’s charisma -- luck was on their side. The Twins have now arrived and are confirming nature’s laws. Nature has its own cycles, and our human affairs are a tributary of its flowing. An interesting side note is that the twenty-eight cycle is based on the lunar cycle. Perhaps the moon is having her say.

Indigenous societies have discerned the methods and techniques to stay within nature’s guidelines and balance their lifestyle to fit into their sacred place harmoniously. Can we moderns learn from them and develop a society that does the same?

Using a form of stereovision, we can see ways in which the Twins are working together. Severe drought is occurring in large areas of the country, in particular the regions of fastest population growth. These are the regions where housing values are dropping and foreclosures are mounting. The population has exceeded its limits, and the Twins are applying pressure from two sides. We have over-polluted the planet -- destroying the air, water, and earth. We now have an excellent opportunity to forsake the harmful industries and craft green ones, transforming a dying planet into a garden of life. The choice and the responsibility are ours.

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Further Reading:

"Keeping a lid on the twin unravelings" by Jan Lundberg, 14 June 2005:

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