

9- Climate in Crisis

***“In the laws of Nature,
There is no right or wrong,
There are no rewards or punishments.
There are only consequences.”***

When we violate the laws of man, we can get away with paying a fine or going to jail. But when we violate the laws of Nature, there are consequences, many of which we do not see right away.

One good example of the laws of Nature is this: Matter cannot be destroyed. We can only change its form.

We light a little matchstick,
Out comes smoke and fire.
A few seconds after,
The smoke is no more,
And all that's left
Is the charred remains of the
Little matchstick.



And so it happened to the Earth. In the last 200 years, we burned wood, coal, oil and gas – fossil fuels of different forms – to make fire. We also released a lot of smoke. We thought that that by some magic, all that smoke would simply disappear. We thought that out of sight is out of mind.

All that burning happened in the last 200 years, a blink in the eyes of Father Time and Mother Nature.

What Happened?

But the smoke did *not* disappear. It got stored up there in the upper layers of the Air and became like a roof. That roof kept the heat in the body of the Earth. Like the human body, what happens when the body heat can not be released? We develop a fever.

But what is happening is that instead of just a temporary fever, the body temperature of the Earth is permanently heating up. Again, let us look at the human body: The average body temperature is 37.0 degrees Centigrade. What if all of a sudden tomorrow it becomes 38 degrees? What happens? It has a fever.

That is what is happening to the Earth. It has a fever. In the last 100 years, our Earth's temperature rose by 1 degree Centigrade. But what makes this fever worrisome is that it is permanent and is rising faster and faster.

Organ Malfunction

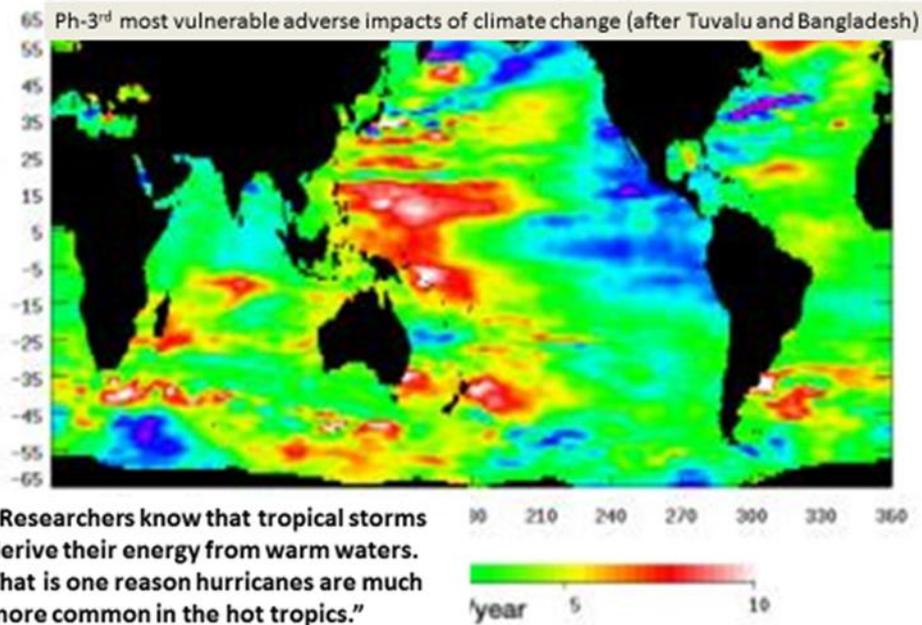
The Earth's fever is causing multiple organ malfunction:

1. The heat in the surface of the sea is the fuel of typhoons and hurricanes. So the storms have become stronger and stronger and more erratic.
2. The water cycle is going haywire. With hotter water bodies, there is greater evaporation, that results in greater volume of water vapor in the clouds. Because what goes up must come down, all that water will fall back into the Earth as torrential rain or snow. Fatal floods and blizzards happen more often.
3. In some areas of the Earth, the land is getting hotter and hotter. Fires break out, and extended dry spells and droughts are happening all over.
4. Because of the water flowing from the mountains of ice in the colder regions of the Earth, the volume of the hotter sea is expanding. It is creeping into the coastlines faster than ever seen in human history. Scientists tell us that in the next 100 years, the sea level will be between 1 to 3 meters higher than it is now.

Imagine what will happen to our water supply, our farm lands, and to our homes. This is not a prediction of the future. As we speak, it is clearly now happening at a speed we never imagined.

And guess what? All these are happening because of the behavior of that which claims to be the wisest animals.

Trend of Sea Level Change (1993-2008)



By the way, sea level rise is not to me a scientific abracadabra. When I built my house near the beach in 1994 along the seashore of the central *Perlas*, the edge of the sea was 45 meters away. Today, 2016, it is barely 20 meters. The scientists tell us that this is only 2 inches of sea level rise. And in the next hundred years, it can rise between 3 to 9 meters. Is that Worrisome, yes! Catastrophic? Hell, no!



Or so say those who still deny the existence and reality of a rapidly changing climate.

5. The water is becoming more acidic from carbon dioxide. It is playing nasty tricks on the underwater forests of the sea – the coral reefs and other life-forms that are suffering from the high fever.

In sum, we are in a crisis. Land will be flooded or will become bone dry. Water will be a major problem – either too much of it or too little of it. Extreme weather events -- like typhoons, floods, droughts, and the resulting disease, famine and wars -- will become more and more common. And so, what to do?

Let us break for a while from this scenario of gloom and doom. It is not predicted. It is expected. Let me divert you with a little story.

A man who has been smoking two packs a day for twenty years is suffering from coughing, sneezing, and has a high fever. His wife calls for an ambulance and he is taken to the emergency room and ends up in the ICU.

After one week, he wakes up and consults the doctor. His diagnosis is that he has the beginnings of lung cancer. So what must he do?

Must he go buy another carton of cigarettes and smoke 2 packs a day?

I leave the answer to you?

The obvious answer is what is called in the science of climate change as mitigation. It simply means the need to stop the source of the disease.

What else must our patient do? Must he learn to accept his weakened state and do everything in his power to adapt to the changes?

In the science of climate change, that is called 'adaptation.'

The Crisis

We are in a state of crisis. The sooner we accept that, embrace it, and turn it to our advantage the better it will be for the survival of our kind.

The Chinese were once wise people. Their pictographic words tell us a story. Look at their word for 'Crisis' – *Wei* and *Ji*.

Wei means 'danger',
Ji means 'opportunity'.



If humans are truly wise as they claim to be, they must to see the danger, accept its reality, and then work on how we can avoid getting killed in the process. Remember our game with words? Let us begin to stop calling it 'climate change.' That is too mild a term to describe what is happening. From now on, let us call it the 'climate crisis.'

To live up to our claim of being wise, we must also see the other side of the word 'crisis' – the Opportunity. Then and only then will we better survive, and thrive.

But how? It all begins with a question.

That is the opportunity.