

Let's Schmooze

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Planetary Reporting

Yep, the Doomsday Clock ~ put out by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists ~ is still in crisis mode, and now even more so. It has been reset at two minutes 'til final disaster. Looming crises had kept the minute hand within three symbolic minutes of disaster ~ Armageddon ~ for a while. Before that, the clock had been set at a symbolic five minutes "before."

Now, it is at only two minutes until the Apocalypse. This is the tightest the Doomsday Clock warning has ever been. There are three main reasons why we should be concerned ~ nuclear weaponry, global warming, and economic contradictions.

More nations have ~ or are successfully pursuing ~ nuclear weaponry. It's like having more sticks of dynamite lying around for grabs. Some of these nations are associated with terrorists who have no trouble taking lots of innocent lives ~ collateral damage, as they would say. Even the older and larger countries can be fingered with problems ~ and they're the ones who are supposed to have all the nuclear expertise. Not long ago, the United States had major issues with properly securing its own massive, nuclear arsenal.

Global warming is also getting to be a major issue regarding our looming Armageddon. The unbridled warming of our climate can cause us as much ~ if not more ~ damage as a nuclear war. It may not be as flash-immediate as a nuclear blast, but it will be as definite in terms of its consequences to our kind. The alarm being sounded is that we may already be past the point of turning this global warming situation around. That's not good.

As populations become more aware of the negative side effects of unbridled consumption, the capitalist model as it has been practiced is starting to stall out. Of

course everyone loves to shop ~ but ~ not if our consumptive shopping is going to eventually poison us out of existence. That's an unhealthy contradiction.

It's time for a new economic model. How are we going to provide for ourselves in the short run without destroying ourselves in the long run?

Or at a deeper level, it's time for a new cultural model ~ how are billions of us going to go about living on this beautiful planet without destroying it?

Economically speaking, a large part of the problem can be found in the corporate quarterly reporting system best showcased in America. Investors demand 90-day corporate financial reporting in order to help them continuously maximize their financial investment profits. However, the mandatory quarterly reports keep corporate managers from taking the long view, such as minimizing the environmental consequences of their industrial outputs.

It's all about the money, and only about the money. If that money doesn't flow nicely green every 90 days, stock investors flee and corporate managers are fired.

Culturally speaking, we need to reset this financial "quarterly report" thinking with something more friendly to our continued tenancy on this planet. It happens that our planet Earth offers such a clock ~ a natural clock ~ would you believe it?

Most of us are familiar with two of the most well known time clocks offered by Earth. One, our planet Earth takes one year to circle around the Sun. That's an astronomical clock. Two, our planet Earth takes 24 hours to spin on its axis. That's another astronomical clock.

There is a third well known time clock offered by our planet Earth. It has to do with the Earth's axis, or more to the point, the tilt of that axis.

Because of the 23-degree tilt, Earth has four unique time points on its journey around the Sun ~ two equinox points and two solstice points. That's where our four seasons come from ~ Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. They follow each other by 90 days, in that they punctuate and divide the yearly orbit into four equal parts, or quarters ~ just like corporate reporting.

Perhaps they can offer us a different way of thinking about ubiquitous financial quarterly reports. Let's look at these equinox and solstice time-points in turn. Before we begin, let's review the planetary astronomy.



The Spring Equinox is one of two time-points on the yearly orbit of our planet Earth where night and day are of exactly the same length. It marks the beginning of Spring in the Northern Hemisphere, and conversely it marks the beginning of Autumn in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Summer Solstice is that time-point on the yearly orbit of our planet Earth where for most of us the day is the longest, and the night is the shortest. It marks the beginning of Summer in the Northern Hemisphere, and conversely it marks the beginning of Winter in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Autumn Equinox is the other of two time-points on the yearly orbit of our planet Earth where night and day are of exactly the same length. It marks the beginning of Autumn in the Northern Hemisphere, and conversely it marks the beginning of Spring in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Winter Solstice is that time-point on the yearly orbit of our planet Earth where for most of us the day is the shortest, and the night is the longest. It marks the beginning of Winter in the Northern Hemisphere, and conversely it marks the beginning of Summer in the Southern Hemisphere.

Now, let's look at the natural characteristics of these four seasons.

the Spring Equinox

Spring brings to us the annual renewal of life. It's an ageless gift brought to us by Mother Nature herself. With flowers blossoming and birds singing, we rest in the sure knowledge that the long, cold winter is over, and that life will reassert itself.

the Summer Solstice

Summer is the season when the plant world works so hard to create food for us to survive on during the long calendar year. It's the unique miracle of photosynthesis. Plants, harnessing

both the sun's energy and the earth's nutrients, create food for all ~ edible roots and tubers, tasty nuts and grains, delicious fruits and greens.

the Autumn Equinox

All during the Summer the plant world has exerted itself mightily to bring forth the food that we rely on for sustenance. Now we get to collect that abundance into our barns and storage bins. It's a time of rejoicing, and that joyous time is well marked by the North American holiday known as Thanksgiving ~ one of the favorite and sacred holidays of most people.

the Winter Solstice

The crops are in, and we are now approaching the depth of winter. The next Spring Equinox, which marks the time when we replant our fields, is still a few months away. Winter is a time of rest and reflection, and a time when we can relax and enjoy the comfort of our labors during the year. Winter starts with the Winter Solstice, the time when the day is the shortest, and the night the longest. Winter ends when the Spring Equinox comes in March.

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Given the natural characteristics of Earth's planetary seasons, perhaps we can utilize these four astronomical points-in-time to arrive at four quarterly planetary reports re humanity's efforts to clean and green our planet Earth.

In deference to the spirit of Spring, we put into motion plans and programs aimed at cleaning and greening our planet.

In deference to the spirit of Summer, we put maximum effort into pushing those plans and programs through to completion.

In deference to the spirit of Autumn, we collect and analyze the results of those plans and programs aimed at cleaning and greening our planet.

In deference to the spirit of Winter, we do a full annual review of where we stand in cleaning and greening our planet Earth. Constructive criticism is aimed at concluded plans and programs, and future plans and programs are devised and/or reformulated with that constructive criticism in mind.

Of course, the four equinox and solstice quarterly reports and the annual report will contain appropriate continuous reporting on all fronts ~ planning, implementing, administering, evaluating.

With this in place, we will train ourselves to look at quarterly environmental reports, instead quarterly financial reports. It will be better for our planet, and for ourselves and how we think of ourselves. To be sure, we exist on this planet for far more than chasing a fleeting, ephemeral dollar bill.

There will be many things to watch as we go thru our renewed efforts to clean and re-green our planet Earth. Our article entitled *Global Trends to Watch* addresses those concerns.

~ 'til we meet again ~