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Professor Tim O'Riordan is Emeritus Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK. He received an OBE in 2010, is a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Norfolk, served as Sheriff of Norwich (2009-10), and is a Fellow of the British Academy. He holds an MA in Geography from the University of Edinburgh, an MS in Water Resources Engineering from Cornell University, and a PhD in Geography from the University of Cambridge. In June 2013, he was awarded the honour of Distinguished Friend of Oxford. Currently he is an Executive Editor of *Environment Magazine*.

He has edited a number of key books on the institutional aspects of global environmental change, policy and practice, led two international research projects on the transition to sustainability in the European Union (1995-2002) and edited two editions of the text book, *Environmental Science for Environmental Management*. He edited (with Tim Lenton) a book on *Addressing Tipping Points for a Precarious Future*, published by Oxford University Press and the British Academy, published in August 2013.

Professor O'Riordan served as a core member of the Prince of Wales' seminar on Business and the Environment. Through his Associate Fellow position with the Cambridge Institute on Sustainability Leadership (CISL), he has many contacts with the business world. He served as Special Advisor to the House of Commons Environment Audit Committee and also as Special Advisor to the CISL Collaboratory on sustainable water stewardship.

Abstract

“Merging the “Big Cs”: Combining the moral response to Covid-19 and to Climate Change”

We are experiencing the early stages of two global convulsions. The Covid-19 pandemic is still youthful, but is currently tightening its grip in almost every nation. Climate alteration is even more pubescent, but there are no escapees from its ever tightening grip.

In this presentation I will consider if there a moral connection between these two predicaments as to how humanity should perceive and behave in terms of safeguarding the continuing life support on which we all and our offspring depend. ►

- ▶ How we respond may define our future sense of humanness as a matter of survival.

I will begin by addressing the concept of “tipping points” as processes of sudden but turbulent transformation. One direction lies in essentially unpredictable alterations of planetary systemic patterns leading to unknown but potentially catastrophic outcomes. The other offers a progressive revelation of collective human response leading to progressive sustainability. The two are not compatible. Any continuation of the first makes the second more tenuous.

This decade at 2030 ends with the commitment to sustainable development goals, to a half way transition to net zero global greenhouse gas emissions, and to a planetary pact over human and ecological rights to permanent coexistence between people and nature. In my view this will be the defining decade for human confidence in the purpose of being essentially human on this unique planet in the solar system.

I will explore the connections between gaianism and the role of moral sentiments. By this I mean alerting the public to the moral connection between their sense of stewardship for future generations and for the life support maintenance of the planet. I will probe the conundrum of moral abstinence. By this phrase I mean that most consumers of greenhouse gases, either directly in their use of fossil fuels, or indirectly through their purchase and use of embedded global warming gases in the food and goods they use, choose not to think about the consequences of these carbon emissions when they purchase and enjoy their experiences. I will also examine the emergence of moral identity. By this phrase I mean people's recognition of their moral sensitivities to how they behave in terms of creating additional carbon emissions, and how they ought to behave as a member of a human family geared to permanent survival, in order to safeguard their collective future. In this quest I will open up the prospect of sustainable localism as the basis for human co-existence with its planetary home.