

What if we are changing?

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Have you seen these movies that show prehistoric people? It has been fascinating to me since I was a little boy. I remember one where these cave people were living next to a volcano, of course in a cave. And of course it ended with dinosaurs chasing them. But the most fun for me was to watch how the humans behaved. They hunched over when they walked, ate like pigs, and pushed and shoved each other instead of politely using their words. The actors looked like people from today acting like they were half humans, not full humans like us. It's hard to describe what was going on inside of me, but it was a kind of disbelief.

The actors acted a little slow and simple. How do you coach someone to act prehistoric? “Act like you don't know what we know, you have no technology, no real cool entertainment, you can't stand up straight, you have no manners, you can't talk, and you treat your friends like crap.”

I remember saying to myself, “it's like watching *actors*, not people from long ago.”

After mulling this over for about a decade, one day in college, I was sitting with my girlfriend and it occurred to me that maybe prehistoric people had a whole different *consciousness*. Maybe their whole world looked different. Maybe the difference was like comparing my current 18 year old feelings for my girlfriend to my 8 year old feelings about the girls in school. Whoa. I told my girlfriend about the movie and started replaying that scene by the volcano – I can still see it today (and I'm a lot older than 18). I asked her, “Weren't you plenty smart at 8 years old – I remember being curious about the whole world around me, learning about animals and sports and food and reading and writing and arithmetic? Did we get more intelligent as we grew up, or did we just learn more stuff? Those actors were like stupid, prehistoric humans. If I asked you right now to act out a scene where you were 8 years old, would you act like a slow version of yourself or just an innocent, uninformed one?”

And then it hit me. Like a cascade – a waterfall of thoughts – I said to my girlfriend, “AHA! What if the actors were *projecting* their modern selves onto the prehistoric people? What if we’re always projecting? Whenever we think why people from the past did what they did, maybe we’re picturing ourselves in their place! No wonder the movies make them look ridiculous! If you or I went back to that volcano, we *would be* ridiculous! It’s as if the movie producers don’t get that prehistoric people had *a different consciousness*. It’s like they were 8 and we’re 18. I wonder if this act of projecting goes past that? Don’t we project the ways of our country onto other countries and our culture onto other cultures. My girlfriend and I talked about this for a while and came to a conclusion, not without a serious amount of pride, pomp, and circumstance, “Basically, I’ll bet we project the image of ourselves and our ways onto *anything and anybody who is different!*”

... skip nearly five more decades ...

My sister was telling me about a conversation she had at my other sister’s birthday party. She (my first sister) was saying to my cousin, “The country is in trouble. We need to take the high road and embrace diversity, even if our leaders do not.” He agreed. “We, the regular people, have to make the change, you know, to actually get along with each other.” He agreed again, but admitted that even if we could, it would take time. “Yeah,” she said, “a lot of time.”

So, sis, here’s my question. Actually, I have two. “First, aren’t you and cousin Paul doing the same thing forward that the movies did backwards? I mean, aren’t you projecting? Aren’t you assuming that people will be the same consciousness going forward as they are today when you say this change will take a long time? Aren’t you picturing people who are just like us trying to somehow embrace diversity in some new way? What if we’re different in the next years? I wonder if the crazy changes in the world - that seem to be accelerating - leave us with a seriously different consciousness in the near future? What would you say, then?” She was listening, but not answering, so I went on. “And another question, if we are projecting a picture of our current self – forming an expectation that we will not grow – won’t that hurt us? Might we hold ourselves back by expecting to be the same?”

“I see what you mean.”

“And here’s another question. What if you discuss strategies to make change at the next march or political rally? If your future plans are based on using today’s people, couldn’t you hurt while trying to help?”

“Well, what would you have me do – sit by the sidelines? Have I ever done that?”

“I have an idea. Actually, two. First you picture what you wish – you know – that our country finally starts to embrace diversity at a serious level. Then - instead of detailed plans that involve a static picture of us that limits us from growing in consciousness – you work on belief.”

“What?”

“Yes, you see if you truly think the conditions you wish are possible. Yeah, that’s it. Whenever you see yourself believing in the limitations caused by projection of our current self, you move to a two-step plan: 1) hitch your wagon to a star and make a wish that can reasonably be conceived, then 2) work on yourself growing into belief and solidarity with that dream.”

If we are truly changing, I wonder what our consciousness will be next? If we are accelerating in our rate of change, isn’t it fruitless and maybe even detrimental to make plans as if we will have the same consciousness when and if we implement those plans?