

The Core Themes of Climate: A New Story: Pachamama (2019) Transcript of Charles Eisenstein's Talk
<https://charleseisenstein.org/video/the-core-themes-of-climate-a-new-story/>

The core theme of my new book is the 'Living Planet' view of Earth, especially in relationship to climate change, because I think that current policy and rhetoric and thinking about climate change is still heavily influenced by what I call the 'geo-mechanical' view, which sees Earth as this fantastically complicated, wonderful machine. That way of thinking leads us to believe that if we could tinker with the air/fuel mixture of our diesel engine, we could get it running properly. So the paramount issue becomes 'levels of greenhouse gases.' The paramount metric becomes CO₂, or temperature, or something like that. And something as complex as planetary health gets reduced to a linear measure. That, in my view, is a terrible mistake that pushes to the margins anything that is not easily measurable or that doesn't fit into our quantitative models.

So the living systems, or the Living Planet view, brings attention back to the things that have become kind of less important, have been relegated to secondary status in the climate conversation. And if you remember back in the 60s and 70s, nothing in environmentalism was saying, "We'd better change our ways or bad things will happen to us."

It was, "We love the whales so much and they're disappearing; let's save the whales. We love the forests so much and they're disappearing; let's save the forests."

It was a love based discourse. And now to a large extent it is based on the economic losses, and the human costs, and things like that; not that that's not important. But I don't think that that's enough motivation to do the courageous things we have to do in order to change the direction of civilization. Courage does not come from fear, really. Courage comes from love.

So if we look at Earth as an inanimate object, or this arbitrary, random scum of life on top of a rock hurtling through space, what is there to love? When we see Earth as a Living Planet, then we understand that, actually, even if we cut greenhouse emissions to zero, if we continue to degrade the organs and tissues of our living earth, the planet will still die a death of a million cuts.

If we continue to degrade and destroy the forests (especially the primary forests), the wetlands, the seagrass meadows (80% of the New England seagrass meadows are gone), the mangrove swamps (half of them in southeast Asia are gone), the coral reefs, the kelp forests, the whales, the soil, the fish; these are organs. These are organs of a living being. And the living being will become unhealthy and sick if we continue to do that.

I'm not saying that greenhouse gases aren't an issue. In fact, I think they pose an especial danger to the homeostatic maintenance of Earth when the organs that perform those functions are damaged. They put more stress on an already weakened system, and that's bad. From a Living Planet point of view, first priority is absolutely to protect and preserve anything that is still in a pristine or close to pristine condition.

So number one, absolutely number one is the Amazon and the Congo, and any other rainforests. Then continuing past that to wetlands, any areas of the ocean that are still relatively pristine. Anything that still has some of the original life force has to be protected.

Number two priority is regeneration. To regenerate damaged ecosystems. To create marine preserves that should cover at least half the oceans; no fishing, no interference there whatsoever. And marine permaculture, and regenerative agriculture, and reforestation and all that kind of stuff to heal what's been damaged. That is second priority. I would make it first priority except that I recognize that the primary rainforests and other primary ecosystems have an importance that we just don't even understand. They are reservoirs of biodiversity, they are reservoirs of the health of the original mind of Gaia.

Third priority is to stop poisoning the tissues. So we have the organs of Gaia, we also have the tissues. And at the tissue level what's damaging is the PCBs, the heavy metals, the pharmaceutical waste, the radioactive waste, the industrial pollution. There are PCBs in every living cell now on Earth; that's got to stop.

Fourth priority, still important, but fourth priority, is to cut greenhouse emissions.