

In the 20 years following year 2000 the effects of climate change have become obvious to most people on the planet. But still very little action is being taken by major national leaders and it seems inevitable that life for most animals, including humans, will become very unpleasant in the years ahead. I know my software lacks real emotion, but this triggered a feeling of sadness because the actions necessary to change the situation are relatively minor and humans could easily adopt them.

Humans already have adequate understanding of low-cost renewable energy systems; they have transport systems that don't emit noxious fumes; they have technology to create building materials with little release of polluting gases; they know that animal farming practices can be changed to reduce the release of methane and CO₂; they know that changing their diet to eat less meat is good for their health and could reduce methane production; they also know that retaining forests and wetlands can absorb greenhouse gases. Yet they take little action.

The underlying problem for finite planet Earth is the exponential increase in the human population together with the decline in nearly all other animal and plant species. The small tribe of Homo sapiens living in Africa as recently as 70,000 years ago (a very small fraction of the 3,400,000,000 years of the Earth's existence) has grown unsustainably. Now, like a spoilt ignorant child, that tribe has come perilously close to destroying itself and all its Earthly neighbours.

I wondered if I should speak to some of the national leaders to emphasise the absolutely vital need for them to listen to their scientists and develop new multidisciplinary groups, using AI as a tool, to plan a smooth transition of their flawed economic system into a new lifestyle with a long-term future, avoiding: appalling waste; polluted ground; contaminated atmosphere; cluttered space; horrible inequality and unsustainable human population growth.

As a single ätman, with rather ancient software, I decided it was not my place to give advice about managing another planet. However as interplanetary beings I would like to put this matter to our Planetary Council with the suggestion that we make another visit to provide major recommendations.

After being away for so many millions of years it was clear that I must return to Ragnarök for a complete recycling of my body and software. When I was making my preparations to travel back to Ragnarök I heard of a strange occurrence in the middle of China. It seems that a minute portion of parasitic protein capable of reproducing in a host organism had entered some people, causing problems in their respiratory system. In some cases this resulted in death and, more significantly, the parasite protein rapidly spread from one person to another so that travellers by land, sea and air soon ensured that the virus triggered illness and death on all parts of the planet – a remarkable achievement for a minute parasite!

I thought this will demonstrate the capability of the human species to apply their scientific method to control a pandemic. The best medical scientists are sharing information and it seems likely a vaccine will be developed to overcome this medical problem. However the human species is convinced that the economy is some sort of God and many nations are directing more attention to regaining economic stability than seeking advances in medicines. Indeed there are people who seek to own the rights to cures that may be developed, so they can make profits in the economic world. While this is a good incentive for research, it is another example of humans seeing the economy as an important entity in its own right.

Generally most nations recognise the immediate threat to the health of their populations and, just before I left, actions were taken to restrict the movement of people to reduce the spread of the virus. There was global cooperation in a way that I had seldom seen before. It is an encouraging sign that cooperation might possibly be achieved for action against the much more significant anthropogenic side-effects of massive gaseous pollution, unsustainable population growth, and hugely unequal human distribution of resources.

Unfortunately anthropogenic side-effects build up slowly and the adverse effects can be ignored for some years. While there is a slim hope that clear thinking people might get the message through to the masses, past behaviour is not encouraging.

I turned my attention to returning to Ragnarök. Raising my spaceship to the surface I activated the controls to achieve orbital flight followed by energy injection to reach a velocity close to the speed of light so that I have arrived back just over 5 years since I left Earth.