

On Nature, Crisis and Hope

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From Global Crises to a World-in-Crisis

Thinking beyond the Anthropocene

Towards the Symbiocene ?

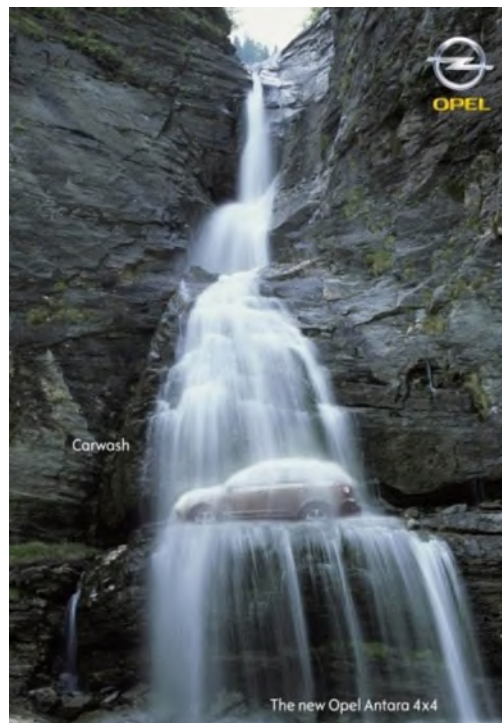
Romanticism, Spirituality, Indigenous
Wisdom, New Philosophy of Science, Deep
Ecology

Hope

Philosophy on hope – individual to
collective

Accounting for 'existential crisis
aversion' beyond denial (journalism
and academia)

Hope in crisis ?





The onward and accelerating crush of global crises and catastrophes can no longer be ignored or simply taken as the latest coincidence of randomly destructive events. These are neither 'accidents' of nature nor society, nor the malevolent acts of someone's preferred God. We are witnessing a *world-in-crisis* even if it is not named as such, and its unfolding in real time. A world in which anthropogenic crises *caused* by the inexorable and ecologically destructive advance of human society and its predominant economic system, are finally reaching their nadir - or endgame.

Planetary threats

Climate Change

Bio-diversity Loss

Mass Extinction

Soil erosion/degradation

Toxic pollution

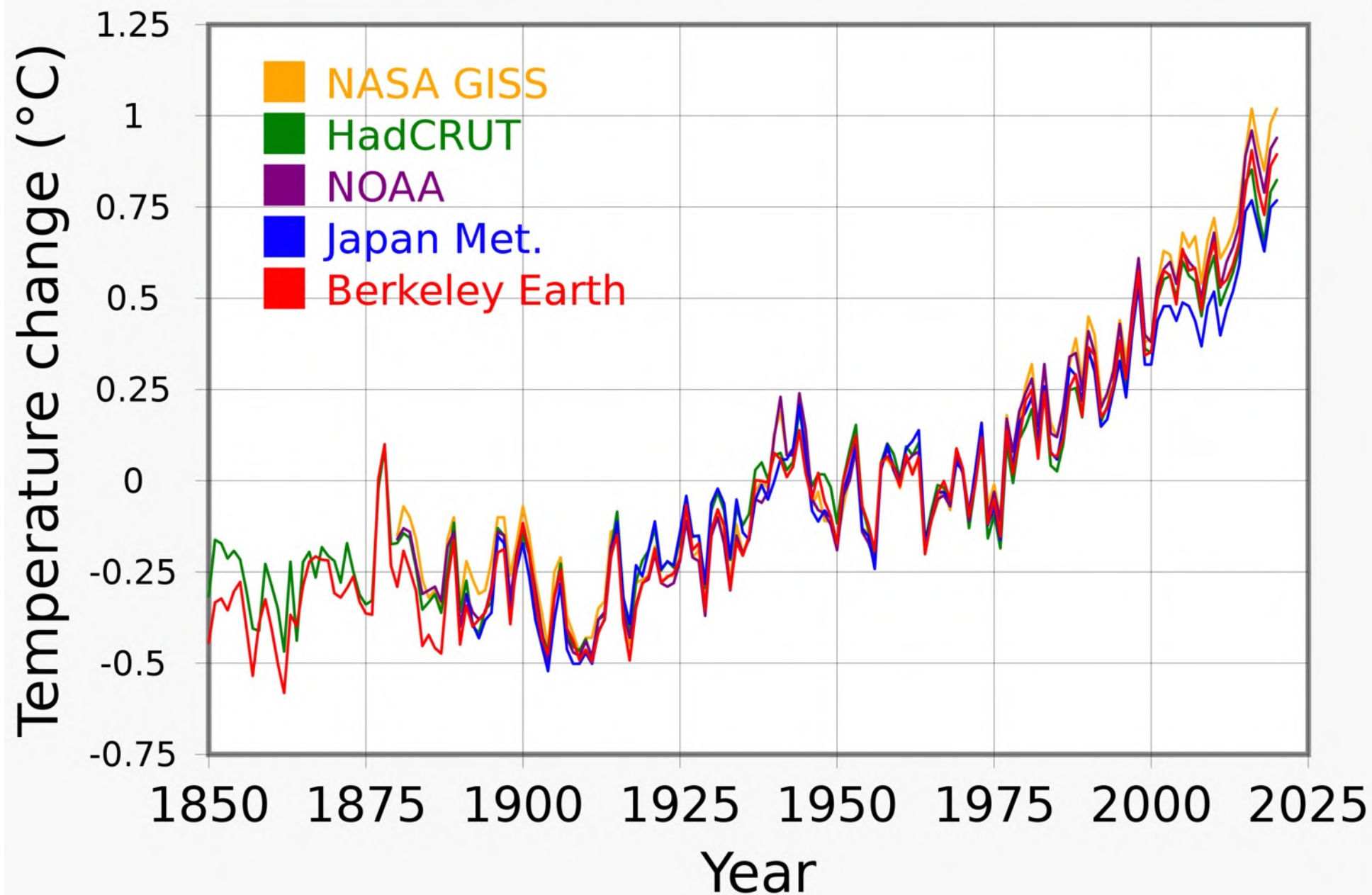
Food, water energy insecurity

Pandemics

Weapons of mass annihilation

Entangled within and precipitating many of them are global financial crashes and deepening inequality, increased political polarisation and instability, failing supply chains, world population growth and mass population movements and, inevitably, increased humanitarian disasters. The latter are no longer *spatially* confined 'over there' in the global South but take root 'at home' in the global North and *temporally* threaten to become permanent emergencies everywhere

Global average temperature change



Climate change

- The latest International Panel on Climate Change Report is unequivocal: 'Pathways reflecting current nationally stated mitigation ambitions as submitted under the Paris Agreement would not limit global warming to 1.5°C, even if supplemented by very challenging increases in the scale and ambition of emissions reductions after 2030.' (IPCC Sixth Assessment Report 2022).
- The politics of hope in the context of climate change, is not looking good: according to UN secretary general António Guterres, "Some government and business leaders are saying one thing – but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic." (*The Guardian* 4.4.22)

INDIA NEWS

Surface temperature tops 60°C in parts of north India, satellite images show

The European Space Agency's website also showed land surface temperatures to be nearing 55 degrees Celsius over many parts of northwest India and crossing 60 degrees Celsius over several pockets.



Experts have suggested that unusually high temperatures this March and April are linked to the climate crisis. (Rahul Raut/HT file photo)

Updated on May 01, 2022 08:12 AM IST



Reuters
@Reuters

Birds fall from the sky as heatwave scorches India
reut.rs/3yvYDBc



6:35 PM · May 11, 2022 · True Anthem

Sixth Mass Extinction of Wildlife Accelerating- Study

BY EARTH.ORG | AFRICA AMERICAS ASIA EUROPE OCEANIA | JUN 4TH 2020 | 5 MINS

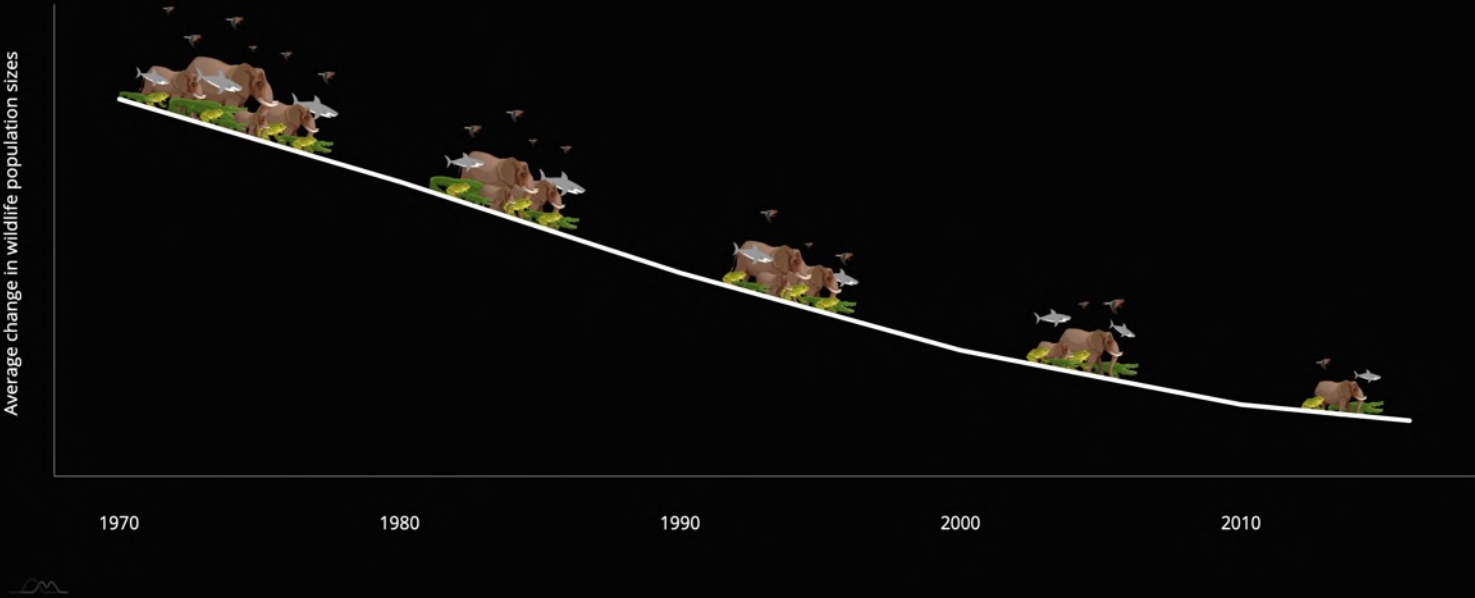
SHARE · BOOST



According to a recent analysis, the sixth mass extinction of wildlife on Earth is accelerating. More than 500 species of land animals are on the brink of extinction and are likely to be lost within 20 years; the same number were lost over the whole of the last century. The scientists say that without the human destruction of nature, this rate of loss would have taken thousands of years and they warn that this may be a tipping point for the collapse of civilisation.

THE LIVING PLANET INDEX

The population sizes of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles have seen an alarming average drop of 68% since 1970.



Insect apocalypse



The global picture



40% of insect species are declining globally with a third endangered and at looming risk of extinction.



The rate of extinction amongst insects is eight times faster than that of animals and birds, with the total mass of the world's insects receding at a speed of 2.5% a year.

Insects run the world

Soil-Agriculture-Food

- A recent study has calculated 'by 2070 soil erosion will increase significantly, by 30% to 66%' (Borrelli et al 2020). Intensive agriculture, including the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and increasing water runoff due to climate change, threaten to massively reduce agricultural yields and generate world food shortages as well as undermine waterways and aquatic ecosystems) (UNEP 2019).

Agriculture is responsible for
80% of global deforestation



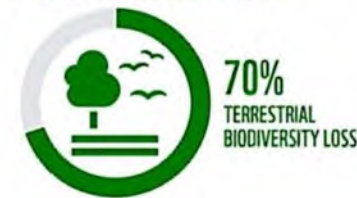
Food systems release
29% of global GHGs



Agriculture accounts for
70% of freshwater use



Drivers linked to food production cause
70% of terrestrial biodiversity loss



Drivers linked to food production cause
50% of freshwater biodiversity loss



52% of agricultural production
land is degraded



CoVID-19: A wake-UP Call?

- Covid-19 is not simply a deadly aberration temporarily wreaking havoc on the world. This is to mistake symptom for cause.
- Covid 19 is both *expressive* of and *exacerbating* today's multiple, accelerating and mutually compounding global crises.
- Zoonotic diseases – Ebola, Avian Flu, MERS on the increase.
- Monocultural agriculture, wildlife trade, human proximity, deforestation, climate change ...



Zoonoses and Nature

To date, methodologically conservative estimates place Covid-19 deaths worldwide at 6 million plus (John Hopkins University 7.4.22), a figure that can be tripled to between 15 million (WHO 2022) and 18 million plus, when estimated in the more realistic terms of excess mortality (Wang et al 2022).

Destruction of Nature Is Triggering Pandemics, Say Leaders of WWF, UN and WHO



By Jordan Davidson | Jun. 17, 2020 11:09AM EST

HEALTH + WELLNESS

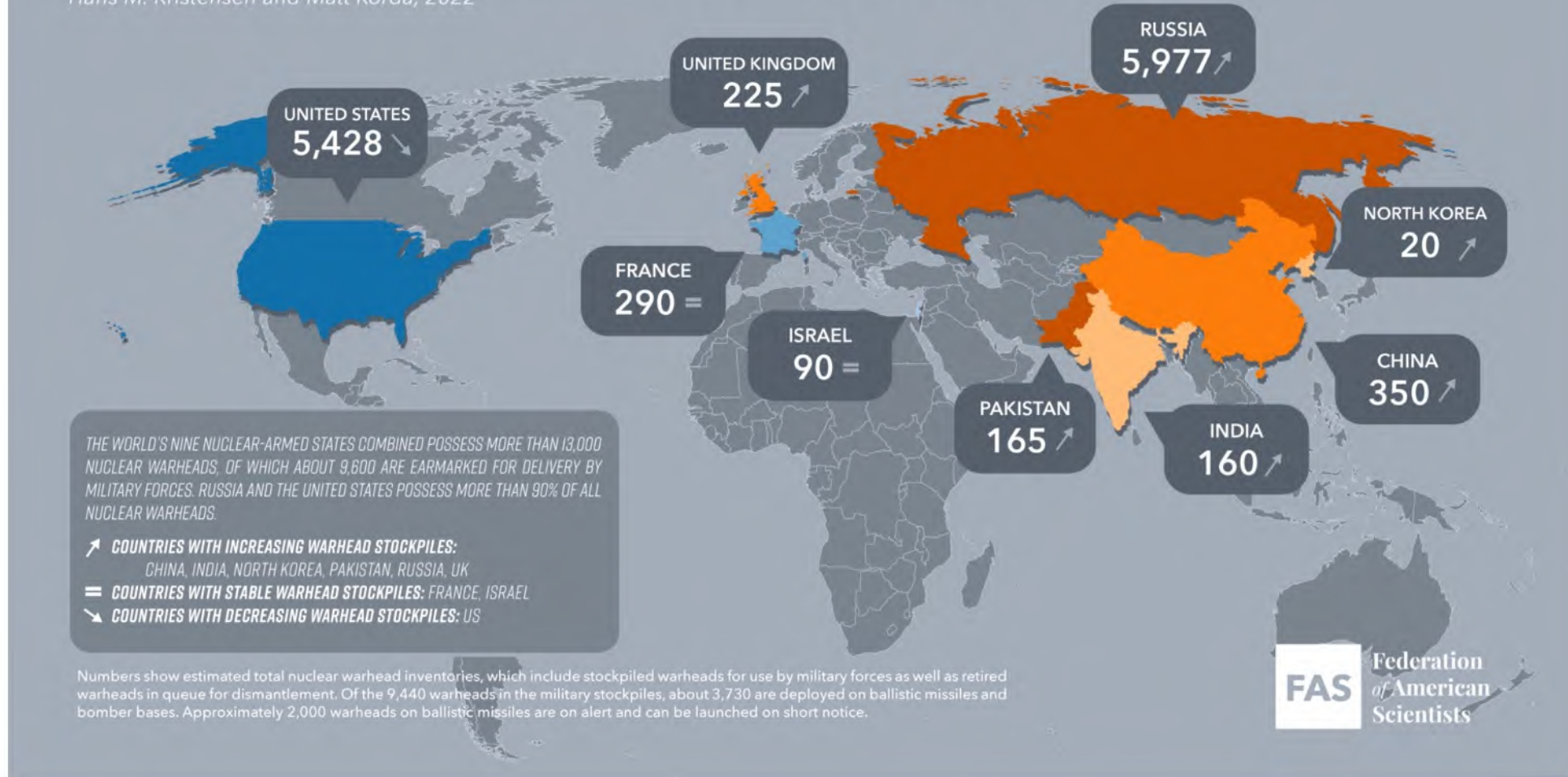


Deforestation and wildlife habitat loss in Uganda. Ron Waddington / CC BY-SA 2.0

Leaders from three international NGOs — the United Nations, the World Health Organization and WWF International — teamed up to issue a stark warning that pandemics like the coronavirus are a direct result of the destruction of nature caused by humans.

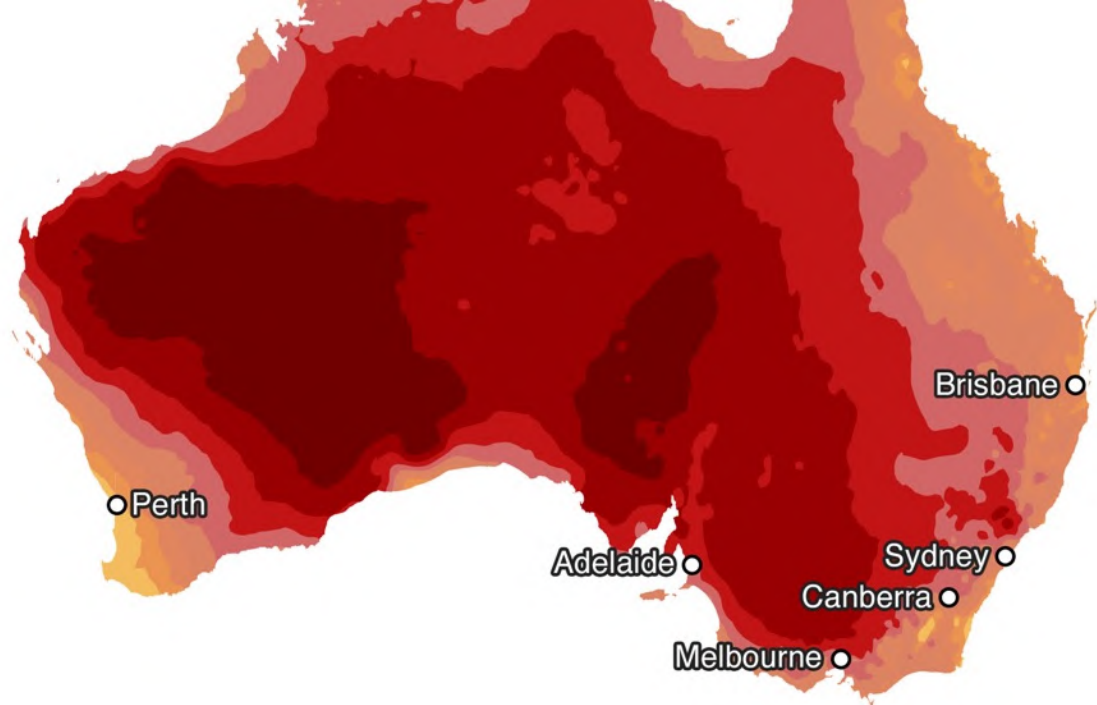
ESTIMATED GLOBAL NUCLEAR WARHEAD INVENTORIES, 2022

Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, 2022



Of the world's 12,700 nuclear warheads, more than 9,400 are in the military stockpiles for use by missiles, aircraft, ships and submarines. The remaining warheads have been retired but are still relatively intact and are awaiting dismantlement). Of the 9,440 warheads in the military stockpiles, some 3,730 are deployed with operational forces (on missiles or bomber bases). Of those, approximately 2,000 US, Russian, British and French warheads are on **high alert**, ready for use on short notice (see table):





'Global Crises' to 'World-In-Crisis' (Planetary emergency)

- Global crises are now *endemic* to our contemporary world-in-crisis.
- For the most part they are globally *encompassing* (which is not to say they are experienced equally around the globe, and issues of (*in*)justice are deeply implicated in them all).
- They are also complexly *entangled* with each other – though too often this is insufficiently recognised and understood.

Example: Today, Covid-19, climate change, conflicts (including Ukraine) and rising fertilizer and food costs are all implicated in the world's latest 'seismic hunger crisis', with 811 million people in the world going to bed hungry and 44 million people in 38 countries 'teetering on the edge of famine' (World Food Programme 2022).

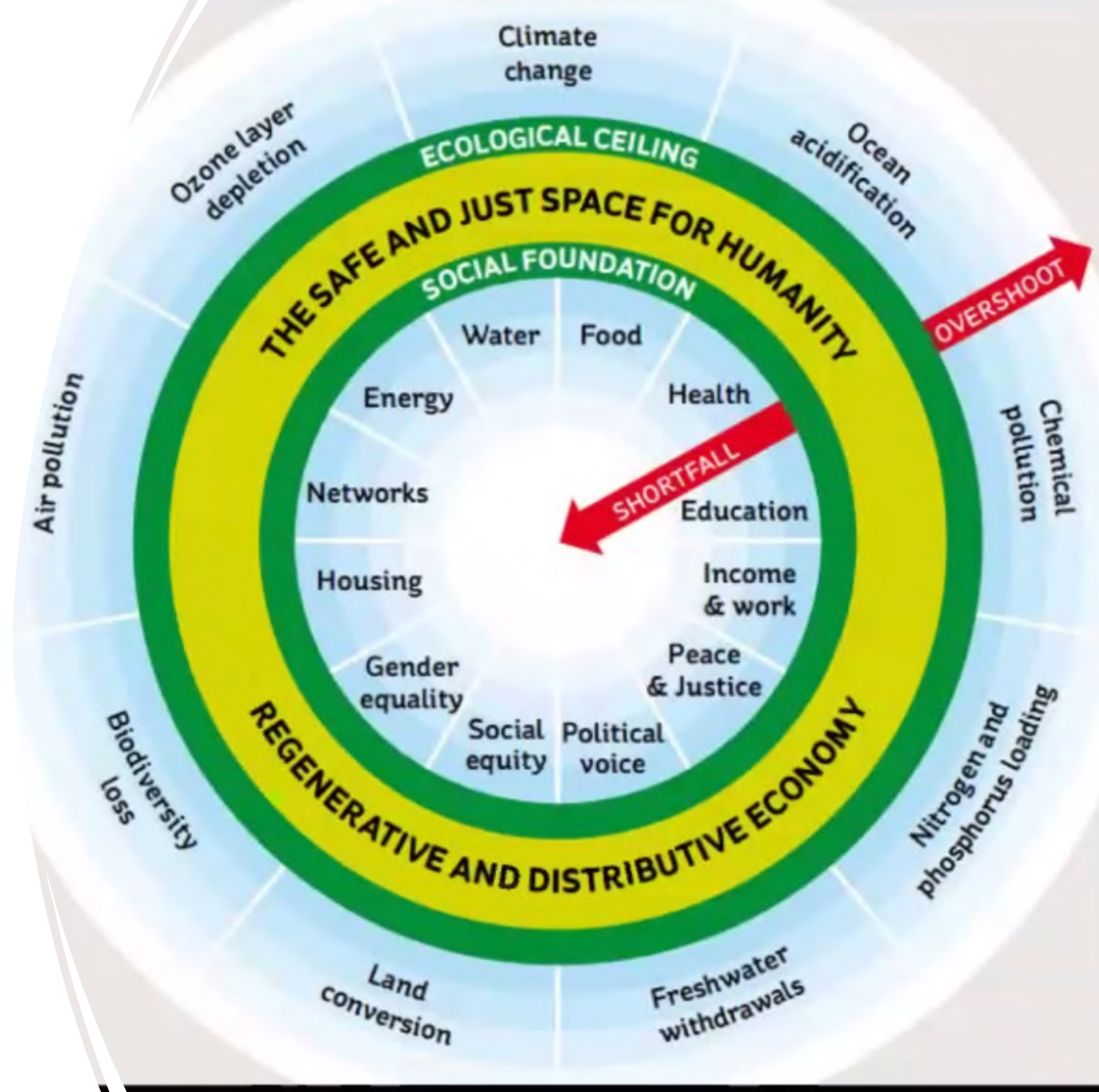
Thinking Beyond the Anthropocene

- **The ANTHROPOCENE:** The Great Acceleration – J-curves of industrialism and modernity, (Steffan et al 2015), (periodization, causative/constitutive, more than human agency)
- **The EREMOCENE** – The Age of Loneliness (E.O. Wilson)
- **The AGE OF EXTINCTION** ‘is a near certainty in the next few decades, and the risk is increasing continually as long as perpetual growth of the human enterprise remains the goal of economic and political systems. (Paul Erlich)
- **GAIA** – James Lovelock
- **LIMITS TO GROWTH** (1972), **PLANETARY EMERGENCY** (2019) (Club of Rome)
- **The CAPITALOCENE and WORLD-ECOLOGY**

“The crisis today is not multiple but singular and manifold. It is not a crisis of capitalism *and* nature but of modernity-*in*-nature.’ (Jason Moore 2015: *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, p.4).

And Economics...

- Planetary ceilings and overshooting and challenge to (ecologically myopic) economics:
- Doughnut economics (Raworth 2017)
- Steady-state economics (Daly 1991),
- Circular economies and regenerative culture and agriculture (Wahl 2019),
- Post growth (Jackson 2021),
- Degrowth (Hickel 2021),
- Sacred economics (Eisenstein 2018) and ecological civilization (Eisenstein, 2021, Lent 2021, Korton 2021).



And Philosophy of Science –

(a crucial
development)

... the Zeitgeist (spirit of the age) of the early 21st century is being shaped by a profound change of paradigms, characterized by a shift of metaphors from the world as machine to the world as network. The new paradigm may be called a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts. It may also be called an ecological view, if the term 'ecological' is used in a much broader sense than usual. Deep ecological awareness recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical processes of nature.

Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi (2014) *The Systems View of Life*, p. 12

Dominant Worldview versus DEEP ECOLOGY

The story we tell ourselves of 'a discrete and separate self in a desacralized world that is other.' (Charles Eisenstein).

Entitlement, Surety, Control, Autonomy, Progress, Exceptionalism (ESCAPE) (Jem Bendell 'Deep Adaptation')

Western Science – Enlightenment Rationality

closed, mechanistic, reductionist, linear,
prediction/hypothesis, control,

versus

open, complex, emergent, feedback loops, autopoiesis
symbiotic, web of life (fractals, holarchy, complex
systems)

Human 'Nature' - Beyond Social Darwinism, Hobbesian nightmare

Traditional indigenous culture

Earth centered world views grounded in systems of relationship
and reciprocity.

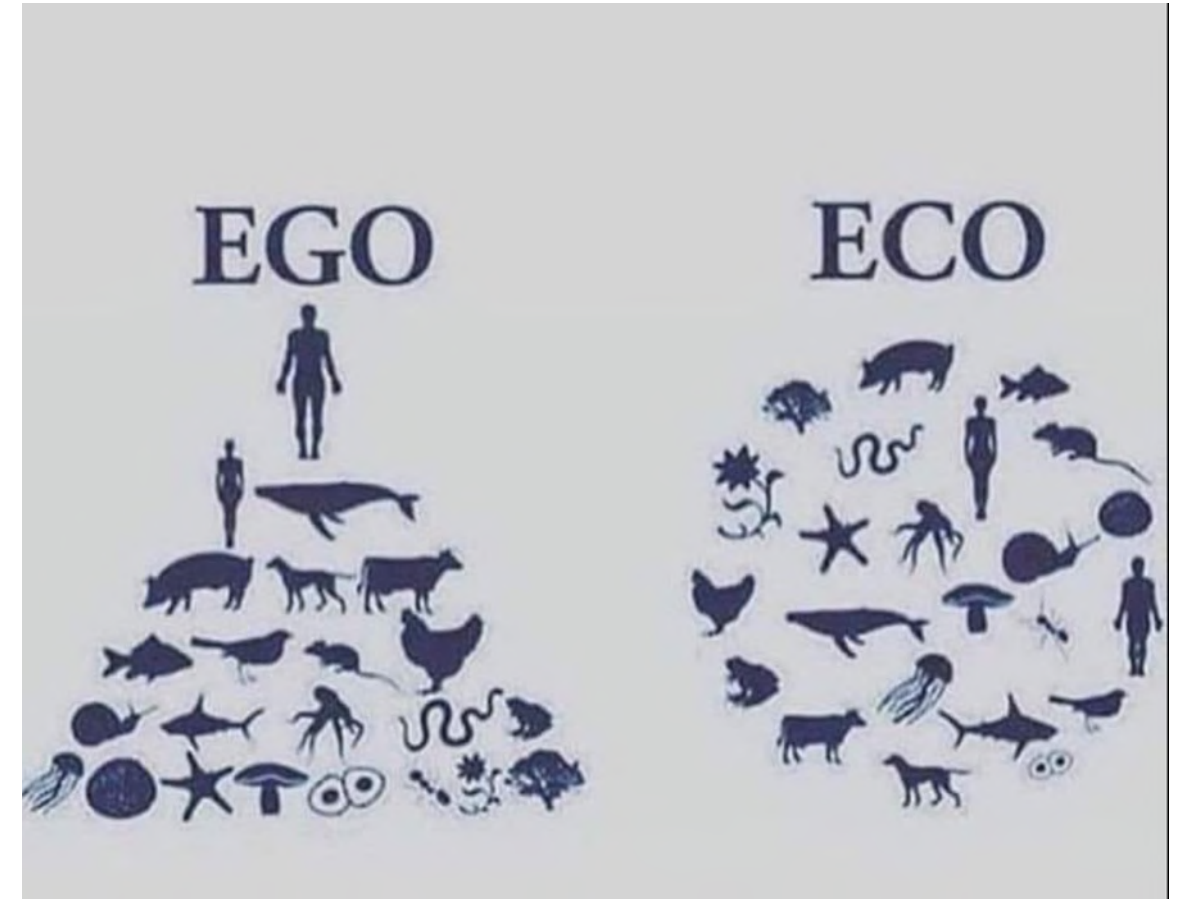
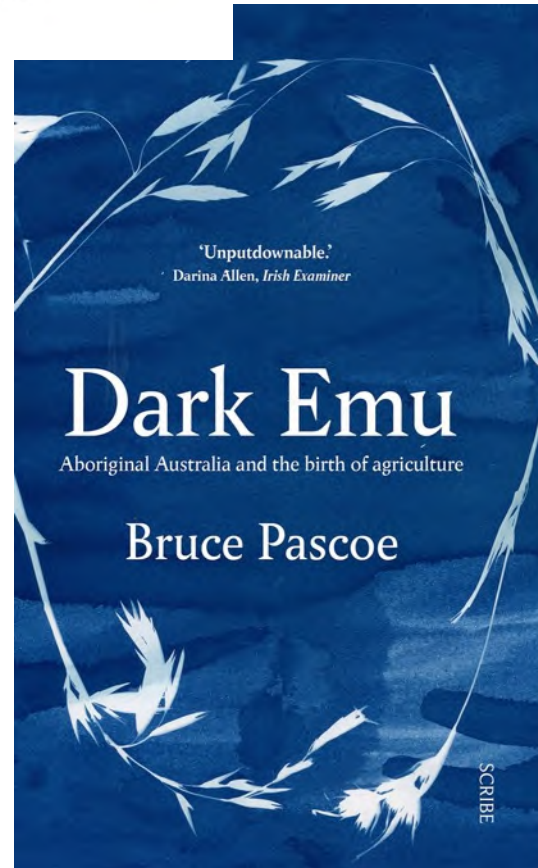
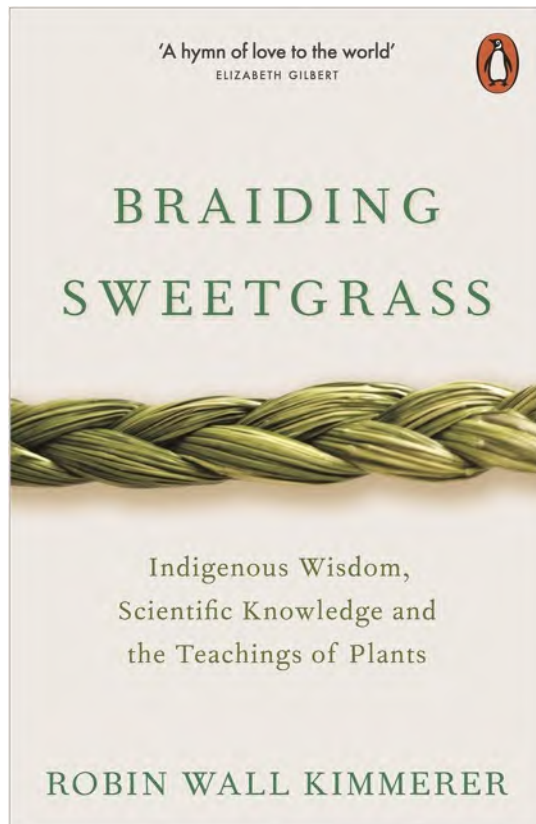


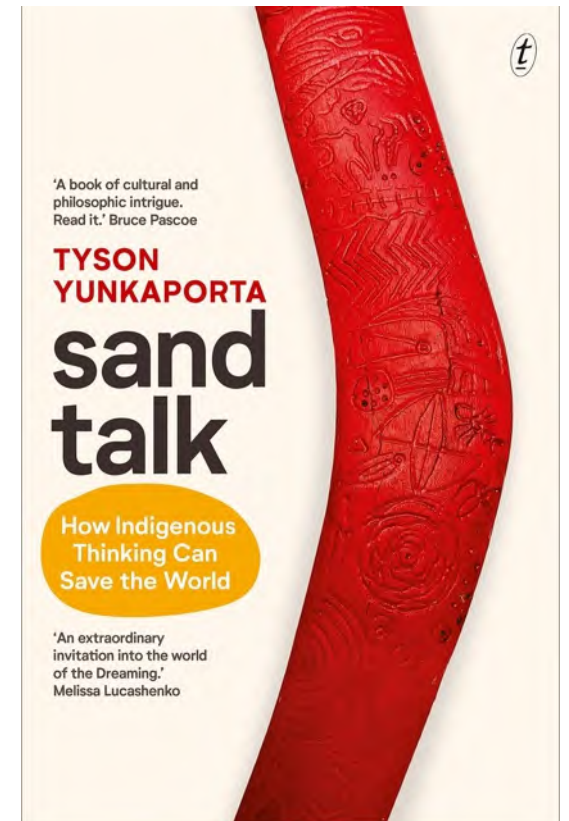


Illustration by Ayuko Hashino

ANCIENT GREEN
Moss, Climate, and Deep Time
by Robin Wall Kimmerer



Within these pages you'll experience fallen leaves, emerging cicadas, changing Arctic landscapes, reflections on motherhood and beauty, the kinship among trees, inward migrations, and imagined post-apocalyptic realities. Vol. 3: Living with the Unknown.
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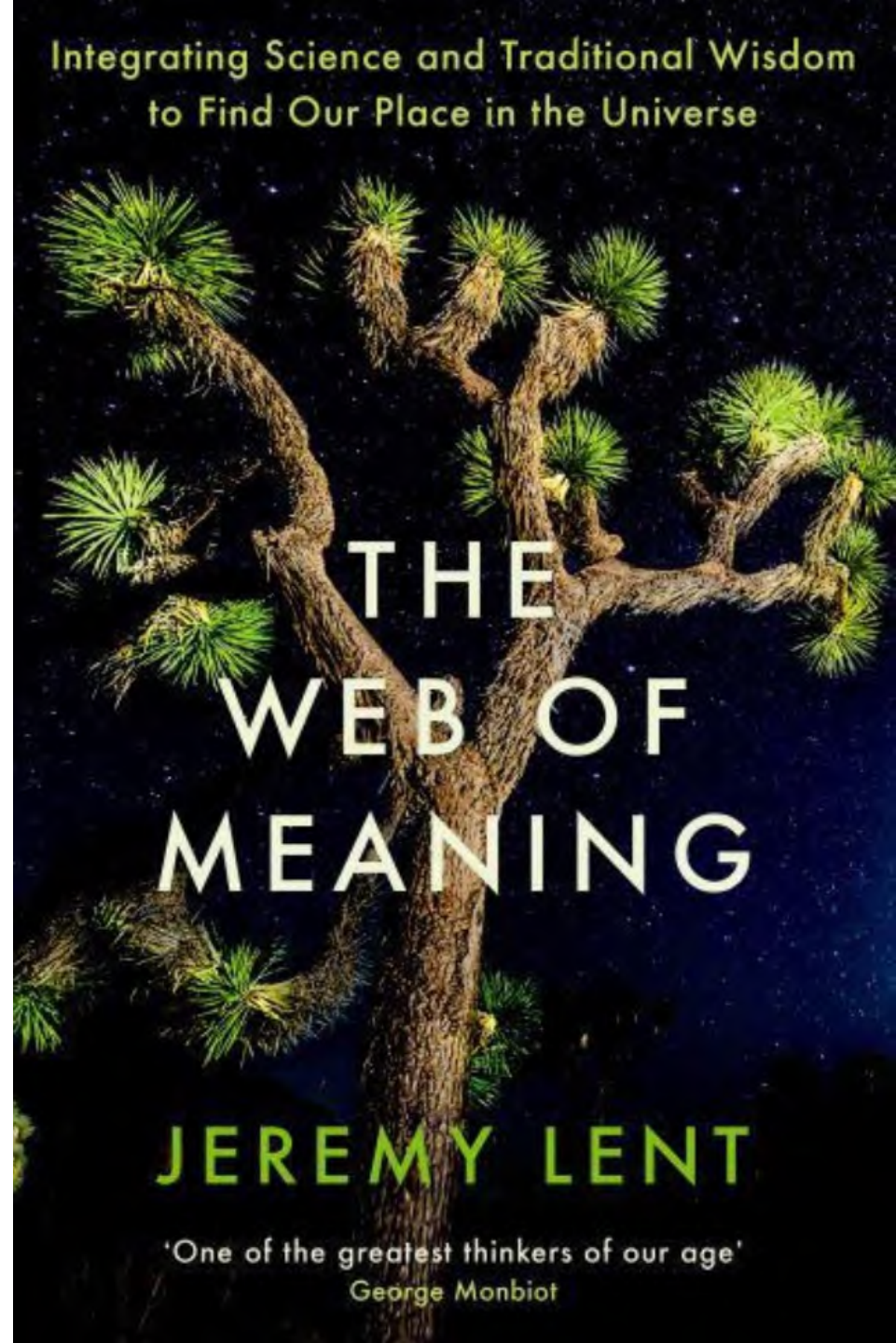
TOWARD THE SYMBIOCENE

(ecological
civilization)

- Romanticism
- Indigenous Wisdom - sustainable relation to nature, reciprocity (ubuntu)
- Deep Ecology (Arne Naess (1912-2009) shallow vs deep ecology)
- The Great Unravelling (Macy 2021), the Great Turning (Kelly and Macy 2021), the Great Dying (Haque 2021), and the Great Derangement (Ghosh 2016).
- Ideas of spirituality, Buddhism and Taoism, pantheism have also coloured the so-called 'Great Awakening' - not only to the immanent forces of collapse inherent to the world system but also to the demand and desire for a more Earth centred way of life and (inter)being (Loy 2018, Lent 2021, Macy 2021, Hanh 2021).
- Importantly, this 'awakening' recognises not only psychological feelings of eco-grief, anger, and despair, of disempowerment and mortality (Gillespie 2021), but also the 'gift' to re-vision our sense of self and relationship to others within the natural world (Macy 2021).

THE SYMBIOCENE

- “An era characterized by the symbiotic flourishing of humans and Earth. In contrast to the current period, commonly known as the Anthropocene, in which nature is treated as a resource to be exploited, human activity in the Symbiocene would be organized as an ecological civilization, based on life-affirming principles, to actively regenerate and sustain Earth’s health. The Symbiocene could, in principle, be an era of extremely long duration, in which humans embark on learning how to integrate deeply with the non-human cohabitants of the Earth, with the aim of developing a truly planetary intelligence.”





We breathe in what plants and trees breathe out, and they breathe in what we breathe out. All life is interconnected.

Tree rings & Human fingerprint



We are not so different. We are Nature.



David Attenborough Fans.

12 February · 🌱

If Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) finds its leaves are being nibbled by deer, it switches genes on to make them spiky when they regrow. So on taller Holly trees, the upper leaves (which are out of reach) have smooth edges, while the lower leaves are prickly



The Edge of the
World,

Anna
Berezovskaya



Hope....

- Hope is not cheery optimism!
- 'Critical thinking without hope is cynicism, but hope without critical thinking is naiveté.' Maria Popova
- **Albert Camus, Victor Frankl, Vaclav Havel....**, We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.' **Martin Luther King Jr.**
- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, also ***Pedagogy of Hope*** (1992). "without a minimum of hope we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can turn into tragic despair.
- **BLM Aims** to: Provide hope and inspiration for collective action to build collective power to achieve collective transformation, rooted in grief and rage but pointed towards vision and dreams.' Patrice Cullors, BLM. **"Love and rage"** XR
- **Joanna Macy (2012) *Active Hope*** 'Work that reconnects,' eco-grief transformative spiral: coming from gratitude, honor our pain for the world, seeing with new eyes, going forth, in 'The Great Turning. (re-enchantment)
- Hope locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act....Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable, an alternative to certainty of both optimism and pessimists. Optimists think it will all be fine without our involvement; pessimists take the opposite position; both excuse themselves from acting." **Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*. (2016)**
- **Emergency/emergence. Enforced enlightenment, The lotus and the mud. The owl of Minerva....**
- **The sleeping giant - Crisis altruism – Civil Sphere**
 - And yet, of course, everything in the mainstream media, suggests that popular resistance is ridiculous, pointless or criminal, unless it is far away, was long ago ,or, ideally, both. These are the forces that prefer the giant remains asleep. Rebecca Solnit *Hope in the Dark*. (2016): xxiii.

Ulrich Beck, 'Enforced enlightenment' and 'emancipatory catastrophism.'

Global risk comes as a threat, but it also 'brings hope.'

Ecological 'bads,' seen as the unintended side effects of producing commodified 'goods',

Unintended common 'goods' now flow from manufactured catastrophic 'bads.'

In the context of climate change, for example, the growing 'anticipation of global catastrophe violates sacred (unwritten) norms of human existence and civilization' and feelings of 'anthropological shock' can produce wide ranging processes of 'social catharsis.' In such circumstances, argues Beck, 'new normative horizons as a frame of social and political action and a cosmopolitized field of activities emerge.'

Ulrich Beck (2016) *The Metamorphosis of the World*. pp. 117-118

The Civil Sphere

The premise of Civil Sphere is that **societies are not governed by power alone and not fuelled only by the pursuit of self-interest. Feelings for others matter**, and they are structured by the boundaries of solidarity. How solidarity is structured, how far it extends, what it's composed of – these are the critical issues for every social order, and especially for orders that aim at the good life. **Solidarity is possible because people are oriented not only to the here and now but to the ideal, to the transcendent, to what they hope will be the everlasting.**

Jeffrey Alexander (2006) *The Civil Sphere*, p. 3

Existential crisis aversion, beyond denialism

- Drill deep not skate wide, research silos, disciplinary outlooks – research topics/issues
- Academic institutional norms, expectations – courses, publications, research grants, career advance
- Alleviates imposter syndrome
- Cool/dispassionate stance cf personal reflexivity, eco-anxieties
- Phenomenology of everyday life, ‘dull compulsion of the economic’
- Methodological nationalism
- Epistemology (e.g. social constructivism) and Presentism (temporalities) cf future imaginaries



Seeds of Hope from the Dark Telos of Despair

“When philosophy paints its grey on grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey on grey, it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.”

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel,
Philosophy of Right
Preface, (1820/21) (translated
by T. M. Knox)

From 'global Crises' to A 'WORLD-IN-CRISIS'

Global crises are crises whose origins and outcomes cannot for the most part be confined inside the borders of nation states; rather, they are *endemic* to, *enmeshed* within, and potentially *encompassing* of today's late-modern, capitalistic, world – a de-territorializing world that has become increasingly interconnected, interdependent and in flux, that is to say, *globalized*.

Their impacts and tumultuous effects register through and beyond the porous borders of nation states and for the most part require cooperative responses from civil societies and systems of governance that are no less transnational in scope.

(Cottle 2011a: 2)

TO media and Communication.....

How global crises are defined, dramatized and deliberated on the media stage, how they are signalled, symbolized and sensationalised, and how they are denied and dissimulated or simply ignored and rendered invisible, proves critical. The stakes couldn't be higher given the catastrophic consequences of combined global crises now impacting on the world's ecology and all life forms on planet earth, including human society.

Media and communications are intimately involved in the conflicts and divisions produced or exacerbated by global crises as well as the enactments and demands for peace, including those for social and environmental justice.





Some key CONCEPTS

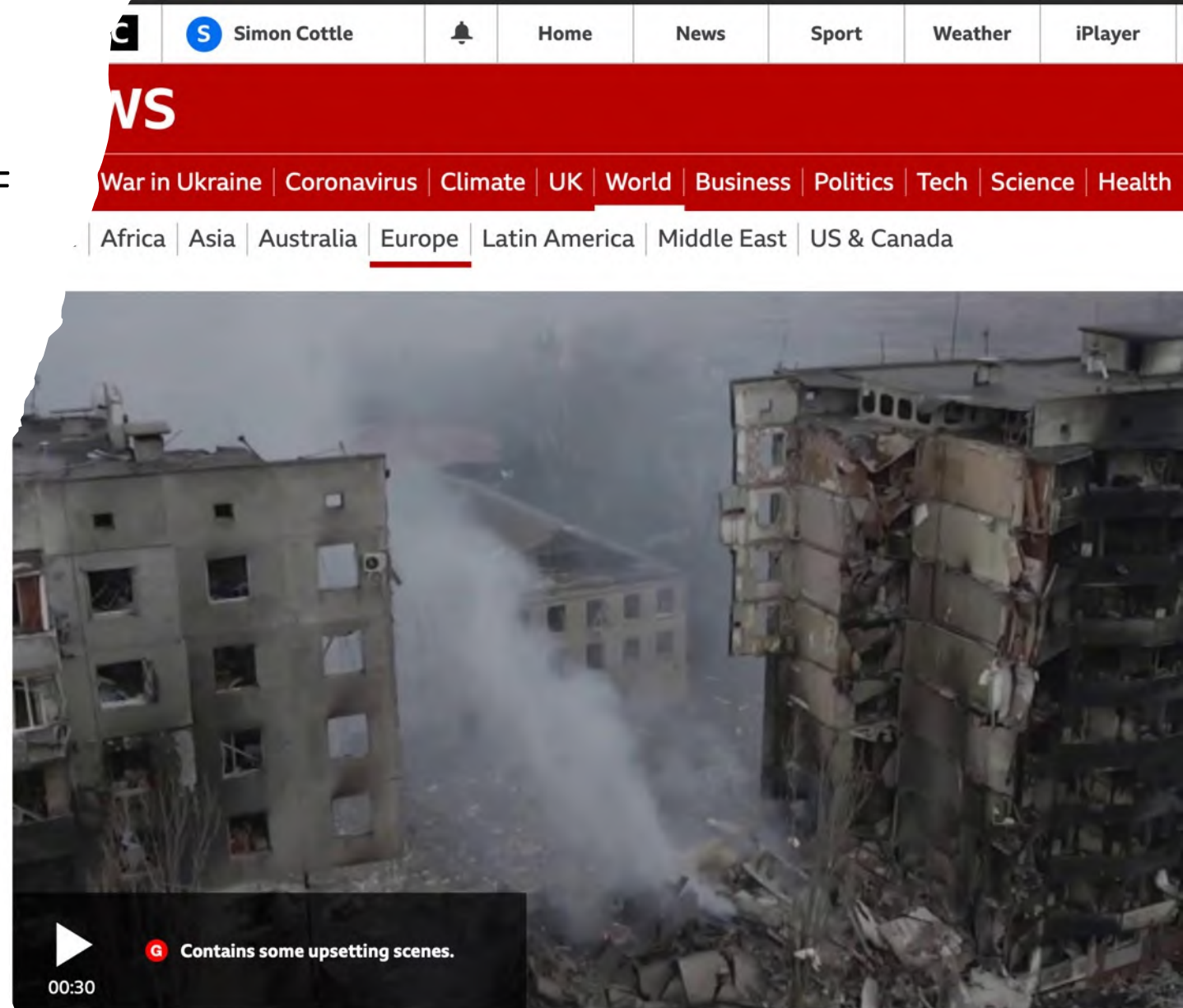
- Media Ecology
- Beyond Dualisms
- 6 x S's: scale, speed, saturation, social relations
enfranchisement, surveillance, seeing
- Reporting global crises – Ontology – epistemology –
methodology (signalling, symbolization, staging)
- Global surveillance, Global focusing events, Global spectacle
- Communicative architecture – information – images;
deliberation-display; analysis-affect; exposition-expression;
voice-visualization.
- Bearing witness, the responsibility to report and the civil
sphere.

War Reporting – RESEARCH AGENDA

- Propaganda, censorship, information war
- Changing communication technologies
- Political economy, Sociology of sources, Cultural studies, Law/legal, Taste/decency, Phenomenology
- Bearing witness, personalized human stories
- Cyber warfare, Memes, Crowd-sourcing, Social media, Drones,

War Reporting: and the OBLITERATION OF ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

- Disregarding
e.g military carbon footprint
- Displacement
e.g IPCC report post COP26
- Diminishment
e.g Amazon reports
- Disparagement
e.g Gas/oil and fossil fuels
- Duplicitousness
e.g false flag – biochemical weapons



Ukraine conflict: Drone shows extent of damage in Borodyanka

The footage shows the extent of destruction to buildings as well as Russian military bases in the Ukrainian town of Borodyanka, 60km (40 miles) north-west of Kyiv.