

Being able to see that things are hopeless
and yet be determined to make them otherwise



Artistic engagement in an age of climate fear



Art work: Ilkka Halso, <http://ilkka.halso.net>



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Structure of presentation

- Touching base on climate fear
- Turning the tide, or
- Living it *through*
- The ecological crisis as an aesthetic crisis
- Art as our antennae to the world
- Acting *as if*
- Embracing uncertainty

TOUCHING BASE

LIVE

3:42 pm ET

U.S. SENATE

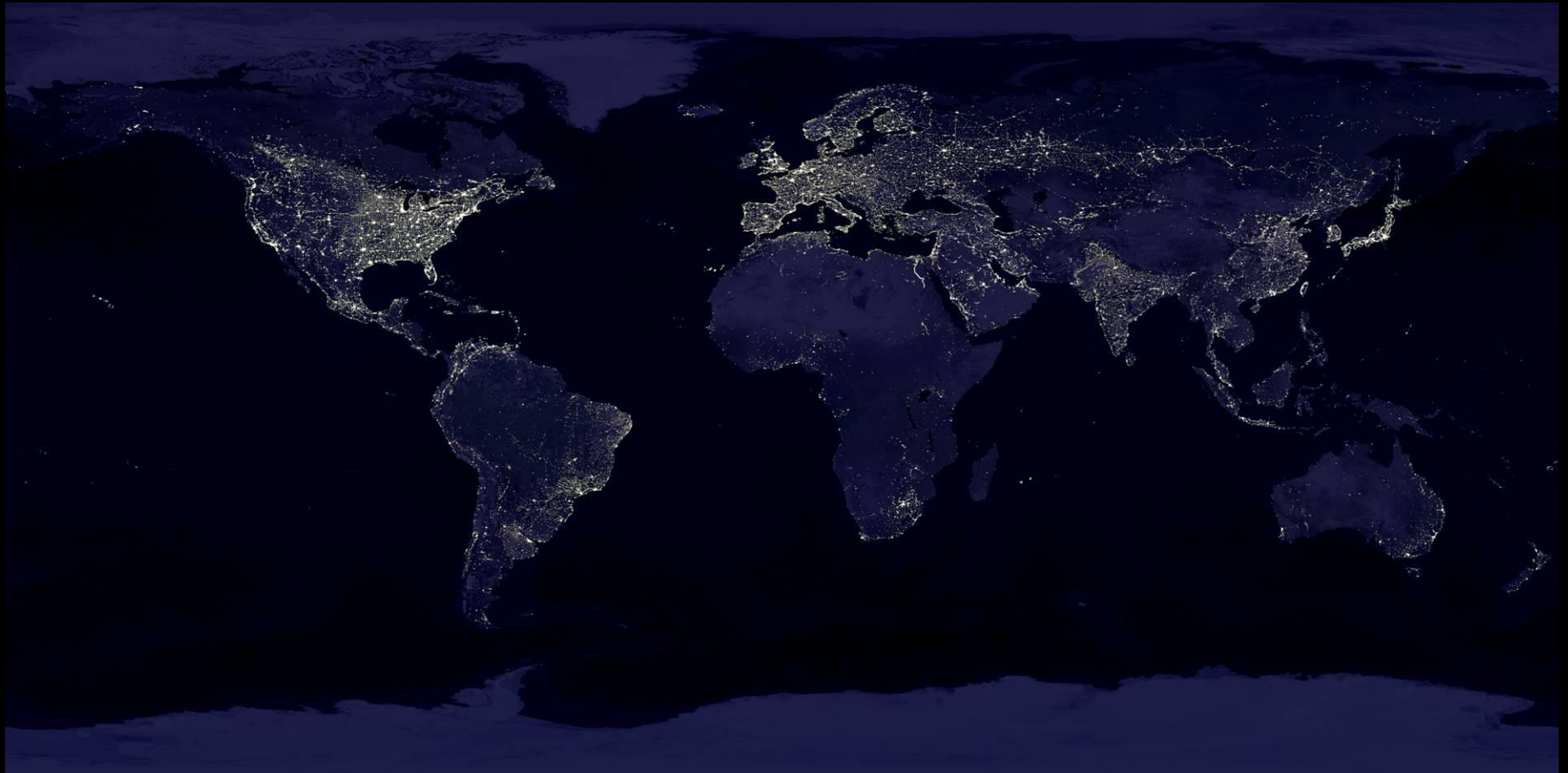
SEN. JAMES INHOFE
R-Oklahoma

C-SPAN2
c-span.org

Source of image: www.washingtonpost.com

The Anthropocene

this era in which humans have become
a dominant influence on the environment



Gaia-hypothesis



James Lovelock Dr. Doom (*Newsweek*, 2006)



Source of image: <http://gameguideworld.net/mad-max-video-game-review>

‘There is something wrong with you if you are *not* profoundly saddened or depressed by the state of things at the moment. You need help, to work out why you are *not* depressed.’

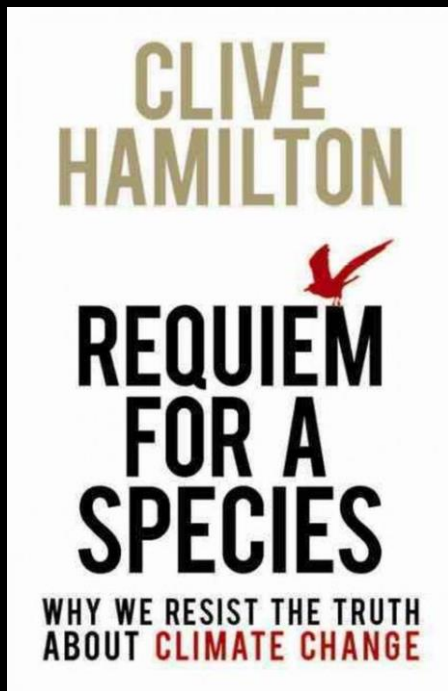
Dr. Stephan Harding



‘If the news that in the past 40 years the world has lost over 50 percent of its vertebrate wildlife (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish) *fails* to tell us there is something wrong with the way we live, it’s hard to imagine what could.’

George Monbiot, 12 October 2014

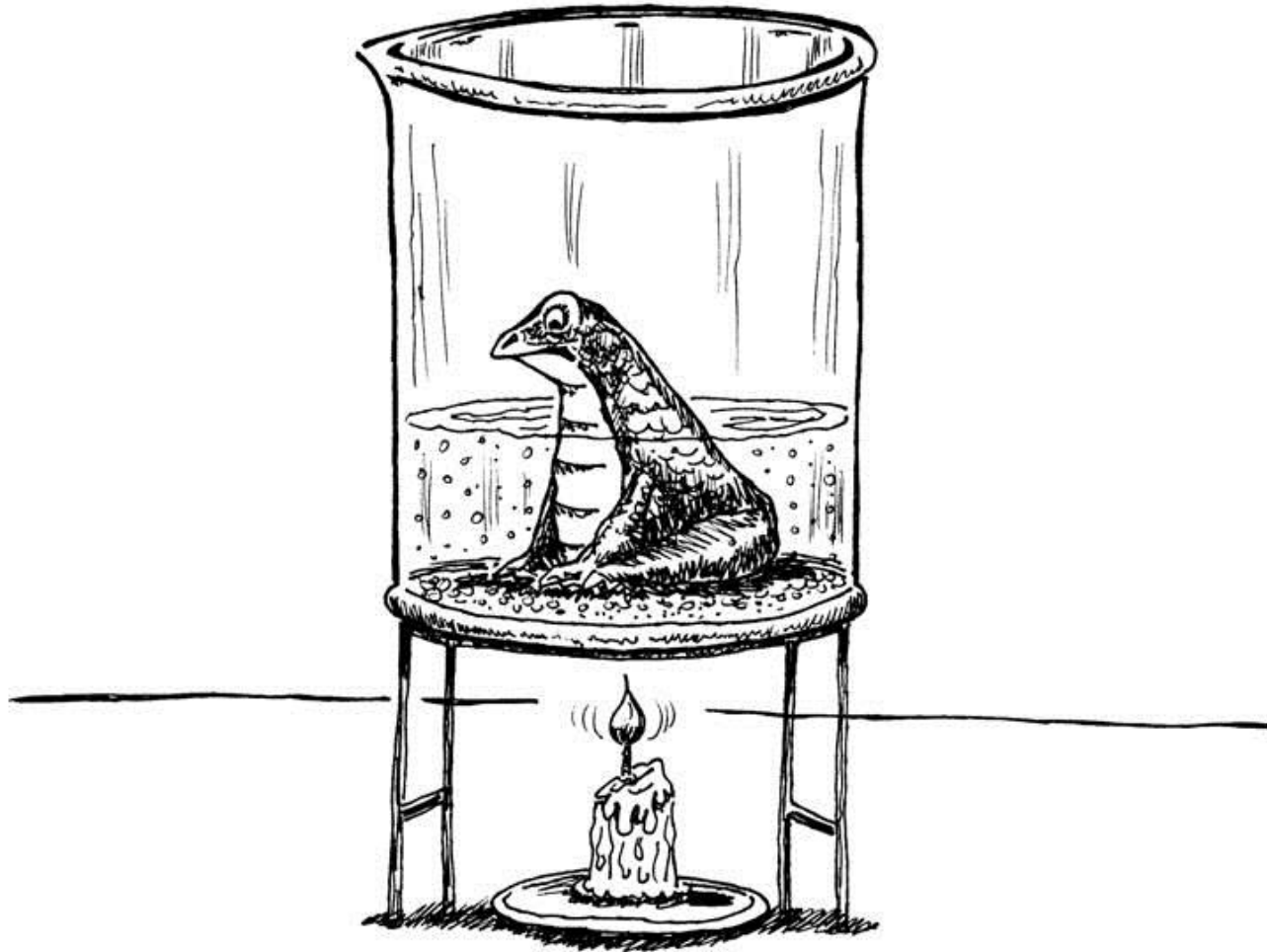


The book cover for 'This Changes Everything' by Naomi Klein features a black and white portrait of the author, Naomi Klein, with shoulder-length hair, looking directly at the camera. In the top right corner, there is a small white speech bubble containing the hashtag '#PowellsEvents'. The title 'THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING' is printed in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font, with the author's name 'NAOMI KLEIN' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font above it. The text is set against a solid blue rectangular background on the right side of the cover.

#PowellsEvents

NAOMI
KLEIN
THIS
CHANGES
EVERYTHING

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 1 • 7:00 PM • POWELL'S BOOKS AT CEDAR HILLS CROSSING



Source of image:

<http://performancemanagementcompanyblog.com/2012/09/30/thoughts-on-boiling-frogs-and-other-metaphors-on-change>

The failure of our imagination



Philosopher Günther Anders

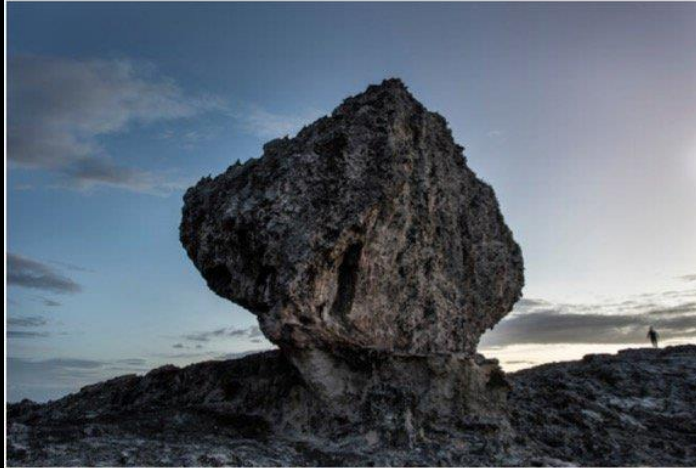
Split between what is
technically feasible
and what we are capable
of imagining

Super-liminal sensations

‘We are blind
to the apocalypse’
(1956)

Game over?

THE DANGER OF CLIMATE CHANGE



CHARLES OMMANNEY/THE WASHINGTON POST, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Scientists Warn of Perilous Climate Shift Within Decades, Not Centuries

- The nations of the world agreed years ago to try to limit global warming to a level they hoped would prove tolerable.
- But a group of leading climate scientists warned that permitting a warming of that magnitude would be highly dangerous.

[New York Times](#)

New York Times
March 22, 2016



A WORMHOLE ?

Source of image: www.popsci.com/article/technology/will-wormhole-travel-ever-be-possible

**YOU CONTROL
CLIMATE CHANGE.**



TURN DOWN. SWITCH OFF. RECYCLE. WALK. CHANGE

Overcoming the psychological barriers to climate action

What We Think About



When We Try Not To Think About

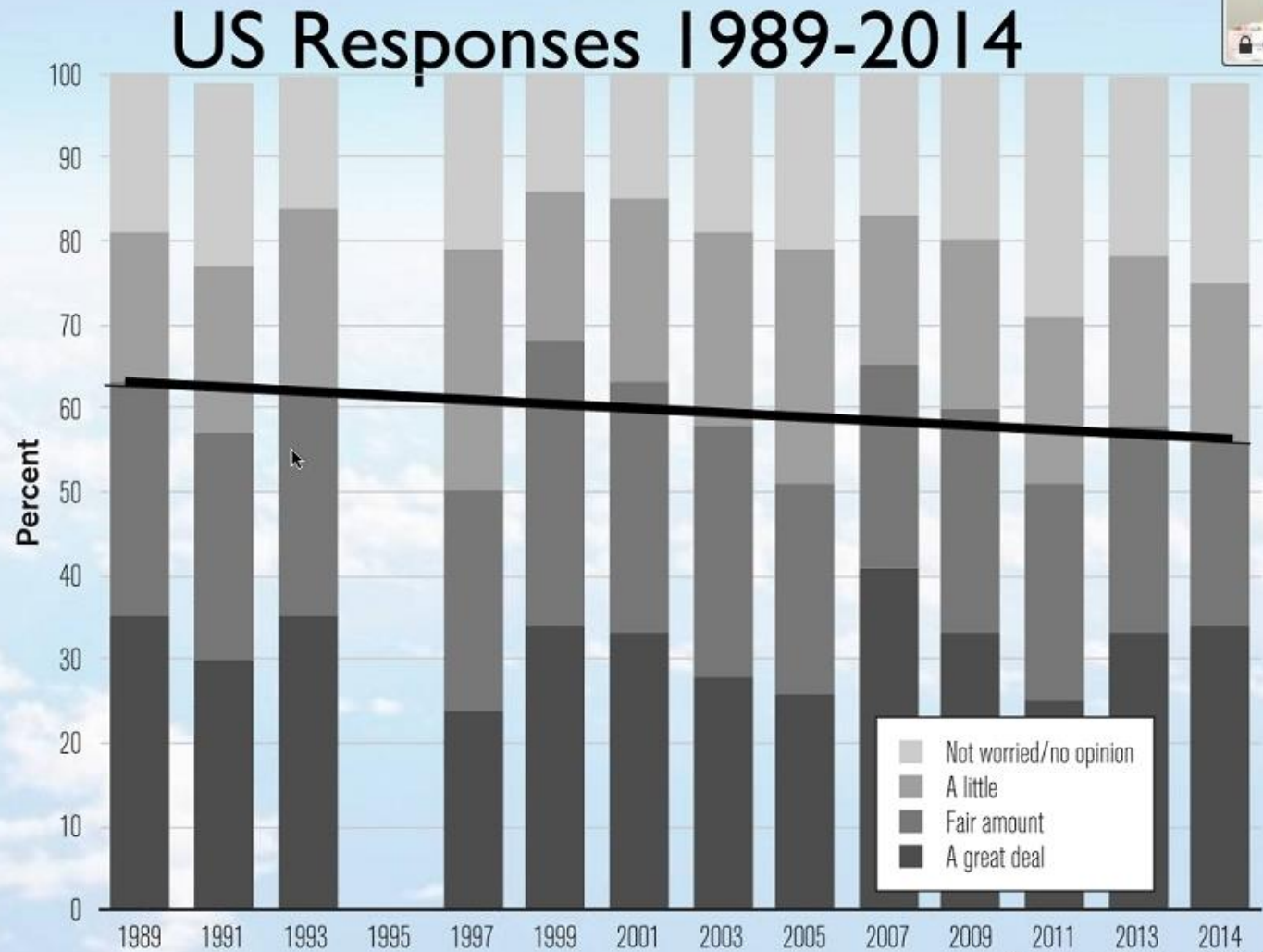
Global Warming

Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action

Per Espen Stoknes

The problem is not: lack of information

“How much do you personally worry about the greenhouse effect or global warming?”



Per Espen Stoknes, BI

Source: Gallup, 2014.

Source of table: OECD Webinar Per Espen Stoknes, 30 March 2016

Per Espen Stoknes

Insights from social psychology:

- Cognitive dissonance
(beliefs don't always match up with behaviours)
- Behaviour *drives* attitudes
(instead of knowledge → attitude → behaviour)

Need for new strategies:

- Use of supportive frames ('health') and the power of social networks ('because your neighbour does it too')
- Develop new stories of deep transformation ('green & smart growth')

LIVING
IT THROUGH



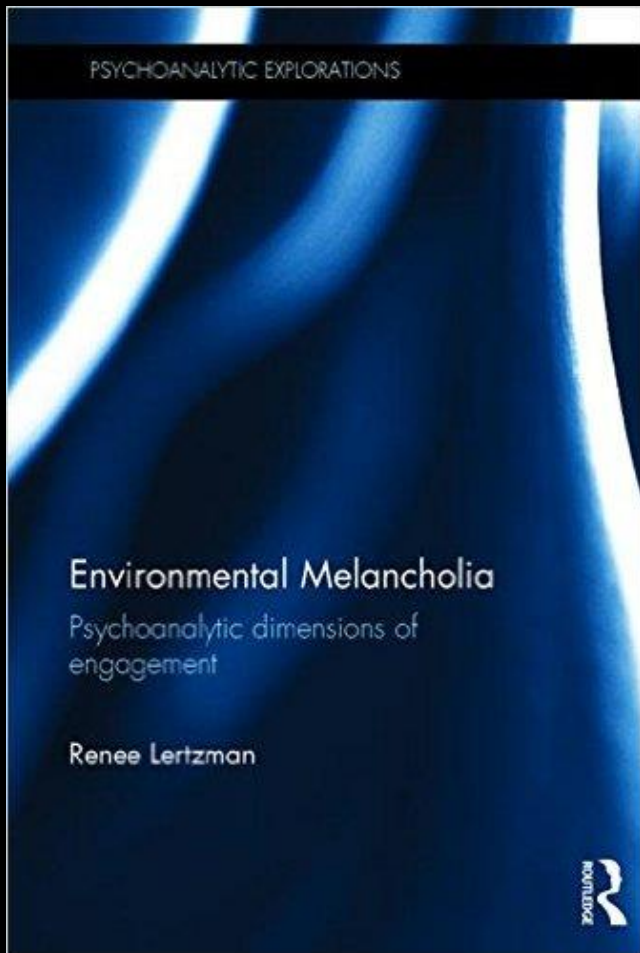
From an ecopsychological viewpoint, climate change is like the visible tip of the iceberg, while just beneath the surface of our collective consciousness, a far greater crisis is playing out.

Source of image: www.weirdoptics.com/iceberg-illusion



Source of image: film *Melancholia* by Lars von Trier

Renee Lertzman: *Environmental Melancholia*



‘The myth of apathy’

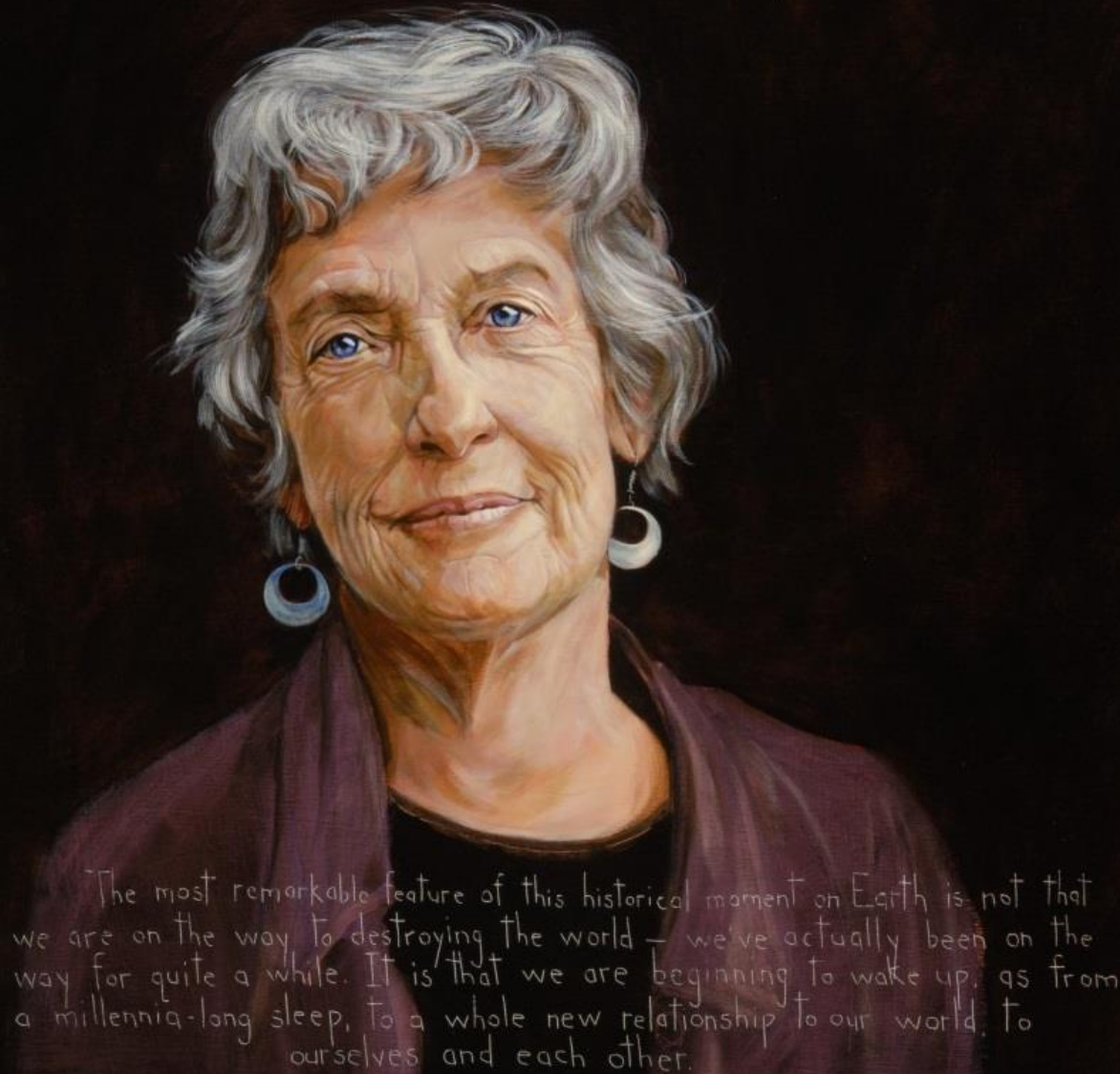
Psychoanalytic dimensions:

- Ambivalence, loss, overwhelm are missing factors.
- Fear and anxiety can contribute to defense mechanisms such as denial and dissociation.
- Apathy as a ‘miracle of protection’. When we are in utter fiasco this is where we can rest until we can do something else.
- Humans *do* care: they have capacity for profound **reparation** through accessing their creative engagement with the world. But what people care about won’t naturally translate into action.

Renee Lertzman

- Denial in climate change circles ('wilful ignorance') is *not* the same as denial in a clinical context (a complex defence mechanism to avoid intolerable levels of anxiety and stress)
- Humans often respond **irrationally** to anxiety, their perception of reality can get distorted.
- The ability to tolerate discomfort and uncertainty is important. The capacity to be curious, without constantly listening to one's 'inner critic', is useful: To know how disturbing our current reality is and *yet* to inquire into it.

Joanna Macy

A detailed oil painting of Joanna Macy, an elderly woman with short, wavy white hair and blue eyes. She is wearing a dark purple shawl over a black top and large, light blue circular earrings. The background is dark and textured. The painting is framed by a thin gold border.

The most remarkable feature of this historical moment on Earth is not that we are on the way to destroying the world — we've actually been on the way for quite a while. It is that we are beginning to wake up, as from a millennia-long sleep, to a whole new relationship to our world, to ourselves and each other.

Joanna Macy
'The Great Work'

Portrait by Robert Shetterly
www.americanswhotellthetruth.org

Love in the Age of Ecological Apocalypse

*Cultivating the Relationships
We Need to Thrive*

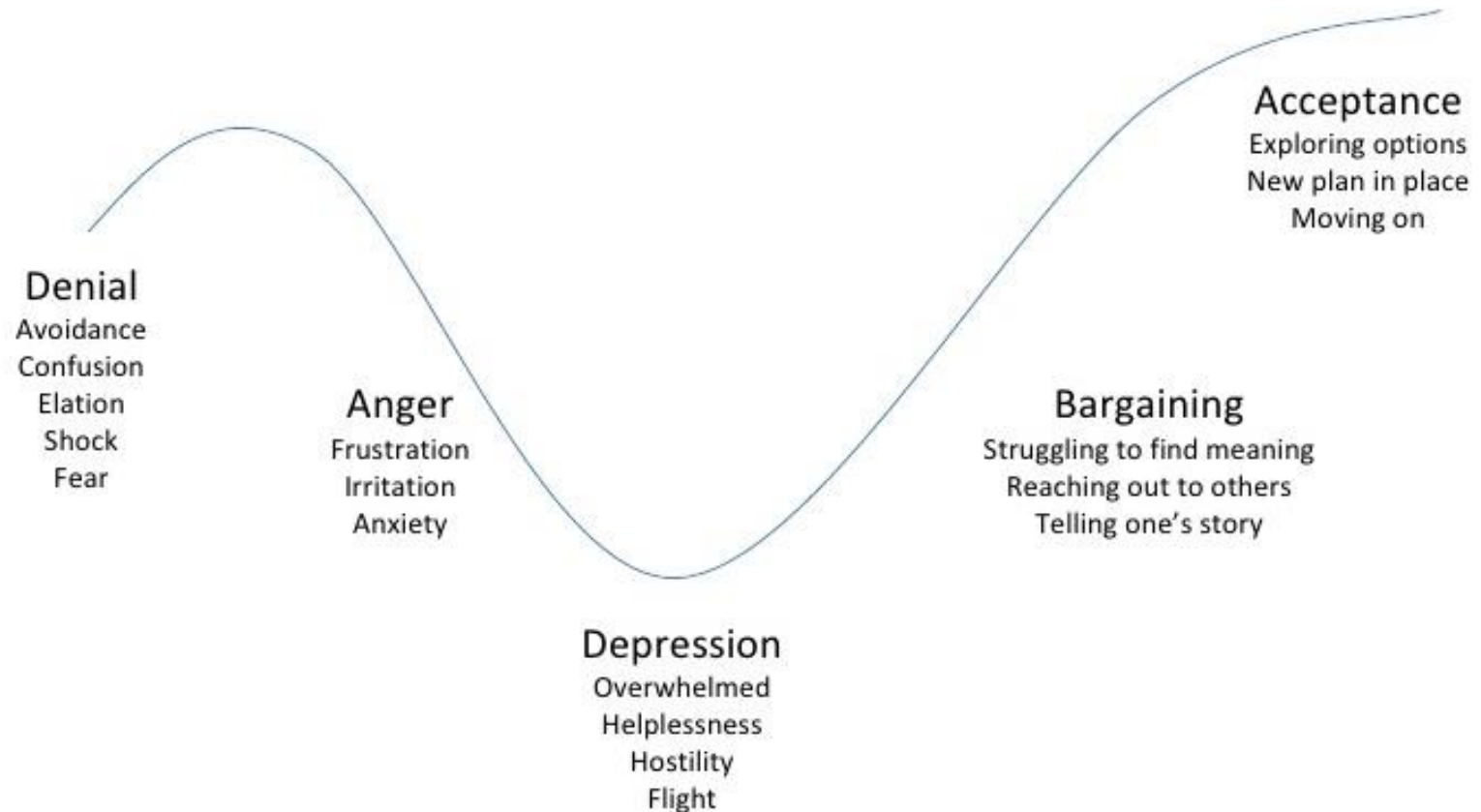


Carolyn Baker

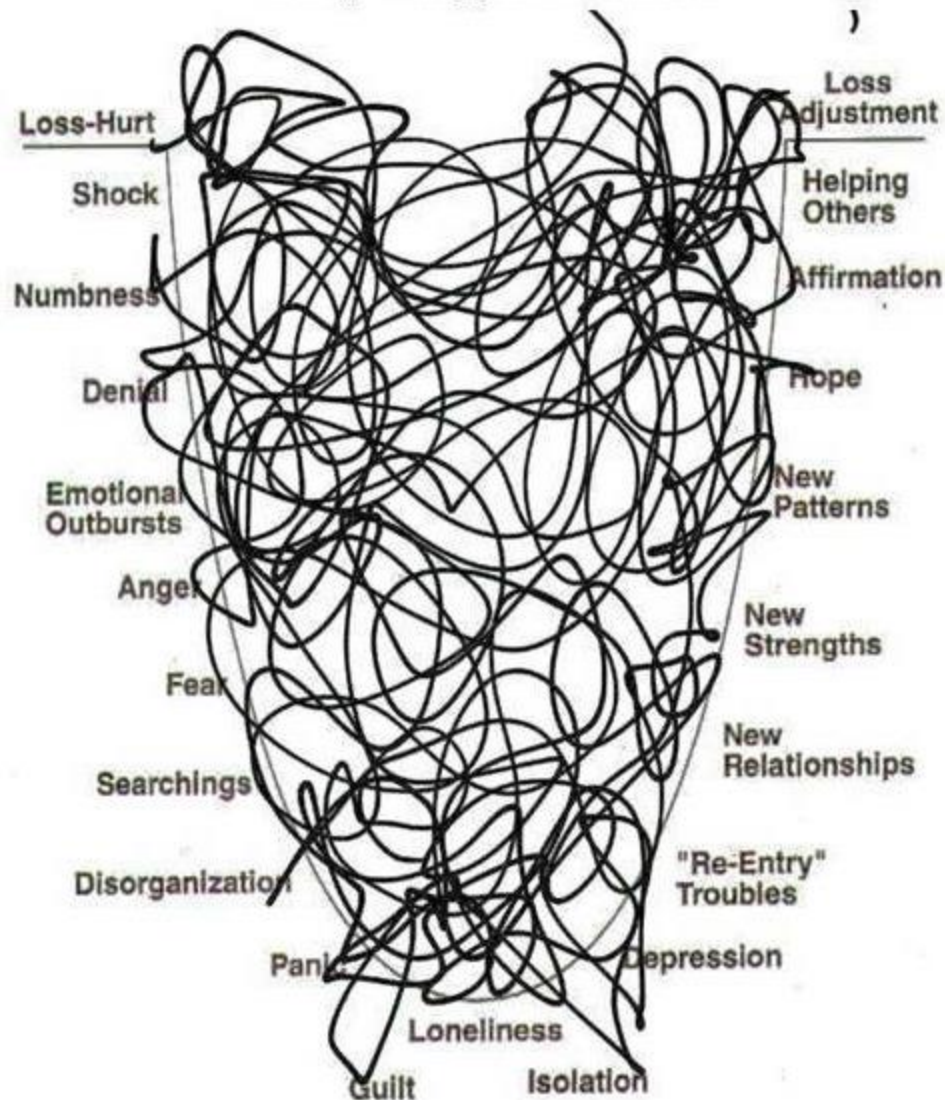
Carolyn Baker

- Coming to terms with one's mortality is the task now before us as a species facing the prospect of its own near-term extinction.
- Need to prepare for the final phase of our collective earthly existence. Many hospice patients report living the most precious parts of their lives at the very end. We too might all discover unprecedented meaning as we cross over into our mutual abyss.
- Apocalypse as opening to something new; crisis as a possibility.

Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



My experience



Denial

Avoidance
Confusion
Elation
Shock
Fear

Acceptance

Exploring options
New plan in place
Moving on

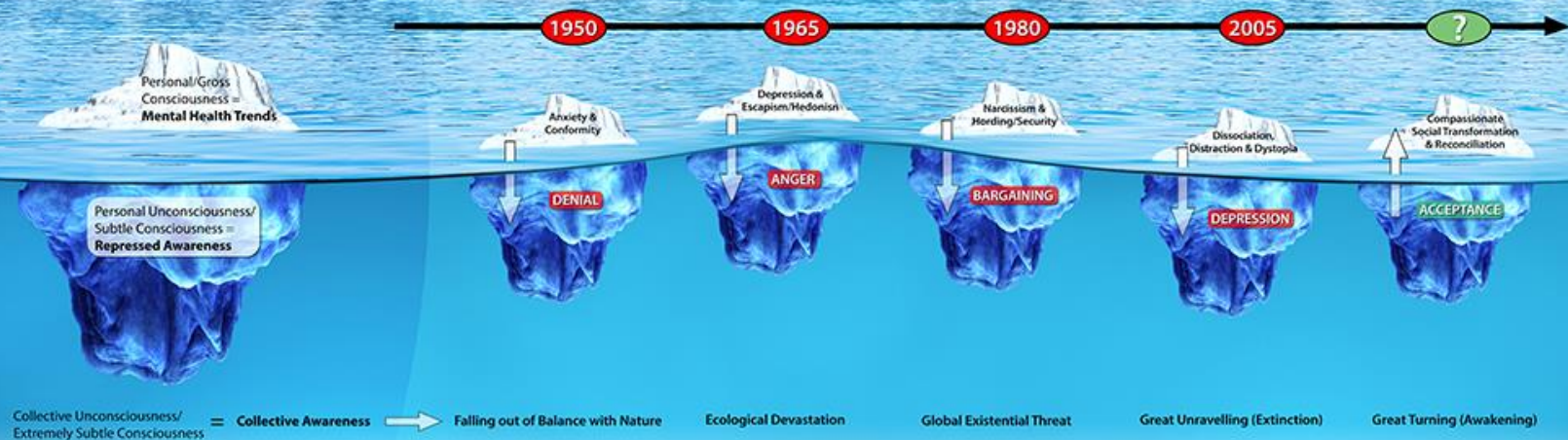
ng
meaning
others
story

Five stages of grief

KEY

PLANETARY HOSPICE

Collective Processing of Climate Grief



*Anima
Mundi*

CLEAR LIGHT NATURE

Learning *to* Die *in the* Anthropocene



REFLECTIONS ON THE
END OF A CIVILIZATION

Roy Scranton

“Scranton draws on his experiences in Iraq to confront the grim realities of climate change. The result is a fierce and provocative book.”

—Elizabeth Kolbert, author
of *The Sixth Extinction*

THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AS AN AESTHETIC CRISIS

Aesthetics and *an*-aesthetics



- *Aesthesis*: taking in the world through the senses.
- We have 'lost touch' in many ways. There is a breakdown or spreading numbness, an inability to sense or feel.
- One has to open up, to be able to receive.



A group of children are gathered around a large, flat rock in a forest. One child, wearing a green cap with 'MC' on it, is looking at a small object on the rock. Another child, wearing a black cap, is also looking at the rock. A third child, wearing a white shirt, is lying on the rock, looking at a small object. A fourth child, wearing a pink shirt, is lying on the rock, looking at a small object. A fifth child, wearing a white shirt with a colorful pattern, is lying on the rock, looking at a small object. The rock is covered with various small objects, including a white feather, a small skull, and some bones. The background is a dense forest with green foliage.

What is the stone telling you?

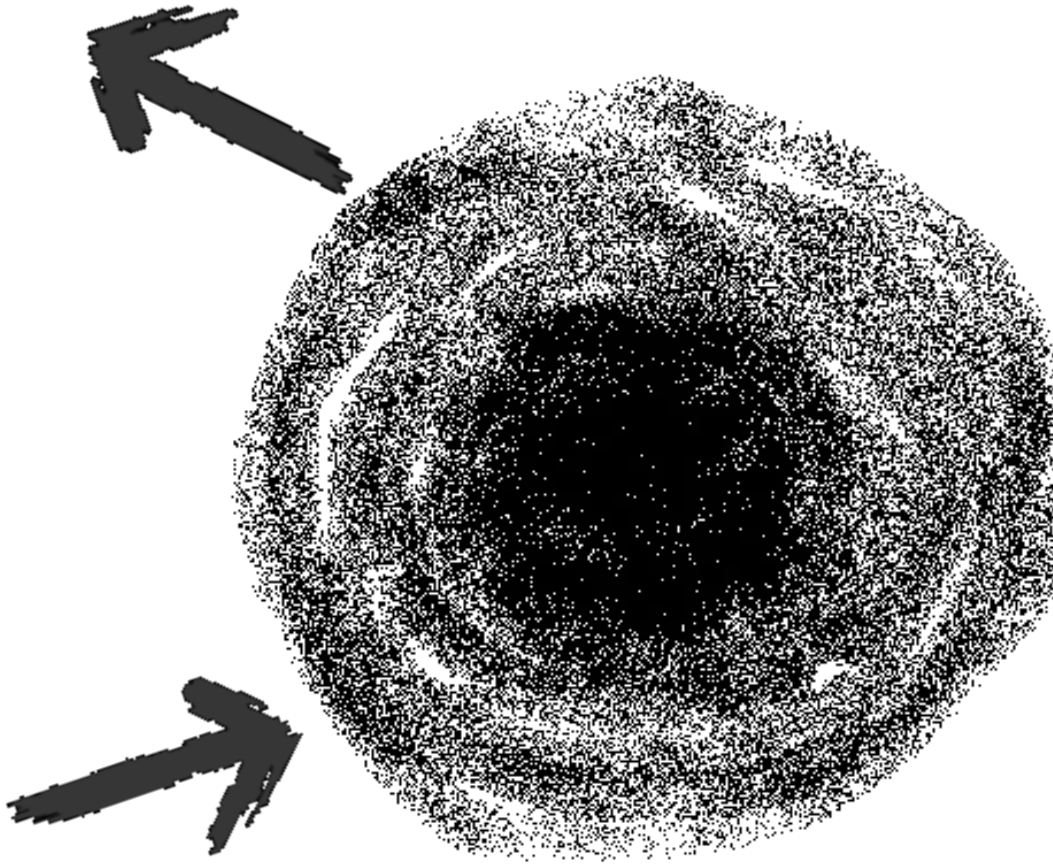
Source of image: *Maan Kuva*, Meri-Helga Mantere (Ed.), 1995



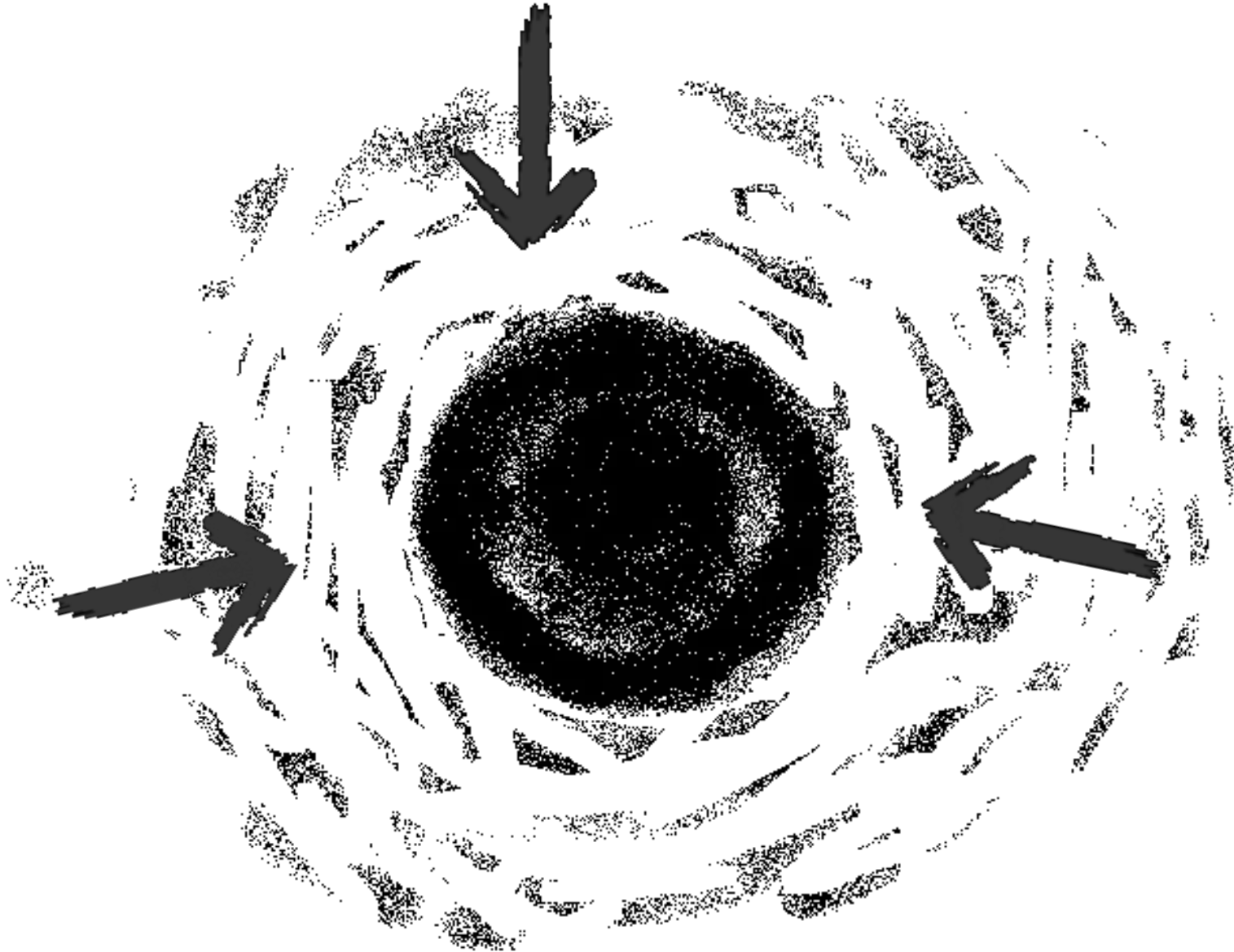
Film clip from *The Body as Teacher*
on Antony Gormley, 2010. www.bosrtv.nl/uitzending.aspx?IntEntityId=1216

- The balanced self
- The closed self
- The ecological Self

Balanced



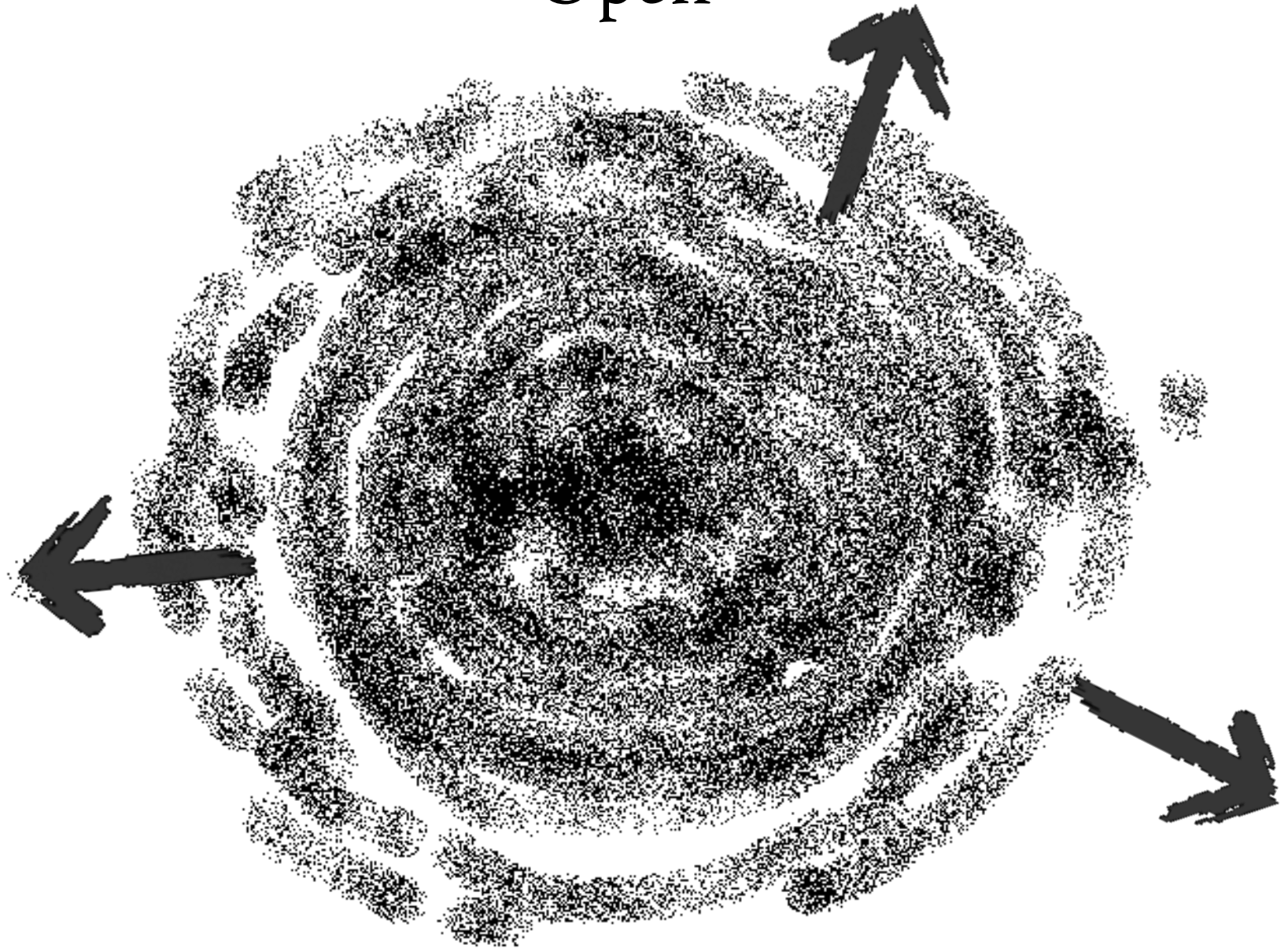
Closed



A person is lying on a grassy field, completely covered by a white sheet. Only one arm is visible, resting on the sheet. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn. The text "Pulling a curtain over our sensory organs" is overlaid in white serif font.

Pulling a curtain
over our sensory organs

Open





Riitta Ikonen & Karoline Hjorth, *Eyes as big as plates*, 2013

Source of image: www.riittaiikonen.com



Riitta Ikonen & Karoline Hjorth, *Eyes as big as plates*, 2013

Source of image: www.riittaikonen.com

ART AS OUR ANTENNAE
TO THE WORLD

- A scientist asks:
 - What is it?
- An artist asks:
 - What is it,
and what is it . . . *to me*?



Riitta Ikonen & Karoline Hjorth, *Eyes as big as plates*, 2013



Photo: Gina Morris

www.ericafielder-ecoartist.com

Zen poet Thich Nhat Hanh
was asked, 'what do we most
need to do to save our world?'

His answer was this:

'What we most need to do
is to hear within us
the sounds of the Earth crying.'

Source of image:

www.sangye.it/altro/?cat=54





Art work: Pedro Marzorati

Photo: Pat van Boeckel

Source of image: www.artcop21.com



Mark Dion, Mobile Wilderness Unit – Wolf, 2006

Source: www.theguardian.com





New York City, Hurricane Sandy, October 2012

Opening up - or lowering our protective shields?



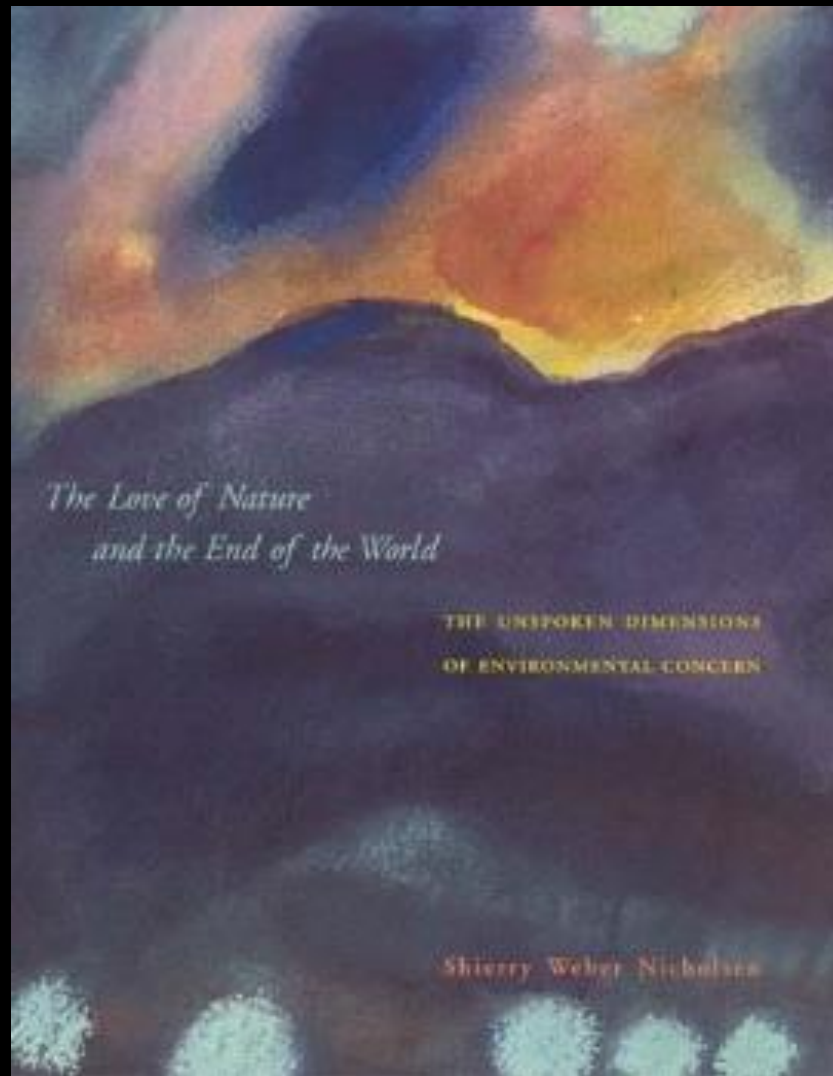
Source of image: *Maan Kuva*,
Meri-Helga Mantere (Ed.), 1995

ACTING
'*AS IF*'

- Usefulness of 'healing fictions'
- Acting 'as if' in a double meaning:
 - Even when it looks certain that any attempt to stop climate change runaway is futile, acting *as if* we still can is the preferred option (out of fear of fear itself)
 - We never know what may happen in a final moment of crisis ('climate swerve')



Baron Münchhausen



The Love of Nature and the End of the World
Shierry Weber Nicholzen, 2002



Antony Gormley

EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY

Cognitive *re*-sonance

‘Even if I knew that tomorrow the world
would go to pieces, I would still plant my
apple tree.’

Martin Luther

Novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald (1936):

‘The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, *and still retain the ability to function.*

One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and *yet* be determined to make them otherwise.’

Negative capability

- ‘...when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.’



John Keats, 1817

‘I've always been crazy
but it's kept me from going insane’

‘Mindful schizophrenia’



Laheema National Park, Estonia. March 2016, Photo: Jan van Boeckel



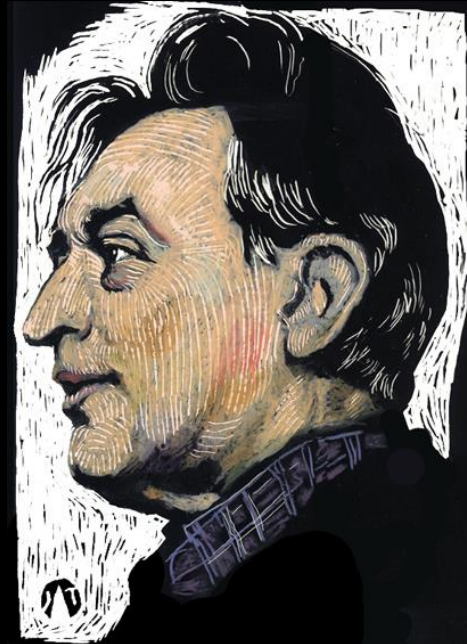
Laheema National Park, Estonia. March 2016, Photo: Jan van Boeckel

Fantastic binominal

‘One electrical pole is not enough to cause a spark. It takes two. A single word acts only, when it encounters a second that provokes it and compels it to leave the track of habit and to discover new possibilities of meaning ... They are ‘estranged’, ‘shifted’, thrown against one another in a sky that has never been seen before.’

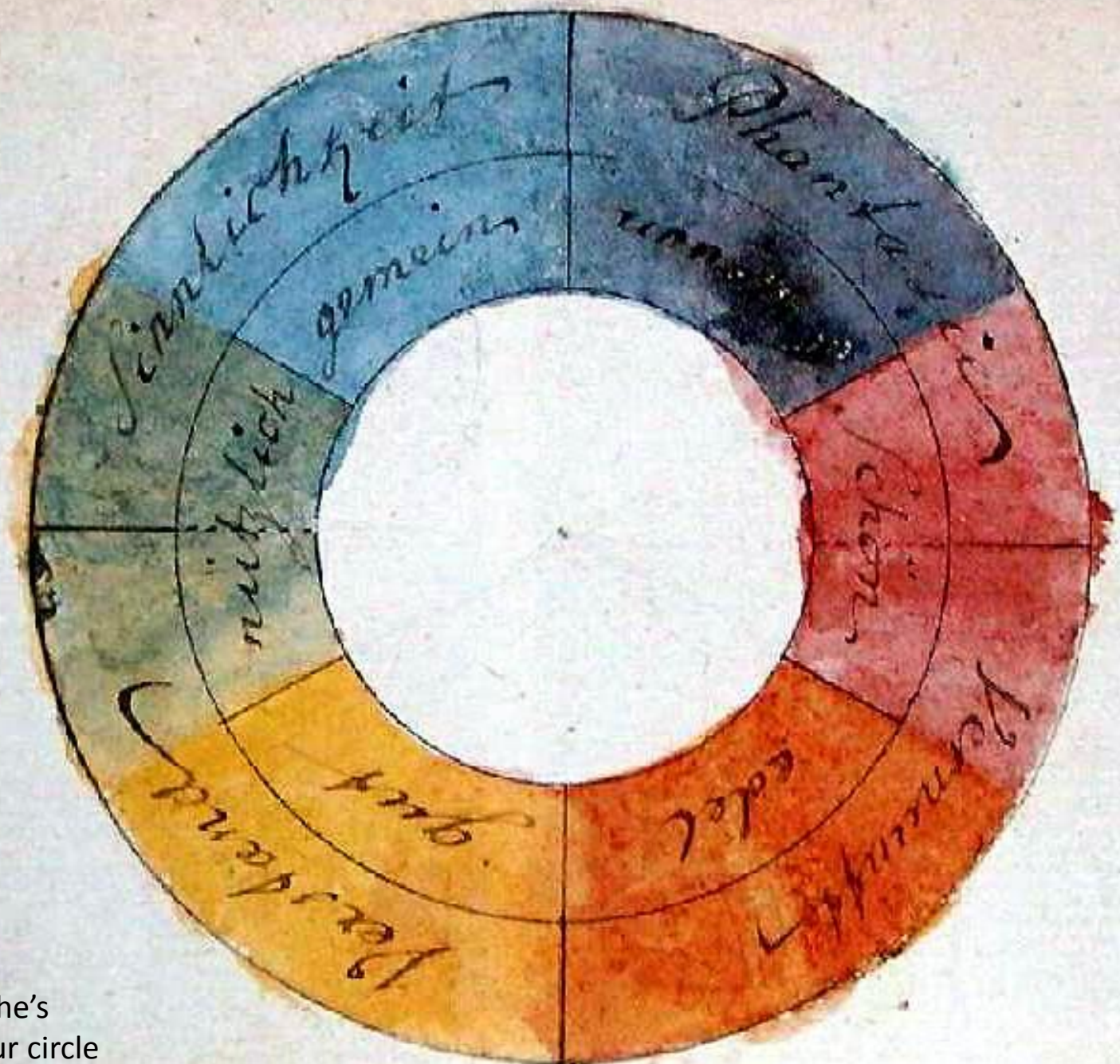
Gianni Rodari,
The Grammar of Fantasy, 1974

binominis: ‘having two names’



The words 'dog' and 'closet'





Goethe's
Colour circle

Artmaking as process

'Notes to myself on beginning a painting'

by painter Richard Diebenkorn, found after his death, in 1993.

1. attempt what is not certain. Certainty may or may not come later. It may then be a valuable delusion.
2. The pretty, initial position which falls short of completeness is not to be valued – except as a stimulus for further moves.
3. Do search. But in order to find other than what is searched for.
4. Use and respond to the initial fresh qualities but consider them absolutely expendable.
5. Don't 'discover' a subject – of any kind.
6. Somehow don't be bored – but if you must, use it in action. Use its destructive potential.
7. Mistakes can't be erased but they move you from your present position.
8. Keep thinking about Pollyanna.
9. Tolerate chaos.
10. Be careful only in a perverse way.

Notes to
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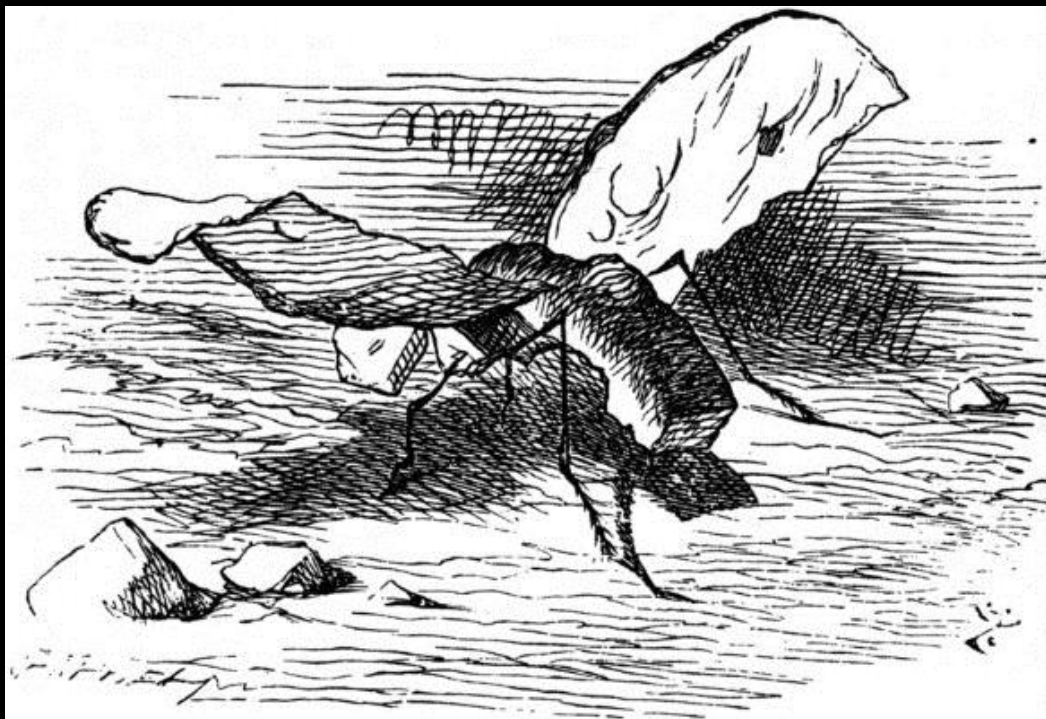
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The unforeseen

‘The job of artists is to open doors and to invite in the unknown, the unfamiliar. To calculate on the unforeseen is perhaps exactly the paradoxical operation that life most requires of us.’

Rebecca Solnit (*A Field Guide to Getting Lost*)

Double bind



The Bread-and-Butterfly,
(based on Gregory Bateson)

- The impossible choices of the double bind actually *motivate* evolution. Finding a third alternative to survive.
- The double bind is a creative imperative. It's the moment when – because this doesn't work, and that doesn't work – something else is going to have to be improvised.
- A creative impulse is necessary at that moment to get out of the situation, to take it up a level. Can we see a bigger picture, can we think about the way that we think?

Nora Bateson





A photograph of a rock face showing several fossilized shells, likely brachiopods, embedded in a layered, sedimentary rock matrix. The shells are light-colored with some darker spots and are arranged in a row. The rock matrix has distinct horizontal and diagonal layers of varying shades of brown, tan, and grey.

Jan van Boeckel

polarstarcentre@yahoo.com

<http://janvanboeckel.wordpress.com>

www.naturearteducation.org