

# PERFECT AVIARY





# Perspectiva at a glance



Perspectiva Press



Insight Essay Series



Realisation Festival



Emerge Gatherings

3 Worlds Academy

Anti-debate



# Perspectiva in 10 premises

01 We are in a time between worlds.

02 Collapse is inevitable and transformation is possible.

03 We can and must act in three different kinds of reality.

04 A post-conventional sensibility is arising.

05 We need to get out of our own way.

06 The method is education, but not as we know it.

07 Civilisational renewal may depend on a new metaphysics.

08 What we need is not 'action' but power to create context.

09 Our praxis has to be profoundly collective and deeply personal.

10 Those who would be angels can still learn from the mafia.





We are  
living  
in a time  
between  
worlds...



# It's not 'just history'

A meta-historical or historiographical claim based on an analysis of world system dynamics e.g Immanuel Wallerstein or Peter Turchin (Zak Stein: *Education in a Time Between Worlds*, 2019)

- The contention is that modernity is ending.
- How it ends, and what ending affords for new beginnings, is up to us.
- Non-linear history. Kairotic time.
  
- Disciplinary parallels
  - Anthropology: liminality.
  - Sociology (Gramsci): interregnum.
  - But it's different on a planetary civilisation



# Modernity is Ending?

## Three major factors

- A shift in geological time (Holocene to Anthropocene or ‘Capitalocene’)
  - “The Stunning extent to which the situation is unprecedented” – Bruno Latour (Down to Earth, 2018)
- Global economic system running out of frontiers and cheap nature and energy that make capitalism work.
  - “Capitalism is a complex adaptive system that has lost its ability to adapt.” – Paul Mason (Postcapitalism, 2015)
- New infosphere; internet enabled smart-phones.
  - “An invisible atom bomb has exploded inside our information system” – Maria Ressa (Nobel prize acceptance speech, 2021)



# Historical parallels

Axial Age from c800 and c200 BCE (Karl Jaspers 1949):

- “From Mythos to Logos.”(Chandler 2016)

Lifetime of Christ, and Paul

- Metanoia: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17)

Decay and dissolution of the Roman State between the 4th to 6th centuries.

- Relativisation of pagan-Roman cosmology; absolutisation of Christian-Roman alternative.
  - Emblematic text of the time was probably Augustine’s City of God.

Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries

- The relativisation of Catholicism. Contention of absolute values including the thirty years war (1618-1648)
  - Emblematic texts from Luther, Erasmus, Calvin, Milton, Spinoza and Comenius.

·Scientific revolution and Enlightenment of 17th-19th centuries

- Gradual rendering by scientific ideologies of all phenomena as contingent, historically situated, reducible
  - Too many texts, but NB: The Master and his Emissary by Iain McGilchrist (2011)



# What kind of Transition?

**Transition one:** A shift in values and behaviour e.g. around civil rights. Important cultural shifts but don't register in longer perspective.

**Transition two:** The world system changes, eg Industrial Revolution, but not necessarily a change in (enlightenment) worldview.

**Transition three:** Transformation of social imaginary or worldview and way of knowing eg the Enlightenment or the Renaissance.

**Transition four:** A shift in the type of society that we have evolved from, such that our experience of being alive is utterly different e.g. The fall of the Roman Empire or the Axial shift.

**Transition five:** A shift in the kinds of organisms we are, perhaps similar to the shift in biological evolution when we went from single-cell organisms to multiple-cell organisms. Such a shift could have technological, spiritual, or biological elements; or all of them.





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# Collapse is inevitable?

"Exponential technology and rivalrous dynamics self-terminates." – Daniel Schmachtenberger

World system dynamics (macro sociology), Cliodynamics (quantitative history), Earth System sciences.

*Some references:*

*This Civilisation is Finished* (Rupert Read 2019)

*The Modern World System* by Immanuel Wallerstein (vol 1-4 over 1974-2011)

*The End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites and the Path of Political Disintegration* by Peter Turchin (2023)

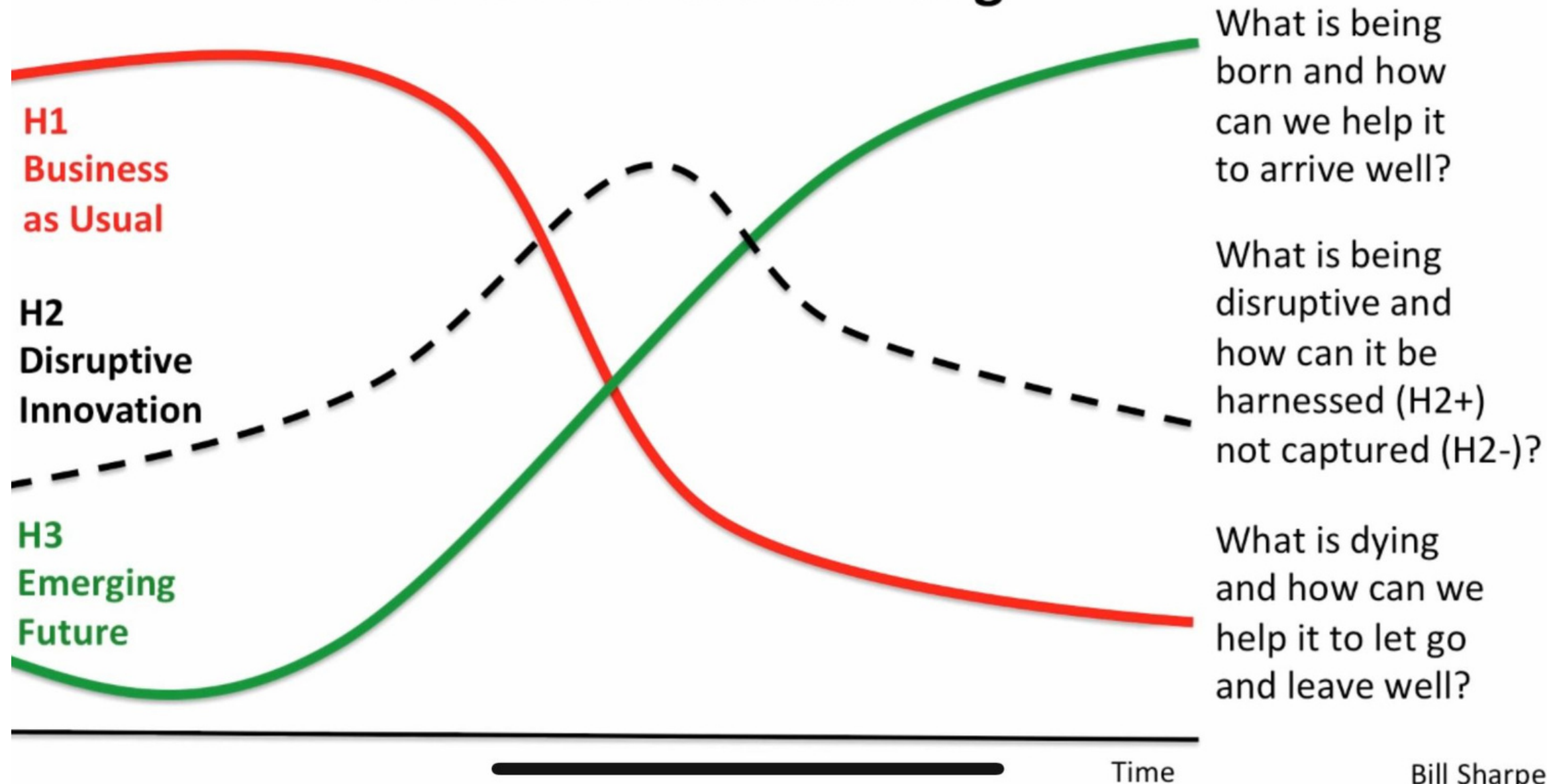
*Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet* (Attenborough, Rockstrom) Netflix 2021

Also: The absence of adequate countervailing forces!



# Transformation is possible?

## Three Horizons Thinking

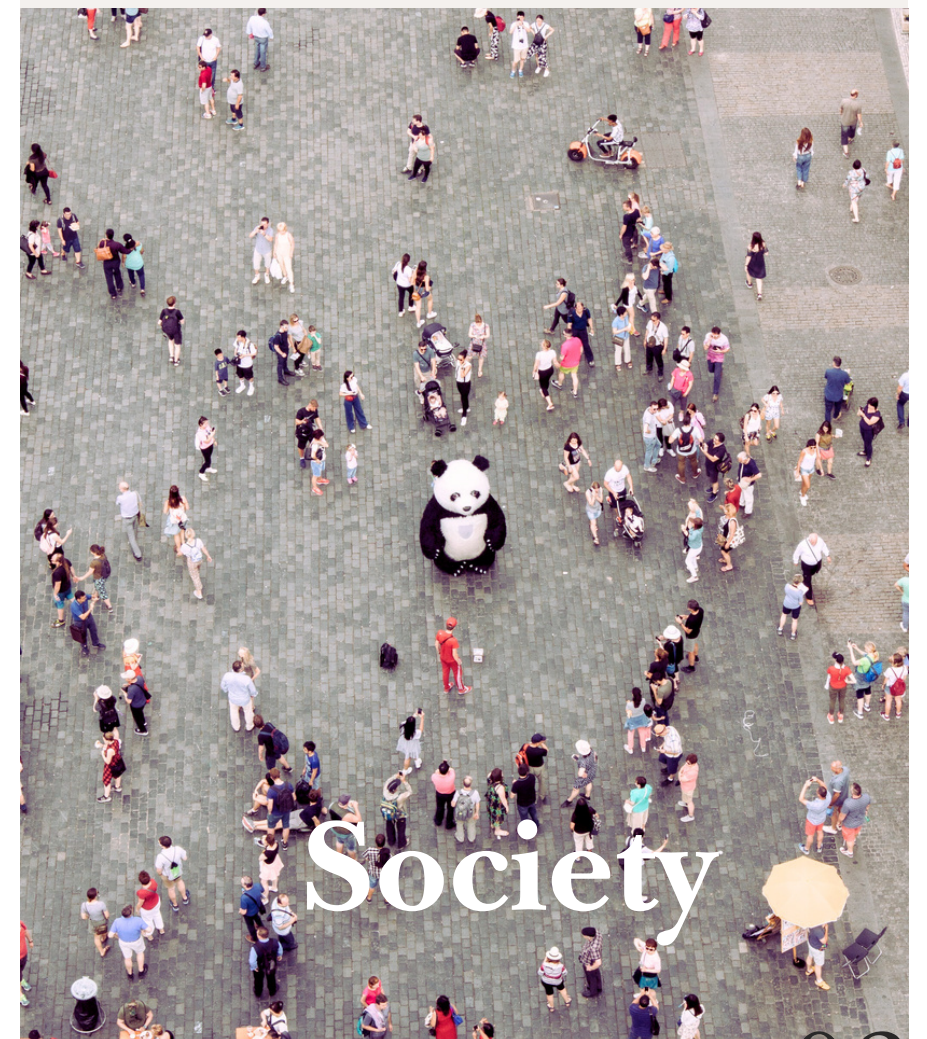
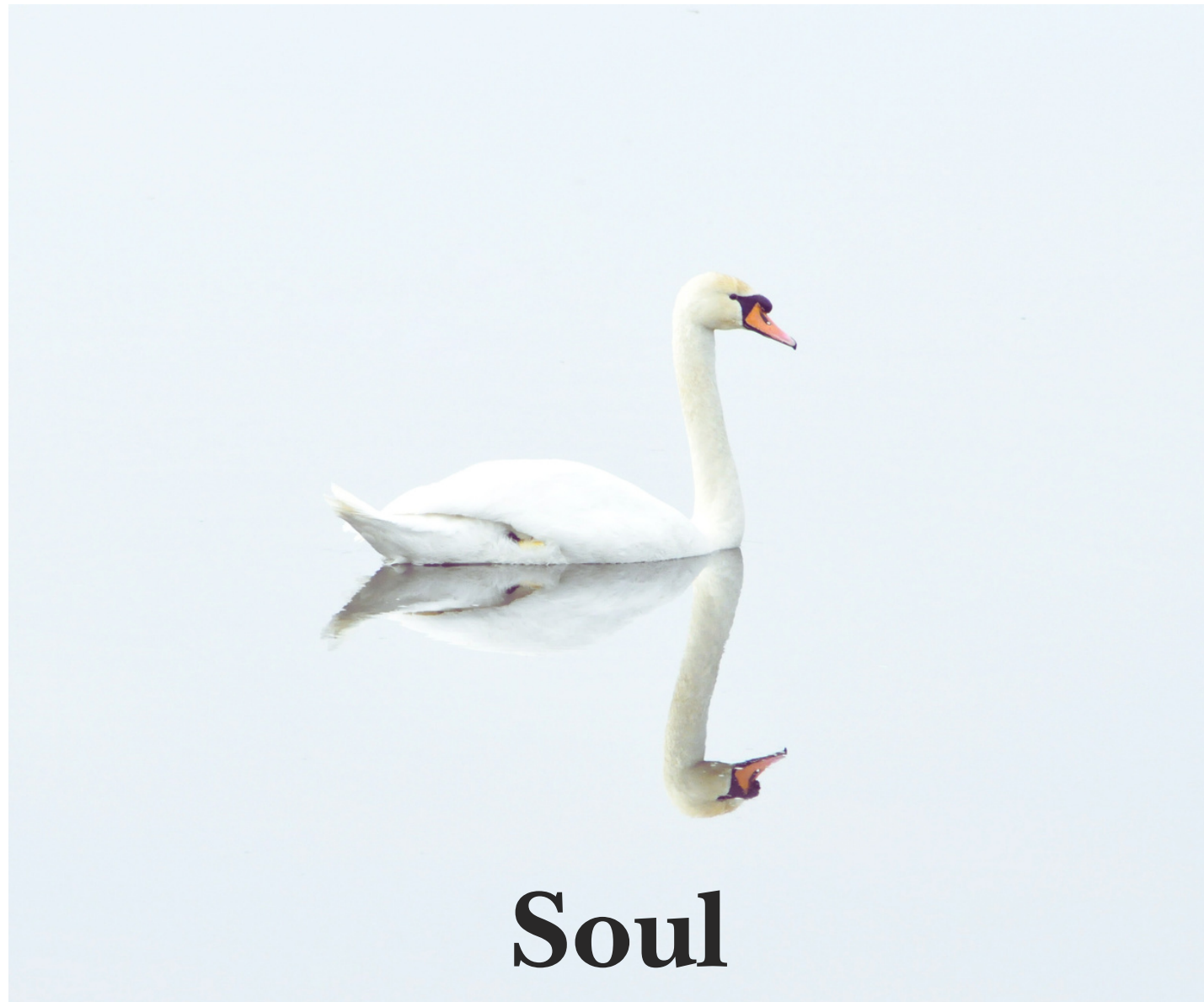
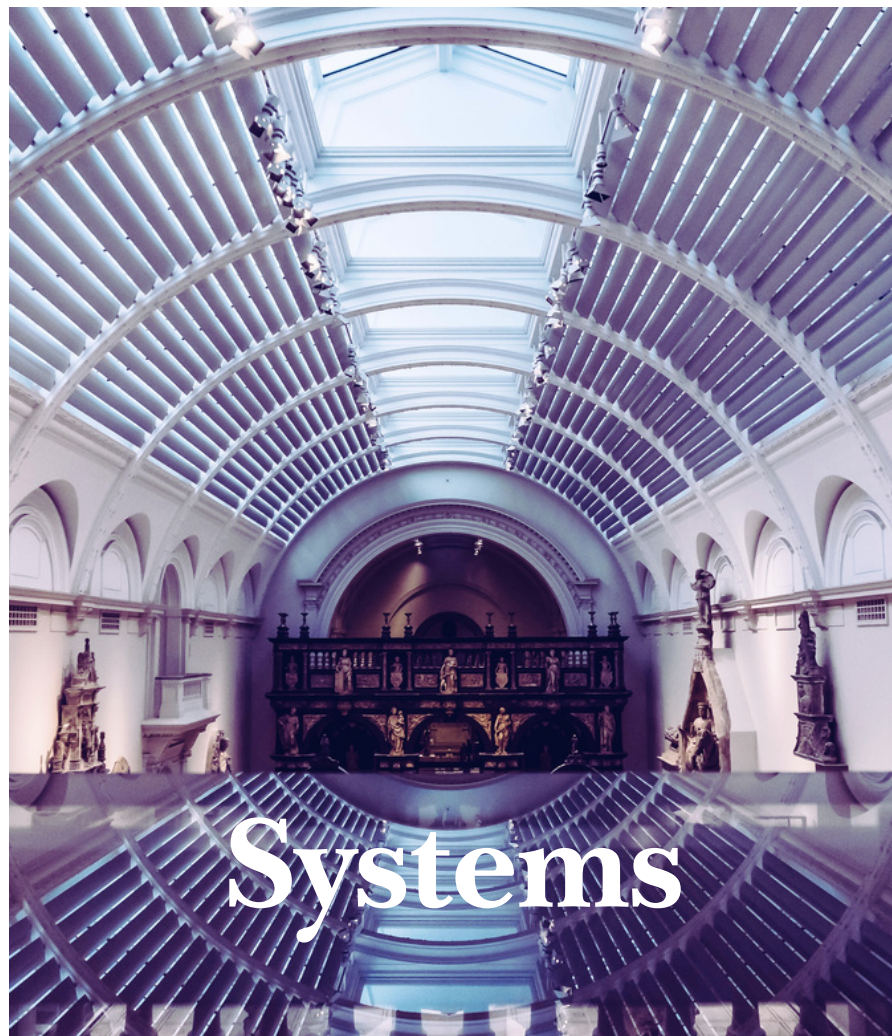


Some references:  
*The Dawn of Everything* by Graeber and Wengrow (2021)  
*The Flip* by Jeffrey Kripal (2020)  
*The Web of Meaning* by Jeremy Lent (2021)  
Also, Bioregionalism (eg Joe Brewer) and Cosmo-localism (eg Michel Bauwens)  
Aphanipoesis (Nora Bateson), Complex Potential States (Bonnitta Roy)

Bill Sharpe



# We can and must act in three different kinds of reality.





# Systems, souls, and society

## Critical Realism

Flatland, epistemic fallacy and the need for deep and generative ontology.

Example: Where is 'climate change'?

## Sociology

Margaret Archer (Structure, agency, culture)

Marvin Harris (Infrastructure, Superstructure, Social structure)

## Philosophy

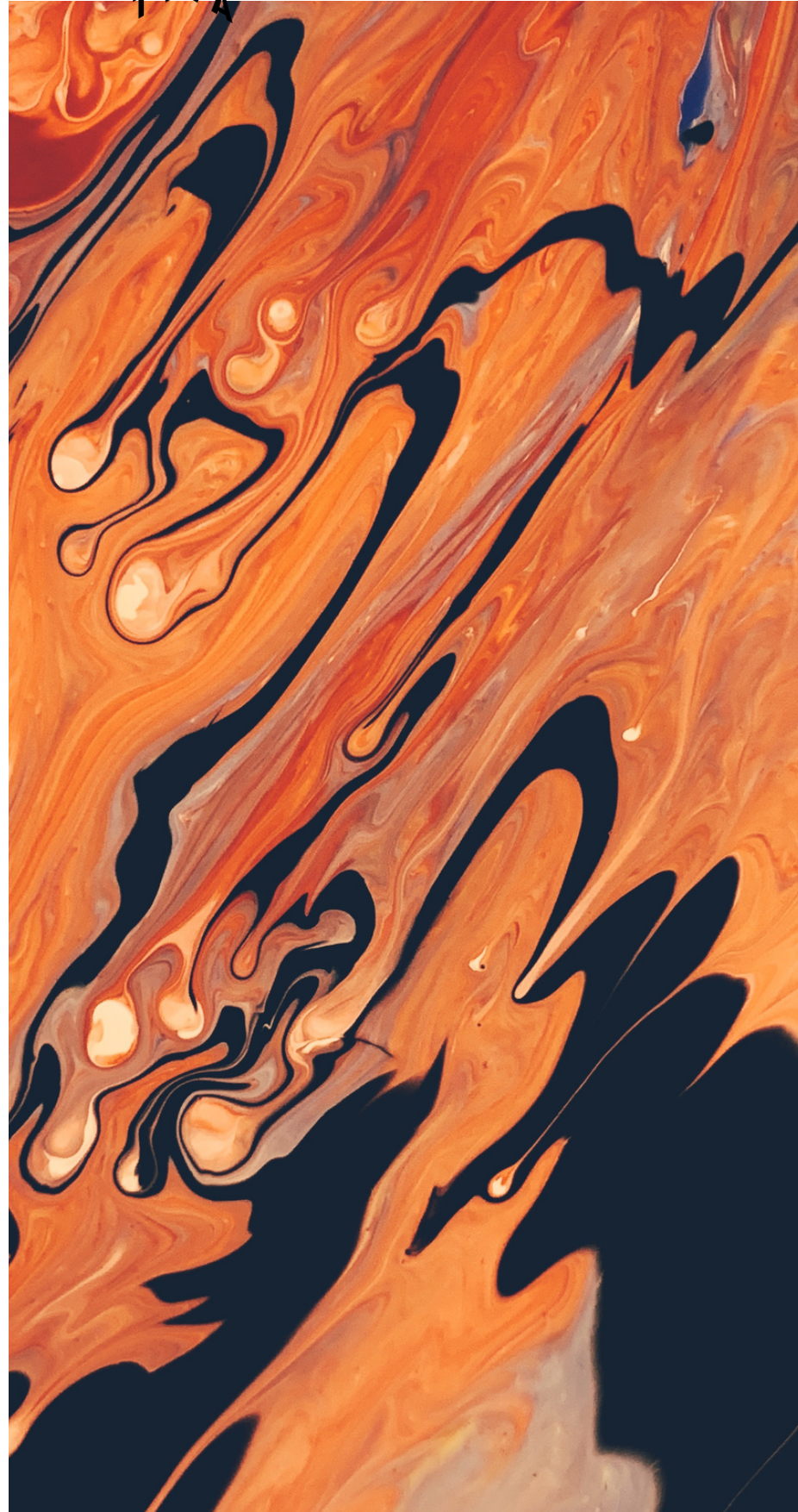
Karl Popper (World I, World II, World III)

Jurgen Habermas (technical, interpretative, emancipatory)

## Applied

Dave Snowden (Assemblages, Agency, Affordances)

Indra Adnan (I, We, World)



# A post-conventional sensibility is arising.

Post-tragic

(knowing life as tragic and beautiful, meaningful, purposeful)

Post-rational

(respect for intuitive, mythic and mystical ways of knowing)

Post-extrinsic

(societal purpose reconceived towards intrinsic value)

Post-exploitation

(historically aware, and vigilant about abuses of power)

Post-tribal

(seeking unity in diversity of all kinds, but not naively)



# Prefigurative Culture

- Prefigurative Culture (Margaret Mead 1969)

*“Many young people today have to “individuate themselves from the whole world”*

– Bonnitta Roy

- Metamodernism as ‘a structure of feeling’

*“Ontologically, metamodernism oscillates...between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity.”*

– Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, Notes on Metamodernism, 2010

- Existential Creativity

*“We have to find a new art and a new psychology to penetrate the apathy and the denial that are preventing us making the changes that are inevitable if our world is to survive. We need a new art to waken people both to the enormity of what is looming and the fact that we can still do something about it.”*

– Ben Okri



We need to get  
out of our own  
way.



# Deep Assumptions and Competing Commitments

*“Like the famous Sherlock Holmes case of the dog that didn’t bark, the most important message of the 2021 assessment report (on climate change) is that one that is not there. The message that jumps out to me above all others is that previous IPCC reports, going back to 1990, have not been heeded. Where is the report on that? Because that’s the one we really need.”*

– (Rowson, foreword to ‘What’s next on Climate?’, Perspectiva 2022)

- Focus on Immunity to change. (deep assumptions and competing commitments)
    - We often put our feet on the gas and the brake at the same time. (Kegan and Lahey, 2009)
  - Take the social imaginary seriously (Carlos Castoriadis, Charles Taylor)
    - The Solipsistic Society (Ivo Mensch, Perspectiva, 2023)
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# The method is education, but not as we know it.

We believe 'the work' is to build a new ecosystem of transformative civic, aesthetic and moral learning (simply 'education' in its proper sense but also Paidiea and Bildung) that speaks to the curriculum of our times.



# Education as Social Autopoiesis

*“Conceived of as an intellectual challenge for humankind, the increasing threat arising from self-induced global warming clearly seems to exceed the present cognitive and emotional abilities of our species.”*

– Thomas Metzinger (2014)

- Paideia: “A well-functioning Paideia (polity) is a community drawn together by a commitment to an explicit philosophy of the good life and a related praxis of education...remaking society requires remaking education” (Stein, 2019)
- Bildung: Transformative civic, aesthetic and moral education. (Rowson, 2019)
- Jon Dewey: Democracy and Education (1916)
- Jon Amos Comenius: ‘Sub Specie Educationis’ (1592-1670)



# Five Urgent and Enduring Educational Questions

They *are* educational because they are about how society learns how to reconstitute and transform itself today.

- Intelligibility (What's going on and how do we know?)
- Meaning (What really matters and how might we coalesce around it?)
- Capability (Do we have what it takes to do what we must?)
- Legitimacy (Who gets to decide how society transforms and why?)
- Imagination (What does a path to a desirable world look and feel like?)

*(Questions by Zak Stein, with additions and edits by Jonathan Rowson and Mark Vernon)*





# Civilisational renewal may depend on a new metaphysics.

"We are not so much working for greater systemic reach or to identify all the links in an enormous causal chain; rather we need to closely examine the metaphysical operating system of our minds, and participate in the creative emergence of a new structure of consciousness." - Bonnitta Roy



# Metaphysics as Perception of Possibility

- Our Mental/Rational Function in its deficient mode (Jean Gebser, 1949;1953)
- Time, Space, Matter, Motion, Causation, Consciousness, Value, Cosmological Purpose, Sense of the Sacred (McGilchrist 2021)
- Metamorphosis (Bonnitta Roy, 2021)
- Paul Marshall (New Axial Vision)





What we need  
is not 'action'  
but power to  
create context.

# Democratising Hyperagency

*“The social capacity to create rather than simply work within the institutionally given world...the capacity to exercise what we call hyperagency - the ability to exercise effective control over the conditions and circumstances of life rather than merely living within them.”*

– Paul G. Schervish and Andrew Herman, 1988.

- Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Vladimir Putin, Sam Altman, Bill Gates etc..
- Vladimir Zelensky: “We are here”
- Extinction Rebellion, specifically around April/May 2019

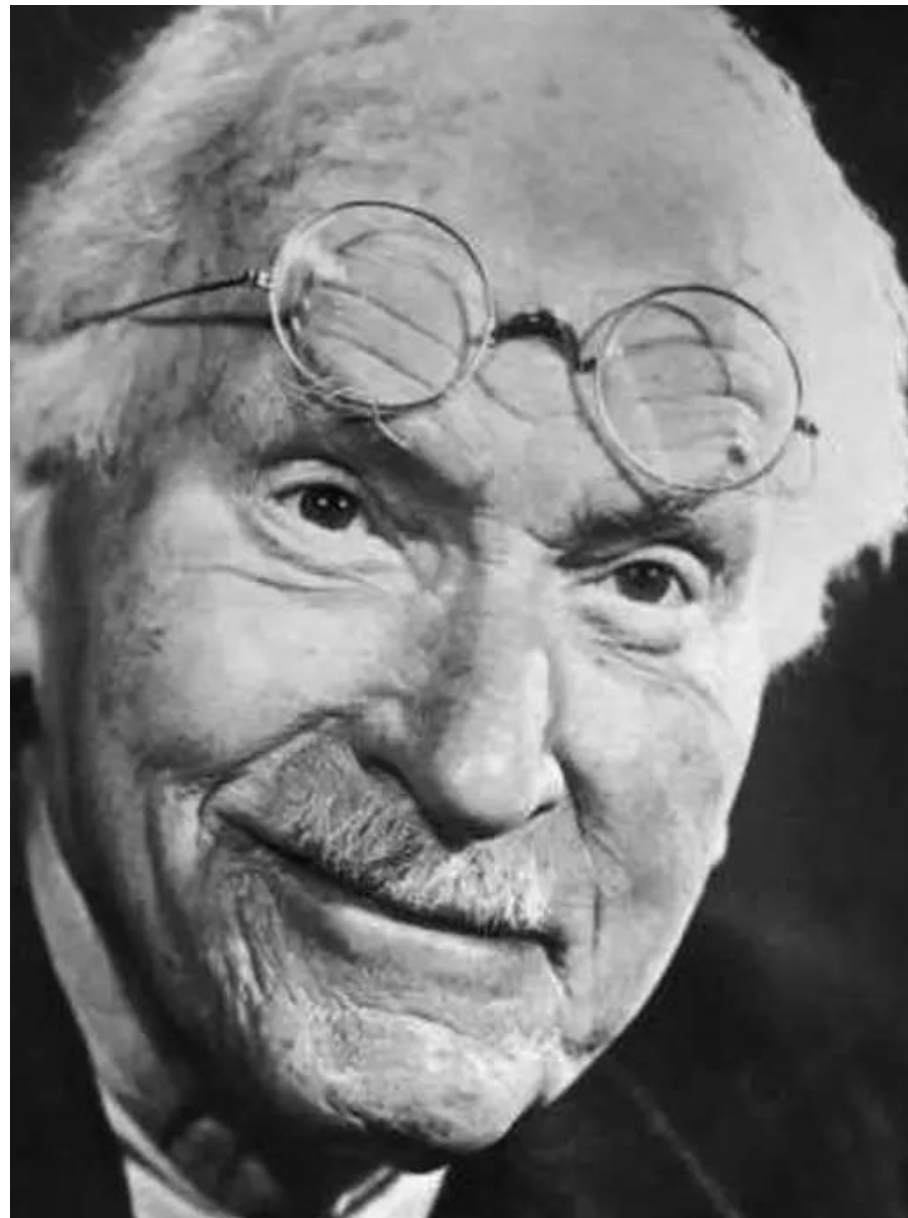




Our praxis  
has to be  
profoundly  
collective  
and deeply  
personal.

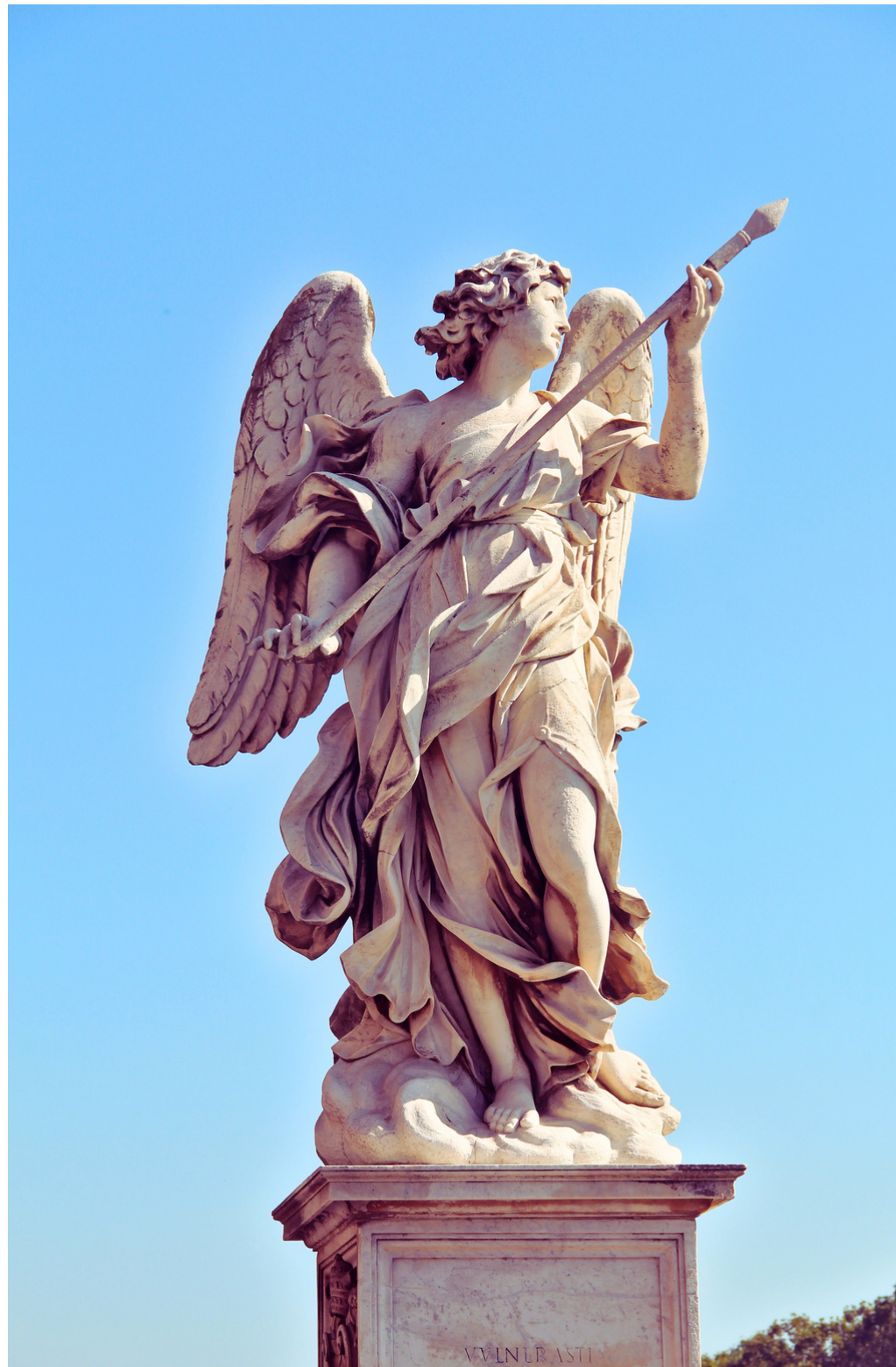


# Collective Individuation



- Where Carl Jung Meets Elinor Ostrom
- Design principle: Somehow, personal individuation needs (more often, not always) to become concomitant with collective action solutions.





Those who would be angels can still learn from the mafia.



# ‘The Impossible We?’

We cannot rely on pressing ‘the nice guy button’ (Gortz, 2022)

“The only pathways to a viable future for humanity that seem credible are those that acknowledge the enduring realities of self-interest, competition, conflict, defection and corruption. This point is acute in relation to ecological collapse in particular, where ‘we’ are called to act. The core problem is the absence of any locus of shared power to generate cultural sensibility and policy coordination commensurate with our collective action challenge, and to see it through in the context of widespread political divergence and resistance.”

– Rowson (2019)



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# Thank you

[www.systems-souls-society.com](http://www.systems-souls-society.com)

[jonathan@perspectiva.co.uk](mailto:jonathan@perspectiva.co.uk)





# Sketch of Sources

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  - Nobel prize acceptance speech by Maria Ressa, 2021
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  - *Complex Potential States* by Bonnitta Roy, The Side View, November 2021
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  - *The Politics of Waking Up* by Indra Adnan, Perspectiva Press, 2021
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## A New Sensibility is Arising

- What's the point of The Realisation Festival?, by Jonathan Rowson
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  - Metamodernism and the perception of context: The cultural between, the political after and the mystic beyond, by Jonathan Rowson, in *Dispatches from a Time Between Worlds* by Perspetiva Press, 2021)
  - Artists must confront the climate crisis – we must write as if these are the last days, by Ben Okri, The Guardian, Friday 12 Nov 2021
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  - Bildung in the 21st Century: Why Sustainable Prosperity depends on reimagining education by Jonathan Rowson, The Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity, 2019
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