

# From Ego to Eco: where are we, where are we trying to go?

## Part 3. Relationships with and within nature

### Tom Boydell



In my opening instalment<sup>1</sup> I gave my picture of moving towards eco- from ego-consciousness, away from the latter's three "separations"<sup>2</sup>, namely the

1. separation of humans from nature, creating eco-apartheid.
1. separation of humans from each other
2. separation of humans from ourselves - that is, from one's own sense of Self

towards thinking, feeling and willing embedded in a sense of oneness. In this episode I will focus on the first of those separations – on relationships of humans with and within nature.

### Anthropocentrism

In the Euro-Western world<sup>3</sup> the idea that humans are at the top of a hierarchical ladder of earthly existence goes back to Aristotle and Plato. Later, Christian theologians put humans roughly in the middle of what they termed *The Great Chain of Being*, starting with God at the top, down through various forms of Angels, then humans, followed by animals, plants and rocks.

Thus for many centuries in the West, anthropocentrism

"a [belief in humans](#) and [their existence](#) as the most important and central fact in the universe"<sup>4</sup>

has been a dominant philosophy, and has grown in strength since what is often known as "The Enlightenment", the "Age of Reason"<sup>5</sup>, which was seen to "prove" the view that humans are far superior to other earthly beings and entities, whilst abolishing the higher supersensible reaches of the *Great Chain*.

The resulting "scientific" knowledge and artistic expression have been used to demonstrate that humans are far superior to other beings and entities such as animals, plants, and rocks.

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<sup>1</sup> From Ego to Eco: Where Are We, Where Are We Trying to Go?: I Overview: Ego- and Eco-Consciousness, this Journal

<sup>2</sup> Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom, Shiva and Shiva, 2019: 22

<sup>3</sup> Into which I chose to be born and where I have spent much of my life. I'm therefore aware that I am writing this primarily from a Euro-Western perspective and that there are alternatives about which I know rather little. I am a white male and aware that I therefore have a significant tendency to see things primarily from a white male point of view - a tendency that is so "natural", so "normal" to me, that at times I find it hard to do otherwise - which indeed some would say is impossible, although I can attempt to empathise with other points of view, to gain a picture of the world as they experience it.

<sup>4</sup> Cambridge Online Dictionary - "anthropocentrism"

<sup>5</sup> *The Enlightenment: a Very Short Introduction*, Robertson, J, 2015; *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness 1680 - 1790*, Robertson, R, 2020.

According to this view, still prevalent although now becoming increasingly challenged, as the most important living beings on the earth we humans are justified in exploiting all the others to our own physical, economic, social, cultural and spiritual advantage: the first of Shiva and Shiva's three "separations".

Thus the ego-conscious view is that humans are separate from, and more important than, nature and indeed the very planet on which we are currently living, as we see when multi-billionaires are now seeking other worlds - and perhaps other populations of diverse life forms - to exploit, dominate and ruin in the names of adventurous thrills, fame, power and riches. We can thus add "*my/our planet*" or even "*my/our solar system*", "*my/our universe*", to our egotistic catechism.

## **Speciesism, The Great Derangement, Ecocide and The Sixth Extinction**

In 1970 Richard Ryder<sup>6</sup> coined the term "speciesism", akin to "racism" and "sexism". This referred to the view - prevailing then, and still rather dominant today, at least amongst Euro-Westerners - that one species, namely the human, deserves better rights, as it is inherently superior to others, and is the only form of being that has consciousness - a view that continues to have many adherents such as Machan, who, in his 2004 book unequivocally titled *Putting Humans First: Why We Are Nature's Favorite* - confidently asserts that indeed

"we are Nature's favorite ... humans are more important, even better, than other animals, and we deserve the benefits that exploiting animals can provide."<sup>7</sup>

a statement that supports Cambridge Online Dictionary's appreciation that anthropocentrism

"comes close to asserting that humans can do whatever they want to nature and the planet, ruining the world for us and for every other form of life."<sup>8</sup>

It seems that one of the things that humans want to do to nature is to forget about it.

In 2007 The Oxford Junior Dictionary had a number of words associated with nature and the countryside removed. Thus adder, ash, beech, bluebell, buttercup, catkin, conker, cowslip, cygnet, dandelion, fern, hazel, heather, heron, ivy, kingfisher, lark, mistletoe, nectar, newt, otter, pasture and willow were replaced in the new edition included by attachment, blog, broadband, block-graph, bullet-point, celebrity, chatroom, committee, cut-and-paste, MP3 player and voice-mail.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Speciesism*, Ryder, 1970

<sup>7</sup> *Putting Humans First: Why We Are Nature's Favorite*, Machan, 2004

<sup>8</sup> Cambridge Online Dictionary - "anthropocentrism"

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/27/robert-macfarlane-word-hoard-rewilding-landscape> accessed 22. 2.22

Is it indeed true that

"an anthropogenic mass extinction is under way that will affect all life on the planet and humans will struggle to survive the phenomenon"<sup>10</sup>.

If so, then if we don't take radical steps to change the way we relate to the world we live in - respect and love it - as a race we are in the grips of "the great derangement"<sup>11</sup>, committing ecocide<sup>12</sup>, heading for the "sixth extinction"<sup>13</sup>, namely that of many species including humans - ourselves.

Professionals known as Planetary Boundary Scientists have started to identify and determine a number of highly interdependent environmental limits beyond which humanity cannot operate safely<sup>14</sup>. We are now beginning to exceed some of these limits, cross these boundaries, which include

- climate change and resultant phenomena such as heat waves, drought, storms, loss of ice fields, crop failure; animal and plant extinctions<sup>15</sup>
- depletion of the ozone layer
- ocean acidification
- deforestation
- drying up of lakes and rivers and, conversely, flooding
- soil erosion and degradation.
- And of course, we can add to this "secondary" effects such as fires, famine, large-scale migration, and general mayhem

It's clear then we have been - and still are - treating the natural environment not as being made up of co-existing life, but, rather, as consisting of "resources," the only value of which is in their ability to be extracted and used in the service of human lives.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The Sixth Mass Extinction and Chemicals in the Environment, Mason, 2015

<sup>11</sup> The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, Ghosh, 2017

<sup>12</sup> Ecocide: Kill The Corporation Before It Kills Us, Whyte, 2020; Oneness vs the 1%, Shiva and Shiva, 2019

<sup>13</sup> The Sixth Extinction, Kolbert, 2015; An Antenarrative Amendment to the Learning Organization: Theories to Avert the Sixth Extinction . Boje and Rosile, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Planetary Boundaries: Guiding Human Development on a Changing Planet. Steffen et al, 2015. This is an update of an earlier paper of which Steffen was second author, namely A Safe Operating Space for Humanity Rockström et al , 2009.

<sup>15</sup> I have relabelled some of these terms, which in the original use somewhat technical language. For example, what I give here as "animal and plant extinctions" is referred to as "changes in biosphere integrity".

<sup>16</sup> An Antenarrative Amendment to the Learning Organization: Theories to Avert the Sixth Extinction, Boje and Rosile 2019: 433

Thus we have moved on from *agri-culture* to

"the self-centred orientation of modern agribusiness, [that] produces profits and increases productivity at the expense of the *environment, society and human health*, ... [through] increasing dependency on energy, fertilizer inputs and transportation; fewer jobs in the countryside; increasing levels of environmental pollution; ever-greater distrust of food by consumers, and insecurity of farmers.<sup>17</sup>

Hence for example Monsanto's business strategy of copyrighting and then creating a monopoly for genetically modified seeds that produce infertile plants, thereby forcing farmers to purchase new seeds every year, rather than save some from their own crops. The charging of high prices for these monopolised seeds is leading to increasing numbers of Indian farmers committing suicide.<sup>18</sup> Shiva and Shiva give a number of other questionable business practices. These include - alleged but denied - cancerous effects of the ubiquitous weed killer *Roundup*, and genetically modified cotton in parts of India where again they held a 99% monopoly of cotton seed sales that eventually failed due to a worm that was resistant to Monsanto's genes. They also recount how Monsanto paid a farm in Australia to contaminate their neighbour's organic rapeseed with Monsanto's so that his crop became unsalable and, to add insult to injury, Monsanto then sued the victim for breaching their patent and growing from their seeds without obtaining a licence for them!<sup>19</sup>

### **Moral and Ethical Issues With Regard to Nature**

As well as practical issues around wanting to avoid an upcoming extinction, there is also a growing recognition of the ethical and moral grounds for looking after the wellbeing of nonhuman entities. There is a long history of questions and concerns about the treatment of animals. Although they differ in a number of aspects around the relationships between humans and animals, major religions are in accord in teaching that animals should be treated kindly and with respect. In Europe the first legislation against animal cruelty is thought to have been in Ireland in 1635<sup>20</sup>. The anti-cruelty movement grew in the 19th Century, supported by a number of writers including Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Darwin and Isabella Beeton of *Household Management* fame.

After the Second World War there was a large growth in the use of animals in laboratory experiments for medical, military and cosmetic purposes. This led to organised protests against not only these but also factory farming, blood sports and hunting. Such campaigns have continued to increase, along with significant growth in both vegetarianism and veganism.

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<sup>17</sup> *Community Supported Agriculture*, Zsolnai and Podmaniczky, 2010: 140. Italics in the original

<sup>18</sup> *Big Rise in Farmer Suicides in Four States in 2016*, Mukherjee, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> *Oneness vs the 1%*, Shiva and Shiva, 2019: 60.

<sup>20</sup> *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism*, Ryder, 2000

Rudolf Steiner, in as early as 1909,<sup>21</sup> and Ernst Schumacher some 50 years later,<sup>22</sup> talked of the growing levels of consciousness as we move through the three "kingdoms" of humans, animals and plants, and Itzhak Bentov<sup>23</sup> added rocks or minerals too, seeing them also as having limited degrees and forms of consciousness - the first time I had come across this notion.

### Consciousness of Plants and Other Entities: Pansychism

There is now increasing evidence that, as well as humans and animals, plants do indeed have their own forms of sensing and then responding to what they sense, as well as ways of communicating with each other. Matthew Hall<sup>24</sup> goes into considerable detail, discussing the moral background of plants in western philosophy and contrasting this with other traditions, including eastern and indigenous cultures. He describes how plants

- are communicative, relational beings
- influence and are influenced by their environment; they can "see" their neighbours through responding to Far-Red light reflected by green tissues<sup>25</sup>
- have their own purposes, intricately connected with finding food and producing offspring
- exhibit intelligent, purposeful movement
- possess brain-like entities - meristems - in the root tip
- learn by trial and error<sup>26</sup>

How might this affect the way we treat plants? And what about rocks and minerals?

Although "spoken about in dismissive tones by many orthodox philosophers"<sup>27</sup>, pansychism, the belief that pretty much everything - animals, plants, rocks, microbes, possibly inanimate objects - has some form of mind, derived from basic levels of consciousness possessed by atomic and subatomic particles, is a growing field of serious study, in both the disciplines of philosophy and neurobiology.

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<sup>21</sup> An Outline of Esoteric Science , Steiner, 1909, [2017]

<sup>22</sup> A Guide for the Perplexed, Schumaker, 1977

<sup>23</sup> Stalking the Wild Pendulum, Bentov, 1977

<sup>24</sup> Plants as Persons: a Philosophical Botany, Hall, 2011. Hall describes in some detail how much of the early research in this area was carried out by Charles Darwin and his son. For a literally more down to earth description of the same phenomena see What a Plant Knows: a Field Guide to the Senses in Your Garden and Beyond, Chamovitz, 2017, which contains chapters entitled What a Plant Sees, Smells, Hears, Remembers, How a Plant Knows Where It Is

<sup>25</sup> Is this "seeing"? Is it different in principle from the human "seeing" process of perceiving light in the red to violet spectrum?. And we consider that bats can "see" and respond accordingly through their use of reflected high frequency sound

<sup>26</sup> To see adaptive learning in action watch your runner bean tendrils when you move the support, to which they are advancing, before they have managed to reach it. And a recent David Attenborough programme on the BBC showed how the Venus Fly Trap plant has learned to wait until a fly has disturbed its trigger response five times, in order to avoid attempting to catch and devour an errant piece of twig or a rain drop

<sup>27</sup>Panpsychism in the West, Skrbina, 2017:2.

It

"is not a formal theory of mind, [but] rather, it is a conjecture about how widespread the phenomenon of mind is in the universe"<sup>28</sup>

and thus not just on planet earth. If a "conjecture", then it is one that has been around for a long time, being

"consistent with spiritual and philosophical traditions that span cultures and centuries – from Plato's world soul to the claim that everything has a Buddha nature. The idea that all things have at least rudimentary consciousness is also a staple of Romanticism – see Wordsworth's nature worship – and, through the work of palaeontologist and philosopher Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, has even [*sic*] found a home in Christian theology ... . People throughout history have had momentary experiences of the *cosmic consciousness* – glimpses of reality as an ordered, living whole – that complements panpsychist claims. Such experiences aren't proof, but they are, perhaps, evidence, and surely have a role to play in the case for panpsychism"<sup>29</sup>.

In my own case this is consistent with the experience that I recounted in Part I of this series of papers in pages, when I experienced

"a feeling of being merged with the whole world and becoming one with it, yet without losing one's individuality"<sup>30</sup>

and just knew, with absolute certainty, that I was connected with everybody and everything, as were everybody and everything else - knowledge that has more or less remained with me ever since.

A readable overview of pansychism is provided by Hurt <sup>31</sup> in a piece that is more open to the idea than the impression given by its title. Skrbina<sup>32</sup> gives a more rigorous and detailed history and explores a number of related issues and challenges. He includes a list of what he refers to as "active lines of enquiry" into pansychism, along with many names of such enquirers, included amongst whom are a number that are probably familiar to readers of this paper - for example John Dewey, Gregory Bateson, David Bohm, Arthur Koestler, Ken Wilber.

Of course you don't necessarily have to have a panpsychic mind set to believe that it's important to treat plants, let alone animals, with care, with dignity, with love. For many years I have talked to plants in my garden, and I avoid the common instruction to sow seeds close together and then "thin out" the apparently weakest, which feels to me like plantslaughter (a lesser charge perhaps than manslaughter?) or even murder.

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<sup>28</sup> *Panpsychism*, Skrbina, no date

<sup>29</sup> *Private Lives of Rocks*, David, 2016

<sup>30</sup> *Rudolf Steiner and the Masters of Esoteric Christianity*, English translation, Prokofieff, 2018:86, referring to *Esoteric Science* by Rudolf Steiner 1909/[2017]

<sup>31</sup> *Panpsychism: The Trippy Theory That Everything From Bananas to Bicycles Are Conscious*, Hurt, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> *Panpsychism*, Skrbina, no date

For me relating to my garden in this way is consistent with Skrbina's perhaps over-confident assertion that "the viability of panpsychism is no longer really in question. At issue is the specific form it might take, and what its implications are"

and that

"Panpsychism suggests a radically different worldview, one that is fundamentally at odds with the dominant mechanistic conception of the universe. Arguably, it is precisely this mechanistic view - which sees the universe and everything in it as a kind of giant machine - that lies at the root of many of our philosophical, sociological, and environmental problems ...

"... By undermining the mechanistic worldview, [panpsychism] promises to resolve not only long-standing philosophical problems but persistent social and ecological problems as well. Many great thinkers ... have recognized the potential for the panpsychist view to fundamentally alter, for the better, our outlook on the world. An animated worldview is not only philosophically rigorous, but it can have far-reaching and unanticipated effects".

So if entities other than humans possess such varying degrees of consciousness - albeit in rather different forms from that of ours<sup>33</sup> - what does this mean about ways in which we might consider ourselves morally obliged to treat them, as well as serving our self-interest through avoiding our extinction?

As well as issues of kindness and avoiding cruelty, what should be the legal position of animals, plants, rocks - a question posed in the rather brilliantly titled *Should Trees Have Standing?*<sup>34</sup> by Professor of Law Christopher Stone. This explores legal issues around the rights not only of trees but of other non-human entities such as animals, rivers, the environment in general. Whilst at first this idea may have seemed somewhat strange, he pointed out that a number of other non-humans, such as business organisations and ships, already possessed such rights. Now, some fifty years later, these are being extended to rivers<sup>35</sup> in a number of countries. For example, New Zealand's Whanganui river was granted legal rights after a campaign, lasting nearly 150 years, by the local Maori people, who see the river as "an indivisible and living whole" and who treat it as their ancestor, seeing themselves as its legal guardian.

Grant Wilson<sup>36</sup> describes how "Earth lawyers" in over 25 countries are working on giving

"rights of nature protections, [whilst] artists, philosophers, writers, and filmmakers are showing the world that humans are part of nature, not separate from it ....

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<sup>33</sup> The Philosophy of Plant Neurobiology: a Manifesto, Calvo, 2016

<sup>34</sup> Should Trees Have Standing? Stone, 2010

<sup>35</sup> Should Rivers Have Same Legal Rights As Humans? A Growing Number Of Voices Say Yes. Westerman, 2019

<sup>36</sup> Humans Have Rights and So Should Nature, Wilson, 2021



"Rights of nature corrects shortcomings of modern environmental laws. Environmental laws operate as a tourniquet, creating rules to prevent nature's loss but doing little to address root causes - such as an economy that incentivizes the maximum exploitation of nature for profit. By contrast, rights of nature establishes a legal duty for humans to protect and restore ecosystems to health because that is their right".

Note the "restore"; we now have regeneration, not just alleged "sustainability", let alone the dangerous illusion of "sustainable growth".<sup>37</sup>

## Posthumanism

This seems to lead into the emerging perspective known as "posthumanism", although it is a term with a number of contradictory descriptions, interpretations and definitions. Perhaps the simplest is that used by Boje and Rosile<sup>38</sup>, namely "non-human centric" - that is, not putting humans at the centre of everything. However, for many of its proponents it has come to mean challenging the current "normality" of only certain privileged humans being at the centre of everything.

It's fair to say that many Humanists would deny that Humanism does put humans at the centre or "above" everything - see Paul Harrison's contribution to this volume. When I was an undergraduate the "Humanist Society's" main message was atheistic - there is no God and we don't need to believe in one in order to live moral lives.

There seems to be considerable ambiguity around terminology in this area. For some "posthumanism" involves replacing parts of human bodies with technological gadgets and machines and thus giving "us"<sup>39</sup> literally superhuman strengths, whilst for others this is known as transhumanism. Complicating the matter somewhat, these terms are sometimes transposed, with transhumanism referring to no longer seeing humans at the centre of everything, and posthumanism involving technology.

And then again, there is "feminist posthumanism", which focuses on the way "we" create and value an imbalance of power, influence, justice and fairness not only with regard to humans and nonhumans but also to a multiplicity of relations between "superior-humans and lesser-humans"<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> As recounted in my piece in the Winter issue of *eOandP* (Boydell, 2020) AMED Executive member Colin Hastings was a pioneering advocate of disabusing ourselves of the notion that "growth" could at the same time be "sustainable". In the 1970s he promoted various initiatives to that end. For example, together with Judi Marshall and Cary Cooper he organised the 1974 ATM/AMED Annual Conference with the theme of Social Responsibility, and ran many workshops on this theme.

<sup>38</sup> *An Antenarrative Amendment to the Learning Organization: Theories to Avert the Sixth Extinction*, Boje and Rosile 2019: 440

<sup>39</sup> in these cases are "we" still "we", or have "we" become "its"?

<sup>40</sup> For example see *Posthuman Feminist Theory*, Braidotti, 2016; *Sustainability, Feminist Posthumanism and the Unusual Capacities of (Post)humans*, Fox and Aldred, 2020; *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth*, Adams and Gruen (eds), 2022



## Philosophy, Science and Culture of Indigenous Peoples

To repeat, far from treating the natural environment with respect, recognising it as being made up of co-existing life, we have been seeing it as consisting of "resources," the only value of which is in their ability to be extracted and used in the service of human lives.<sup>41</sup> This is very different from the science, philosophy and culture of many indigenous peoples, who maintain so-called "primitive" connections with earth and nature, and do not think of the natural world - animals, plants, rocks, rivers, mountains and other geographical and geological features - as separate from human life but rather as living beings. To them the Earth is "Mother," to be respected as a source of both nourishment and also of wisdom<sup>42</sup>, and we owe her our care and respect. From this perspective we human observers are in no way separate from the world and its creatures and forces, which are all related and therefore should all care for one another.

Introducing what is here shown as Table 2<sup>43</sup> Rosile and Claw note that

"there are by some estimates over 500 such tribal cultures among Native American Indians alone and there may be more differences than similarities among these various tribes, yet there are some common elements ... drawn from a variety of tribal cultures, and are common to most American Indian tribes".

I have added to the original table, first by including the terms "ego-" and "eco-centric", and then including extracts from further elaborations on the aspects from later in their chapter. It will also be seen - well I hope it will - that the Tribal Wisdom aspects map on to Modes 5 and 6 in Part 2 of this series, whilst Euro-Western matches Modes 1 to 5.

With regards to their table, they comment that

"the eight aspects of traditional tribal values and practices ... are numbered only for organizational purposes for non-indigenous minds. The eight aspects could be best thought of as a hologram, where each part contains the whole. In fact, for some indigenous experts, it was difficult to separate one aspect from another, since all are so closely interrelated around the concept of 'relationship'."

Thus the presentation of Table 2 in this way is itself an example of Euro-Western culture. I only realised this when I read the preceding passage. It's another example of the fish saying "Water? What water?"

Rosile and Claw make no reference to what might be termed the "width" of tribal wisdom - that is, how far beyond one's own tribe does it spread? Does the sense of collectivism extend beyond my tribe to yours and to all tribes, or is it restricted to mine - an example of the ego-centric view of "us" compared with "you"? What was - and indeed what is now - the nature of inter-tribal relationships?

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<sup>41</sup> An Antenarrative Amendment to the Learning Organization: Theories to Avert the Sixth Extinction, Boje and Rosile 2019: 440

<sup>42</sup> An Antenarrative Amendment to the Learning Organization: Theories to Avert the Sixth Extinction, Boje and Rosile 2019: 433; Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World, Yunkaporta, 2019/2020

<sup>43</sup> Eight Aspects of Tribal Wisdom for Business Ethics, and Why They Matter, Rosile and Claw, 2016: 5-9

**Table 1: Tribal Wisdom compared with Euro-Western Values/Practices<sup>44</sup>.**

<p align="center"><b>Eight Aspects of Tribal Wisdom [Eco-Centric]</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Euro-Western Values/Practices [Ego-Centric]</b></p>
<p><b>1. Relationships are an end in themselves.</b> This refers not only to social relations, but to human relations with the natural environment, and with the universe of all that is. Indigenous cultures view business as a means to the end of enhancing a harmonious balance of relationships among humans and the planet. The other aspects in this Table may all be interpreted as aspects of, or contributions to, the primary value of relationship.</p>	<p><b>Relationships are a means to an end.</b> "Business is business" - profit is at best unrelated to, or in the worst case, takes precedence over, social relationships. The Euro-Western world often views humans, plants and animals as a means to an end.</p>
<p><b>2. Gifting is valued more highly.</b> A person who gives back to the community earns more respect than one who makes a profit from the community. Profit is not avoided or disdained, it is simply less important than generosity.</p>	<p><b>Getting/acquiring is valued.</b> "Greed is good".</p>
<p><b>3. Egalitarianism is preferred.</b> By definition the tribe is more important than the individual. Many tribes use verbal shaming of any individual who gives the appearance of being better than others.</p>	<p><b>Hierarchy is preferred.</b> Business, along with competitive sports, is the arena where one proves one's superiority to others.</p>
<p><b>4. Non-acquisitiveness is valued, not greed.</b> American Indians tend to see accumulation of wealth as a community-eroding greed. Taking only what one needs is valued as a way to assure that all have enough.</p>	<p><b>Accumulation of wealth.</b> Euro-Western capitalism is rooted in the idea of accumulation of wealth as a good and desired end.</p>
<p><b>5. Usefulness or access to use is valued.</b> What is important is not so much the ownership as the access to, or use of, something (e.g. a car pool).</p>	<p><b>Ownership is most valued.</b> Ownership of something is important, even if I never actually need or use it.</p>
<p><b>6. Barter for what is needed.</b> A barter economy is compatible with a non-acquisitive, user-oriented economy (point 5 above)</p>	<p><b>Acquire according to supply/demand.</b> A monetary economy more easily accommodates accumulation of wealth.</p>
<p><b>7. Trust and Buyer Trust are valued.</b> The importance of trust carries over to business practices that emphasize keeping one's word, being honest, and following through on commitments.</p>	<p><b>Buyer Beware still exists.</b></p>
<p><b>8. Disclosure is full and voluntary.</b> The historical practice in traditional American Indian trading was a seller-initiated voluntary full disclosure of the flaws and shortcomings of any item in trade.</p>	<p><b>Truth to the extent required by law</b> - if that - it's more a question of what you find expedient and what can get away with<sup>45</sup>.</p>

<sup>44</sup> *Eight Aspects of Tribal Wisdom for Business Ethics, and Why They Matter*, Rosile and Claw, 2016: 5-9. They give further references in connection with each of the eight items

<sup>45</sup> At the time of writing (January 2022) this seems to me to be an accurate reflection of the current notion, in politics and other fields, of the notion of "truth" in many if not all parts of the world, including the district of London known as "Whitehall".

Certainly Drake (2000) describes various types of pre-colonial North American inter-tribal conflict, many connected either with revenge for some perceived slight or with kidnapping males from other tribes in order to boost population numbers. European contact ushered in an era of greater warfare by intensifying competition for resources for trade, with settlers and the American armed forces agreeing treaties with various tribes, often in opposition with others. In the case of Australia the picture I have gained to date is that there were local conflicts before the arrival of the Europeans but that these were on a rather limited scale, mainly for local revenge or to abduct women for purposes of increasing the population - which appears to be the converse of North American practice where it was young men who were kidnapped. In general loss of life was rather little, although when the white settlers arrived they engaged in large-scale massacres of the indigenous peoples.<sup>46</sup>

I think it's fair to say that by and large indigenous ways of knowing are

"labelled as primitive and nonsensical, ... illogical nonsense to Western science, ... Few critical scholars are willing to investigate knowledge that is outside the borders of academic disciplines, [although] Western science has pilfered many aspects of indigenous ways of knowing as evidenced by pharmaceuticals, food-ways, cosmology and more. Although most scholars and scientists will admit there is a vast unknown, they fear banishment and ridicule ...when exploring these kinds of knowledge" <sup>47</sup>

and I rather imagine the same applies to panpsychism.

Contrary to this view, Noam Chomsky believes that at last the rest of us are taking serious notice of indigenous views

"Indigenous people across the world are the ones keeping the human race from destroying itself and leading earth to a disaster as they gain voices in countries in Latin America, the United States and Australia. ... That's a tremendous step forward for the entire world. It's a kind of incredible irony that all over the world the leading forces in trying to prevent a race to disaster are the Indigenous communities...It's phenomenal all over the world that those who we call 'primitive' are trying to save those of us who we call 'enlightened' from total disaster."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Forgotten War*, Reynolds, 2013

<sup>47</sup> *Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Quantum Science for Business Ethics*, Pepion, 2016

<sup>48</sup> Noam Chomsky: Indigenous people are our only hope for survival. Contributor, Ecologise.in, 2017

## World Economic Forum Global Risks

The 2021 World Economic Forum Report<sup>49</sup> contains a chart, reproduced here as Figure 1, showing their estimate of the likelihood and impact of a number of potential risk factors. It's not clear how they define "risk" - i.e. risk of what? They may be talking mainly but not solely about risk to economic development. Similarly I can't find a clear indication as to who "they" are, other than "an extensive network of academic, business, government, civil society and thought leaders" (there is a list of people who have contribute to the Report but no explanation of the nature of those contributions). This is rather important - what countries were they from? What gender? What ethnicity? What sexual orientation? What disciplines? What occupations? Who paid their salaries and fees? And so on.<sup>50</sup> These must have a big effect on their responses<sup>51</sup> and without this information the data might perhaps be viewed with reservations.<sup>52</sup> As indeed must all data, always. So why include it at all? Well perhaps simply because it is a picture that I find interesting, as may others.

The WEF - who let's face it have a rather poor reputation among many of us for their luxuriating annual beanfeasts for the multi-wealthy - have been producing this survey for 17 years. However in 2022 they changed the scoring and presentation formats - no longer this two-dimensional chart but a single list of the top 10 risks. In Figure 2 I have created a "head-of-the-river"<sup>53</sup> diagram showing the movements of the "top ten" in 2019, 2021 and 2022.<sup>54</sup>

In the 2019 and 2021 surveys the "top five" - in terms of high likelihood together with severe impact - are what might be termed "environmental".<sup>55</sup> Using a different measure - simply the "most severe" risks then six of the top ten are what might be deemed environmental. Many of all the thirty are also almost certainly mutually inter-related - for example nearly all of the effects are probably contributing to "mental health deterioration" and also to that termed "youth disillusion". And all of them can be seen to be the result of ego-centric thinking, feeling and willing.

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<sup>49</sup> World Economic Forum 2021: 12

<sup>50</sup> I do know that I was not included

<sup>51</sup> For example if a large majority were from the military it's rather likely that "weapons of mass destruction" would not only show a high impact but also be considered rather more likely than in these data. The methodology involved the respondents being asked to score or rank a total of 30 factors. I can't see an indication of how these 30 were identified.

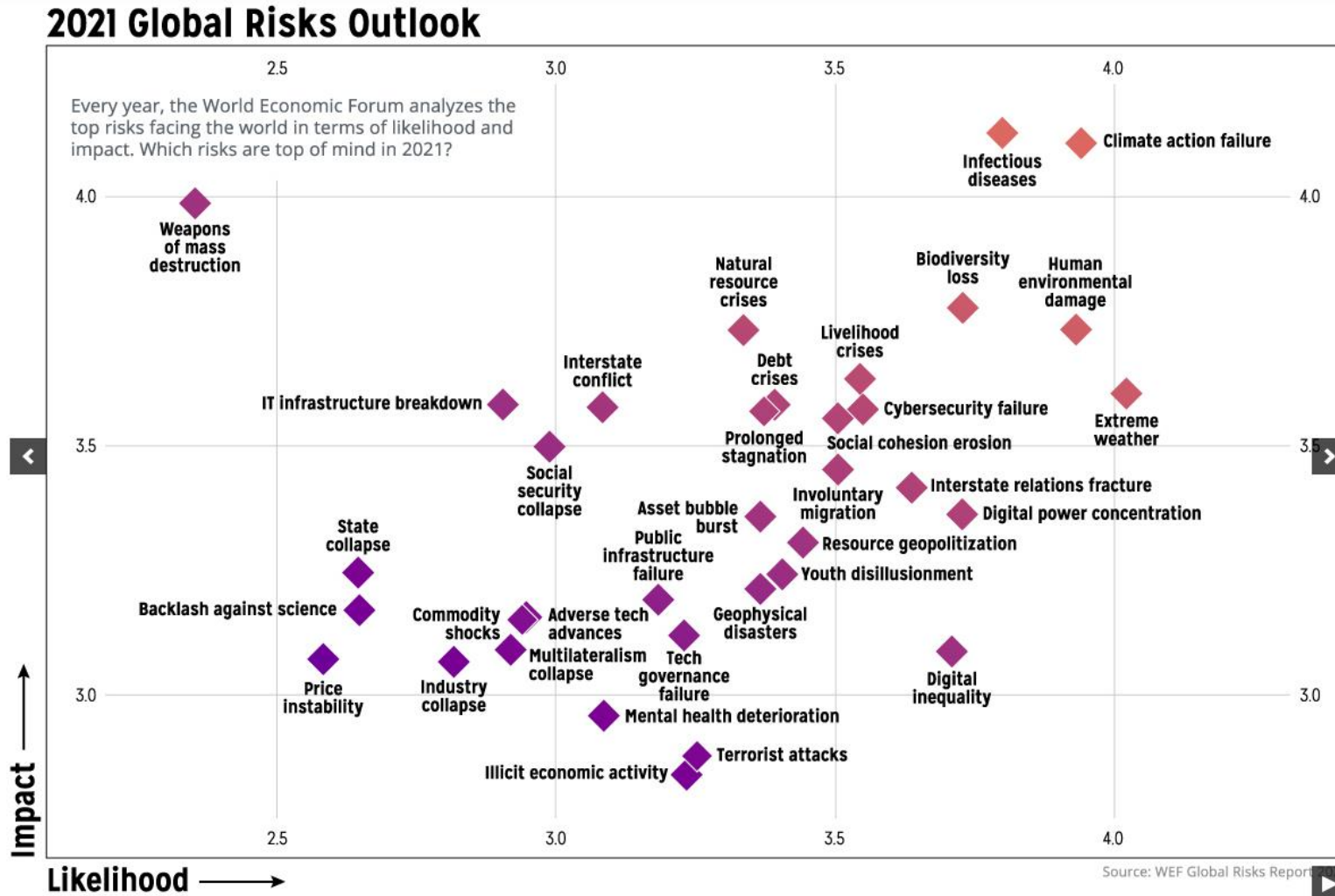
<sup>52</sup> As perhaps because of the source - the World Economic Forum, a body which has many critics and is seen by some as a "billionaires club". At [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Economic\\_Forum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Economic_Forum), in a piece that admits that it has "many issues", as well as a somewhat hagiographic praise for the WEF, Wikipedia gives a number of examples and references to such critics

<sup>53</sup> So-called after charts showing the way that rowing clubs climb or fall in the rankings at the Henley Regatta

<sup>54</sup> The identifying labels of a small number of items were changed over this four year period - I have kept them the same for consistency.

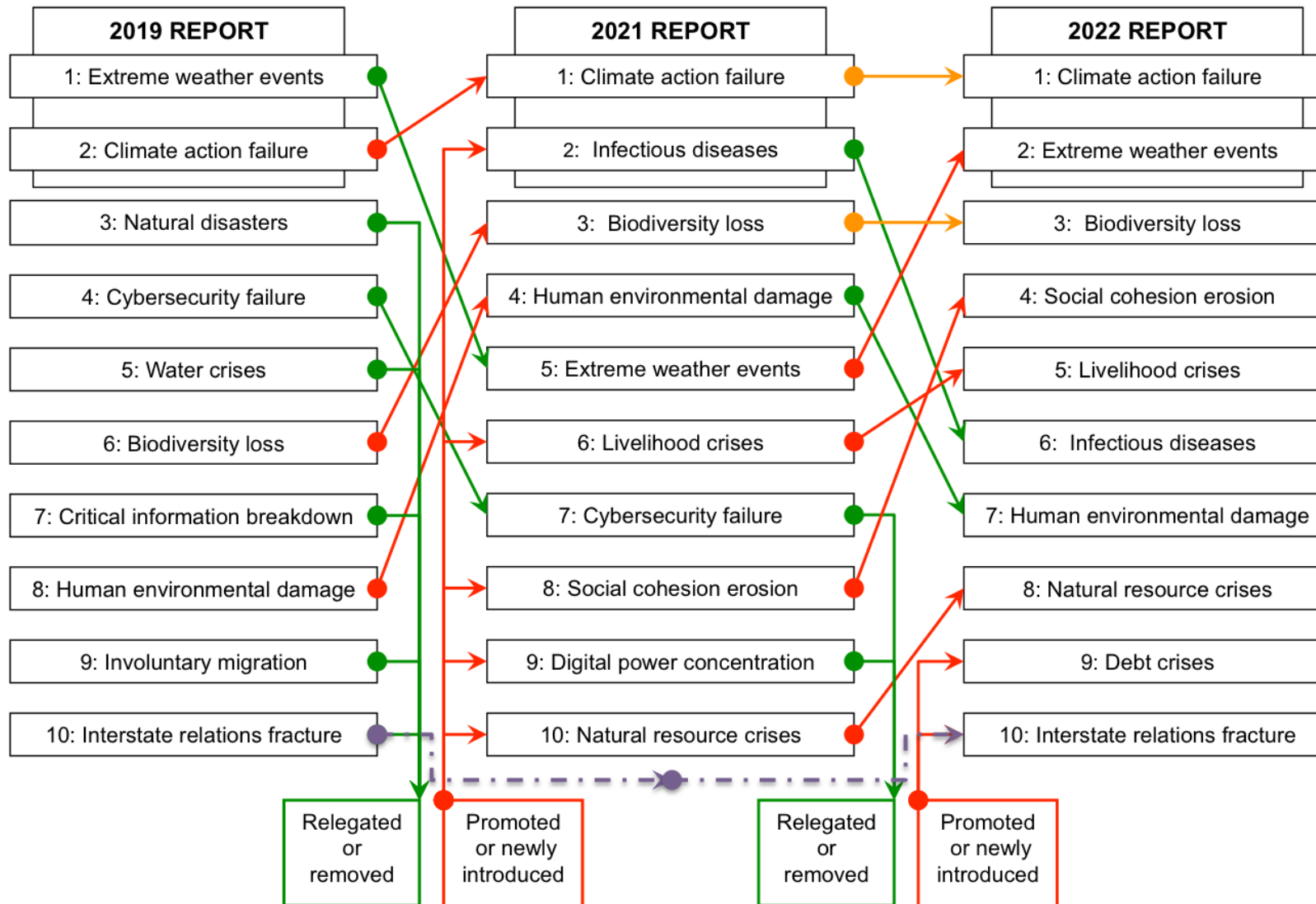
<sup>55</sup> The reports themselves refer to them in this way

Figure 1: World Economic Forum's 30 Global Risk Factors as in 2021 Report<sup>56</sup>



<sup>56</sup> The Global Risks Report 2021, World Economic Forum, 2021:12

Figure 2: World Economic Forum's Ten Worst Risk Factors 2019, 2021 and 2022



## So what can we do? Reducing our separation, increasing our oneness with nature

In spite of what might appear to be a somewhat depressing picture that I have been painting, there are in fact many things that we can do to make a general move towards eco-ways of thinking, feeling, willing and doing, and some more specifically related to our relationship with nature. Given the limitations of time, space and; above all, my knowledge and creativity, I will just refer to a few. I have located the general ones in Part I of this serial; here I mention some that are more specifically related to our relationship with nature.

There is in fact a lot that we can do, from creating or joining large projects, getting involved in lobbying schemes, talking with each other, changing the way we look after our domestic window boxes or gardens. An excellent resource of numerous ideas for individuals, groups, teachers, businesses and others can be found in the *Ecosystem Restoration Playbook: a Practical Guide to Healing the Planet*, published by The UN Decade on Eco Restoration for World Environment Day 2021 and freely downloadable from <https://unenvironment.widen.net/s/ffjvzcfldw/ecosystem-restoration-playbook>. Some of its suggestions are incorporated, with others, in the points that follow. (The numbers are purely for ease of reference when referring to these. They are in not meaningfully sequential).

### We can raise our voices, and we can listen to voices of others:

1. Organise, take part and speak up in private and public discussions and debates about how to improve the local, national and international environment, the ways in which we treat nature, and how we can make our communities, societies and economies fairer and more sustainable
2. Put on or participate in an exhibition of posters, photos or art showing the beauty and effectiveness of local ecosystems
3. Find, create and tell people about further such sources and resources
4. Hold discussions about the value of ecosystems and the threats they face
5. Stage online campaigns to draw attention to climate change, nature loss and what can be done to reverse these trends
6. Write blogs, poems, limericks, plays, articles, books,
7. Paint, knit, weave, sculpt, compose, sing, perform
8. Write letters to local and national newspapers and other publications
9. Use social media
10. Download the *Ecosystem Restoration Playbook* referred to above, from <https://unenvironment.widen.net/s/ffjvzcfldw/ecosystem-restoration-playbook>
11. Listen to podcasts such as those on the BBC's *Fixing the World* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04d42vf>



12. Sign up to organisations like the *Global Landscapes Forum* at <https://www.globallandscapesforum.org> and the Society for Ecological Restoration and
13. Follow the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. For example access *Biodivercities by 2030: Transforming Cities' Relationship with Nature* at <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/publications/biodivercities-2030-transforming-cities-relationship-nature>

#### **We can make eco-conscious choices:**

14. Pledge a donation or other support for restoration or conservation initiatives
15. Change our behaviour and spending to shrink our local and global environmental foot-print and divert resources toward companies and activities that bring back nature instead of harming it. We can encourage others around us to do the same.
16. Halt purchases of products and services that are not certified as sustainable
17. Start a new diet or catering policy based on our preferred combination of seasonal, sustainable, locally-sourced and plant-rich products

#### **We can take some action:**

18. Volunteer for an existing restoration effort
19. As an individual, a business or another form of organisation, start our own on-the-ground initiative, join an existing restoration or conservation effort, or help build an alliance to give a bigger boost to nature's comeback
20. Clean up a lake, beach, park or other natural area
21. Make our home, balcony, garden, school, roadside, public space more eco-friendly with composting and planting, perhaps using organics, or Permaculture<sup>57</sup>, which as well as not using chemicals avoids disturbing the soil and uses mulches instead. (<https://www.permaculture.org.uk/>).
22. Another approach we can explore is Biodynamic Agriculture<sup>58</sup>, which can be applied to gardens as well as farms. The Biodynamic Association can be located at <https://www.biodynamic.org.uk/>. A bit like Permaculture but it includes somewhat more esoteric practices such as sowing according to the calendar and using natural substances in homeopathic dilutions, for example to enhance the efficacy of compost heaps. An internationally known community created in the Sinai desert using Biodynamic principles is SEKEM; a description of this and other worldwide biodynamic enterprises is given in *Biodynamic Preparations Around the World: Insightful Case Studies from Six Continents*, Hurter, 2021
23. Have a go at trying some of the ideas put forward by The Green Cuisine at
24. <https://www.greencuisinetrust.org/RESOURCES>

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<sup>57</sup> Permaculture: a Beginner's Guide, Burnett, 2003; *The Minimalist Gardener: Low Impact, No Dig Growing*, Whitefield, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Koepf's *Practical Biodynamics: Soil, Compost, Sprays and Food Quality*, Koepf, 2012. Case stories of applications of Biodynamic Agriculture in different parts of the world are given in *Biodynamic Preparations Around the World: Insightful Case Studies from Six Continents*

25. Make our business, school, roadside or a public space more eco-friendly with indigenous trees or plants
26. Mow our lawns less frequently and intensively
27. Enhance the ecosystem functions of our own homes and work spaces
28. If involved with an organisation or a business, make our procurement, production and distribution policies more eco-conscious to reduce the footprint of our products and operations.

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## Tom Boydell writes

When I turned 80 I was advised to go part-time. So I'm now a part-time management development consultant, a part-time writer, a part-time actor, a part-time singer, a part-time poet, a part-time weaver and a part-time gardener. I'm glad I'm only a part-timer, otherwise I'd be worn out.

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