

School
of
Critical Design

EDITION

FOREWORD BY
J. Paul Neeley

THE
M I R E D
WORLD
IN THE
ANTHRO-
POCENE ©

WIRED

adjective

1. making use of computers to transfer or receive information, especially by means of the internet.
2. in a nervous, tense, or edgy state.

MIRIED

adjective

to be involved in a difficult situation, especially for a long period of time.

FOREWORD

At the School of Critical Design we like to play with the word “critical” as not only the use of design for important critique of the world as it is, but also thinking about “critical” as design work that is essential and infinitely important today and in the future. As I think through the ideas in Ted Hunt’s *The MIREd World In The Anthropocene*, I am struck by the work’s ability to touch on both of these criticals.

Our global society faces profound, existential challenges in the Anthropocene, and for me these insights from Ted are not just academic musings but essential tools for understanding the broader implications of our actions and planning new ways forward.

The future seems to be accelerating towards us faster and faster, and yet our predictions and visions of what is next, which deeply impact actions taken today, have underlying mechanisms that very often are poorly understood and unconsidered. And this forecasting tends to support the very acceleration into particular directions that may not be in our best interest. To be very clear, it is also these very underlying and unconsidered mechanisms that have also brought us to this current condition. *The MIREd World In The Anthropocene* work of revealing and questioning these mechanisms gives us new ways to see our current state, and encourages changes in our frames for next action.

For example, today the boundaries between our evolutionary position and technologically-driven existences are blurring and clashing in distressing ways, and *The MIREd World In The Anthropocene* provides important perspectives on understanding and navigating these complexities. Rather than just continuing in a vein of worship of new technologies and the fashion of what’s next, we are invited to reset our understanding and expectations of what is good, what is sustainable, and what we value, etc.

Ted’s collection is not just a reflection on design or technology; it is an incisive commentary on the critical juncture at which our society stands today. His analysis is crucial in an era defined by rapid technological advancements and environmental crises. *The MIREd World In The Anthropocene* becomes a mirror we all should be looking into, and to take a good look at ourselves, our work, and the systems we exist within and create. It compels us to consider the long-term effects of our decisions and actions in an increasingly interconnected world, and calls us to mindful action, emphasizing the importance of thoughtful decision-making in an age where such clarity and insight are desperately needed.

I’m really grateful for Ted’s work and the ease with which he makes these ideas accessible to all of us, and I hope you’ll devour this indispensable journey of introspection and discovery that *The MIREd World In The Anthropocene* has created for us.

J. Paul Neeley
Designer & Researcher
School of Critical Design

FROM THE EDITOR

Our perceptions and predictions for the future have long been coupled with default mindsets we rarely seek to question. But what if instead we were to consider the future from the perspective of cautious criticality, rather than a default mindset of optimism/progress, and over the course of an entire epoch, rather than neatly bookended into the next calendar year? The following propositions are not intended to be purely pessimistic or dystopian, but instead to act as departure points either away from something old or towards something new.

The MIREd World in The Anthropocene is an exploration into such alternative perspectives. It is an obvious parody of *The WIRED World In X* published annually by *WIRED* magazine, employing the same tropes and modes of future forecasting. But here with an added dose of the realities of the shared predicaments we face framed within the epoch we collectively live in.

Ted Hunt

Editorial director
Ted Hunt

Production director
Ted Hunt

Content director
Ted Hunt

Art director
Ted Hunt

Designer
Ted Hunt

Illustrations
Ted Hunt / Noun Project

MIREd

1

FUTURES

A critical look at the futures of The Future.

2

SOCIETY

Alternatives to consensus

3

ENVIRONMENT

What's going wrong?

4

BUSINESS

Questioning the business of business

5

SCIENCE

What we know and how we go about knowing it

6

CULTURE

Concerns for the cult of culture

7

ECONOMICS

Towards a new economy of economics

8

POLITICS

Getting political

9

TECHNOLOGY

We create our tools and the our tools create..

PERMANENCE FORECASTERS

BACK TO THE FUTURE

WEIRD FUTURES

HISTORIC FUTURES

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN
FOR BRANDS?

FUTURES

THE END OF TREND

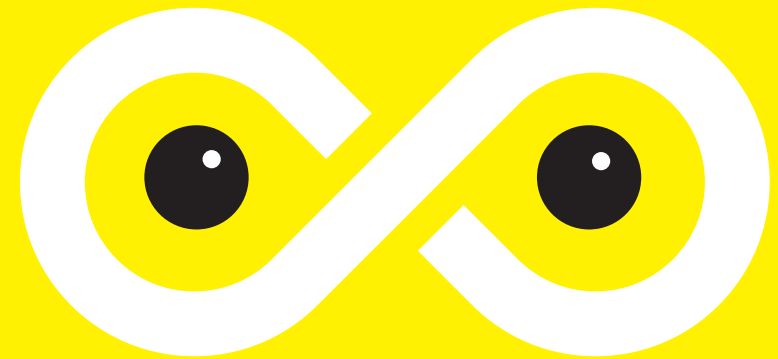
FUTURES

PERMANENCE FORECASTERS

The ability to identify the perpetual might soon overshadow our fascination with the transitory

If any business was to be offered only one of the following two insights it might seem logical which would be the rational choice. The first insight would offer the business a forecast on what new transitory desires might interest their customers within the next twelve months (authored by a Trend Forecaster). The second insight would identify what enduring needs might remain consistent for the entirety of their customers' relationship with their business (authored by a Permanence Forecaster). The business advantage of focussing on consistency over the temporary, and of enduring needs over transitory wants might seem obvious. And yet most businesses are now accustomed to the adrenaline rush of identifying and chasing temporary trends above and beyond all else.

If we were to consider the future objectively we'd see that it is made up primarily of repetitions of existing entities, with the 'NEW!' only accounting for a small percentage of the substance of the future. And yet we seem to think that the future will be entirely made up of the new, with futurists becoming fixated on naming and taming such newness. The practice of forecasting shouldn't be entirely specific to newness, however, and its methodology might evolve to identify what will remain the same in the future as much as what will change.



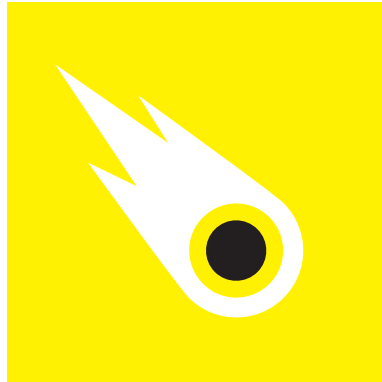
SINGULARITY

FUTURES

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Though referring to the future as futures has brought about a much needed appreciation of plurality, it might have arguably done so at the expense of solidarity.

Orbiting the sun every 75-76 years Halley's comet will next appear in the night sky on 28th July 2061. This singular event will mark a point in the Earth's singular future. Halley's comet will pass over a version of the Earth that although experienced and perceived in varying ways, will ultimately be singular in its actuality. Whoever is President of the USA on 28/07/2061 within the USA, will be the same as who the rest of the world knows to be President of the USA on 28/07/2061.

**The Slow Cancellation of The Future**

"What's gone is the idea of the non-individual Future, the collectively shared and experienced anticipation that tomorrow will be different from today, in some dramatically improved way, or even in just some dramatically strange way."

Simon Reynolds

Music journalist and author

This temporal truth might help us to decouple two critical aspects of the future. The first being a future as an imaginary time considered from the present with plasticity. The second the future as an entirely real time that will inevitably come into being. While the imaginary future is indeed subject to plurality under the term futures, the later is absolute and inevitable. Rather than this becoming a determinist and disempowering mindset, considering a singular "shared future" might manifest a far greater appreciation of solidarity and collaboration in the knowledge that whatever fate awaits us upon Halley's comet's next appearance in our night skies will be our shared fate.

OUTSIDE IN

FUTURES

WEIRD FUTURES

What if the answers to our most challenging issues lay outside of the small niche of knowledge we currently draw upon?



As an acronym W.E.I.R.D stands for Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Developed and defines the self declared dominant worldview to rule all worldviews. This version of WEIRD is a highly niche mental state, however, and using it as the single window onto the world discards all other known and knowable human mental states, all other known and knowable animal mental states, not to mention all unknown and unknowable mental states beyond our knowledge.

Outside of the W.E.I.R.D window of knowledge lies paralinguistic knowledge, religious knowledge, indigenous knowledge, oral knowledge, non-human knowledge and many many more. What if the perspectives, answers, and solutions to the numerous crises we face exist within these knowledge domains? UnW.E.I.R.D'ing the ways we currently think about and navigate reality might present entirely new and genuinely weird paths into a safe and fair shared future. Here weird doesn't refer to the unearthly or irrational as a form of othering, but as an acceptance of the origins of the term 'weird' as a description considered with matters of fate and destiny.

Seeing The Light

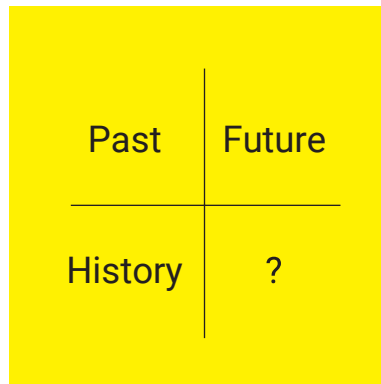
"There is nothing new under the sun, but there are new suns."

Octavia E. Butler
Science-fiction
writer

HISTORIC FUTURES

What might an equivalent to the ontology of history be for the future?

The past is markedly different from history, in that references to history tends to solely concerns human affairs that play out upon the canvas of the past, whereas the past encapsulates the affairs of pretty much everything prior to the present. Any student attending a history lesson in school will be taught human history, everything else is the remit or geography, biology, or physics.

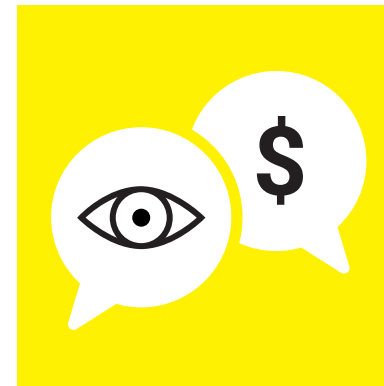


Yet when we speak of the future we tend to refer solely to human affairs. While in actuality the future, much like the past, encapsulates anything that might happen to everything beyond the present.

What if we identified a new means of thinking and talking about the future that moves beyond just talking about human concerns playing out upon the canvas of the future, in the same way that we can decouple history from the past?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BRANDS?

Many, if not most, trend reports contain a section entitled 'What does this mean for brands?'. This is usually the critical juncture where cultural observation becomes cultural appropriation.



By identifying the boundaries at which brands exist, and resist, we might gain better clarity upon the blurred limits of an otherwise all encompassing and limitless growth ideology. Rather than shying away from non-actionable insights we might instead lean into them in order to identify exactly what business can, and can't, help us with.

Only certain types of cultural observations tend to be documented within trend reports, usually those that are deemed trend setting, innovative, or 'New!'. Other forms of culture are expressly excluded as they lay outside of the limits of a brands interests, or ability to exploit, profit, or positively associate themselves with. Trends in conspiracy, crises, conflict, crime, care, and collective action are just some examples of such instances that are seemingly incomprehensible to brands - and as such are omitted from forecasters' scope of work.

ON OFF

CARELESSNESS

OFF-BOARDING

WE CAN JUST GIVE UP

SOCIETY

NEW CONSTRAINTS

SOCIETY

ON OFF

After centuries of 'always-on' growth, 'temporarily off' or 'on/off-ism' might now become the new normal.

Over the course of 2022 the world has seen; Milan turn off its public fountains whilst rationing water in order to fight drought, Japanese being told to turn off lights to save energy amid a Tokyo heatwave, the UK's National Grid offering to pay households to shift electricity use to avoid blackouts, and numerous German cities imposing cold showers while urging citizens to turn off lights amid the Russian gas crisis.

It seems that turning things off is now one of the most effective, if not only, solutions we have to the emerging realities of the climate crisis.

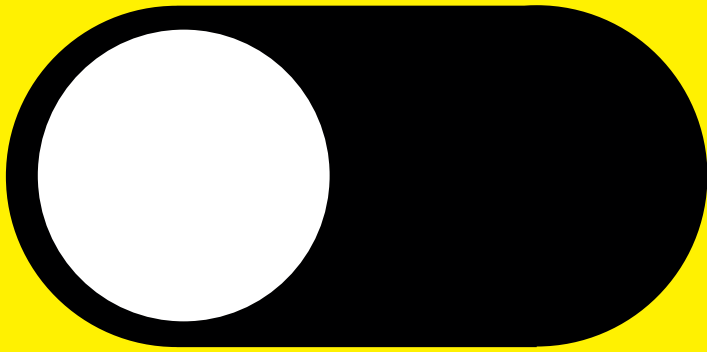
This is an evolutionary strategy known to nature as diapause, dormancy, or hibernation - the simple act of minimising activity to endure or survive adverse environmental conditions, such as temperature extremes, drought, or reduced food availability. And it is a strategy that has been able to sustain the species and entities employing it far beyond their immediate fate.

Turn Off The Taps

"When your bathtub is about to overflow, you don't go looking for buckets or start covering the floor with towels – you start by turning off the tap, as soon as you possibly can."

Greta Thunberg

Climate and environmental activist

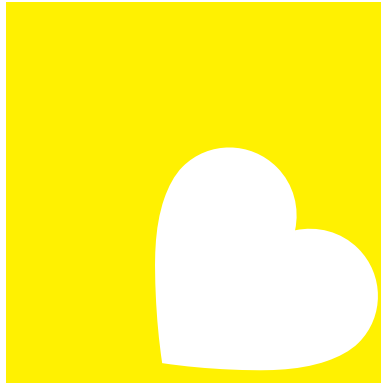


HAVE A HEART**SOCIETY**

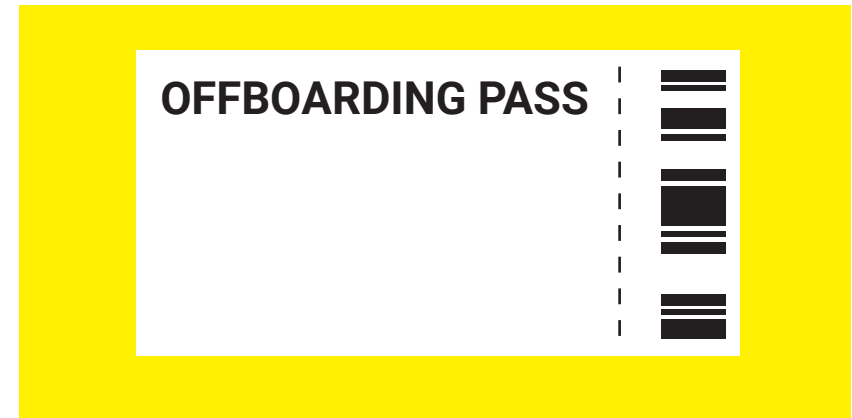
CARELESSNESS

A distinct absence of care in society is leading to both heartless and clumsy outcomes

We can think of carelessness in two ways; a distinct absence of empathy, or the distinct presence of clumsiness. Both of these interpretations are now arguably key attributes of modern society. The recent release of the court transcripts from the inquiry into the circumstances of the Grenfell Tower tragedy in the UK surfaced an abundance of carelessness. Local government and housing authority decisions were shown to have been made detached from actual human lives and without emotion or care. And numerous private sector actions were proven to have been conducted in an entirely clumsy and unprofessional manner in what seemed to be a hope for the best attitude to risk. Such carelessness is arguably a combined product of cost cutting (better known as 'cost engineering' within industries) and an emotional detachment from people that a governing culture of procedural decision making brings about. Rather than being unique to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, such carelessness is universal to most sectors of society and business.



What if the so-called 'care sector' of society wasn't confined to health and medical services? What might happen if every sector of society and business had a remit of care and roles and responsibilities that would mitigate against the heartlessness and clumsiness we are becoming increasingly accustomed to?

THE UNTRAINED EYE**SOCIETY**

OFFBOARDING

A means to introduce citizens to a new future and depart from the limitations of the past

Many corporations pride themselves in authoring and enacting onboarding sessions for new recruitment hires. Such procedures usually involve both familiarising employees with not only the administrative structure of the workplace, but also the organisation's ideological structure. The practice isn't just confined to new employees within an organisation, an omnipresent version of the onboarding process can be seen to be spread across an individual's entire education and career in order to groom a compliant and productive population. In adapting to the new normal that faces us we might reverse engineer the same practices in order to decouple ourselves from the social and cultural norms that so strictly govern us. Might we be able to systematically offboard ourselves from the toxic ideas of; meritocracy, entitlement, inequality, patriarchy, extraction, and exploitation through the process of unlearning as a ticket to a safe and just future?

Unlearning

"The difficulty lies not in learning, but in unlearning. In Galileo's great book, the Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems, most of the text is not dedicated to arguing that the Earth turns. It is dedicated to demolishing the ingrained intuition that its turning is inconceivable.."

Carlo Rovelli, Theoretical physicist and writer

NO / HOPE

POLITICS

WE CAN JUST GIVE UP

Giving up has always tended to have a bad image problem. But giving up might actually be one of the primary components in actively addressing the climate crisis and social inequality.

It is said that one of the defining features of neoliberal capitalism is its unique ability to subsume, (re)appropriate, and marketise pretty much everything. Ironically even the hope of alternatives to neoliberal capitalism itself isn't immune from this feature.

The mindset of "we can't just give up" is now being appropriated by cynical actors in order to delay / defer / deny the true extent of the climate crisis. We can't just give up.. so we can make next season's fast fashion collection from semi-sustainable cotton and sell it in paper bags rather than plastic bags. We can't just give up.. so we can switch the delivery vehicles (of an industrialised extraction and exploitation system that feeds over consumption) to battery powered versions.

By holding fast to the "we can't just give up" mindset in ALL instances we are inevitably distracted from what "we can just give up". And what we should just give up on.

We can just give up on;

- HUMAN-CAUSED EMISSIONS OF GREENHOUSE GASES
- OCEAN ACIDIFICATION
- CHEMICAL POLLUTION
- NITROGEN AND PHOSPHORUS LOADING
- FRESHWATER WITHDRAWALS
- ABSENSE OF LAND CONVERSION
- BIODIVERSITY LOSS
- AIR POLLUTION
- OZONE LAYER DEPLETION
- INEQUALITY IN/OF;
- FOOD SECURITY
- HEALTH
- EDUCATION
- INCOME AND WORK
- PEACE AND JUSTICE
- POLITICAL VOICE
- SOCIAL EQUITY
- GENDER EQUALITY
- HOUSING
- SOCIAL CAPITAL
- ENERGY SECURITY
- WATER SECURITY

BAD TASTE

CONVENIENT HALF-TRUTHS

SHADES OF GREEN

DO NO HARM

SUSTAINABILITY TM

ENVIRONMENT

IT'S ON THE TIP OF OUR TONGUES

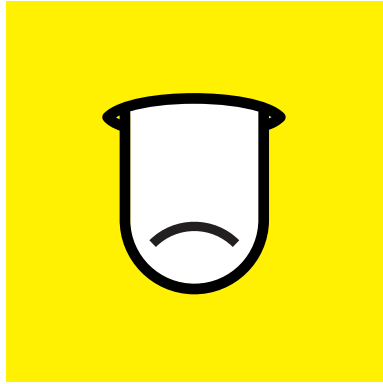
ENVIRONMENT

BAD TASTE

Like a Pac-Man chomping its way around a game, are we letting our tastes drive us into eating ourselves into oblivion?

Taste buds are clusters of receptor cells which are also known as gustatory cells. These tiny clusters of cells might be largely responsible for the systematic destruction of our environment. Why?

As humans we are evolutionarily led by our hunger for food to sustain us, but also by our taste for certain foods over others. These tastes have evolved from a means to identify healthy fresh foods from potentially life threatening rotting ones, to a means for industrialized agriculture and retail to produce and profit from selling us dopamine inducing food and drinks products whenever we want them, wherever we want them. Furtherstill, the same analogy of taste can be extrapolated to how our broader 'tastes' dictate the products we demand, the means in which those products are made, and the duration of time we remain engaged with those products before seeking new ones.



As a simple thought experiment, consider what might happen to exploitative global agricultural supply chains, the associated co2 emissions, and food waste, if we were all to lose our taste buds and food became a simple matter of quelling hunger with the most immediately and feasibly available foods. Rather than the narrative for a dystopian sci-fi movie if we refrained from thinking of this a totalitarian sensory genocide on gustatory cells, and simply saw the same scenario as a conscious choice by citizens to eat seasonally and locally grown we might return to the same ways that humans have eaten for c. 200,000 of our evolution. And how every other living organism that doesn't demand the option of fresh avocados 365 days a year is able to sustain an existence.

THIS INFORMATION

ENVIRONMENT



CONVENIENT HALF-TRUTHS

When Al Gore introduced us to the concept of Inconvenient Truths in 2006 he might not have imagined the response two decades later would be a series of convenient half-truths

A half-truth is a knowingly deceptive statement that includes some element of truth. Such half-truths have become the bread and butter of corporate and government sustainability initiatives, neither wholly false nor entirely true; they leave the public having to navigate a kind of Orwellian doublespeak of partial actions folded into systemic inaction.

Convenience of half-truths have become a go to strategy for those wishing to continue to profit from delaying, denying, deflecting, and defending their explicit or implicit involvement in social and environmental injustices.

SHADES OF GREEN

There's a critical need to shift to an acceptance that being 'green' exists upon a spectrum rather than being a singular catch-all claim

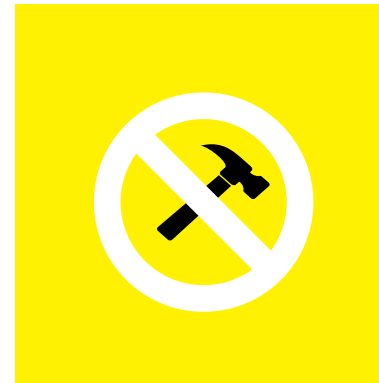


The accomplishment of becoming 'green' has become a universal proxy for an entirely environmentally positive, or neutral, business. Yet the reality of balancing business with regenerative or reciprocal environmental relationships is far more nuanced than the self-proclaimed absolutism of being 'green'.

Like it's metaphorical equivalent of a *Grey Area*, or *Shades of Grey*, (describing the fuzzy border between states, such as legal and illegal actions), *Shades of Green* might encourage us to appreciate that ecological harmony is an emergent and complex phenomenon that should be measured against a progressive spectrum rather than a binary absolute. An increasing appreciation of such *Shades of Green* might see organisations and individuals aspire to progress into, and along, a series of distinct nuances of 'green' through the process of 'greening'.

DO NO HARM

Just like everything looks like a nail to a hammer, everything looks like a trade(off) to an offsetter



The fundamental principle of medical ethics is "do no harm". Another way to state this is to consider that "given an existing problem, it may be better not to do something, or even to do nothing, than to risk causing more harm than good." Such a moral framework might be interpretable to our collective efforts to approach the climate crisis and environmental degradation. Current goals and ambitions of Carbon Neutral / Net Zero / Climate Positive still arguably allow harm to persist, but for it to be offset along the way or at a later stage. A business can create a product sourced

from materials or labor extracted through social and environmental injustices, manufactured and transported with a significant co2 impact, and continuing to contribute to emissions throughout its lifecycle while simply offsetting those manifest negative impacts through carbon trading and charity contribution.

An alternative ethical principle to do no harm (to society nor environment) might distinctly raise the standards, to which we hold organisations accountable, to a level that negates the obscure methodologies and practices of offsetting and give us faith that the products and services we use aren't causing more harm than good. And like within medical care if that might mean not doing something, or doing nothing, in order to actively avoid harm then so be it.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE SOLUTION**ENVIRONMENT**

SUSTAINABILITY™

Neoliberal Capitalism has a distinct habit of turning the problem into an opportunity, and sustainability has now become big business

“Doing good is good business” so the mantra goes. If a brand can position a product or service as having even the slightest positive impact upon the world, framed as “business as a force for good”, then sales will inevitably follow. This winning formula has not gone unnoticed by small startups nor global corporations. And so Sustainability™ (a term coined by Alec Leach) has been born, a reappropriation of sustainability initiatives now gone mainstream. And yet bigger doesn't always mean better for Sustainability™.

If the dictionary definition of sustainable is something that can be maintained at a certain rate or level for an indefinite period, then what we're told and sold as sustainable is pretty far from that definition. For Sustainability™ to be sustainable simply means to do something slightly less bad. And while governing regulations still remain lax about sustainability claims we're seeing a free-for-all of corporate growth driven by half truths, empty promises, deliberate obfuscation, and cynical manipulation. Welcome to Sustainability™.

No Problems

“If hype is about making products seem more important than they really are, then Sustainability™ is about making products seem less problematic than they really are”

Alec Leach

Consultant, writer and editor

Sustainability™

STEWARDSHIP

GOOD LIARS

BETTER BAITING

PLAN C

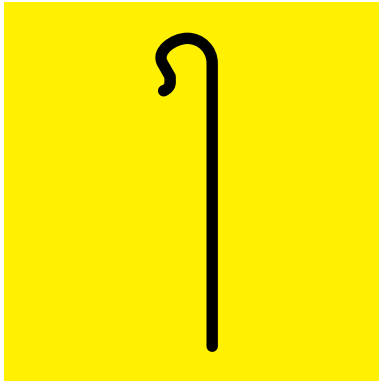
WELCOME TO THE CORPROPOCENE

BUSINESS

STEWARDSHIP

A shift from authoritative control to collective care might bring about the wholesale shift in how business is done

Any casual engagement with LinkedIn seems to quickly result in endless words of wisdom upon the tenants of good leadership. Though what constitutes the attributes of leadership are still shifting, the core premise of a leader as a single individual leading from the front as a flag bearer for success is a dated one. If not a toxic one.



Stewardship radically differs from leadership through a view of temporarily supervising or taking care of something, rather than taking authority and control over something. Though the concept is usually associated with agriculture, environment, nature, and health care, it is easily transferable to any form of collective enterprise requiring decision making. Stewardship is ultimately built upon the understanding that responsibility is only ever a temporary role, required to ensure future prosperity rather than immediate gain.

GOOD LIARS

When is a lie not a lie? When it's just a PR story? When it's done for the greater good? When it's told by respectable business men?

An unusual phenomenon that has seemed to recently infest business is the tendency for perfectly responsible leaders to tell outright lies in the name of amplifying the good they do. These are the "good liars", they are both extremely good at telling lies, and good at lying for the sake of greater good.



Examples of such (suspected) good lying might be found in;

innocent genesis story of the 'Yes No Bins' which was later stated to be fabricated by an advertising agency, and although still stated as an objective historical event by numerous media sources including Wikipedia yet has no documented proof that it ever happened. [1]

BrewDog former staff accusing *BrewDog* founders of lying about sending anti-homophobia protest beer to Russia, and about Watt and Dickie changing their names to 'Elvis' in order that they might cynically generate PR from making these statements. [2]

Lululemon's promise that "we do not tolerate racism, discrimination, harassment, or hate" that is made despite the brand's name being said to have been created by founder Chip Wilson because it had three L's, which were difficult for Japanese people to say, and he thought that was funny. Later Wilson stated "I was playing with Ls and I came up with Lululemon. It's funny to watch them try to say it." [3]

[1] Source Wikipedia / A Book About Innocent, 2009

[2] Source punkswithpurpose.org

[3] Source 2004 interview with National Post Business Magazine

BETTER BAITING

Is the ambition to make the world a better place really as altruistic as we're being led to believe?

Queer Baiting is defined as a marketing technique within fiction and entertainment in which creators hint at, but do not depict, same-sex romance or other LGBTQ+ representation in order to draw in an LGBTQ+ audience. *Better Baiting* might in turn be described as a marketing technique that hints at products or services being created in accordance with a socially just and environmentally safe future in order to draw in ethically and morally oriented audiences.

The term 'better' has become such an ambiguous declaration that it has now come to mean pretty much anything - from a little less bad (mostly), to a genuine commitment of working towards equality and utopia (rarely). The absence of a shared definition of better has now led us to become beset by an industrialised level misappropriation of what we are being told is better. Everyone, and everything, is seemingly promising us something better, and yet a true realisation of better has never felt further from our grasp.

Part of the problem with better is that it can essentially be used by just about anyone to describe just about anything. From a heartfelt call for a better future found in Pope Francis's latest book, to the life-dependent challenges of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, to Mark Zuckerberg's looping-promise to "do better". Visions of better are now ubiquitous.

Everyone is selling us better. Better water, better e-cigarettes, better energy, better financial services, better entertainment channels, and even better worlds. These versions of better actually help us to uncover a key issue of our times. Our interpretation of better is simply 'less bad' than what came before it. Yet in most current cases of the use of better we're starting from such a low base that actually achieving better is often just a case of achieving something less bad.



Better™

PLAN C

The 'Plan B' for business that is compliant with social justice and environmental safety is now proving to be mostly a performative charade - is it time for Plan C?

Most Westernised countries, and the entire global economy, seem to be relying upon a strategy of "green growth" in order to navigate the conflicting demands of internal economic prosperity within external climate safety.

The flagship for such green growth is the so-called Plan B of B-Corp - the ideology of "business as a force for good". And yet this Plan B for business is arguably proving to be far more performative than performing when it comes to delivering a safe and just future.

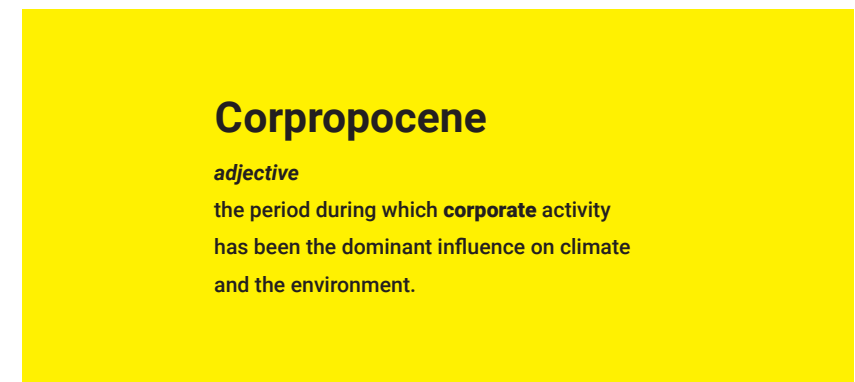
By example in February 2022 the UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) ruled that a television advertisement by the B-Corp certified innocent actively mislead customers in stating that the company was "fixing up the planet" while there was no evidence that innocent was having a net positive impact upon the planet. Within the ruling lays a critical fault of the B-Corp ideology; that while it is extremely adept at certifying less bad, it is pretty appalling at accrediting the standards of good that empirical science dictates.



As such it might now be time for Plan-C for business - where C stands for cooperative, communal, collaborative, and is built upon economies of care.

WELCOME TO THE CORPROPOCENE

Is it correct that we attribute the current climate and environmental crisis to the entirety of humanity, or might there be another far more explicit causation?



For the vast majority of Homo Sapiens 200,000 year history (arguably up until the industrial revolution of a mere few hundred years ago) human activity had a relatively benign impact upon the climate and environment. To this day only around 10% of the world's population have ever taken a flight in a plane - which we could take as a loose proxy for relative per capita CO2 emissions. As such it might be far more logical to attribute the negative impacts of human activity on the climate and environment upon the specific entities contributing to that impact, rather than the general population forced to just observe it.

Such a conclusion might lead us to question whether we are actually living in the so-called Anthropocene, or if in fact we are living in the Corpropocene? An era where it is specifically corporate activity that drives geological changes.

SEEING

EMPIRICAL TURBULENCE

ALT-INTELIGENCE

UNKNOWABILITY

SCIENCE

NEW PERCEPTION

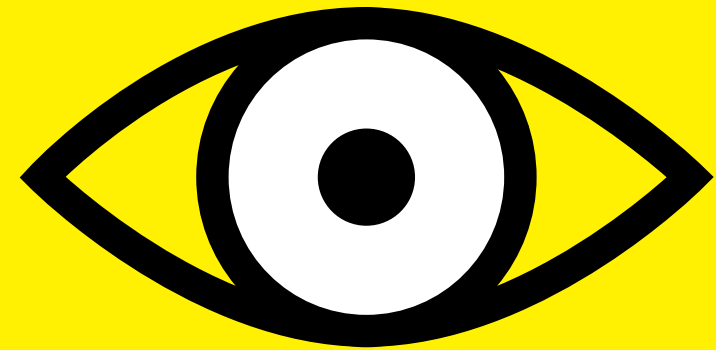
SCIENCE

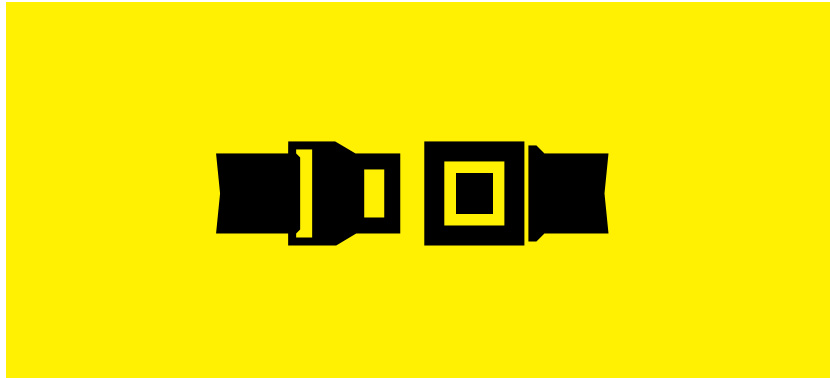
SEEING

We look but we don't see. The modern Westernised world has been defined and created by looking without seeing.

The distinction between looking and seeing is subtle and yet profound. The act of looking without seeing has arguably resulted in the limiting and objectifying phenomenon of "the gaze" - whether male gaze, female gaze, scientific gaze, white gaze, imperial gaze, or postcolonial gaze.

To see, rather than merely look, requires patience, empathy and ultimately the separation of our immediate visual perception of things from the innate meaning behind and within things. Seeing is an appreciation that we do not see with our eyes but *through* our eyes.





S**T'S GETTING REAL

SCIENCE

EMPIRICAL TURBULENCE

Humanity is fast reaching an event-horizon of the impacts of its imaginary ideologies destabilising the empirical world - and things are about to get even bumpier.

The climate crisis isn't a negotiation, it is essentially a geochemical reaction emergent from the carbon we emit to fuel our growth and the physics of the chemical composition of the Earth's unique atmosphere. The climate cares little about; COP26 agreements, B-Corps, Patagonia declaring the Earth as a shareholder, nor Net Zero promises and goals. Given enough GHG it will rapidly and drastically change.

As we will inevitably experience more and more as a form of empirical turbulence blowback to the tendency to delay, deny, deflect, and defend.

A Very 21st Century Conflict

"The 21st century will be marked by an extraordinary conflict between the assumptions of neoclassical economists and the empirical reality of the physical sciences"

Jason Hickel

Economic anthropologist

NEW ONTOLOGY

SCIENCE

ALT-INTELLIGENCE

Much of the current obsession with extending intelligence through man-made technologies such as AI might be better directed at a plural appreciation of more-than-human intelligences.



If the definition of intelligence is 'the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills' then intelligence can arguably be found pretty much everywhere in nature. The reduction of intelligence to a singular and absolute phenomenon unique to humanity, and only potentially emergent in human-made inventions such as 'Artificial Intelligence' (AI) excludes all other forms and phenomenon of plural intelligences.

The sooner we recognise this the richer our own intelligence will be.

NEW KNOWLEDGE

SCIENCE

UNKNOWABILITY

The future will be defined as much by what we don't, can't, and won't ever know, as it will be defined by what we do, will, and might know.

MORAL FASHIONS

CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

BRANDS AREN'T REAL

CULTURE

MORAL FASHIONS

Concepts, terms, phrases, and hashtags are fast replacing fashion in their ability to generate trends and identities



The term “morally fashionable” has recently been used as a means to critique academic interest for socially engaged research and analysis. Within such critiques a desire for academics to align with so-called ‘woke agenda’ is seen to be a merely politically fashionable rather endeavour. The critique was advanced and given broad attention when American philosopher and pedagogue Peter Boghossian published a series of hoax

academic papers in order to expose a prevalence for what he terms “grievance studies” and the associated low academic standards for academic work which validates ‘woke ideology’.

While the agenda of “grievance studies” might not appeal to many, the assertion that morals themselves are subject to trends and fashions might alternatively be employed as a means for progression rather than regression. By treating emergent moral trends with the same degrees of thought, creativity, craft and propagation as we do cultural and fashion trends we might more effectively create the kind of society and world we want.

What in a name?

“..activist movements are helped by novelty. In order to draw public attention to a social issue you must first make it seem fresh - and a trendy new name does the job.”

Martha Gill
Journalist

CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

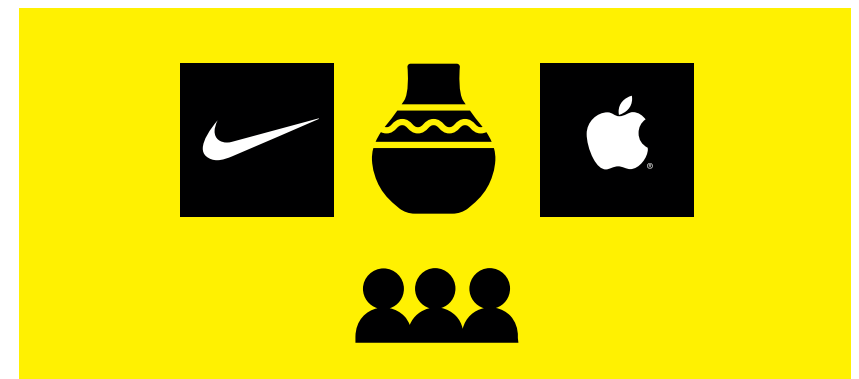
Consuming with our eyes and experiences might offer a pragmatic alternative to the toxic impacts of material consumption

In 2015 the exhibition *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, became the V&A's most visited show with 493,043 people seeing it during its 21-week run. For the final two weekends, the V&A opened the exhibition throughout the night for the first time in its history to accommodate the unprecedented demand. Many of the items and collections in the show would have arguably found a far wider audience within this exhibition context than as consumable products. As such rather than halting the practice of creating ever rotating fashion collections, we might just be better to recontextualise how it is that we consume them? Might the very future of fashion ironically be a museum exhibit?

Buying Into Culture

“If we had culture instead of consumption – which is everybody for himself, not relating to people – we would not have climate change. We would not have allowed the National Health Service to be wrecked; it just would not have happened. Culture makes people think. It's good for people. And now we have consumption, not culture. We don't have art anymore.”

Vivienne Westwood
Fashion designer and activist



BRANDS AREN'T REAL

Open any newspaper, magazine, or social media platform and you might be forgiven for thinking brands are actually “real”.

Brands aren't real, they are just aesthetic veneers upon a business or organisation. Every brand is a metaphysical oddity, emergent from a few tangible parts like logos and products, and yet entirely imaginary. If we can accept atheism in religion (the absence of belief) then we should logically be able to accept atheism in brands. To think of *Nike* the brand as an entity of objective reality is no different from thinking of the *Nike* of Greek mythology, the goddess of victory and daughter of the giant Pallas, as an entity of objective reality.

The sooner secular society realises this unreality, the sooner we might reawaken to the beauty and fragility of what IS actually real.

Imaginary Reality

“Corporations, money and nations exist only in our imagination. We invented them to serve us; why do we find ourselves sacrificing our lives in their services?”

Yuval Noah Harari

Historian, philosopher and author

FAKE



BILLION DOLLAR ANSWERS

MARKET COLLABORATION

THE COST OF EVERYTHING

ECONOMICS

BILLION DOLLAR ANSWERS

The phrase a “million-dollar question” describes a question that is very important and/or difficult to answer. We are now moving from a world of million-dollar questions, to billion-dollar answers.



In May 2020 the UK Government ‘NHS Test and Trace’ initiative was set up with a budget of £22 billion. Subsequently it was allocated a further £15 billion in funding: totalling £37 billion over two years. In September 2022 the UK Gov’s intervention to freeze energy prices for households was expected to cost the government £89 billion. And in October 2022 the same Gov announced a package of tax cuts that would cost £45 billion by 2026/27. Whilst in November 2021 the US President Biden signed the bipartisan infrastructure bill, which will put \$550 billion in new funds into transportation & utilities.

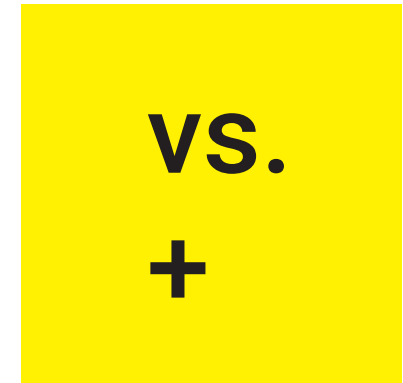
Problems that once required millions in investment are now commonly accepted to cost billions. And with this a new order of financial magnitude and intergenerational debt has arisen, and an age of billion dollar answers.

MARKET COLLABORATION

Might capitalism serve the majority of peoples interests far better if it simply shifts its core incentives from competition to collaboration?

The idea that a competitive market place is fundamental to progress and prosperity is fundamental to capitalism. This core concept frames individualism, meritocracy, and entitlement as central to not only economics, but also definitive to the human condition. And yet evolution shows us that long-term collaboration has always been a far more effective strategy for survival over and above immediate competition.

A global economic market based upon collaboration rather than competition might see existing vertical structures replaced with horizontal alternatives, where the principles of mutual aid supersede a “survival of the fittest” mentality. Such an economic model might breach the existing zero-sum economic mechanic ruling that “one person’s gain is another person’s loss” via a form of collective regenerative wealth creation and attribution more akin with good than with greed.



Existence Is Coexistence

“It’s coexistence or no existence.”

Bertrand Russell

Mathematician and philosopher

THE COST OF EVERYTHING

What if everything was priced by the regard with which it is held and importance, rather than its financial value?

The Cost of Everything is a speculative financial protocol that would see anything valued at its true "cost" (its material impacts upon environment and society), rather than its assumed "price" (its demoninated percieved worth). The valuation system would be live, like petrol prices, reflecting the most immediate implications to valuation measured through their impact upon nature and society. It would be intended to become a value exchange that transacts in much the same way as nature's own harmonised systems of exchange and reciprocation.



\$ Price

\$ Cost

Economic Cynicism

"What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing."

Oscar Wilde
Poet and playwright

THE OVERDEVELOPED WORLD

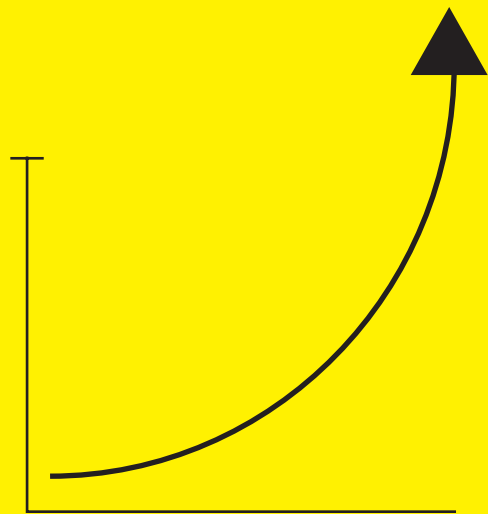
THE ARBITERS OF GOOD

HIERARCHIES OF GOOD

POLITICS

THE OVERDEVELOPED WORLD

How might we acknowledge that many so-called developed countries have now advanced to a dangerous level of excess?



Existing narratives largely place every country in the world into one of two categories; 'the developed world' and the 'developing world'. This narrative is defined by each country's current state of industrialisation and economic development. As an imaginary hierarchy, countries with a heavily industrialised infrastructure and high economic productivity are seen as more advanced than countries still growing towards this aspirational status.

A counter new narrative might categorise countries whose industrialisation has exceeded basic necessity as 'the overdeveloped world' rather than 'developed world', suggesting the critical need for deceleration.

THE ARBITERS OF GOOD

The definition of what good is a highly subjective question, and yet its current interpretation seems to have a very specific author



The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the largest private philanthropic foundation in the world, and has a stated vision of “working toward a world where every person has an opportunity to lead a healthy, productive life”. However, whereas most of the work it does is directed at the developing world, nearly 90% of its funding is inversely directed to the developed world (institutions such as Oxford and Harvard who work on international development, and private corporations such as Master Card, Phisa, GSK, and Merck). This irony is arguably driven by a mindset that the West are the ultimate arbiters, and creators of good.

Good is Greed

“We set ourselves up as arbiters of what is good when often our standards of goodness are driven by narrow interests, by what we want.”

Robin Wall Kimmerer
Author and Professor

Rather than being unique to philanthropy, the desire to be seen as “good” and to feel good about doing good is near universal to a Western mindset. The celebration of standards of good such as B-Corp (business as a force for good) highlight how criteria of good purely authored by Western arbiters for Western audiences has now become the new normal, and only normal, in a universal pursuit of good.

HIERARCHIES OF GOOD

There is an unspoken order that governs the greater good



While the developing world is often/mostly seen as ‘not as good’ as the West’s own self-declared standards of good, it is supposed that only the West can author and initiate the solutions to global inequality. Further still, the legacy of good vs bad binary oppositions render outlier states such as Russia / North Korea / Iran / Cuba as distinctly bad, and as such further establishing the West as the arbiter of good.

This unspoken order, born of colonial mindsets, still dictates much of current international relations and global policy on everything from wealth distribution, to climate action and impacts, to vaccine rollouts during pandemics.

THE INTERNETS OF VALUES

.ING

BIOPOMORPHISM

CLOUDED THINKING

UNSENSATIONAL AI

TECHNOLOGY

THE INTERNETS OF VALUES

Could reinterpreting the commonly understood 'first principles' of how we consider the internet(s) help us to critically reconfigure its entire structure?

The *Internets of Values* describes a vision for the internets where values, accountability, and solidarity are valued to the same degree as money and data. It acts as a counterpoint to recent references to a *Internet of Value* which itself describes a vision for the internet in which money is transacted at the speed and ease as current information transfer.

Examples of the *Internets of Values* can be found within the movements of; #MeToo / #BLM / #FridaysForFuture / BTS ARMY mental health support initiatives / Fandoms / Go Fund Me campaigns / Squad Wealth..

Refining the first principles of an Internet of Values

	Internet of \$Value	Internet of ♥Values
Ownership	The rightful possession of property, goods, or capital	To take responsibility or accountability for your actions
Value	The estimated monetary worth of assets	The regard that something is held or deserves
Energy	Power derived from extraction of physical or chemical resources	A mood, aura, vibe or momentum that someone or something radiates
Commodity	A raw material or product that can be bought or sold	A useful or valuable thing



NEW DOMAINS

.ING

What if the internet was a verb?



How technologies prefix and suffix themselves has now become a semantic signal of their broader identity and intent. First came the prefix e (ecommerce/ebooks etc), then i (largely unique to Apple), then the postfix + (a default signal of limitless streaming services). Website domain names have been subject to similar signals, from the commercial .com of Web 2.0 to the dot .io and .ai of Web 3, to the emerging dot-just-about-anything.

Given that such prefixes and postfixes have become a means to both define and develop the culture of the internet we might now ask if we can deploy their implicit and explicit protocols far more creatively and consciously? .ing is a speculative domain postfix that would signal a commitment to an internet culture of emergence, relativity, animism, and verbs.

TECHNOLOGY

Verbalisation

"In The Grammar of Animacy the biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer observes that the indigenous Potawatomi language is rich in verb forms that attribute aliveness to the more-than-human world. The word for hill, for example, is a verb: 'to be a hill'. Hills are always in the process of hilling, they are actively being hills."

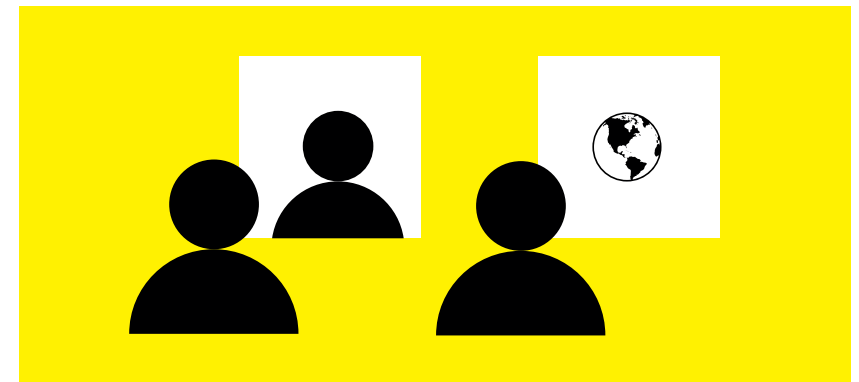
Merlin Sheldrake
Biologist and writer

STRAIGHT BACK AT YOU

TECHNOLOGY

BIOPOMORPHISM

Rather than seeing ourselves reflected in nature we might be better placed to begin seeing nature within ourselves.

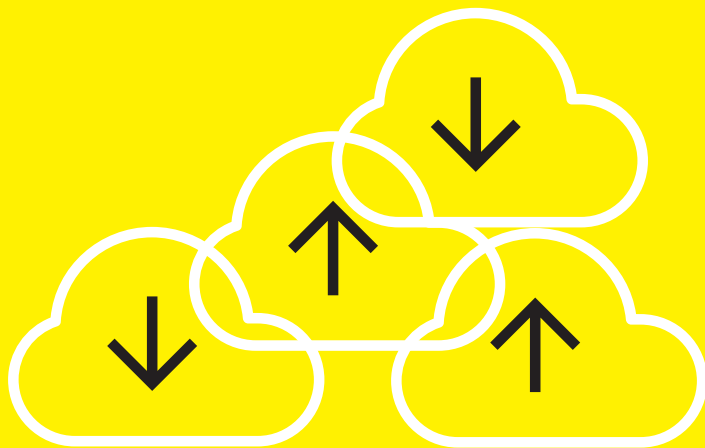


If anthropomorphism, derived from the Greek *ánthrōpos* ("human") and *morphē* ("form"), describes the very human habit of projecting traits, emotions, or intentions onto non-human entities, then biopomorphism might logically describe the same tendency of projection - but in reverse. That is to say to find eternal traits of nature within the very substance of our human bodies, senses, and interactions with the world around us.

An example of such thinking would be to consider the human behaviors of rest, relaxation, and sleep as fundamental iterations of a Circadian Rhythm entrained to the day-night cycles of energy giving sunlight that first emerged within Cyanobacteria around 3.5 billion years ago, and is still a universal attribute of nearly all living organism. By re-emphasising the nature within us, rather than the human-like nature of nature, we might begin to cure the fatal, yet imagined, gap that has come to be formed between our single species and everything else.

CLOUDED THINKING

Does a reliance upon universally stored and accessible information provide us clarity, or in fact confuse and fog our thinking?



If judgement describes the ability to make considered decisions or come to sensible conclusions, and clouded judgement the inability to understand a situation or to judge it properly, then our reliance upon 'cloud computing' might be a cause for concern given that increasing aspects of our judgements are based upon information contained within the cloud. The affordances of eternal and universal access to limitless information promised by cloud computing are offset by its inherent constraints of only accommodating certain types of information inputs and output over others.

Take for example the well documented cases of both explicit racism and sexism contained within Google search results. Although Google's algorithm is capable of sorting units of information (such as image results for a search on CEO heavily biasing examples of Western white male CEO's) the same algorithm is far less capable of reflecting societal expectations of racial and gender equality without human intervention.

Do Not Compute

"..the entire sphere of being cannot be experienced in a computer. Existence is what cannot be reduced by any amount of processing power. Time, death, self-perception, fear, anxiety and pleasure: the incomputable is the excess in the process of cognitive automation. Therefore I assert that the incomputable is the leading force of human evolution: incomputability is why history is human."

Franco 'Bifo' Berardi
Philosopher

REALLY?

TECHNOLOGY

UNSENSATIONAL AI

Artificial Intelligence might be better considered as a body of knowledge in the absence of a body

Seven of the eight technology trends contained within The Wired World in 2023 report related specifically to AI. To say that coverage of AI as a technology over the course of the past 24 months has been sensationalist would in itself be an under exaggeration. Which in itself is ironic given that the technology itself is entirely without sensations or a sensory experience of the world defined as 'a physical feeling or perception resulting from something that happens to or comes into contact with the body'. It is precisely AI's absence of a sensory body which prevents it from embodying sensation. The science-fiction writer Ted Chiang has criticised the creators and commentators of AI for confabulating analogies of human sensory experience into AI using the example phenomenon of AI hallucination*. Such an analogy implies not only the presence of an inner mind within AI, but also the capacity for sensory experiences such as hallucination within that mind.

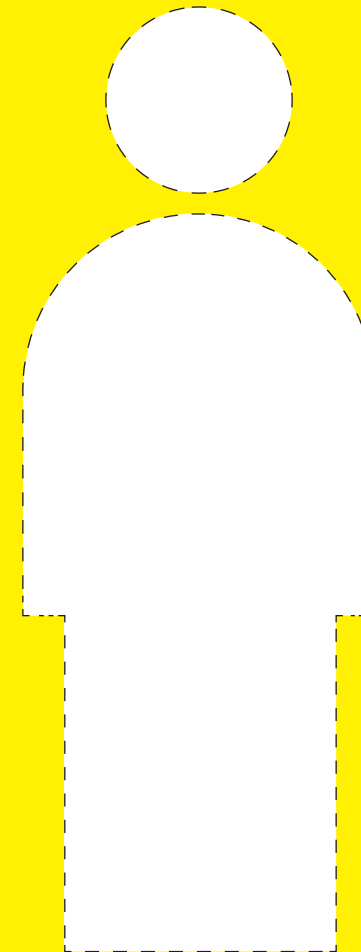
Rather than presenting a problem to be solved - most obviously by coupling AI

with Robotics - this observation might surface a critical insight into the very nature of intelligence itself. We tend to think of intelligence as an emergent phenomenon of the brain, and yet as humans we not only have embodied intelligence distributed throughout our bodies but have a social intelligence between our bodies. Further still living entities such as plants are capable of distinct acts of intelligence without the presence of an equivalent to a discrete neurological brain. So perhaps it will be the absence of sensation in AI that will bring an end to its sensationalism.

Get real

"..we confuse signs, words, numbers, symbols, and ideas with the real world.. What is reality? Obviously, no one can say, because it isn't words.. We all know what reality is, but we can't describe it. Just as we all know how to beat our hearts and shape our bones, but cannot say how it is done"

Alan Watts
Writer and speaker



ATTRIBUTIONS

IMAGES

PERMANENCE FORECASTERS

infinity loop by MUHAMAD KHOTIBUL UMAM from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Comet by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

EMPIRICAL TURBULENCE

Seat Belt by Phil Laver from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)
Globe by SBTS from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

BAD TASTE

tongue by Creative Mahira from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

BETTER BAITING

Badge by NAPISAH from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

CONVENIENT HALF-TRUTHS

Liar by HeadsOfBirds from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

GOOD LIARS

smirk by Xinh Studio from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

MORAL FASHIONS

Tshirt by Brad from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

ARBITERS OF GOOD

Stamp by Jakub Čaja from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)
Smiley by shashank singh from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

Museum by bmijnlieff from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)
vase by Icons Cart from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

BIOMORPHISM

Earth by regara from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

STEWARDSHIP

Shepherds's Crook by Andrew Doane from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

DO NO HARM

Hammer by Bonegolem from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BRANDS

translate by Icon Lauk from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

CLOUDED THINKING

Cloud by Ananth from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0)

FONTS

HEALINES

Gestalt by Seb McLauchlan

BODY

Roboto by Christian Robertson

WEIRD FUTURES

Weird Words by Saridezra

CREATIVE COMMONS

All concepts are licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 unless otherwise stated.

You are invited to republish, reference or iterate any CC-licensed material for non-commercial purposes as long as you follow the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license conditions. One condition of all CC licenses is attribution.

Full license conditions:

creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0

Exception to 'THEWIREDWORLDIN..' and 'WIRED' Logo © CONDENAST PUBLICATIONS LTD, copyright made under UK Gov Intellectual Property Office: 'Parody, caricature and pastiche' with 'Sufficient Acknowledgement' under 'Fair Dealing'
/ EU Copyright Directive 2019/790 item 70 / #DUPE

M I R E D