

The impact of the Anthropocene on human health, and what to do about it

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Intro – where we are

- in order to survive, homo sapiens sapiens has to concede exceptionality to other beings as well
- endless examples of exceptionality with all kinds of different beings
- opening our minds to become aware of extraordinary capacities and skills

Exceptional Abilities

Arctic Tern

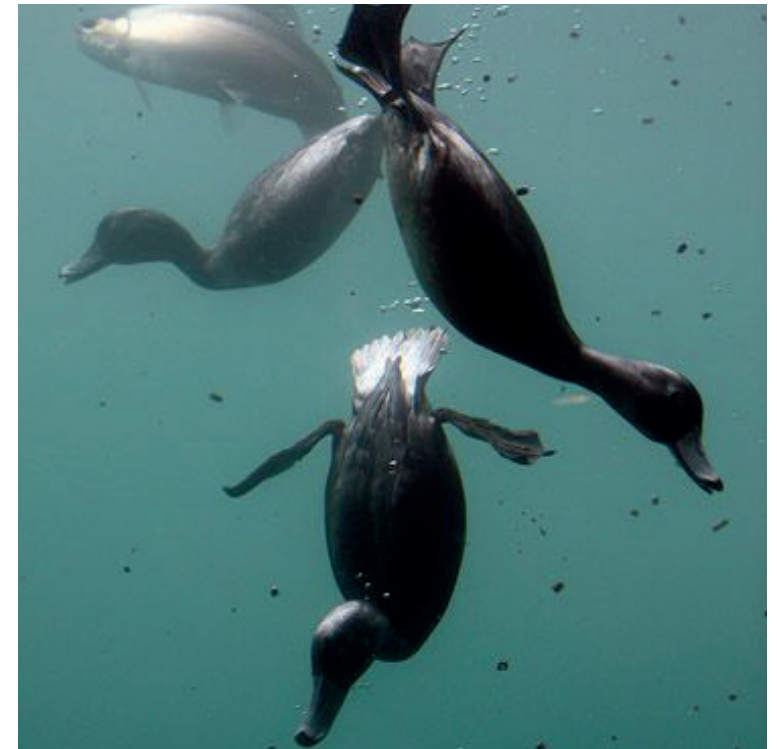


Duck Child



Entangled Empathy

- Children sharing some of the energy performed by the small bird – a seemingly enjoyable state of being, movement, pure joy.
- duck had clear ideas of what to do next and how to achieve her goal.
- being the subject of one's life
- a kind of embodied response to another individual or individuals in one's immediate environment and does not require any reflection or conceptualization or even understanding (Lori Gruen)



Agency and Fatalism

- inclination of living beings to connect to other living beings, to share moments of life and the ability to care for each other
- ongoing entanglement of biographies of different species
- at stake, in this time of »anthropocene«, is the loss of habitat

Future Landscape?



Gobi Desert in western China
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Anthropocene/Chthulucene

- Anthropocene: Earth's most recent geologic time period as being human-influenced, based on overwhelming global evidence that atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other earth system processes are now altered by humans
- »Earth/Gaia is maker and destroyer, not resource to be exploited or ward to be protected or nursing mother promising nourishment.« (Donna Haraway)

Future Landscape?



Japan Earthquake, helicopter view

Connections, inter human and inter species

- Loneliness one of the bigger problems in urban modern societies, besides depression
- one of their main sources of regaining energy is spending some time in nature and/or with (companion) animals
- How can we reconnect? How can we regain power of well being?

Why we feel what happens

»In the world of composites, the world of matter, everything is full, which means that all matter is interlinked. If there were empty space, a body might move in it without affecting any other body; but that is not how things stand. In a plenum [= 'world that is full'], any movement must have an effect on distant bodies, the greater the distance the smaller the effect, but always some effect. Here is why. Each body is affected by the bodies that touch it, and feels some effects of everything that happens to them; but also through them it also feels the effects of all the bodies that touch them, and so on, so that such communication extends indefinitely.«

(G.W.Leibinz, philosopher and mathematician)

Natural Networks

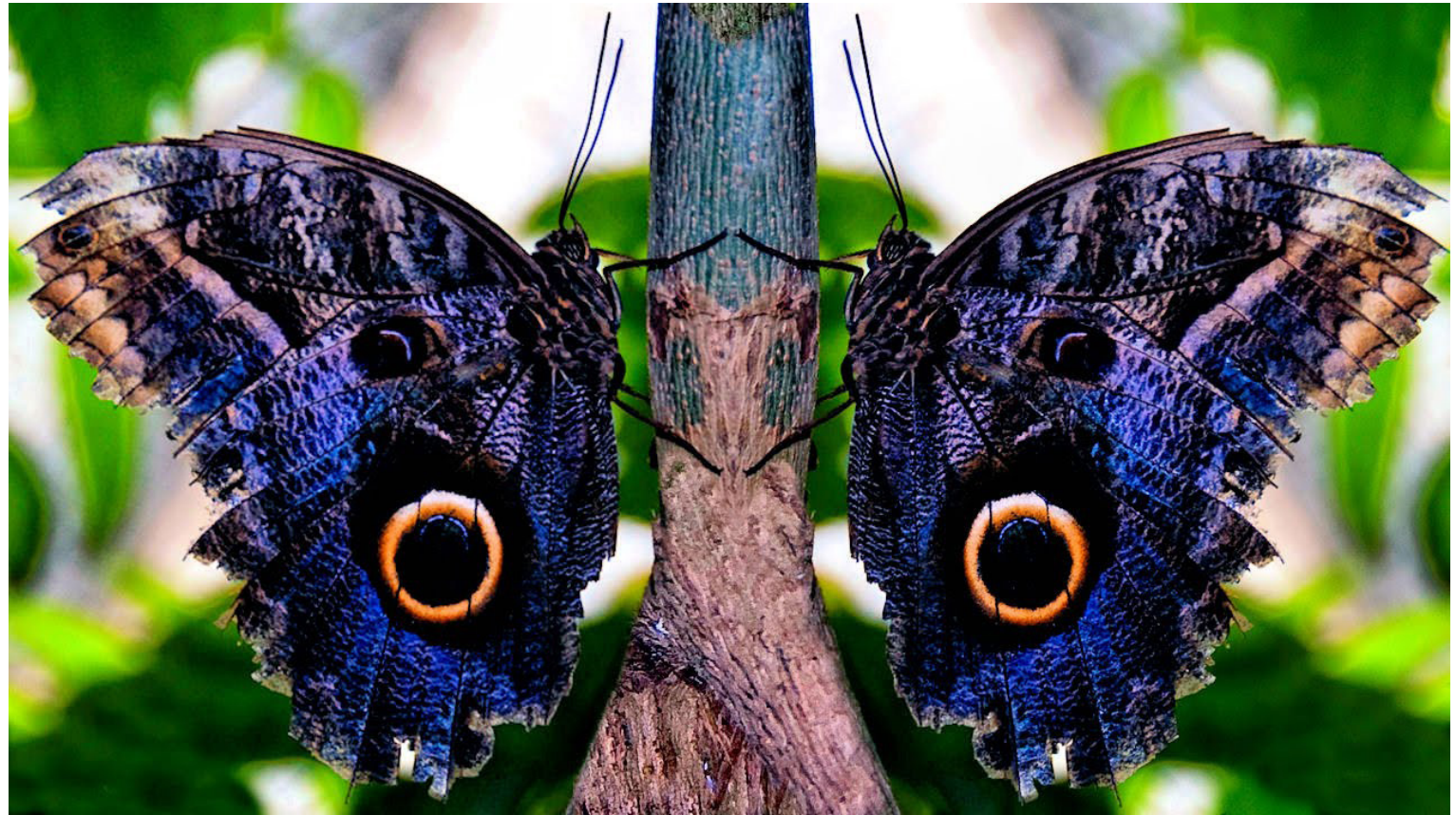


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Empathy and the ability of being affected

- necessary to revive the innate power of empathy, lost in most cases in the process of »socialisation«
- reintegrate empathy into the self : act of courage and self-esteem
- child clearly has a full reservoir of empathy and curiosity
- Note: research on creativity always refers to the state of childhood. This suggests that empathy and creativity are closely linked.

Future Landscape?



Morphing butterflies
©Womanyes

The Soul

- responsible for reaching out to another living being
- facilitates the individual's responses to his or her environment
- instrument of integration
- Ability to affect and be affected (Spinoza)

The Soul

- claim the importance of soul
- rehabilitate its purpose – connection and communication
- not enough to accept soul only in therapy

Understanding interconnectedness

»We are at stake to each other. Unlike the dominant dramas of Anthropocene (...) human beings are not the only important actors (...) with all other beings able simply to react. The order is reknitted: human beings are with and of the Earth, and the biotic and abiotic powers of this Earth are the main story.«

(Donna Haraway, biologist and historian of science)

More than human- animals matter

- Necessity of including non human beings into reflections of psychical empowerment
- animal »as behavioural facilitator In the mental health area« (Ivan Dimitrijević , psychiatrist)
- »Educationally, it improves vocabulary, as well as long- and short-term memory. Motivationally, the presence of an animal increases the desire for joining in group and social activities, and improves interaction with others.« (Dimitrijević)

Valuable presence of an animal

- Adopting battery hens: a trending occupation
- »They were terrified at first, but the first time they ran out of that coop, flapping their wings, was one of the most pleasurable moments of my life.« (Paul Checkley, battery-hen-adopter)
- »If they can cope with the trauma they have experienced, then I've got to find the strength myself.« (Checkley)



Coyote
©Oscar Sutton

Not for but with each other

- aspect of utility: whole universe is interpreted in regard of the benefit for humans
- producing destructive hierarchies
- »As if nature had a “wise” moral quality to it, favorising humanity, in a way that in the end everything would turn out to be positive for humans. It is even possible or highly probable that human intervention is exactly the problem.«
(cf. Peter Wohlleben, forester)

Empathy as information

- cosmos does not and did not evolve for the sake of humans
- human domination did little to show any traits of superiority
- contrarily, the complex connections of natural processes have by far not been researched enough, e.g. when we think of plants' communication
- step back, humbly, and try to interfere as little as possible

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Thank you very much for your attention.