

Form Fatigue

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OUR WORLD IS IN FRAGILE shape—actions and decisions today portent consequences of planetary magnitude. We find ourselves carried by swift and ever-shifting crossing currents churning and pulling us to an ever-widening and deepening unknown. We are intelligent, resourceful, responsive, and capable of creating a future imaginal world. The stakes are high, the terrain ever-shifting, unknowns and consequences unpredictable and ominous.

The future is now. All that was and ever will be lives at this moment.

What and where are the arts in this cauldron of future making? What, why, and how are the humanities in a world of increasingly porous and evaporative boundaries? Domains and bailiwicks once easily demarcated are vanishing like so many ghosts dematerializing into the ether. A new sort of world emerges, demanding a response.

The need and role of the liberal arts have had a long and convoluted history, undergoing numerous and contested transformations throughout the history of Western civilization. In the past lay both the origins and the solutions. An overview of the liberal arts from which the creative arts and humanities evolved is in order.

The liberal arts, as identified by Plato in his *Republic*, included grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry. From these broad and encompassing origins, the arts and sciences evolved. Plato, who channeled and

conflated the thinking of Socrates with his own, articulated the template which seeded a concept of reality that informs every aspect of our world today. His philosophy, methods of inquiry, dialogic process, and interdisciplinary established critical thinking, drawing from a diversity of angles with the ability to adapt to evolving contexts and situations. It was the Axial Age. The world was younger then and maturing and in need of an operating system suited to the times and circumstances of a socially and culturally complexifying world.

Platonic Ideals are objective. They do not depend on human thought but exist entirely in their own right. They are perfect patterns embedded in the very nature of things. The Platonic Idea is, as it were, not merely a human idea but the universe's idea, an ideal entity that can express itself eternally in concrete tangible form or internally as a concept in the human mind [...] At times Plato seems to exalt the ideal over the empirical to such an extent that all concrete particulars are understood to be, as it were, only a series of footnotes to the transcendent Idea. At other times he seems to stress the intrinsic nobility of created things, precisely because they are embodied expressions of the divine and eternal.¹

The sub-categories of the creative arts and humanities as we know them today did not take the Form we would recognize until the Renaissance. Before this, the creative arts were considered artisanship, and the humanities were not specialized, giving rise to polymaths like Leonardo.

In his Socratic dialogues, Plato made frequent and varied cases against the dangers of relying on the senses, emotions, and the material world, because it was a changeable world of appearances. He argued that the changeable material and the observed world, the living world,

¹ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (London: Pimlico, 1991): 10-11.

referenced a more real world of reliable permanence, the world of Forms or Ideas (*eidōs* in Greek). For Plato, knowledge existed for those who could comprehend the true reality that lived immutable within the everyday experience: the Form. For example, an act of 'goodness' or a 'triangle' in the material world has no meaning in and of itself. Its meaning comes from referencing the Form (which holds the Idea) of each occurrence in the world. When I say chair, you think of the Form or Idea of a chair. The type of chair you visualize in the cave of our minds will be unique to us. However, they both adhere to the Form/Idea of a chair.

For Plato, an individual must be educated to recall and understand the world of Forms/Ideas, which he maintained was present in a person's mind. He associated Forms with a person's soul, which preexisted and was recalled in accordance with the soul of an individual. Your chair is different from my chair, but they are both chairs. However, not everyone is meant to be king or basketball great—that depends on a person's soul.

In the *Republic*, Plato presented the *Allegory of the Cave*, which asserted that most people spent their lives living in a cave perceiving shadows of physical objects on the cave wall and thinking that these comprised reality. Only those able to step out of the cave and into the sunlight and understand (educated or able to recall) truthful reality were fit to rule or serve as leaders in the *Republic*. Plato was an elitist, asserting that only the philosopher-king (and by implication, the educated) had the ability and responsibility to lead others out of the cave and into the sunlight. Only those educated to the Forms are thereby fit to know the truth. This is a paradigm of prejudice that shapes our world, and is the engine powering the academy. Truth and meaning lie not in the lived world but float

in the nether world of Ideas and Form. Our fundamental and unquestioned conception of reality is so integrated that you are most likely puzzled by my assertion.

The Forms/Idea, a seed, once planted, grew into the central germinating hub of Western civilization, remaining truthful to its origins to this day. The Forms initiated anthropocentrism, a model conceived to serve and articulate the human-centric perspective.² But before Plato and the Forms, which lifted humans from the world, there was another way of being in and with the world.

Cosmocentricism

Cosmocentricism is not human centric.³ Rather, it is place-centric. I hesitate to call it a "worldview" or "perspective," because that implies a human vantage. The cosmocentric, exemplified in multiple and varied ways by indigenous people, was a way of being of, in, and with the world. Written language is inadequate, because it is so oriented to the human-centric perspective and presence, and predicated on subject-object relationships, that it cannot convey the embodied oneness and openness of a living place.

Cosmocentric life was a conscious reiteration and reaffirmation of place-specific patterns. Integrative mind-body-spiritual agency with the world was functional and necessary for survival.

2 Anthropocentric societies and cultures are those shaped to the needs and advancement of humans with little or no consideration of the effects and consequences on other, non-human beings, or networks and systems of place, its sustainability and maintenance.

3 Indigenous systems of place are cosmocentric, meaning a lived conscious of how the actions on a microcosmic (local and place specific) level interrelate and affect the macrocosmic. The community of a terrestrial place, which include humans, flora, fauna, spirits, ancestors, elements, seasons, climate, and celestial movement and rhythms, are interdependently connected, making for a cosmocentric reality.

Humans are not an enlightened species, but rather self-serving and destructive without the restorative tonic and structure of the self-organizing system of nature to give life meaning and purpose.

The mind-body split promoted by Descartes, has haunted and hobbled humans and in turn life on earth:

The organism constituted by the brain-body partnership interacts with the environment as an ensemble, the interaction being of neither the body nor the brain alone. But complex organisms such as ours do more than just interact, more than merely generate the spontaneous or reactive external response known collectively as behavior. They also generate internal responses, some of which constitute images (visual, auditory, somatosensory, and so on), which I postulate as the basis for the mind.⁴

The cosmocentric way of being understands the lived world (the inhabitants of the environment, planet, and cosmos) as a body/mind which humans are but a part. What I term the cosmocentric is a *community of place*, a way of being which still echoes throughout the indigenous world today. “An indigenous person is a member of a community retaining memories of a life lived sustainably on a land base as part of that land base. Indigenous knowledge is any application of those memories as living knowledge to improve present and future circumstances.”⁵

Belief systems shaped by a group’s geography and climate were non-literate. What was true was held bodily, emotionally,

and spiritually. It was not fixed, did not exist in a virtualized and abstracted as a mental construct. It was maintained and conveyed in mythology, rituals, taboos, language, chant, song, symbols, shared orally and sensorially as a means by which to encode, communicate, and sustain a place.

For most indigenous cultures, individual human and non-human beings were said to have complex personalities acting like separate persons. Everything is alive, and often animals are referred to as people. To add to this complexity, humans often had animal identifiers such as clans and spirit helpers.⁶ The social, cultural, and spiritual belief systems of indigenous/cosmocentric systems were not arbitrary, but formed with all the community of place members for the good of the community.⁷

Alaska Native elder Harold Napoleon explains the idea of the cosmocentric, and how the Yup’ik concept of *Yuuyaraq* was a living, adaptive, and sensorial system of place integral to a way of being:

Yuuyaraq defined the correct way of thinking and speaking about all living things, especially the great sea and land mammals on which the Yup’ik relied for food, clothing, shelter, tools, kayaks, and other essentials. These great creatures were sensitive; they were able to understand human conversation, and they demanded and received respect.

4 Antonio Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (London: Penguin Books, 1994): 89.

5 Tyson Yankaporta, *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World* (HarperCollins, 2020): 36.

6 With sports teams like the Tigers, Lions, Broncos, Eagles, and Bengals, and with popular culture attributions such as Spiderman, Batman, and Wolverine, are we that far from anthropomorphism? Vestiges of the cosmocentric live in Bull and Bear stock markets.

7 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Routledge: 1966, 2002): 14.

*Yuuyaraq prescribed the correct method of hunting and fishing and the correct way of handling all fish and game caught by the hunter in order to honor and appease their spirits and maintain a harmonious relationship with them. It outlined the way of living in harmony within this spirit [...] To the Yup'ik, the land, the rivers, the heavens, the seas, and all that dwelled within them were spirit and, therefore, sacred [...] When the Yup'ik walked out into the tundra or launched their kayaks into the river of the Bering Sea, they entered into the spiritual realm. They lived in deference to this spiritual universe, of which they were, perhaps, the weakest members. Yuuyaraq outlined for the Yup'ik the way of living in this spiritual universe. It was the law by which they lived.*⁸

Values, ethos, and beliefs were immediate, actionable, and accountable. Each member of the community of place, human and non-human beings alike, was animated and had agency (each speaking and being in their own way), experiencing, and witnessing the world uniquely. Daily acts were expressions of spirituality and dialogs enabling participation in and with the place.

Our ancestors were animists. We were all once indigenous to a place and cosmocentric. Within this world, the role and responsibility of humans, the most enabled inhabitants, and greatest beneficiaries of a community of place, are responsible to sustain and maintain a place.

Anthropocentrism

Hunting and gathering progressed into horticultural, herding, then into agricultural cultures. The agricultural revolution brought stability, security, and permanent settlements, enabling city-states to rise, providing a shared culture, unifying minds, and purpose through agreement. Their gods and belief systems evolved to reflect their

⁸ Harold Napoleon with Eric Madsen, *Yuuyaraq: The Way of the Human Being* (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, Fairbanks, 1996): 5.

cultural transformation, from elemental to increasing human-like embodiments reflecting the rise of human empowerment. Ancient Greece, beset by an external threat, required a means, an operating system, to enable trade, military and political cohesion, and an identity. The Forms established by our Ancient Athenian cultural progenitors came at a time of development responding to the need to organize disparate city-states for commerce and defense.

Plato, giving voice to and building on Socrates, laid the foundations of Western culture, shaping and informing Western and global culture to this day. Plato's establishment of reality and truth referencing a priori Forms came at a time of another axial shift in consciousness, the adoption of written language. The cosmocentric, the body in a lived, embodied world, once the unquestioned framing of reality, would give way to disembodied knowledge and alphabet knowledge, cascading through time to become embedded in social and cultural systems and firmly establish anthropocentrism as the operating system of the world.⁹ Under the slowly spreading influence of alphabetic technology, a new way of thinking facilitated by written language enabled the separation from the animate flux of the world and became a ponderable presence in its own right.¹⁰ Written language reinforced the assertions of Form knowledge, that immutable truths existed in pure mental Form rather than embodied, tactile, and living in the world. "Letters and the written words that they present are not subject to the flux of growth

⁹ The recent exhibit of African Art at the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth was an embarrassing example of how the anthropocentric and its institutions, frame and confine cosmogenic art and culture as a mysterious and exotic object positioned for the titillation rather than an insight into another way of being in and with the world.

¹⁰ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (Pantheon, 1996): 107.

and decay, to the perturbations and cyclical changes common to other visible things; they seem to hover, as it were, in another, strangely timeless dimension.”¹¹

Removing humans from active interaction with the world and exalting the superiority of human thought, Form, and alphabet knowledge had the effect of relegating all non-human beings to marginal positions, which would ultimately lead to denigration, marginalization, subjugation, and servitude of humans and non-humans not educated to the anthropocentric. This separates the knower from the known by keeping knowledge embedded in the human world rather than the sensuous lived world.¹² Alphabet knowledge and its removal from the body marked an inflection point: when deeply interiorized alphabetical literacy usurped orality and ultimately the cosmocentric worldview. At the time, neither Plato nor anyone else was aware that this was going on.¹³

Plato, followed by Aristotle, completed the turn from the cosmocentric by articulating logos, the process of reason, and scientific inquiry, which shaped ethics and values, the arts, and the humanities of today. Christianity and Islam imbibed the anthropocentric, incorporating, extending, and manipulating it to serve doctrinal ends. The body and embodied world became profane and dangerous, an impediment to achieving the idealized truth revealed by heaven. The monotheistic religions became patriarchal and supplanted animism, polytheism, and the feminine (the matriarchal, goddess, and mother earth) as part of a broader trend to reinforce and sustain anthropocentric hierarchal systems. Nature, once the measure of all things,

became secondary, as city-states, empires, Abrahamic religions, and the Renaissance, nations, corporations, capitalism, consumerism, and globalization are products of the human-centric.

The anthropocentric enabled and justified the pillage and plunder of the natural world and, in turn, the enslavement and righteous cultural domination wrought by conquest, conversion, and colonization. Because they were deemed lesser, unworthy, and unenlightened, “others” (human, animal, flora, mineral, and the environment) were inconsequential non-beings. The natural world and all associated with it were vilified and excluded access to religious purity that lived beyond the profane material world. Only fantasy heavens held ultimate truths and reality. The pure and imaginal, propagandized creations of thought promoted the denigration of the body and emotions of the individual and the alive world they inhabited. The concept of Forms enslaved and devalued the lived world, formalizing control through dogma and systems of belief and intellectualism that played on the emotions of inadequacy, guilt, and shame to justify and control. The cosmocentric, living-within-the-sensual-world realm was supplanted by virtualized fantasy, accessible only to those enlightened or educated to it—a pernicious form of hierarchal elitism evolved.

The Renaissance, sparked by the rediscovery of the ancient Greeks, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, reanimated anthropocentrism. Da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man vividly placed man at the center of a mathematically determined and proportioned world. Forced perspective, determined by a human vanishing point, was introduced to the theatrical stage, the Allegory of the Cave vivified. Descartes promulgated the mind-body split, and the theatre stage became a metaphor for the

11 Abram, 112.

12 Walter J. Ong, Jr., *Orality and Literacy* (Routledge, 1982, 2002): 44.

13 Ong, 24.

illuminated mind speaking to the passive body of the audience. Ritual, once a communal exchange and celebration between humans and non-human and spiritual beings, gave way to a performance between and for humans. The performance of the anthropocentric remains today, expressive of primarily human concern. It is an expression of the human perspective, a means for cultural affirmations and social remediation, with all that is non-human serving as a backdrop to the human event or antagonist. The how and why of performance is an indicator of social and cultural movement.

Universities were established from 1088 onward in Italy, England, Spain, France, and Portugal, propagating, validating, and institutionalizing the anthropocentric. Implicitly pursued and valorized were the control of humans over the natural world and the othering of the cosmocentric. Educational philosophy and disciplines were structured by the prevailing cultural and societal needs, with universities becoming unwitting propagandists for the anthropocentric. Embraced and propagated by European culture, the anthropocentric was aggrandized as a worldview, giving rise to cultural and moral superiority, hierarchal legitimacy, and racism. This unchecked evolution was exclusively male, mainly structured and competitively driven by ego, status, and power.

In contrast, the more collaborative, sensual, and emotive sensibility, historically associated with women (and the cosmocentric), was marginalized and dismissed by the patriarchy as a substandard other. The near total exclusion of women parallels the genocidal conquest, disregard, and exploitation of the lands and lives of others—those deemed substandard and incapable of comprehending and adhering to the “truths” held by Form thinking. Those who

challenged or did not adhere to Form thinking were threats, outcasts, and heretics, dehumanized and eliminated, branded as witches, shamans, healers, and non-believers.

Anthropocentrism enacted in the world served as an affirming and justifying feedback loop. Rather than learning, accepting, and exchanging with non-conforming others, the male-exclusive, self-justifying anthropocentric juggernaut institutionalized and spread its concept of reality. This was accomplished most prominently by universities, which trained and had a far-reaching influence on the religious, political, military, merchant, and ruling classes.

The demise of the cosmocentric did not go unnoticed. The meaningful social and cultural centrality of the cosmocentric indigenous had become a reference, an allegory, metaphor, and nostalgia minded by the anthropocentric arts and humanities. Shakespeare, Keats, Manet, Byron, the Brontës, Shelley, Wordsworth, Beethoven, Thoreau, and Rousseau come to mind as searchers of a lost consciousness, as others single-mindedly embraced an ever-deepening interest in the human condition. The sciences pursued the exploration and documentation to control the natural world for the benefit of humans. Darwin established a schema that positioned humans as the apex of life on earth, giving credence to human superiority, speciesism, and eugenics. Electricity was identified and harnessed by Franklyn, Volta, and Edison. Franz Boas, Rasmussen, and Malinowski formulated anthropology, a tool to document others and often used to control and exploit. Biology and psychology flourished to chart and fathom every aspect of the mind and human body in the pursuit of control. Zoos and zoology, along with natural history museums, became metaphoric expressions of capture and domination of the natural world.

The anthropocentric and its primary avatar, advocate, and enabler, Western culture, has immeasurably benefited humans, resulting in longer and healthier lives, a measure of security and stability concerning the vagaries of the natural world, significantly enhancing and forwarding our species. Humans are the beneficiaries, and it would be difficult to imagine our world today without Form thinking, the pursuit and triumph of the anthropocentric. However, within every positive lives a negative, and adherence to the anthropocentric has come at a profound cost.

The human population has exploded, putting onerous stress on the environment. In my lifetime, the world's population has more than doubled, an unsustainable rate of growth. People are healthier and live longer in an increasingly insecure, threatened, polluted, and poverty-ridden world caused by (to name a few) industrializations, airborne and seaborne pollutants, plastics, rampant consumption, and the creation of ever more deadly war machines, technologies, and nuclear armaments. The anthropocentric response has been to refine in new and ever more frantic, extreme, and efficient ways to mine, manufacture, and exploit the natural world. What was once verdant, self-organizing and self-sustaining, has given way to abuse and devastation, precipitating accelerating decline. The sciences, arts, and the humanities were, in their origins, a means by which to understand and fathom the mysteries and wonders of our world and the place of and relationship of humans. Today that is a faint if not romantic notion.

Technological advancement serves as an accelerant to further the anthropocentric. Microscopes, telescopes, medicines, photography, automobiles, airplanes, telephones, audio recording, television, atomic and nuclear weapons, bioweapons, robots, the internet, social media, radar, space exploration, Artificial Intelligence,

and an endless cacophony of innumerable technological advancements are extensions of the human body and mind in keeping with the anthropocentric imperative.

The motive driving technology is human enhancement, empowerment, and survival at the expense of all else. Strip mining, oil and gas drilling, and fracking, along with bioengineering, genetics, and market capitalism, are all, each in their way, raping the earth—all the above subjects are taught at Texas universities. Animal experimentation and vivisection, along with agricultural pesticides, factory farming, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, growth hormones, and genetic modification, proceed without regard to environmental consequences. We are all part of the system, beneficiaries, and complicit in what portends the demise of our life world.

I don't see science embracing Indigenous methods of inquiry any time soon, as Indigenous knowledge is not wanted at the level of how. Only at the level of what. A resource to be plundered rather than a source of knowledge processes. Show me where some plants are so I can synthesize a compound and make a drug out of it.¹⁴

Business schools and computer science depend on expansion and self-serving control in a world with more people and fewer resources. Efficiency, time, and resource management are the word of the day. On a planet stressed by political, economic, and climate anxiety, migrations, and inequities, the assertion of control intensifies as it heads to its inevitable end.

Unless there is an active reconfiguration of new communities and formations capable of egalitarian self-government, shared ownership, and caring for their weakness. Post capitalism will be the new field of barbarism, regional despotism, and worse, where scarcity will take on unimaginably savage forms. [...] Now, over half a century

¹⁴ Yankaporta, 42.

later, amid the burning and pillaging of our lifeworld, there is little time left to meet up with the future of new ways of thinking and living on earth and with one another, with each other.¹⁵

All life is cyclical, with beginnings, middles, and ends. We are now at the end of the anthropocentric cycle. Form thinking, having carried the world so far, now turns on itself, participating in its demise. The human world is subsumed by monetization, narcissism, digital and drug-induced escapism, fracturing, bickering, and disassociation.

The anthropocentric is nearing its dead end and its apotheosis untethered by the terrestrial, floating in a digital virtual meta world; artificial intelligence brings artificial life and then the disappearance of life.

Arts and Humanities

As humans asserted control, the arts and humanism became expressive of the pathology of power, a cover, and justification for the domination and ultimately destruction of all else. The pragmatism of place-based systems gave way to human-centered social and cultural systems, with the arts and humanities serving as propaganda ministry for the anthropocentric. Value and meaning were no longer based on place considerations and maintenance but with the anthropocentric becoming further entrenched and institutionalized.

Value and responsibility shifted from place-based cosmocentrism to human needs, values, and functionality. Humanism is human centrism, a justification, bespeaking removal, control, manipulation, and ultimately superiority of humans and domination of a world that is not theirs but shared. The arts are an

expression of human valorization. Each painting, play, concerto, and hip-hop rave is a demonstration both of human triumphalism and removal from the non-human world as it contradictorily seeks transcendence and absolution of loss. The arts, humanities, and their prodigal progeny, technology, are not in the service of the world but rather, the tools of colonization and exploitation of the world of one species over all others. It is the rendering of the world into an object with dissonance, an expression of self-justifying human survivalism.

We are immersed in a cultural inheritance forged from another era's necessity. It is exhausted and inadequate for the needs of our moment.

As the anthropocentric expanded and flourished, so did the arts, sciences, and humanities. I am aware of no indigenous/cosmocentric culture with a word or concept for "art" or "humanities"; there was no cause or need for categories or demarcations for cultures that viewed the world as integrative and dynamically in flux. The Yup'ik word for dancing is the same word for prayer. For the Yup'ik of Alaska, objects and human experiences constituted a complex and unified worldview inextricably weaving together the material, spiritual, and personal. Every part is an expression of a more wondrous totality. Non-Yup'ik people might discuss art forms as separate categories—dance, song, story, art, objects, for instance—however, the Yup'ik would not or could not make the same distinctions.¹⁶

Anthropocentrism imposes structure and categories to assert control and power, and is true to this Form knowledge template which separates the lived with definitions of disciplinary Ideas and Forms. A person is

15 Jonathan Crary, *Scorched Earth: Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World* (London: Verso, 2022): 123–124.

16 Lynn Ager Wallen, *The Face of Dance: Yup'ik Eskimo Masks from Alaska* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1990): 7.

taught an art “form,” meaning educated to inherited and accepted concepts, and alteration or recombination of the forms is thought of as innovative, yet remains a human-centric elaboration. Any connection or consideration with a greater sense of purpose or responsibility to the lived world is a cause of puzzlement to those operating in a standardized mindset system.

Making land art, placing a sculpture in a park, or the impressionist painting of a rustic scene remains human-centric. Similarly, the humanities disciplines are ensconced and predicated on a system of Ideas and Forms. The methods and a knowledge base one must know to seek and comprehend the “truth” may draw from the world but remains decidedly a human creation for human benefit. The arts and humanities are so much a part of the anthropocentric they are incapable of any other way or purpose.

Disciplinary myopia is self-serving, speaking to those similarly initiated and with little responsibility or connection to their community of place. As they are currently self-righteously and doggedly configured, the arts and the humanities have outlived their usefulness. They continue as they do out of a combination of momentum, lack of courage, lack of imaginative alternatives, and structural investment. They are spent, exhausted, and need to evolve to the needs of an injured, complex, and challenged world.

Museums, the arts, and humanities are drawn to but befuddled by an African mask, a cloth made of pounded bark and intricately designed with animal blood, a wooden totem or fetish replete with feathers, shells, and animal parts. Exotic and strange, but unknowable as anything except a unique and marketable object. The historical Yup’ik of Alaska have possibly the most sophisticated mask tradition in the world. Masks drawn from shamanic

visions were elaborately carved and painted and afterward thrown away, having served their cosmocentric function. Today they exist in museums in Paris, New York, and Houston as unknowable curiosities. As with other indigenous groups, the tradition of mask-making among the Yup’ik no longer exists because it did not subscribe to, indeed, was a threat to, the conquering, missionizing ways of the anthropocentric.

The new is old because the old is new. We have reached the end of history. The arts and humanities today are left with remains, with many seeking refuge in an ever-narrowing arcana. Others remix hollow tropes, tired narratives, rehashed plots, and remixed music. The metaverse, superheroes, “reality television,” endless sportscast, and fantasy worlds portrayed by the media blend and fold the real and imagined. A last-ditch adrenaline rush to titillate and excite terminal rehashing and boredom. Collectively we are expressing a cocktail mix of delirium, hallucination spiked with anxiety, neurosis, and psychosis, and the ever-frequent mass shootings to mark the suicidal collapse of the human-centric system. Endless repetitions, sequels of inanity, banality, self-referencing, rampant and normalized, and increasingly desperate narcissism and the cult of celebrity, social media enabling anguished expressions of individuality with forced smiles and emojis as the human project sinks to the muck of its own doing.

Hopelessness, media filled with casual brain splatter killings as media entertainments, the fusion of the real and performed, truth is negotiable and conspiratorial—all point to Form fatigue. Our operating system is spent, rotten, having run its course. A culture of trauma and grievance emerges, the embrace of nostalgia becomes more desperate, and the reconciliation of historical ills and wokeness collides with conservative and

fundamentalist backlash and is part of the reckoning before a final, epic demise. The pandemic was a metaphoric expression of mighty nature fighting back to restore balance. It also allowed the planet to feel, think, and breathe again, giving hope for renewal.

Fear and uncertainty circle the planet provoking the return of the strong man of old invading empires and the return to medieval religiosity. Democracy, forwarding the human pursuit of freedom and individuality, is challenged because it offers no real solutions. Humans are not an enlightened species, but rather self-serving and destructive without the restorative tonic and structure of the self-organizing system of nature to give life meaning and purpose. Freedom and individuality have led not to enlightenment but exponential consumer choice. Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are desperate to say *I exist*, promoting mind and soul-numbing wannabe celebrity in an ADHD world. Partisanship, anger, guns, the demise of civility and public discourse, and the threat of civil war are part of the ending swirl.

We know what is happening around us. The indicators of systemic rot are everywhere, metastasizing towards collapsing ecosystems and catastrophic system failure. Extreme weather events: forest fires, hurricanes, floods, tornados, tsunamis, and earthquakes increase exponentially. In all their abundance and beauty, the life-giving oceans are heating and dying. Plastic islands form, and microparticles move through the food chain and into our bodies. The extermination of animal and plant life foreshadows our extinction.

Past is a prelude. I'm hopeful, and something in me tells me we can recreate a verdant and sustainable world. We cannot

return to the historical indigenous/cosmocentric way of being. We cannot abandon the advancements and advantages Form knowledge has afforded us. What we can do is listen again. Reconsider who we are as individuals not with the objective of human betterment and advancement, but rather think and do for our community cosmocentrically. Taking the best of what we know and reconceptualizing, reimagining how to live in and with the world. The advances wrought by globalization, trade, commerce, technology, and the environment, affect and create a new planetary society and culture in which we are all a part—every human and non-human being, the elements, the spirits, ancestors, and the cosmos. In many ways, we are becoming a new sort of indigenous. A new consciousness is taking shape around us. We are becoming earthlings. This is our place.

Over the last thirty years, the accelerated advancement has left us stunned, suffering from whiplash, coming so quickly and overwhelmingly. How things are and have been will no longer suffice. An epochal shift in thinking and being is taking shape around us. The arts and humanities, or whatever they will become known as, can lead the way, explaining, articulating, and integrating. Witness environmental and climate awareness, the rise of women's rights, the MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, gender and identity sensitivities along with veganism and animal rights, the recognition of poverty, famine, and health needs of the disadvantaged, and the heightened awareness of income and power inequity are all part of a shift. We are all part of the profound, all-encompassing shift and foundational to the survival of life on the planet. A