



WHERE ARE WE GOING?

PHILOSOPHY IN THE
ANTHROPOCENE

1. HOPE AND FEAR









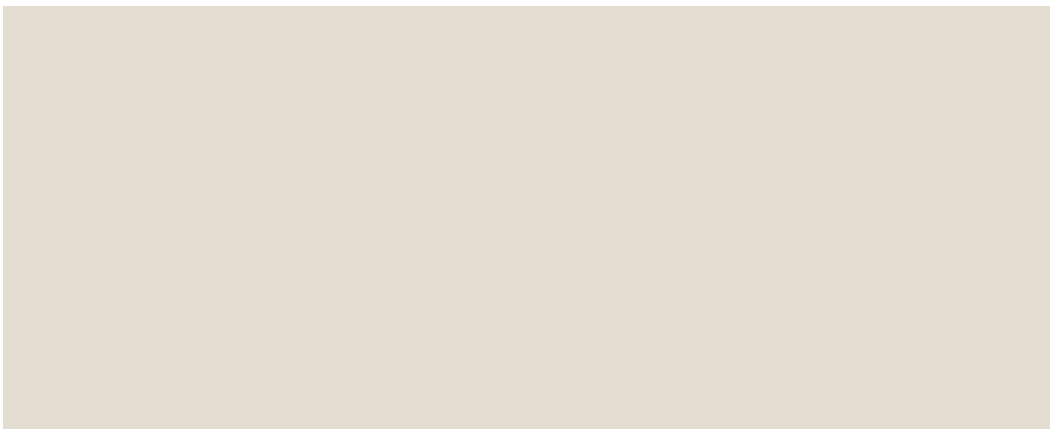




THE ANTHROPOCENE ERA

What do we mean by this word?

What does this word make us feel?



IDEAS BEHIND THE COURSE

Cultivating an 'enlarged mentality'
(Hannah Arendt)

'not to condemn, curse or bewail, but to
understand' (Spinoza)

Avoiding the mental paralysis of fear

Interrogating the present

Considering the view of the future

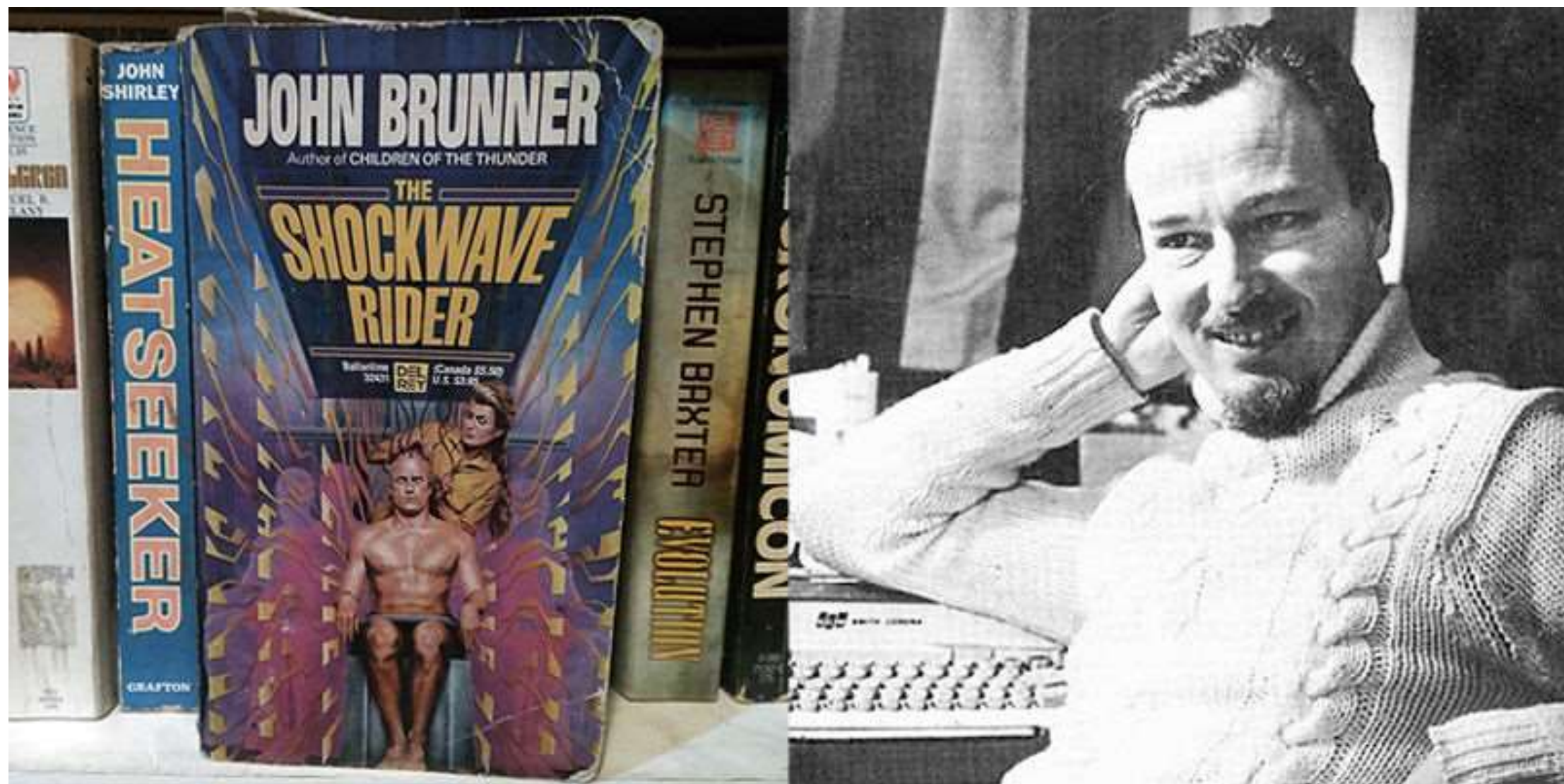


‘It’s been very isolating for people. It certainly was for me. One of the reasons I waited as long as I did to try and get pregnant, and I would say this to my partner all the time – what, you want to have a *Mad Max* water warrior fighting with their friends for food and water?’

It wasn’t until I was part of the climate justice movement and I could see a path forward that I could even imagine having a kid.

... the discussion we need to have is how do we build a world so that those kids can have thriving, zero-carbon lives?’

- Naomi Klein (2019)







BRUNNER TECHNIQUE

John Brunner would imagine a Victorian time-traveller arriving in the 1960s. How would he explain to them everything that had changed, from the telephone to the sexual revolution?

Shifts not just in technology but often hidden, unquestioned cultural assumptions

What if we reverse the process? What will those same assumptions mean in the future? How will they shape the future world to come?

Genetic engineering, computer viruses, online encyclopedias, same-sex marriage, laser-printing, techno music, Viagra, anxiety disorders, legalised cannabis...

Moon bases, deep-sea mining, war with China, universal healthcare in the US...



WHEN ADAM DELVED
AND EVE SPAN
WHO WAS THEN THE
GENTLEMAN

CHAPTER I. THE MEN OF KENT



SOMETIMES I am rewarded for fretting myself so much about present matters by a quite unmasked-for pleasant dream. I mean when I am asleep. This dream is as it were a present of an architectural peep-show. I see some beautiful and noble building new made, as it were for the occasion, as clearly as if I were awake; not vaguely or absurdly, as often happens in dreams, but with all the detail clear and reasonable. Some Elizabethan house with its scrap of earlier fourteenth-century building, and its late degradations of Queen Anne and William IV. and Victoria, marring but not destroying it, in an old village, once a clearing amid the sandy woodlands of Sussex. Or an old and

‘if men still abide men as I have known them, and unless these folk of England change as the land changeth ... there should be all plenty in the land, and not one poor man therein, unless of his own free will he choose to lack and be poor, as a man in religion or such like;

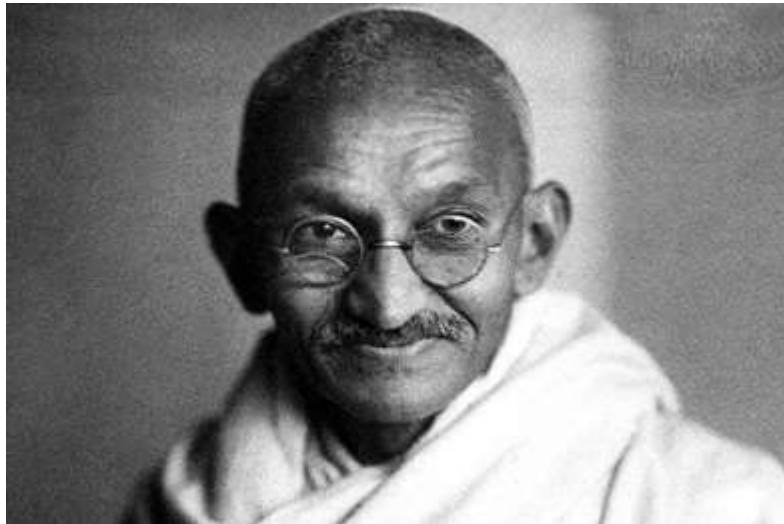
for there would then be such abundance of all good things ... that these should labour far less than now, and they would have time to learn knowledge’

... ‘I said: Hast thou forgotten already what I told thee, hat in those latter days a man who hath nought save his own body (and such men shall be far the most of men) must needs pawn his labour for leave to labour? Can such a man be wealthy? Hast thou not called him a thrall?’

... ‘Now I am sorrier than thou hast yet made me,’ said he; ‘for when this is established, how then can it changed?’

– From William Morris, *A Dream of John Ball* (1888)

1.	23 rd Sept	Beyond hope and fear	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> ; Baldwin, <i>The Fire Next Time</i>
2.	30 th Sept	The Anthropocene and responsibility	Kant, <i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> ; Wallace-Wells, <i>Uninhabitable Earth</i>
3.	7 th Oct	Interdependence and Nature	Whitehead, <i>Process and Reality</i> ; Gandhi, <i>Hind Swaraj</i> ; Greta Thuneberg, "This house is on fire"
4.	14 th Oct	Equality and rights	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> ; Sen, "Equality of what?"
5.	21 st Oct	Individual and community	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> ; Milton Friedman, <i>Free to Choose</i>
6.	28 th Oct	Care, ageing and vulnerability	Nussbaum, <i>Fragility of Goodness</i> ; <i>Aging Thoughtfully</i>
7.	4 th Nov	Democracy	Addams, <i>Democracy and Social Ethics</i> ; Carole Pateman, <i>Participation and Democratic Theory</i>
8.	11 th Nov	Nations, borders and refugees	Kant "Perpetual Peace"; O'Neill, "Lifeboat Earth"
9.	18 th Nov	Gender, sexuality and difference	De Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> ; Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference"
10.	25 th Nov	Automation and work	Bertrand Russell, "In Praise of Idleness"; Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i>
11.	2 nd Dec	Wealth, poverty and class	Oscar Wilde, "Soul of Man Under Socialism"; Piketty, <i>Capital et Idéologie</i>
12.	9 th Dec	A world that could be free	







MOODLE LOGIN

Username: firstnamelastname

Password: FirstNameInitial (capitals)

E.g. Boris Johnson

Username: borisjohnson

Password: BORISJ

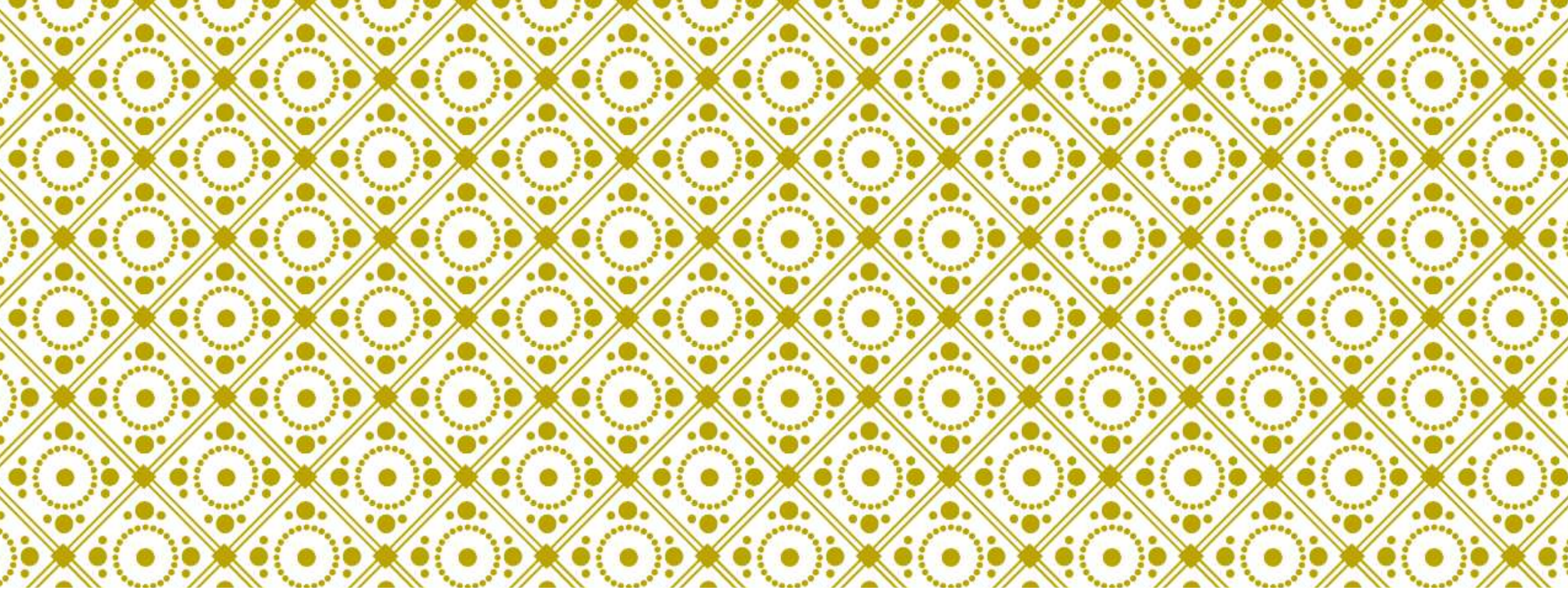


COURSE PAPERWORK

Before going to break, take a moment to complete the course forms

Reflect to yourself, and discuss with your neighbour, what you'd like to get out of the course

If there's any questions come and talk to me during the break or email later:
Dan.Taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk



HOPE AND FEAR

The Uninhabitable Earth

A STORY OF THE FUTURE

David
Wallace-Wells

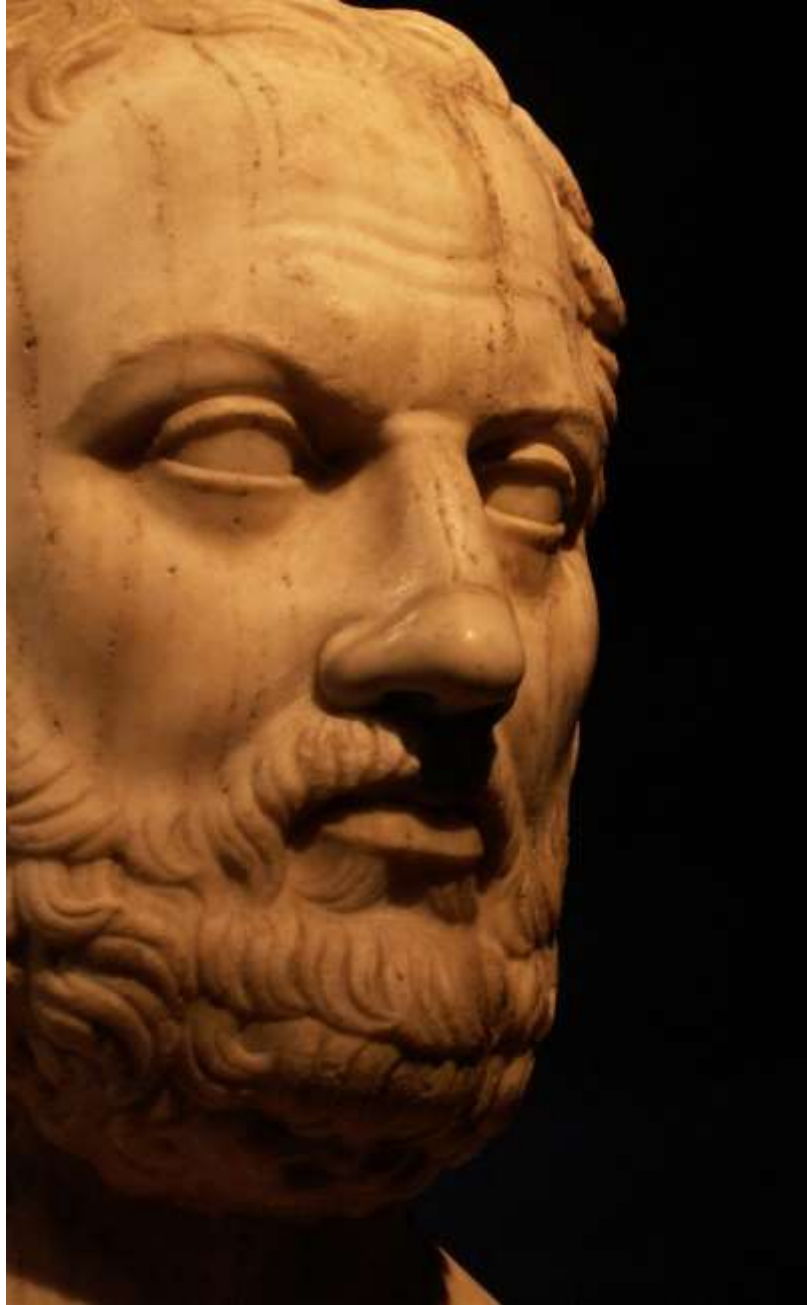
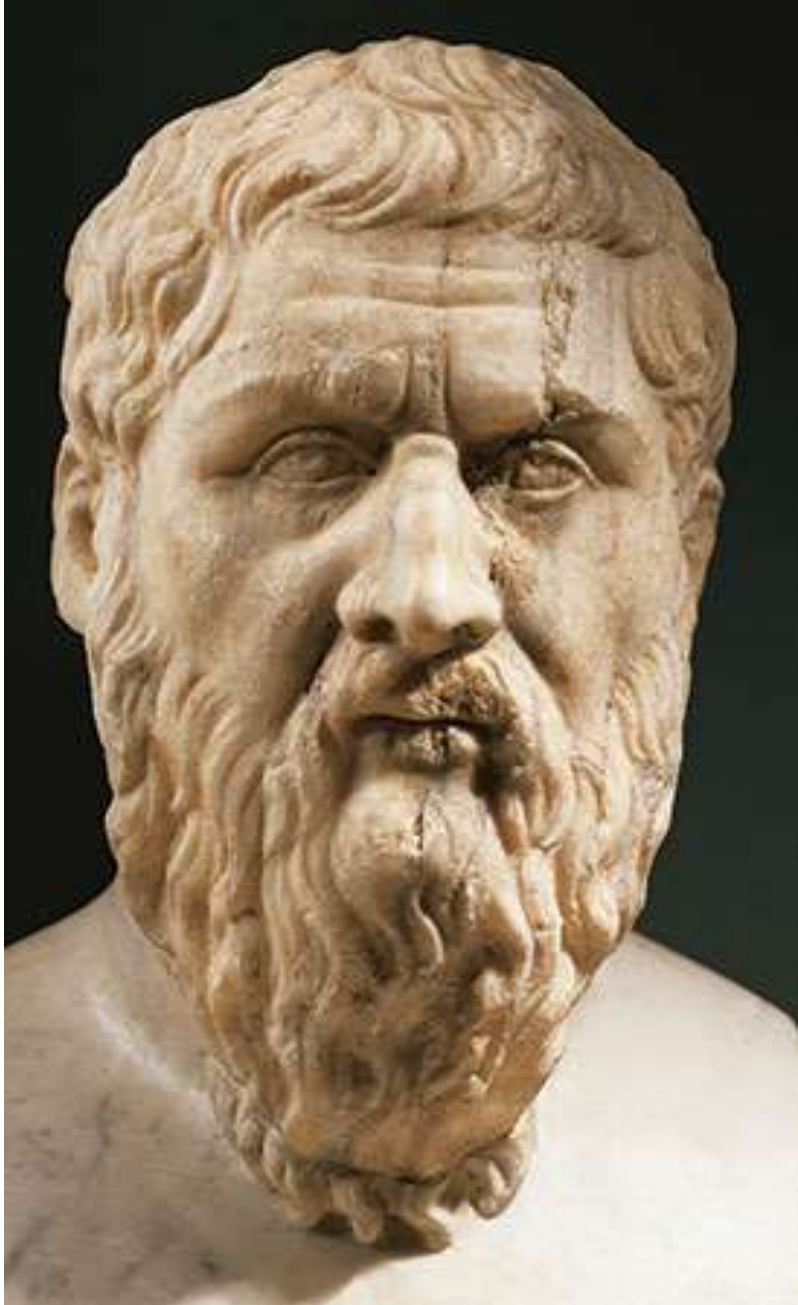


‘It is, I promise, worse than you think. If your anxiety about global warming is dominated by fears of sea-level rise, you are barely scratching the surface of what terrors are possible, even within the lifetime of a teenager today. And yet the swelling seas — and the cities they will drown — have so dominated the picture of global warming, and so overwhelmed our capacity for climate panic, that they have occluded our perception of other threats, many much closer at hand.

... absent a significant adjustment to how billions of humans conduct their lives, parts of the Earth will likely become close to uninhabitable, and other parts horrifically inhospitable, as soon as the end of this century.’

- David Wallace-Wells, “The Uninhabitable Earth” (2017, New Yorker)





BEYOND ALL HOPE

What is the status of hope in Pandora's box – good or evil?

'Hope is the worst of all evils, because it prolongs the torments of men' (Nietzsche)

'Hope, danger's comforter, may be indulged in by those who have abundant resources ... [but] those who go so far as to put their all upon the venture see it in its true colours only when they are ruined' (Thucydides)

Merely the mind's 'state of anxiety through looking into the future' (Seneca)

a 'form of moral cowardice that allows us to escape from reality and prolong human suffering' (Critchley)



... OR THE AUDACITY OF HOPE

‘what can I know, what should I do, and what may I hope?’
(Kant)

‘With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope’ (Dr King)

‘a vision of the good world that might ensue, and, often at least, actions related to getting there’ (Martha Nussbaum)



DOES HOPE INCREASE OUR CAPACITY TO ACT,
OR DOES IT DIMINISH IT?

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

‘show a defect of knowledge and a lack of power in the mind’ (Spinoza)

‘the impossible is the least that one can demand’, for history ‘testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible’ (Baldwin)

For Spinoza and the ancient Greek tragic tradition, hope inhibits our capacity to act, because it either leads to bad decisions or a failure to act wisely

It enables us to persist in the present through delusions rather than challenging it

While Baldwin is alert to the dangers of empty hope, it is one basis for the oppressed to decide to act together. Historical change is driven by it, even if many hopeful movements have failed in their goals



ABANDON HOPE, OR RE- ESTABLISH IT?

Are there any aspects of the present and future of the 21st century that you feel hopeful about?

If not – then how do you think you orientate yourself to that present and future, without hope?

NEXT WEEK: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND RESPONSIBILITY

I'd like you to take a look at two things:

- Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, excerpts
- David Wallace-Wells' *The Uninhabitable Earth*, Chapter 1

As you read, I'd like you to think about what your basis is for moral concern and responsibility for others. Think about Kant's arguments for a universal moral principle and its regard for others (the categorical imperative). If you don't accept such a universal viewpoint, pose to yourself what you consider your basis for moral concern.

We'll also discuss Extinction Rebellion, and early modern attitudes to nature in Francis Bacon. For the indefatigable there will be further readings of interest on Moodle!

Any questions, email dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk