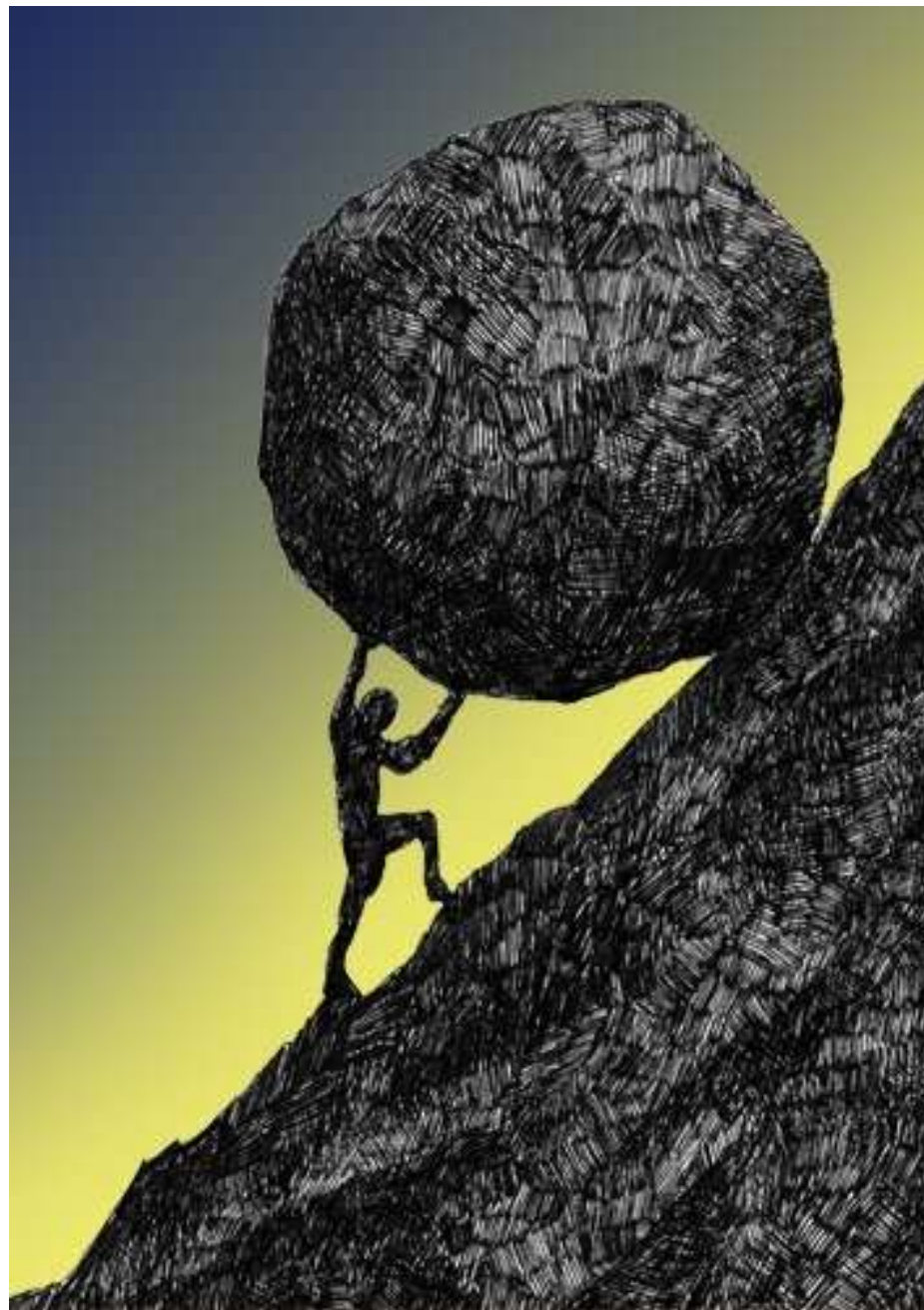




Where are we going?

Philosophy in the
Anthropocene

2. Responsibility

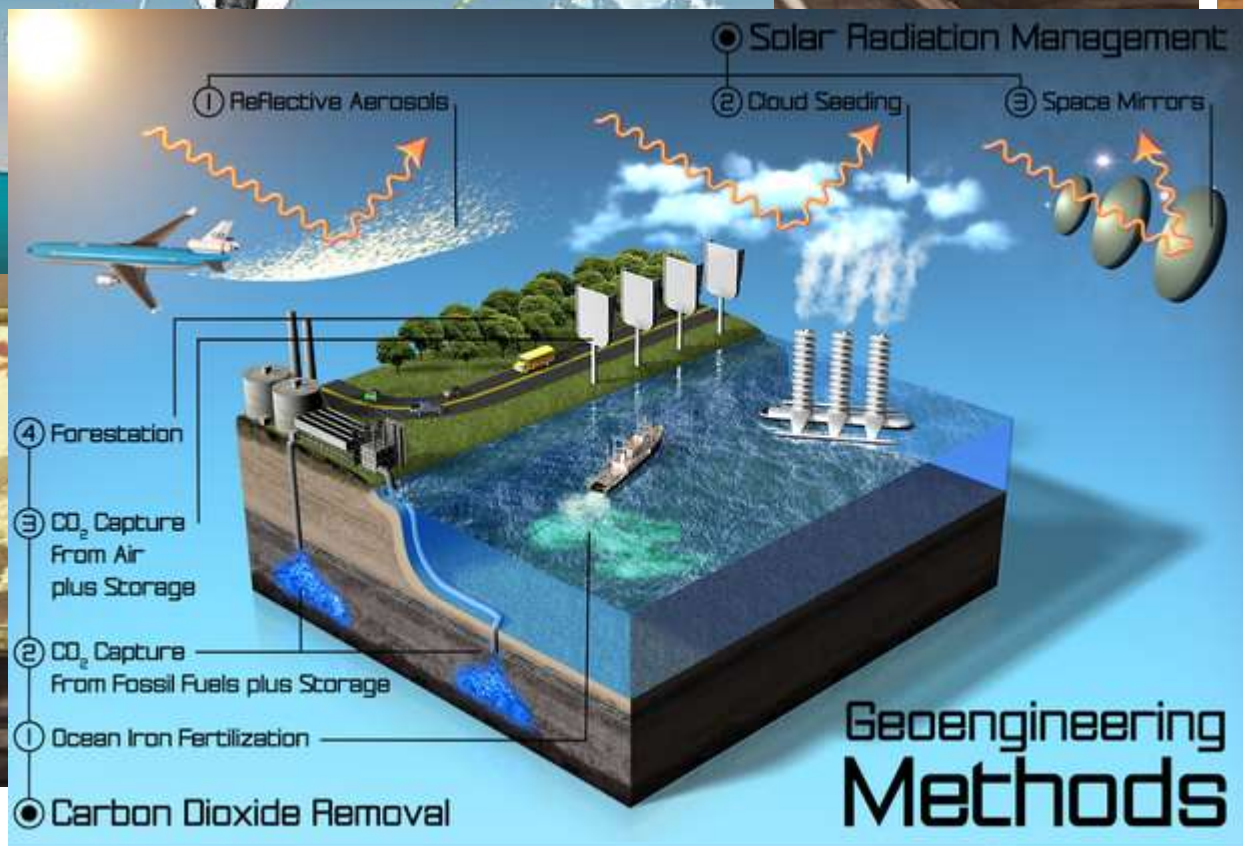
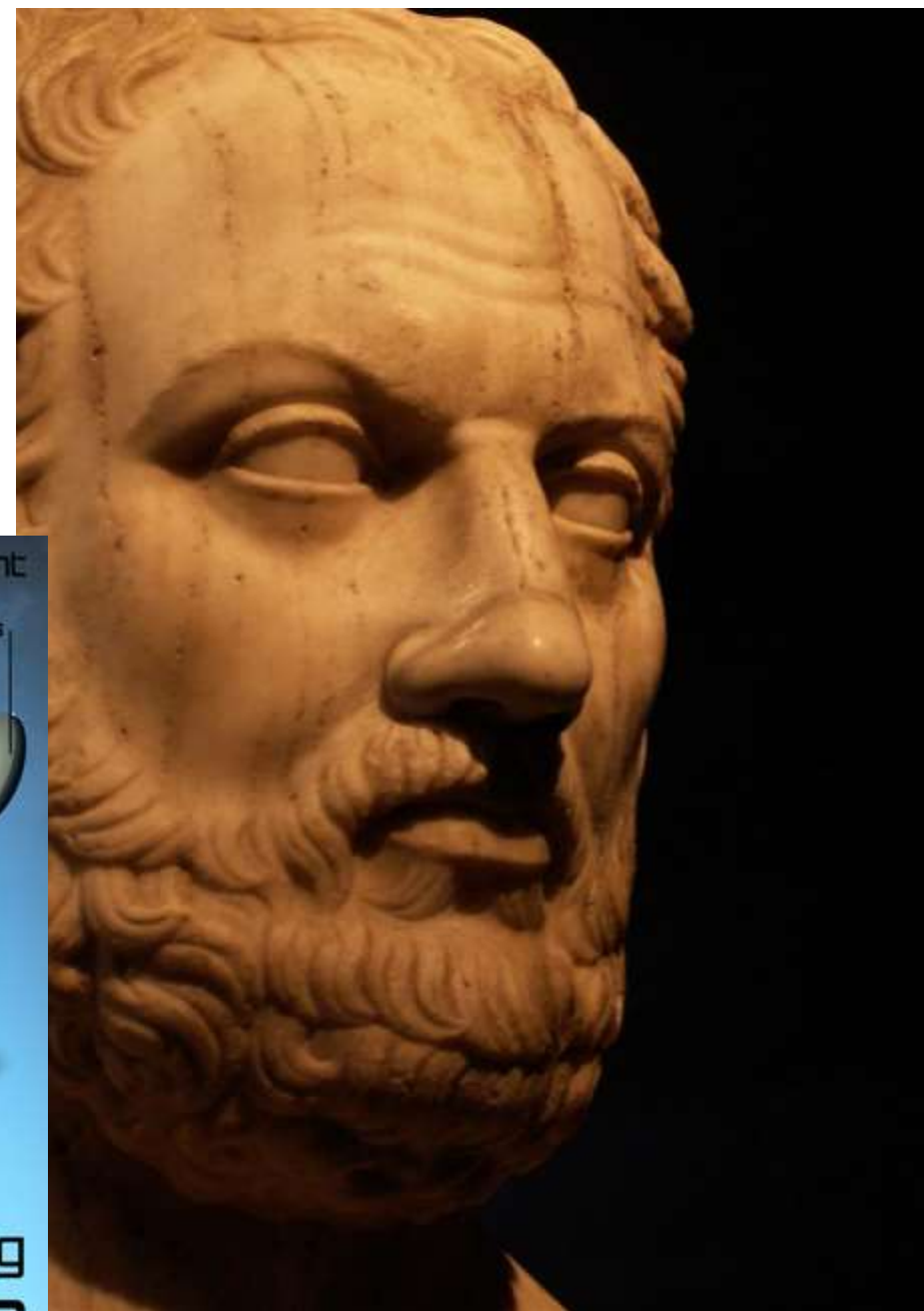
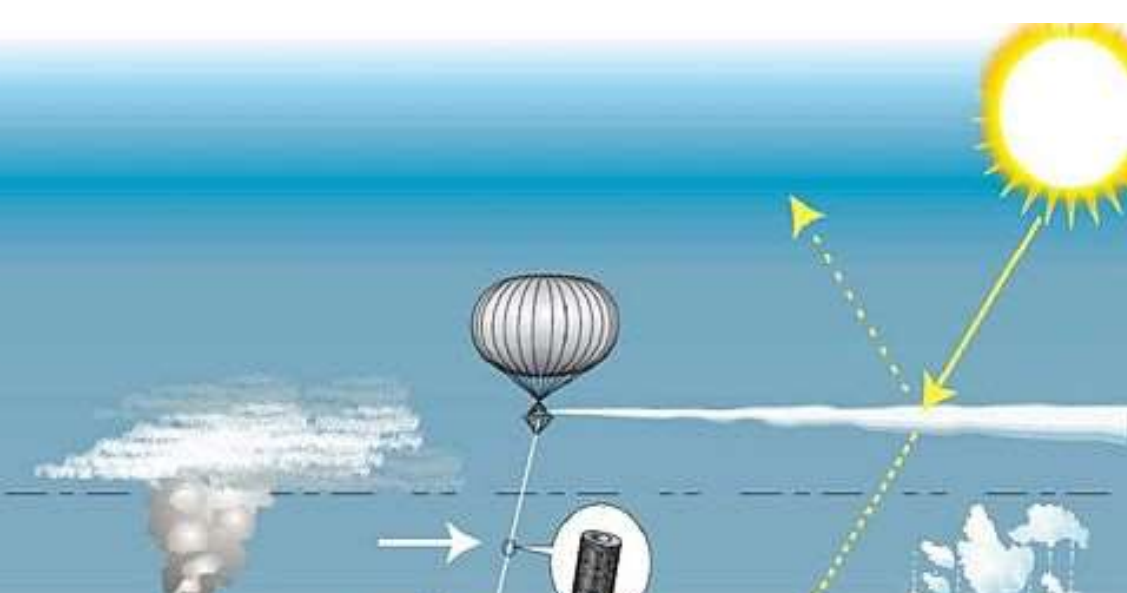


Recap

- Anthropocene vs Capitalocene
- Tragic vs optimistic
- King Sisyphus of Corinth – twice-defies death, duly punished
- Different modes of freedom: individual choice, collective responsibility



Does hope increase or diminish
our capacity to act?



PUBLISHED 07:00 SEPTEMBER 23, 2019

The world has a moral responsibility to

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Climate change

This article is more than 11 months old

World leaders 'have moral obligation to act' after UN climate report

Even half degree of extra warming will affect hundreds of millions of people, decimate corals and intensify heat extremes, report shows

Full report: We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN

Jonathan Watts and Matthew Taylor

Mon 8 Oct 2018 18.17 BST

f t e

1,948

ENVIRONMENT

Greta Thunberg To U.S.: 'You Have A Moral Responsibility' On Climate Change

September 13, 2019 · 3:23 PM ET
Heard on All Things Considered

BILL CHAPPELL



AILSAL CHANG



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)

Climate crisis?

- UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report 2018: we have 12 years to limit climate increase to 1.5C
- Review of 6000 works: 2C+ collapses ecosystems, crop yields and coastal flooding
- So far, with Paris accords: on track for 3.2C+ by end of century (IPCC)
- 200 million climate refugees by 2050 (UN)
- Cascades: rising sea-levels, ocean acidification, desertification, declining food production, heat death, wildfires and tornados, flooding, declining fresh-water, increased global conflict...



‘Here, the facts are hysterical, and the dimensions of the drama that will play out ... incomprehensibly large

... Global warming has improbably compressed into two generations the entire story of human civilization. First, the project of remaking the planet so that it is undeniably ours

... Second, the project of preserving our collective future forestalling that devastation and engineering an alternate path’

- Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 29)



Over to you

In small groups of 2-3, I'd like you to discuss two things

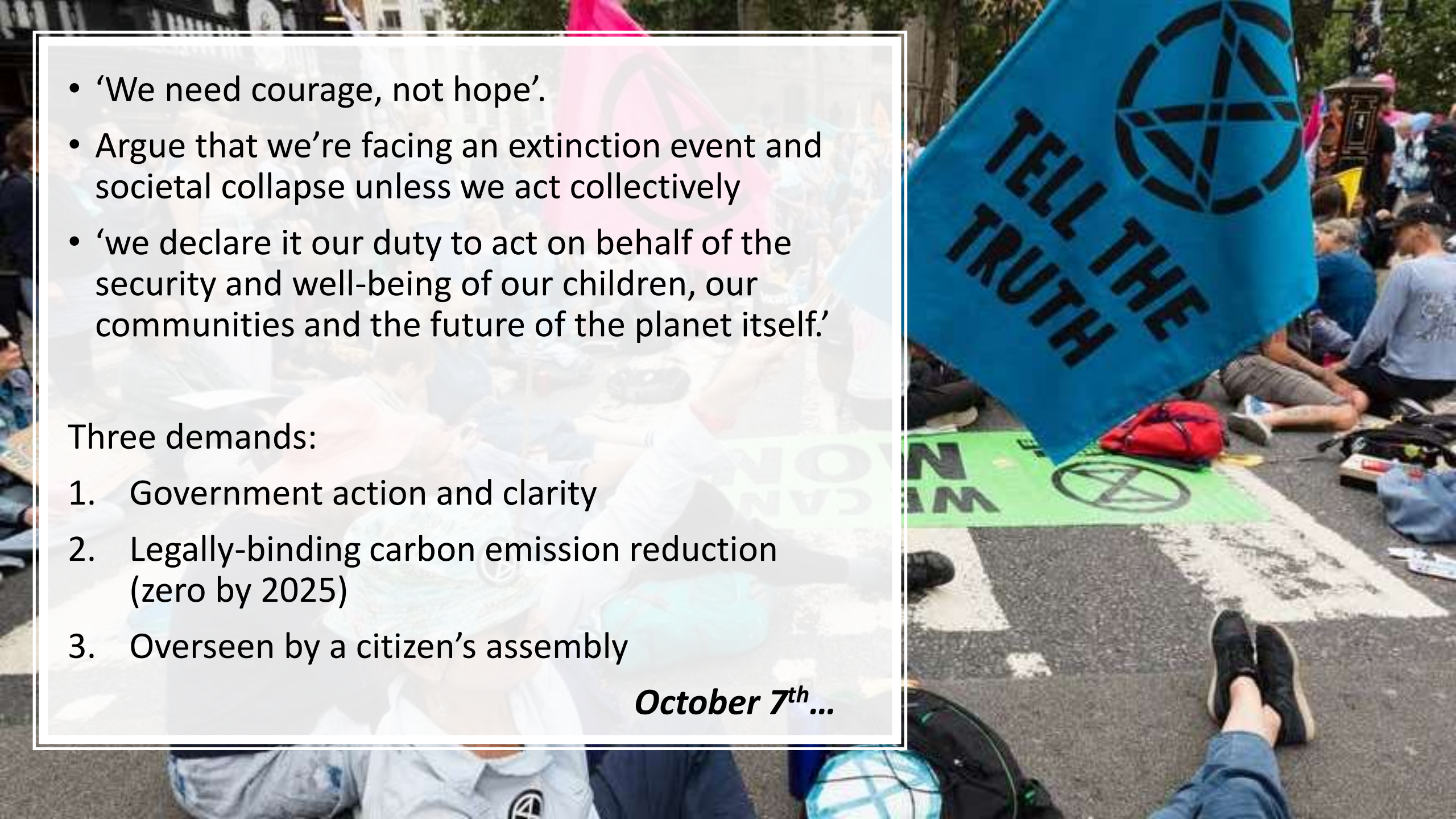
- Are 'we' responsible for climate change?
- If so, what does that responsibility demand of us?
- If not, do we still have an obligation to change our behaviour so as to avoid worsening it in some way?



ALL EVENTS ARE PREORDAINED AND UNALTERABLE. WHATEVER WILL BE WILL BE. THAT WAY, IF ANYTHING BAD HAPPENS, IT'S NOT MY FAULT. IT'S FATE.





- 
- ‘We need courage, not hope’.
 - Argue that we’re facing an extinction event and societal collapse unless we act collectively
 - ‘we declare it our duty to act on behalf of the security and well-being of our children, our communities and the future of the planet itself.’

Three demands:

1. Government action and clarity
2. Legally-binding carbon emission reduction (zero by 2025)
3. Overseen by a citizen’s assembly

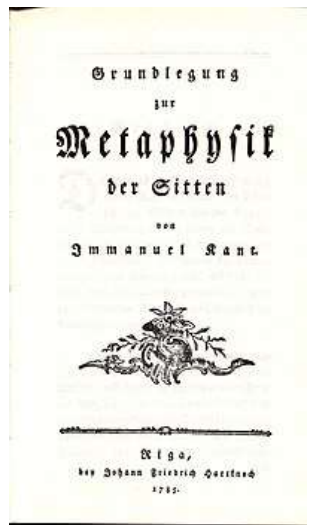
October 7th...

Question:

What's the basis of our moral concern?

‘A crime is something someone else commits ... Someday, perhaps not long from now, the inhabitants of a hotter, more dangerous and biologically diminished planet than the one on which I lived may wonder what you and I were thinking, or whether we thought at all. ... Of course we did it to ourselves; we had always been intellectually lazy, and the less asked of us, the less we had to say. ... We all lived for money, and that is what we died for .’

- William Vollmann, *Carbon Ideologies*



‘For a human being has so many preferences working on him that, though he is quite capable of having the idea of a practical pure reason, he can’t so easily bring it to bear on the details of how he lives his life.’



Introducing the *Groundwork*

- *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)
- Aims to explain the basic principles of morality and then demonstrate how it applies to human beings
- Key claim ... ?
- Actions are moral when based not on outcome, impulse, self-interest or preference ... but when they conform to duty
- A good will is decisive (without which 'one can't even be worthy of being happy')
- The categorical imperative and universal morality

Some key points

- Reason 'is to be aimed at no matter what else is the case; which is why our private plans must stand out of its way' (ch1, 7).
- 'I ought never to act in such a way that I couldn't also will that the maxim on which I act should be a universal law' (11)
- 'Act as though the maxim of your action were to become, through your will, a universal law of nature' (universal imperative of duty, 24).
- 'Act in such a way as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of anyone else, always as an end and never merely as a means'. (29)



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Euro	0.70
Japanese Yen	100.00
Australian Dollar	1.50
Canadian Dollar	1.25
Swiss Franc	1.10
Chinese Yuan	7.00
Indian Rupee	80.00
South African Rand	15.00
Thai Baht	30.00
Singapore Dollar	1.30
Malaysian Ringgit	4.00
Philippine Peso	50.00
Indonesian Rupiah	1,000.00
Maldivian Rufiyaa	1.00
Kenyan Shilling	100.00
Ugandan Shilling	1,000.00
Tanzanian Shilling	1,000.00
Botswana Pula	1.00
South Korean Won	1,000.00
Portuguese Escudo	200.00
Spanish Peseta	166.67
French Franc	6.55
Belgian Franc	6.55
Dutch Guilder	3.60
German Mark	3.00
Austrian Schilling	13.76
Italian Lira	2,000.00
Spanish Peseta	166.67
Portuguese Escudo	200.00
French Franc	6.55
Belgian Franc	6.55
Dutch Guilder	3.60
German Mark	3.00
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Over to you

Let's discuss one of Kant's examples – the debtor who weighs up borrowing money he can't realistically repay (24-25).

In small groups, choose and discuss one of these questions:

1. How does Kant use this example to demonstrate his morality based on duty? (And – once you've reconstructed it – are you convinced?)
2. How does Kant's claims about moral responsibility and applicability correlate with your own, discussed earlier?

The debtor's shift

‘To answer this, I change the demand of self-love into a universal law, and then put the question like this: If my maxim became a universal law, then how would things stand? I can see straight off that it could never hold as a universal law of nature, and must contradict itself.’ (25)

- Acts purely from universal duty. Sets himself up as a universal moral legislator (or later, a sovereign of the realm of ends)
- Acts not from a thing's relative 'price', but its 'intrinsic worth'



Practical
reason into
practice...

How would Kant's morality of duty apply to the arguments of Wallace-Wells earlier?

- Duty would necessitate doing ourselves what does not contribute to climate change
- But Kant freely admits that duty can conflict with instinct, pleasure and happiness
- For Kant, the more certain contentment of living according to a universal morality and benevolently is worth the 'price' – it has intrinsic value
- ***Do you agree?***

Greta Thuneberg



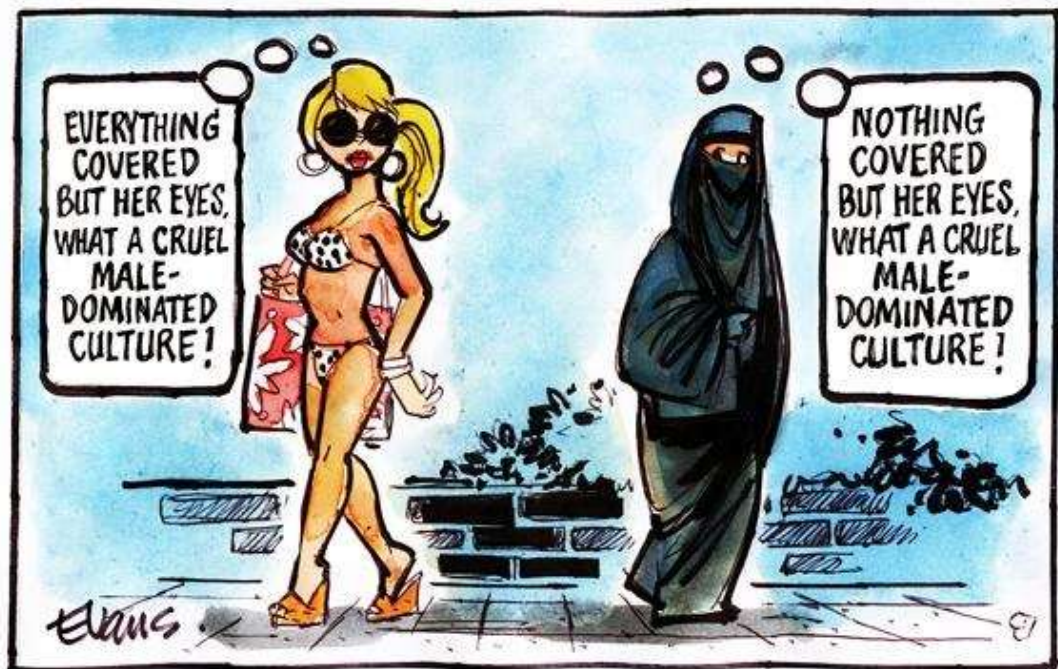
‘We saw these horrifying pictures of plastic in the oceans and floodings and so on, and everyone was very moved by that. But then it just seemed like everyone went back to normal

... And I couldn't go back to normal because those pictures were stuck in my head. And I couldn't just go on knowing that this was happening around the world.’



‘When everyone else seems to just compromise and have this double moral that’s “Yeah. That’s very important, but also I can’t do that right now and I’m too lazy and so on.” But I can’t really do that.

... I want to walk the talk, and to practice as I preach. So that is what I’m trying to do. Because if I am focused on something and if I know something and if I decide to do something, then I go all in. And it seems like others are not doing that right now.’



Rounding up

- What have been the moral basis of the appeals we've heard today from David Wallace-Wells, Greta Thuneberg and Immanuel Kant?
- Wallace-Wells and a lot of leading climate writing focus on the consequences of acting and not acting
- While led by practical concerns, Thuneberg is closer to Kant: she doesn't want to compromise on practical grounds, and acts from duty
- But Kant doesn't explain how we can know with certainty what our specific duty is... moral reflection and decisions are usually less clear-cut

Take-home Q: duty and responsibility

What's been your basis for living according to a sense of duty, or having difficulty with that?

Have you found yourself conflicted over wanting to observe and commit to something you consider morally or politically right, but practically very difficult, inconvenient or isolating to implement?

If there's been several such times, what occasion do you think you got the balance right? Or if you've avoided it, or let practicalities speak, why was that rather than duty most persuasive?

Next week: Interdependence

We're going to venture into a debate behind environmentalism and social justice with important consequences for how we view our place in the natural world...

Is identity something individually defined and fixed, or interdependent on others and continually changing?

There are two readings:

- 1) a lecture and excerpt from Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, making the case for national moral development and critiquing a Eurocentric view of 'civilisation'
- 2) excerpts from Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, setting out what's called Process Philosophy

Whitehead will be tougher to read (though the underlying ideas will hopefully be intuitive). There'll be some guides on Moodle too by Wednesday evening

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