

The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter: *Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter*

Robert MacNeil Christie, PhD

Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System, as it unfolds before our eyes. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.

Latest News from the Hopeful Realist

Please Note: *The hyperlinks to some useful sources were inadvertently left out of Erin Remblance's Guest Commentary last issue, which so many readers enjoyed. The corrected issue, vol. 2 no. 3 will be posted in the archive at thehopefulrealist.com shortly for anyone who would like to use those links.*

Waiting for Something that will Never Be. The latest news includes reports of a "Rage Against the War Machine" rally in Washington, DC, with various speakers from both extreme ends of the political spectrum who argued to the few hundred attending, against U.S. support for the Ukrainian people fighting against Putin's genocidal invasion and assault on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

I am old enough to have protested the unjustified U.S. war against the people of Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the atrocities involved. I have always opposed wars in my lifetime, but not to the extent that I would protest a sovereign people defending themselves against a ruthless dictator who invades and attempts to take over their nation by destroying everything and everyone he can.

Nor have I ever accepted that the [Pentagon budget](#) should exceed the spending of most other nations on Earth combined. The so-called 'defense budget' has funded wars of choice around the world for decades. It can easily be characterized as a 'war machine' that has inserted itself in the affairs of other nations without justification, except for the false claim of 'spreading democracy' (by force—how is that supposed to work? Afghanistan is the answer to that one). The underlying motivation for the 'war machine,' of course, is corporate profit and maintaining the domination of the global political economy of corporate growth. Nevertheless...

Putin is the bloodthirsty epitome of the *dominator culture* that infects far more politicians than one might realize. His will to power is unbounded by any human value whatsoever. We must make certain distinctions in this world if we are to retain our moral compass. Otherwise, confusion will reign.

One very peculiar thing I have notice in recent years is the frequent self-contradictory merging of political positions that if examined precisely are incompatible. This reflects not only a lack of critical thinking and the proliferation of propaganda unrelated to facts, but also a deep social isolation among more and more people whose only sense of meaning resides in their social media silos, none of which are subjected to systematic analysis or confirmation of facts.

It is also important to note that in Congress most rumblings of discontent with supporting the Ukrainians in defending their country, come from the new MAGA Republicans who oppose any policy of the Biden administration unless it contributes to the hegemony of the wealthy elites and the mega-corporations that have turned the U.S. into a corporate state in democracy's clothing.

Steve Schmidt is the most articulate real conservative I know of. He articulates the fundamental principles of our democratic republic with an eloquence of language and meaning like no other. He saw clearly the anti-democratic, racist, and neo-fascist elements of Trumpism from the start, and broke with the Republican party as a matter of principle. His latest piece in his Substack column, [The Warning with Steve Schmidt](#), calls the people who attended the "March Against the War Machine" rally, "Putin's useful idiots." "That assessment is hard to dispute.

One has to wonder what brought far right and far left public figures together for an 'anti-war' rally with an odd assortment of 'sponsors,' including so many we have never heard of. I suspect that their motives for opposing 'the establishment' were not exactly the same.

Steve points out that Tucker Carlson, Fox News' purveyor of autocracy, in a slick rant, proposed 'negotiation' to end the war soon, by negotiating with the world's greatest liar, who even surpasses Trump's fictional world in his claims to righteousness and has no reason to negotiate his absolute quest. Besides, what is to negotiate? The relinquishing of one's nation?

How is capitulation to a ruthless mass murderer a 'path to peace'? Capitulation and subservience is not peace. These folks who oppose helping the brave Ukrainians really are Putin's useful idiots. I would like to track down the original organizers of this event. I would not be surprised to find some Russian oligarch's money behind it.

As humanity continues to fragment into ever more violent confrontations, the increasingly extreme existential threat of global collapse—of climate and ecosystems first, then of what is left of what we call civilization—garners less and less attention in the realm of politics and economics, where the power players scramble for more...of what?

Publishing Plan v. 2.0. As previously mentioned, because of its density and length, I decided to recast my book, *At the Edge of Illusion: Facing the New Great Transformation*, in a new more accessible form. It will consist of a three part series. The first volume of the trilogy, *Holding It Together: Social Control in a New Era of Great Transformation*, is now with my editor and will soon be ready for publication, at which time this newsletter will announce how to acquire it.

My eBook **HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto** is still available for free download from [Kindle Unlimited](#). After a bit of procrastination, the price will soon go to normal. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](#). Or, [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on Amazon. On Amazon, do so by clicking the button on the lower left of the book's Amazon page below "Customer Reviews," and say a few words about what you think about the issues and how I frame them.

Note: Past issues of this Newsletter are available, archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

We are one. Really? Here's the fundamental contradiction of modern life in a nutshell. Everything we can learn about the nature of life on planet Earth by reading today's featured book by Jeremy Lent, *The Web of Meaning*, contradicts the dominator worldview of industrial civilization. The dualistic ontology of industrial modernism reduces everything about life to the operations of a machine, whether it is an industrial machine, a political machine, or a war machine. Our feelings of connection to Nature are real, but treated as a naïve illusion that should be overcome by objectivist separation of life from the very grounds of our being.

Yet, the only way we will ever achieve peace with ourselves, with others, and with our living Earth, is to recognize the interconnections of all life on the planet and our role in the web of life itself. That is the point at which we will be able to forge a web of meaning that connects with the living Earth System of which we are a part. However, currently a worldview apart from our very existence dominates our lives. Yet, it is no accident that living forms repeat in fractal patterns at all scales throughout the world. Life is about connection, which is expressed in the networks of living entities within ecosystems of mutual support and competition.

We live in the midst of the now global industrial-consumer culture, which exists as if it were not connected to this world. The material power of the reductive dualistic anti-nature culture of industrialism for capital accumulation by the very few has allowed a tiny 'trickle down' of small bits of wealth to the technically useful classes, with poverty to the rest. However, this is not by any stretch human progress and certainly not human flourishing. We confuse many spent consumer products from the Big Box store in our garage or overflowing to that storage locker, with success. Instead, we have succeeded in the art of self-delusion. Meanwhile, 'the system' squeezes us economically to the point where we can no longer afford that storage locker, and since its contents have no significant economic value, we let the manager auction it off to pay for back rent on storage of nothing.

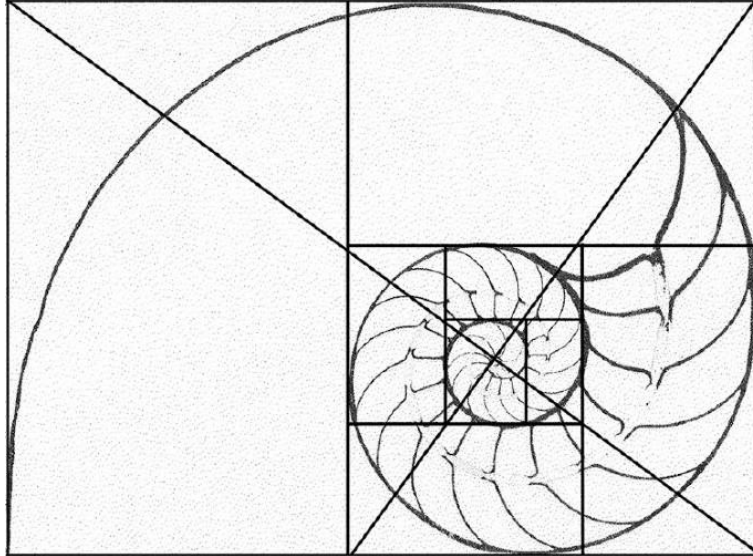
All that '[stuff](#),' as George Carlin so wisely characterized our blind attachment to things as symbols of our tenuous 'status' in the consumer culture, will never lead to our flourishing as members of our complex ecosystems of life. Only those who live in the few '[Blue Zones](#)' around the world, where life revolves around relations with close relatives and friends, and with the elements of Nature in their local and regional areas, seem to flourish, as indicated by measures of happiness, which by the way, are largely unrelated to money or products of industry. No wonder populations living in the Blue Zones have a higher percent of centenarians than anywhere else.

For more Hopeful Realist discussions of this and related matters, go to:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/the-hopeful-realist-blog/>

Today's Featured Image:

We are all Living Systems within Systems and with smaller Systems within us. All this can produce 'fractal flourishing' of Species and Ecosystems, if we let it.



We Live in a World of Chaos and Order. Fractal Flourishing in Nature includes Humans, if we Live within the Earth-System Boundaries.

Fractal patterns exist naturally in all sorts of living systems, with Nautilus seashells and fern leaves the obvious examples. Human populations can have fractal flourishing as well. It would be wise to look into why natural patterns repeat themselves at every scale. Because of culture and the distribution of economic and political power, we can either harmonize with Nature to achieve Fractal Flourishing, or we can fight it and suffer the consequences of being out of phase with the energy flows of Nature.

Books and other Sources on the New Great Transformation

This week, our featured source for understanding the New Great Transformation of the Earth System and the New Great Transformation we humans must create in order to salvage 'a place of our own' here on planet Earth, is Jeremy Lent's second book, *The Web of Meaning*. Jeremy goes to the heart of the matter when it comes to finding the meaning of life and how we might resolve our many modern dilemmas by accepting our true identities as participating members of the living Earth.

Lent, Jeremy. 2021. *The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to find our place in the Universe*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Okay, that subtitle may be a mouthful, but it points to the essence of not only how humans can "find our place in the Universe," but also contrasts with how our cultural meanings got off track and got us into the mess we will now have so much difficulty overcoming. Jeremy Lent contrasts some key discoveries by ancient Chinese scholars of the Tao, and neo-Confucianism, Buddhist principles, and the core wisdom

of indigenous peoples from all over the world—all recently confirmed by modern science—with the crucial error of Western philosophy, science, and technology.

The world is actually not dualistic; we are not really separate from Nature, which must not be treated as a mere repository of ‘resources’ for us to extract and exploit. Our destiny, if we choose to acknowledge it, is to transform our institutions to create an ecological civilization that takes its rightful place living in harmony among the myriad other species that make up the whole living Earth System. Do not be fooled. This is not some idealistic utopian fantasy; the unified worldview is grounded in the best modern science and ancient wisdom.

Quotable Quotes

Gregory Bateson was a renowned anthropologist, linguist, and philosopher. His explanation of the ‘double bind’ element in schizophrenia has implications beyond individual pathology. The worldview of industrial consumerism is at odds with the fundamental principle of how nature works, which directly contradicts the political economy of endless growth. Or, as Bateson put it:

*The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between
how nature works and the way people think."*

~ Gregory Bateson

The dualistic culture of industrial consumerism has put us all in a ‘damned if you do, damned if you don’t’ predicament: The trajectory of industrial civilization continues to add to the likelihood of catastrophic Earth System collapse, which will pretty much destroy industrial civilization. Yet, most of us still believe that our ‘way of life’ is as sacred a George Bush’s admonition to go shopping in response to the terrorism of 9/11, or his assertion that the American way of life “is not negotiable.”

If political ‘leaders’ continue to ignore the climate emergency they ensure societal collapse. If we take the necessary collective actions, we will have to destroy much of industrial civilization we built, in the process of creating the ecological civilization we need to survive on a livable planet. The choice seems eminently clear, yet these imperative actions severely conflict with how the politicians and investors think.

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe and read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#).