

## Chapter

# Looking for Eros in the Long Hard Rain of Climate Collapse

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## Abstract

More frequent and intense fires, floods, droughts and extreme temperatures point to a progressively de-regulating environment. In so much as this reality is understood as 'climate collapse' we are confronted by a processing task that is profoundly difficult. Initially, the conceptual and affective dimensions of this challenge are examined. A second section develops the proposition that as climate collapse accelerates, and as the scale and timelessness of this disruption takes hold, experiences of guilt and loss, anger and despair, will tend to be amplified by pre-existing unconscious tropes, particularly the fantasy of the vengeful, all-powerful mother. Accenting the possibility psychic tumult may be held against, the implications for mental health are reviewed. A final section considers the prospects for Eros – for play and creativity, innocence and companionship – in the long hard rain of climate collapse.

**Keywords:** climate collapse, psychoanalysis, Eros, interiority, psychic impact

## 1. Introduction

*So let us not talk falsely now*

*The hour is getting late*

All along the watchtower.

Bob Dylan (1967).

Plato understood Eros as an intermediate between the human and the divine. Less metaphysically, and with differing emphases, the Freudian tradition sees Eros as representing the life force that generates the will to live. However voiced, Eros is the wellspring of purpose and delight, creativity and affinity. What is the chance this bounteous muse will live on in the presence of climate collapse?

In a future roiled by grief, in a context where there will be outlandish disorder and destruction, this a difficult question as it forces a brutal truth into view: it is predicted billions will die in a future structured by climate collapse. In the presence of this actuality, paired with the terrible knowledge that billions are currently, and will continue to, endure lives of suffering, there is a fact that, in and of itself, inevitably and horribly folds back into the psychic conditions within which we live.

In this landscape many will have, more or less, the physical resources to survive. A minority will be disproportionately privileged to such an extent that they will be able to live in material luxury. Physical variables acknowledged, all who are alive will live

within a common psychic condition: fear and despair with the latter especially lashing equanimity. Everybody will know. The good place we used to inhabit is gone. She is not coming back. Mother nature as we knew her, she is gone.

Sentenced to endless anguish and remorse, in a close-to-forsaken condition, can Eros' positive energy last and continue to nurture the human spirit? There will always be sex, but will we still be enlivened by the timeless frisson between play and actuality, imagination and action, that has long sustained us? This question is the destination focus of the present contribution.

Before Eros' future can be addressed, a prior question arises: why is it so difficult to recognize, and accept, the reality of climate collapse? In what follows this difficulty is argued to implicate (i) a formidable conceptual challenge, and (ii) a profoundly disturbing affective component. Who can come to terms with the idea that more frequent and intense fires, floods, droughts and extreme temperatures points to a progressively de-regulating environment?

Before considering the prospects for Eros two intermediate issues are attended to. The first of these examines the intra-psychic correlate of living with climate collapse. This consideration stimulated a general proposition: as climate collapse accelerates, and as the scale and timelessness of this disruption takes hold, experiences of guilt and loss, anger and despair, will tend to be amplified by pre-existing unconscious tropes, particularly the fantasy of the vengeful, all-powerful mother. This possibility is considered as a specific condition.

The second issue concerns the prospects for maintaining a degree of mental health in an environment that will be progressively totalized by climate collapse. However schematic, this sub-section argues there is some possibility private tumult might be held against, if not ever denied, in so much as, firstly, the militarization of the self is eschewed, and secondly, that collective rituals recognize loss and appropriately articulate contrition. These two intermediate interests examined, the destination focus is examined: might Eros still have a place in the long hard rain of climate collapse?

Before proceeding, a language use issue should be clarified. Throughout the paper the term 'climate collapse' is preferred to the terms 'climate crisis', 'climate emergency' or 'climate change.' This may seem an extreme position given action to reverse emissions, and to mitigate the effects of climate change, are both necessary and possible. I absolutely agree that radical action to support the environment is required, and I also acknowledge that the terms 'climate crisis' and 'climate emergency' have a potentially important role to play in raising public awareness about the need to make fundamental, climate positive changes.

This clear, the decision to prefer the term 'climate collapse' was taken because the terms 'climate crisis' and 'climate emergency' incorrectly imply that there is a definite alternative to the world experiencing the effects of 200 years of climate vandalism. Unfortunately, the research is clear. Irrespective of what is done now and into the future, the progressive degradation that is already underway cannot be reversed. More, it remains uncertain if decisive progressive action will actually be taken. Given these two facts, the current purpose is served by envisaging that, to a marked extent, climate collapse is an inevitability [1].

## **2. Purpose and sources**

What follows is an extended thought experiment. In this exercise the task is to employ an established heuristic (the psychoanalytic tradition) to investigate the effects of a phenomenon (emerging climate collapse) on that which animates the human

spirit (Eros). The aim is to generate a density of suggestion and, more particularly, to articulate likely trajectories rather than to confirm or disconfirm a single hypothesis.

Given the sweep of the task, it is not surprising that the materials used are, to a degree, diverse. For example, lyrics from several popular songs are cited as these excerpts capture a particular mood or perspective. More technically, there are several instances where an 'extra-curricula' idea is imported because it serves a purpose that could not otherwise be advanced. This was particularly the case with Timothy Morton's notion of the 'hyper-object' [2], an idea that was imported for its ability to explicate why climate collapse is formidably difficult to comprehend.

Occasional outlier acknowledged, the materials used and, more centrally, the argument that is at the core of the work, are explicitly derived from psychoanalysis as this tradition relates to the socio-cultural field [3–5]. In this engagement the focus is on the dynamic relationship between psychic life, both conscious and unconscious, and historical reality as a material, evolving context. In this ambit, variabilities, for example, in the regimes of repression between early ninetieth century middle class Vienna and island life in the 1960s Caribbean are as relevant as are the differing material and political realities present in each of these contexts. This allegiance clear, in the current exercise the decision was taken to employ a non-specialist form of psychoanalytic thought.

This decision reflects the premise that a non-specialist level of expertise does not, in itself, disqualify the validity of an argument and, for certain purposes, may even be advantageous. For example, Pierre Bourdieu argued that academic purists can lose breadth and perspective in so much as they devolve to a 'coquettish relationship ... with selected works' (as quoted in [6] p. 39). Consistent with this idea, the current exercise avoids a partisan allegiance to, say, the conventions of Kleinian or Lacanian, classical or middle school, thinking. More positively, a non-denominational engagement with psychoanalysis has been preferred as an inclusive approach facilitates associative and divergent thinking above linear and convergent lines of thought. As the intention in the present contribution is to be inductive, rather than deductive, this preference has an explicit, if eminently contestable, rationale.

### **3. Why is it so difficult to recognize the reality of climate collapse?**

It is relatively straight-forward to talk about climate change given this term evokes images of incremental evolution. These images have, more or less, benign connotations. This advantage noted, more than a euphemism the term 'climate change' is counter-articulate. In contrast, the term 'climate collapse' denotes a phenomenon that confronts because something large and spectral is conjured. However threatening to consider, climate collapse is a phenomenon that is both undeniable and accelerating. This fact is, and will continue to be, confounding. Why is this so difficult to recognize? Two levels of action fuse to make recognition formidably challenging to achieve. Each is discussed individually even as they present a conjoint challenge.

#### **3.1 Climate collapse as hyper-object**

Climate collapse is an example in a class of phenomena the philosopher Timothy Morton terms hyper-objects [2]. These phenomena are so massively distributed, so powerful and totalising, that their complexity defies both denial and comprehension. For example, Morton argues that human cognition cannot comprehend the fact that

radio-active isotopes have a half-life whose scale varies between the tiniest fraction of a second and millennia. For example, Uranium-238 has a *half-life* of 4.5 billion years whilst Neptunium-238 has a half-life of 2.15 on the scale of 10 to the minus sixth of a second. Both these numbers are incredible, literally beyond our ability to apprehend.

We have been intellectually socialized to assume items and events are located in time and place. Hyper-objects, in this case climate collapse, transcend localization and temporal fixedness. This state of unbounded distribution and temporal non-specificity defies common sense.

Deepening the intellectual difficulty is the fact that climate collapse involves the loss of an embedded pattern. This pattern has historically involved a steady state [7]. That is, there was a quality of homeostasis between regular features (the pattern of seasons) and an expected distribution of irregular events (droughts; storms, etc.) that occurred, broadly speaking, at an expected and acceptable frequency and intensity. This state was normalized, was assumed to be permanent, and became naturalized as our frame of reference.

Anthropocentric inputs over the last 200 years have disturbed this state. This input has triggered a greater degree of entropy – a loss of organization in the key patterns that sustain amenable existence. In this cascading complex system the only regularity is non-regularity, that is, an accelerating rate of de-regulation. One in one hundred year events are clustering, droughts are defying seasonal averages, pyro-cumulonimbus cloud conditions are propagating fires.

Even given an extended inspection, this seems like crazy talk. To intellectually comprehend this situation requires the thinker to jettison the received practices that allocate probability. Re-purposing an idea from the renowned architect Christopher Alexander, such a disruption could even be said to sunder the grand ‘pattern language’ that structures experience and imagination [8]. Again, this seems like madness. What has evolved, and become embedded, over the length of human history cannot be dismissed even as the fact that climate collapse is real is indisputable. The situation is therefore confounding.

Of course, the key issue is not intellectual; the deregulation of the material conditions within which life on earth has prospered, including but not restricted to human life, is not an abstract matter. This distinction introduces the symbolic-affective dimension of the problem with recognition.

### **3.2 What was always true is no longer so**

Seasonal rhythms have endowed human life with structure and meaning over millennia. These patterns denote the calendar of blooms and fruits, sowing and reaping, cold and heat, that gave shape and purpose to agrarian and nomadic life. Although urbanized societies are no longer nomadic or agrarian, modern subjects are heirs to the symbolism that endures from the myths and legends of earlier times as modern citizens, and our lifestyles and economies, also continue to be subject to the vicissitudes of nature for amenity and material needs. Quoting Herman Daly, Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury said, ‘the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment.’

Modern societies to one side, seasonal regularity was the muse that elicited the visions of death and re-birth, sin and redemption, that animated, as they also shaped and reflected, the human spirit. Over time, legends, even part cosmologies, were passed between cultures. The Adonis myth from Phoenicia was Hellenized as ancient Greece became the dominant power in the Mediterranean; symbolic ‘pagan’ events,

such as the ceremonies celebrated around the spring (vernal) equinox, found their way into early Christian worship. Amongst a far larger suite, Ishtar and Tammuz, Astarte and Adonis, Aphrodite and Jesus' mother Mary, interbred. James Frazer, perhaps the best known of early twentieth century scholars of comparative religion, wrote in *The Golden Bough*: 'in more than one chapel the Cypriote peasants adore the mother of Christ under the title Panaghia Aphroditessa' (as quoted in [9] p. 39).

None greater, this power has been sung to across time, for example, in Kathleen Raine's *The Goddess* [10]:

*Some worship her as queen of angels, Venus of the sea  
House of gold, palace of ivory  
Gate of heaven and rose of mystery  
Inviolate and ever-virgin earth,  
Daughter of time and mother of Eternity.*

The seasonal calendar associated with fecundity is being disrupted and is on the way to being lost. Climate collapse has demolished 'normality' – the rhythms that have birthed and, until recently, continued to document the cycle of life. More, climate collapse signals that Mother Nature can no longer be relied on. Of course, in the past this deity may have had her occasional whims, her moments of irritation and disregard, but she could be taken for granted to be generally nurturing and benevolent. That her beauty has been spoilt, that her fecundity can no longer be assumed, is too shocking to be countenanced.

### 3.3 In summary

Contemplation of climate change is aversive. Any genuine engagement with the specter of climate change immediately generates fear, even panic. Isn't it better to only worry about the things I can control? The reflex is to hold the eyes shut rather than be swept into a whirlpool of dangerous feeling.

Even at this point (2022) it is well-known that bud-burst is far earlier in many places, that extreme weather events are much more frequent, that storm surges are more profound. In the next decades deniers, those who have suspended belief in science, will be exposed as the child who has pushed an inflatable ball below the surface of a pond. No matter how much energy goes into this project, eventually the child becomes tired, loses interest, is distracted. Like what is repressed, what is physically suppressed returns. When it does, the coming back is unpredictable. The more control is demanded the more what is feared is charged.

In brief, that climate collapse is an example of a hyper-object means that recognition, really taking in, the concept 'does one's head in conceptually.' What does one's head in holistically is that climate collapse will disturb every aspect of life – now and forever. Taking in this fact is not like swallowing a single pill, however big and bitter this pill might be. Rather, recognition will be an ongoing confrontation that could be likened to swallowing an ornery and unruly hairball – a restless nasty that flexes perennially as it remains stuck in the throat. Deliberately laboring the point, this means there will be a semi-continuous gag reflex, as there will be a feeling of strangulation and suffocation.

It is no wonder climate collapse provokes disbelief. Threatening to impel a jagged new totality, this prospect endangers consciousness with an input that simultaneously sucks the oxygen from the lungs, strangles the throat and poisons

the arteries. More than simply a single ominous fur-ball, it is a mutating colossus, a specter that roils digestion. How can one take in the fact that the very conditions of life are metastasizing? It is almost unfathomable that much of what we take as normality is imploding.

The recognition problem is not singly about the quantum and distribution of information. At the psychic level, a complex precondition must be realized: a tumult of primary emotions – grief; horror; anger; despair; disbelief – have to be accessed, and to a significant degree then processed, to allow proper recognition to be countenanced. This is a considerable affective task.

#### **4. The unconscious is not a historic: there are consequences if you poison your mother**

As climate collapse accelerates, and as the scale and timelessness of this disruption takes hold, there will be massive material effects: forced migrations; tremendous food insecurity; international tensions if not strife. Consideration of these outcomes is not the business of the current exercise. What is in-focus is the consequences that will befall inner life.

Broadly speaking, a de-normalized nature can be expected to fold back into, provide content for, and play a role in in shaping the flow of energies of the unconscious. Witnessing more death, pestilence, famine and flood will quicken core anxieties. It seems almost unimaginable that a radically greater experience of precarity, and a more unchecked Thanatos, will not infiltrate the deepest workings of the psyche. In this scenario it can be predicted grief and despair will be prominent. Confusion and anger, fear and anxiety too.

The situation will also summon attributions concerning fault and blame. For example, who is ‘they’ in the following?

*What have they done to the earth  
What have they done to our fair sister?  
Ravaged and plundered and ripped her and bit her  
Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn  
And tied her with fences and dragged her down*

When the music's over  
Jim Morrison (1969)

Mother Earth, the life-giving womb, has been vandalized and can no longer look after her own. This is a terrible sin, an unimaginably heinous crime. Who did this? Who is the guilty party?

Responsibility might be slated to bad luck, but assigning culpability is an ad hominem practice. In the latter case attributions can be projected out, or they can be projected in. For example, Exxon, and its public relations company Edelman, might be blamed; we know the former cynically funded climate denial programs, but less known is that the latter – the world's biggest advertising firm – organized ‘astroturfing’ campaigns to set up myriad groups, both of a grassroots and scientific composition, that advocated climate change denial.

A serious moral reckoning should hold particular persons, interests and ideologies to account. Less formally, what is salient is that climate change is largely the outcome of anthropogenic inputs. In the abstract, this means that humankind is, as a species, at fault. Variations on this attribution include, but are not restricted to, blaming those who have been the elected representatives, media and industry heavy-weights, such as Rupert Murdoch, Exxon's Rex Tillerson, all citizens over eighteen years old in the (so-called) first-world societies, and so forth. Investigations conducted, culprits could face executions and jail terms, public castigation and programs of re-education, fines and community service orders. How the dark art of fault finding should be processed is uncertain even if each of us is likely to have a more or less rational, personal view on what should occur.

More privately, self-blame is incited in the shadow of doubt. What seems very likely is that the fantasy of the vengeful, all-powerful mother will be excited in the psychic netherworlds that will exist in a climate de-regulated world. Guilt may be, or may not be, consciously denied but the infant's experience of the cold, angry or crazed mother figure is a trope that is perennially associated with, and is evoked by, the merest scent of guilt.

The threatening mother-figure takes different forms in particular faiths and cultures, fables and myths. She could be Kali, Media, a nameless animated gargoyle or the giant predatory Alien in the movie of the same name. Her method of attack also varies. She could be deadly in despising, ridiculing, ignoring or castigating. Vengefully enraged, she could smite with fire or sword, spell or stiletto. Grand in sweep, the aggression could desiccate, or flood, a whole region or, if the assault involved annihilation, the offending party could be swallowed - taken in, absorbed, engulfed, caused to disappear. And, in the event the party to be punished is male, a particular kind of gendered assault can be occasioned. The victim can be mocked, smacked, castrated or, Black Widow like, \*\*\*\*ed and cannibalized.

Deep in the psychic interior, these dark tropes survive as vestigial, embedded images. These animations are especially likely to be triggered when the past's dark parts echo with the realities, perceived or actual, of the here-and-now. The material circumstances of climate collapse will cue many instances of this kind of context resonance. Like the old children's game of Snakes and Ladders, these are the 'snakes', the trap-doors, that will unsettle, if not necessarily derail, consciousness.

In symbolic, and at times in material, ways climate collapse will have each of us feel vulnerable. This affect resonates with the inner experience of the orphan. In this ego state if I think, or I fantasize, that *I have done something*, or *I might have done something, wrong*, it follows that I deserve to be unsafe. More, I will feel I should be hurt rather than looked after. This one-down position invokes regression. The good mother, exemplar of moral authority, has been wronged and is the perfect person to inflict punishment on the offending child.

More generally, it can be expected that experiences of loss, anger and despair, like guilt, will tend to be amplified by pre-existing unconscious tropes. With respect to the fantasy of the enraged and dangerous mother, a particular hand-in-glove complicity brings on this specter in a climate collapsing world. You know your mother has been poisoned, and you claim you did not administer the toxin. This claim may, or may not, be credited, but you do know one thing is certain. You will inevitably be found guilty on an associated charge. You are condemned for failing to protect her.

In fantasy, and sometimes in the material world, mothers can be pushed so far that they become vengeful in their grief. This is a terrifying prospect. The yonic punisher,

it can be imagined, is perforce summoned because it is human kind that has poisoned nature. This culpability carries a terrible psychic charge, a timeless jeopardy that is worse than Sisyphus had to manage. Even if some of us have a more obvious criminal responsibility, it is us, not them, who is at fault. We know we could have done better. Like the concept of original sin, at a symbolic, if not at a behavioral level, everyone shares the sin of complicity. Nobody gets to be out of this world.

#### **4.1 Misogyny and denialism**

Broadly put, fifty years of denialist campaigning torpedoed the possibility of the world taking the actions that needed to be taken to mitigate, if not avoid, catastrophic climate change. These campaigns were motivated by commercial interests and neo-liberal ideology, but they also have a strong association with misogyny [11].

The misogynist sensibility is devastatingly split-off from source and earth and is horrified at the primacy of the womb. This is why Vladimir Putin refers to Russia as the Fatherland, just as the Nazis did in their heyday. For haters, for those who fetishize control, it is intolerable to countenance the idea that man and his precariously built environment is an epiphenomenon, a puny subsidiary, of Mother Nature's infinitely grander organic enterprise. That this nature can abolish up-starts, that human hubris relies on the indulgence of a higher power for its life, so annihilates conceit it cannot be contemplated.

Why? For 'male-stream' thinkers [12] their hatred of dependence is so visceral as to demand that the map must be read upside down. This perversity is evident in tech billionaires like Jeff Bezos and Peter Thiel investing fabulous sums into nature denying projects: artificial islands; the artificial extension of individual human life; the colonizing of space. These conceits speak explicitly to the subverting power of their aversion. These nay-sayers have naturalized an inverted version of reality, a perversion that begets sadistic callousness, ever murder, more than numb indifference. (This idea was developed by Wilhelm Reich, mindful its reception has been side-tracked by the controversies that surrounded his later life).

The same ideology was evident in early Australian explorers hot to 'penetrate' the continent's interior [13]. Theirs was the mythopathic mission to conquer and dominate. It is the dream of the phallic triumphant that represents heterosexual sex as the subjugation of the yonic by a more powerful authority. Of course, this reading can be upended. The yonic can be understood to use, to exhaust, to engulf, to swallow, and-or to mock, the tiny phallic intruder. The more civilized view understands there can be a frisson – a dialectic; a dynamo; a difference engine – in the contrast between two energies.

Whatever interpretation of sexual politics might be favored, the misogynist position entails a fear, and a simultaneous hatred, of the feminine. This ambivalence played itself out aggressively in debates about climate change between, say, 1970 and the early 2020s, and can be expected to play an even more vexed part in the world of climate collapse. In this context deniers will be subject to full force of mother nature's physical 'derelictions' as these people will also be subject to the 'return of the repressed' [14] at the deepest level of interiority. This means that aggressive projections will be likely, along with an ill-at-ease subjectivity [15, 16]. However disowned, it would be terrifying to be haunted by an angry and powerful fantasy figure that is part Kali, part Medea, part Black Widow.



## 4.2 Mental health

‘Mental health’ is a diffuse construct. Understandings of mental health therefore have, at least, a historico-cultural dimension if not are entirely context dependent. It follows that ‘mental health’ will be formulated differently in, say, a context where reliable social organization has broken down – think of the dystopian world depicted in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* [17] – compared to the definition that is in-play in an ordered, compassionate milieu. This difference noted, no one is an island. To a degree, climate collapse will have an impact on every person’s mental health, hubristic assertions of autonomy notwithstanding,

This degree will be regulated by several factors not least of which is location. If one lives on low-lying ground in Bangladesh, or is a farmer in the mid-west corn-belt in the USA, one’s mental health will tend to be more affected by climate collapse. More generally, those who live anywhere that is qualitatively impacted by sea level rise, storms, droughts or fires or, at a different level, are impacted by the migration pressures and food shortages that will accompany these effects, will tend to experience a heightened impact on their mental health. In contrast, those whose exposure to the material effects of climate collapse is less severe will tend to face less hazard. The nature of variables noted, if the relevant principles of decision are applied a limited set of generalizations can be put forward.

If left untrammelled, at a social level fear and blame, grief and helplessness, will fuse to form a febrile emotional atmosphere. Depression and anxiety, like anhedonia, will be stoked. It is logical to expect that keeping one’s bearings in such a fraught situation will be a serious challenge. This scenario puts the consideration of ‘mental health’ into compelling relief. Several scenarios arise.

Confronted by climate collapse, bourgeois psychology and neo-liberal ideology will conjointly advocate that the self should be militarized: personal boundaries need to be strengthened, feelings cauterized, behaviors should be strategic, and so forth. Simply put, the attractive error will be to become more amoral and more repressed.

Like the trajectory human kind has furthered in its relationships with nature over the last 200 years – strip mine; stand apart from; be heedless of the longer term impact of one’s actions – being ‘more amoral and more repressed’ is exactly what Wilhelm Reich saw as increasingly characteristic of human socialization in the so-called advanced economies nearly a 100 years ago. Thicken the character armor, augment muscular rigidities, mobilize the defenses [18]. In this movement the face comes to be hide-bound, an immobile exo-skeleton that should show no emotion. Alarmed and armed, bunkered in a hunter’s cave, the eyes of the repressed are not a window to the soul but are an impersonal instrument that is on the look-out for danger or opportunity.

The half-way point, the situation we are in now, is that the industry that has been set up to care for the mental health of citizens is miscarrying its purpose. Rather than steadying, it is overheating the appetites of its potential and actual customers. *You are not feeling positive? That is a sure sign you have a mental health issue!*

In simple terms, if the industry continues to pathologize the ups-and-downs of inner life, if the fashion to be ego-centric remains a constant or, even worse, if this trend strengthens, this will dramatically predispose the population to have ‘mental health problems’ even before the consequences of living on a darkening planet are materially realized. What is created in this scenario is a pyro-cumulonimbus psychic

cloud. The self-care imperative, the i-me-my-mine hot-house, generates the lightning and strong winds that ignite, and spread, more fire.

Like a dog chasing its tail, this is a path to pathology not mental health. The alternative is to greet the honest child in each of us and reach towards affinity and ethical relationships. This idea is explored below.

## 5. Can Eros survive?

'Eros' is not consensually understood. In at least some readings, Plato is said to have endowed Eros with a non-erotic character; this idea is still with us in the notation of a 'platonic friendship.' In eighteenth and nineteenth century literature, Eros was about romance; this idealization of dyadic union is still with us too. In most recent theoretical accounts, Eros is distinguished from what Freud termed libido, from an erotic definition. Differentiating matters further, Jung considered Eros a 'feminine principle' and contrasted this energy with logos, the 'masculine principle.' Taking Eros into a different register, Marcuse stated in *Eros and Civilization* that '(t)oday the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the *political* fight' [5]. On even the most basic plane of interpretation it is clear Eros can have different faces.

A working sense of Eros can be convened if three themes are clustered: life force; will to live; the desire for wholeness – for psychic relatedness. This clustering allows the question to be asked: can the life force, the will to live and the desire for wholeness survive the cart-wheeling impacts of climate collapse?

In one scenario, there is hope. In this scenario, if we can hold against emotional contagion there will continue to be a viable space for the life force, the will to live and the desire for wholeness. This 'holding against' stance is not the same as denying, or raging at, the tumult; nor is it about bowing down and surrendering. It involves the 'emotional literacy' [19] to name, and look directly at, fear and loss, guilt and anger, in order to make the place for what is positive and unwritten, for what is bright and fruitful.

In this approach loss needs to be honored. It will be ongoing, progressive and profound. Collective rituals of grieving, of propitiation, of gratitude, are part of a loving relationship with the earth as our mother. Although it will long remain unclear how much we have lost, mourning cannot be permanently deferred by putting this distressing emotion into an 'in-abeyance' status [20].

In this formulation psychic wholeness is not only about the integration of divergent intra-psychic energies. What profound wholeness requires is that the anthropogenic world view is de-centered. That is, psychic relatedness is a holistic aspiration linked to the motif of eco-feminism [13] more than the narrower images of Eros put forward by Plato, Freud, Marcuse and, in a somewhat differing way, to Jung. In this sense, the 'will to live' is re-formulated as the will to holistically connect and be at-one.

In the other scenario there is only a scant hope for Eros. In this misogynist world-view we will continue to beat our mother – to befoul, to strip mine, to vandalize. Disavowed programs of revenge, along with spontaneously erupting individual acts of revenge, will be enacted against mother earth because we are angry that she is wounded *and* that she will not continue to allow us to hurt her without sanction. This is not about the will to live but it's opposite [16]. Misogyny cannot understand that everything that lives exists interdependently. Nothing stands, or falls, on its own.

Eros' existential condition is relationality, as is yours and mine. The us and the we, if the understanding goes beyond the anthropogenic, are part of, not separate to, a

larger ecology. Adonis may have a seasonal lifecycle, a rhythm that climate collapse has disrupted, but he, like all beings, has a life that is in-relation. The grand seasonal tides may be disturbed but, however tragic this is, there will remain a larger living matrix.

## 6. Conclusion

It is deeply disturbing parents can no longer say to their children that ‘the best is yet to come.’ In the grief this truth prescribes, slogans like Gramsci’s ‘pessimism of the spirit, optimism of the will’, or Tolkien’s advice to ‘fight the long retreat’, can be recited to fortify courage. As Wiseman (2021) says, there are many ways to nurture and support the group ‘in the long emergency.’

This is important to know, *and* there is no point pretending. It does look dark, mindful there have been other times when humans have faced-up to fearful spec-ters. Commenting on the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany, Max Horkheimer wrote: ‘Only one thing is certain ... the irrationality of society has reached a point where only the gloomiest predictions have any plausibility’ (as quoted in [21] p. 163). Let us tell it like it is.

Climate collapse is not the rise of Nazism, even if there may prove to be political parallels. What each of these phenomena do have in common is that in each instance the conscious and unconscious life of the individual is radically impacted. Mindful exceptions and counter-trends are bound to co-exist, inner life will tend to be roiled by climate collapse in part because the unanimous culprit for the disaster is ‘anthro-pogenesis.’ For this crime collective psychic punishment will be meted – think uncon-scious fantasies of unpredictable attack and wraith-riven whirlpools – though many are definitely innocent.

Future generations bear no responsibility for the disaster. Given this innocence, what will their disposition be? Malignant anger and poisonous grief: *how could they have done this to us!* More or less, this distemper is likely to cart-wheel in and through all those who arrive from now on.

Given this bad lot what is the best that can happen? It was noted earlier that a complex precondition must be realized if recognition is to be achieved: a tumult of primary emotions – grief; horror; anger; despair; disbelief – must be accessed and, to a significant degree, processed if deep recognition is to be achieved. However quixotic it may sound, in so much as this quality of recognition is achieved, a further pos-sibility then presents: to come to terms with, rather than act out, the disaster that is climate collapse. That is, if private and public disturbance is to be minimized personal and collective rituals need to directly address loss and articulate gratitude as well as contrition. It is only in this scenario that it is possible to envisage forms of rational public and private thought that lead to planned civilly minded action. This hope is about ‘smelling the spring on a smoggy wind’ [22].

What of Eros in this most optimistic of all scenarios? Is there a prospect the sky-bound can continue to soar, that innocence, curiosity, the spontaneous and the fresh, will continue to spark the inner breath? This dream must continue to be imagined.

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