An Eco-system of Myths

Jon Walker

Barry Clemson

Hans-Peter Plag
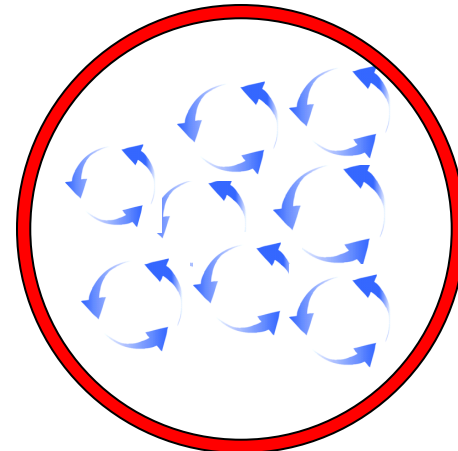
Background (1) :   Gregory Bateson

"I believe that the massive aggregation of threats to man and his ecological systems arises out of errors in our habits of thought at deep and partly unconscious levels."
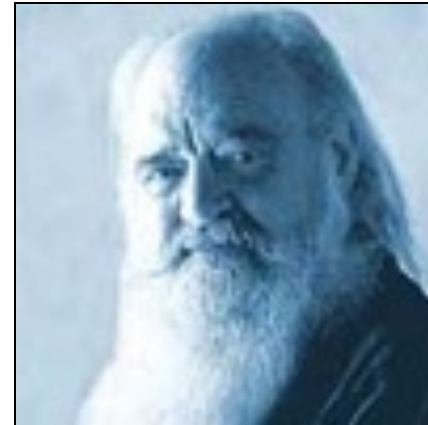
Background (2)

Stafford Beer

Man is a prisoner of his own way of thinking.

His machine for thinking

- the brain -

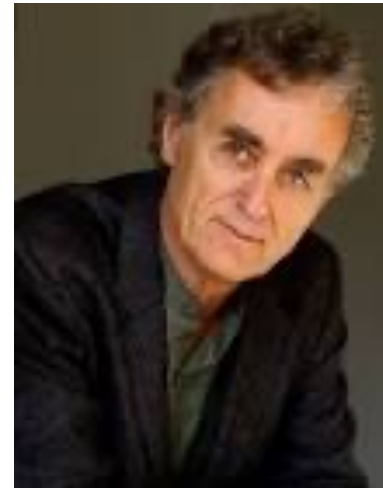*has been programmed to deal with a vanished world.*

Background (3)   Fritjov Capra

"All crises are different facets of one and the same crisis, which is essentially a crisis of perception"

An Eco-system of Myths

Just as all societies have their
science, all societies have their
myths.

    Myth is the way in which
    human societies give structure
   and meaning to experience.

   But the larger mythic structures of history
        we've been deploying for the last several
        centuries simply don't work any more.

        They are impossible to reconcile with the
        evidence now before our eyes, and the
        structures and meanings they encourage are
        tawdry, shop-worn and politically disastrous.

The Dawn of Everything.

Graeber and Wengrow.

An Eco-system of Myths

The State of the World 2022

The Global Economy

The Environment

War in Ukraine

Inequality
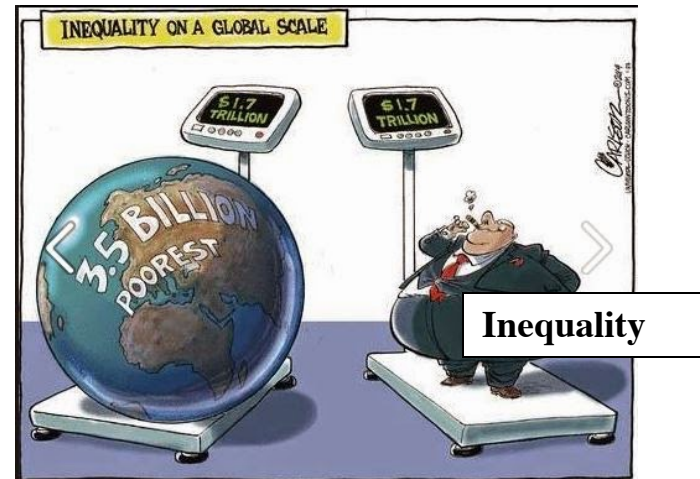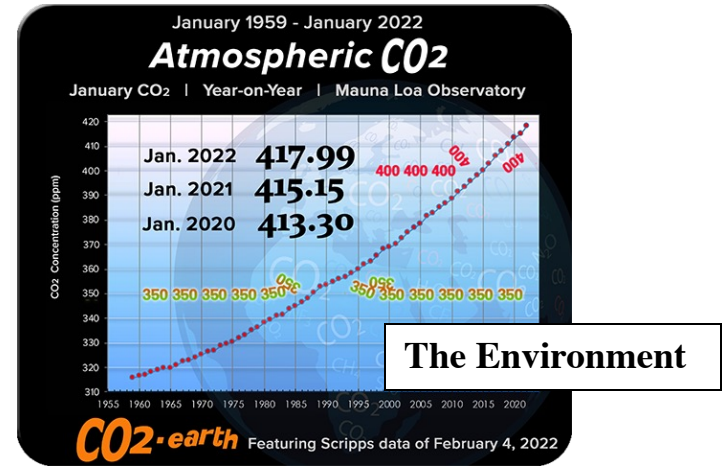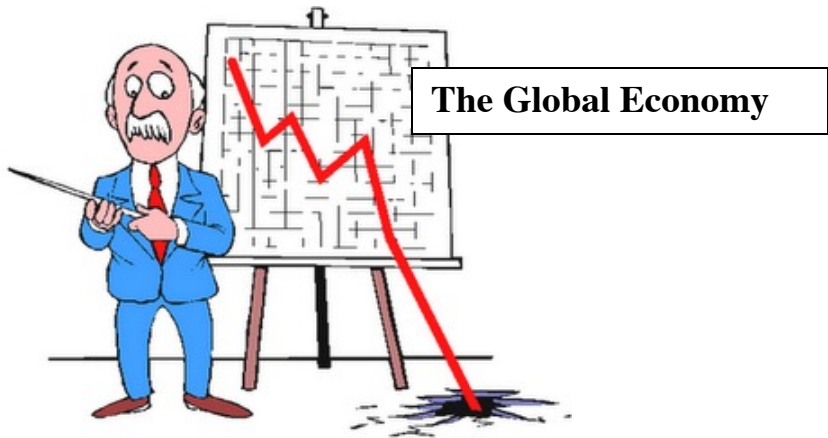
An Eco-system of Myths

The State of the World 2022

**"Racing at Top Speed
Towards Global Catastrophe"**

NOAA report June 3rd 2022.

**"We have known about this for half a century and
have failed to do anything meaningful about it."**

Implications of current Myths

How our current myths
affect the way we live.

The Dominant Myth

The clockwork world of Newton, Descartes, and Bacon

Mechanistic

Reductionist

Predictable

Understandable

Controllable

Single explanations

Most of our thinking is still based on this myth.

An Eco-system of Myths

1. Reductionist thinking.

Only the parts matter.

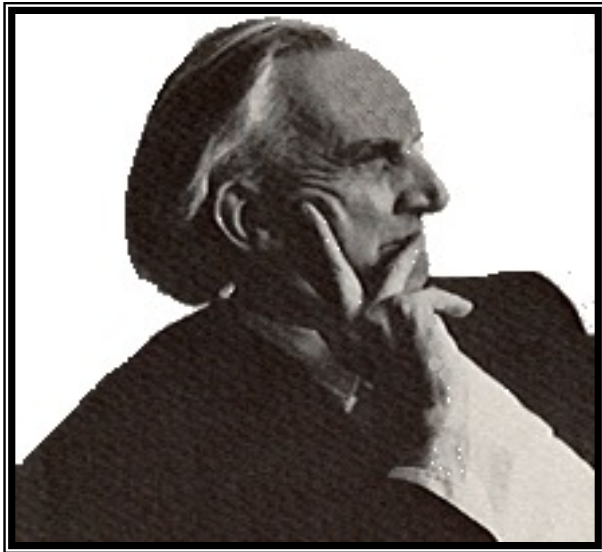We are separate from Nature.

Nature can be exploited

We are isolated individuals

Humanity can be exploited

An Eco-system of Myths

Only the parts matter: no appreciation of the whole.

Kenneth Boulding:

"Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist."

(United States. Congress. House (1973) Energy reorganization act of 1973: Hearings, Ninety-third Congress, first session, on H.R. 11510. p. 248).

An Eco-system of Myths

Only the parts matter: no appreciation of the whole.

Milton Friedman:

"There is one and only one social responsibility of business - to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits"

One of the many myths which define neo-liberal economics.

2. Logical Straight line Thinking

Materials Economy

Resource depletion
Pollution

Chains of Command

Authoritarian
governance

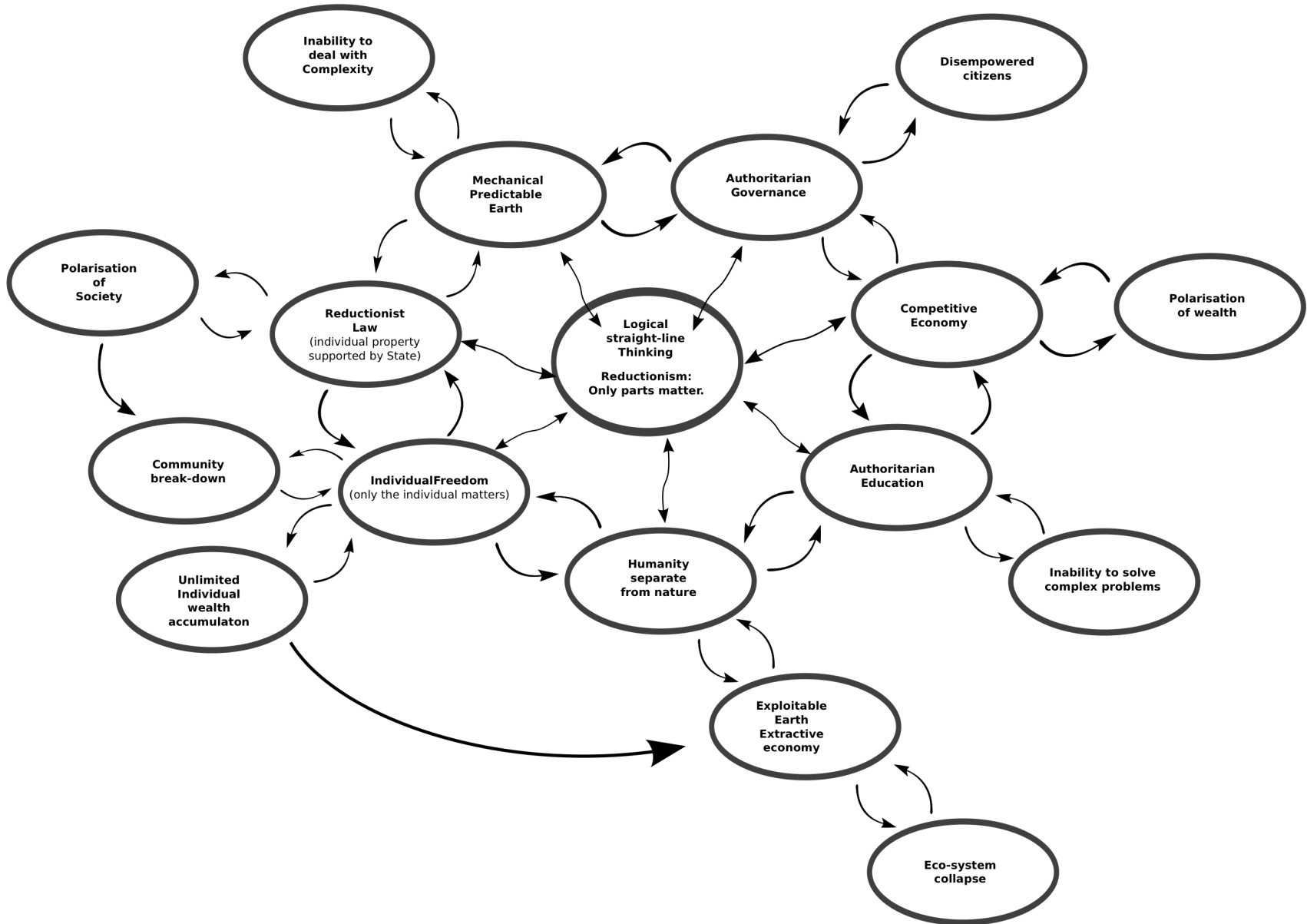Loss of the freedom
to disobey orders

An Eco-system of Myths

We are proposing that many of these are deeply buried myths, and that they, and their implications interact and reinforce each other in an eco-system of myths.

This gives the eco-system a robustness and stability which is hard to change.

An Eco-system of Myths

Other Myths which thrive in this ecosystem

Veneer Theory

Humanity is mean, selfish and brutal and needs to be controlled by civilisation to create a veneer of decency.

Monocausotaxophilia

The love of a single idea which explains everything

An Eco-system of Myths

Clearly this ecosystem of myths
is extremely destructive.

It is predominantly European, patriarchal,
authoritarian and Christian.

There are many alternatives which
have demonstrated their ability to
co-exist with nature for millennia.

The Challenge !

How to begin to disrupt the current Ecosystem of Myths and help it to evolve into another which would encourage participatory democracy, regenerative economics and agriculture, and distribute resources fairly ?
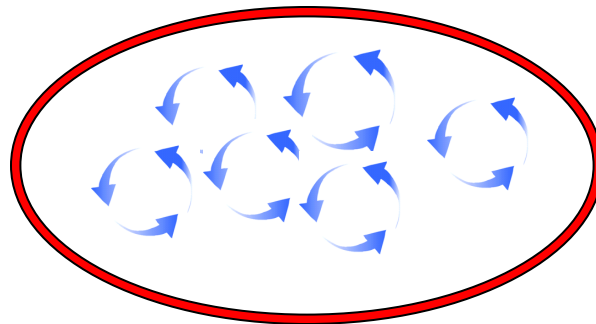
An Eco-system of Myths

Possible Approaches

Tell Stories

Stories grounded in the new EoM could prove to be invasive species which disrupt the existing Myths.

Identify and disseminate new Key-stone Myths

Ideas such as systems approaches change the way we see the world. They have consequences for the entire eco-system.

An Eco-system of Myths

And now . . .

. . the next two presentations . .

What we are doing
to address this
challenge.