# Climate: A New Story

Charles Eisenstein. North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA. 2018

## Chapter 1: A Crises of Being

### A Lost Truth

Do you remember the event that made you into an environmentalist?

What drives our addiction to fossil fuels?

What is the unmet need underlying this addition?

The new story is the next mythology—the narratives from which we weave our understanding of who we are, what is realm what is possible, why we are here, how to live, how the world came to be what it is, and what ought to come next. [p.8]

The dominant story of our time is the “Story of Separation,” a story of a separate self in a world of other, a story of competition and domination. The universe does not have the qualities of self—intelligence, purpose, sentience, agency and consciousness. [p8]

The name of the new story is “Interbeing” meaning existence is relational. Every aspect of society, the economy, and political system must come into alignment with a new story.

Older, indigenous cultures hold some version of the story of interbeing. [Footnote p.9]

Western civilization holds some of the new story in the form of esoteric teachings, wisdom traditions, and cultural counter currents. [p.9]

How do we tell the difference between what to save and what to dismiss in these old stories? Love and empathy are the guides. The ecological crisis is asking for a revolution of love.

*[Eisenstein does not elaborate on the old stories. How is his description of the new story the same and different from how we, the New Story Group, define the New Story?*]

### The Identity of “They”

This withering of biological life accompanies the impoverishment of human life and cultural vitality. [p.12]

We, the environmentalists can’t beat “the powers” at their own game. But if “they” feel grief at the loss of beauty, then “they” would be able to change and then “they” would be all of us. The problem is that our ability to feel has been numbed. To blame evil is to misdiagnose the problem.

Are you willing to stop seeing yourself as on Team Good fighting Team Evil? This is the template of “othering” that exemplifies and reinforces human separation from nature.

The totality of circumstances driving ecological degradation and climate derangement is greater than conventional opinion recognizes. [p.17]

### The Fight

### Fighting the enemy is futile when you inhabit a system that has the endless generation of enemies built into it. We have to give up the addiction to fighting. In a world of competitors well-being comes through domination. In a world of random natural forces well-being comes from control. War is the mentality of control in its most extreme form. [p.18]

### Our culture is built on war making, but the power of scare tactics is waning. –Beware: climate activists are also using scare tactics. Should we be using fear-based appeals to self-interest?

### What about appeals to love? [p.19]

###  We will access much greater power when we appeal to peace.

The tools of war are becoming impotent to achieve what we say and believe we want. In the case of ecocide, the mentality of war is not only an obstacle to healing, it is an intimate part of the problem. [p.20]

Climate change calls us to a greater transformation than a mere change in our energy sources. It calls us to transform the fundamental relationship between self and other, between the collective self of humanity and its “other” nature. Our mythology is changing. [p.21]

## Chapter 2: Beyond Climate Fundamentalism

### Does Nothing Else Matter?

An environmentalist friend said, “the only relevant action you can take right now is to put 100 percent of your efforts into cutting green-house gas emissions a swiftly as possible by whatever means necessary…So are you going to join the fight?” [p.25]

This pattern of thinking is called fundamentalism. Fundamentalism reduces the complex to the simple and demands the sacrifice of the immediate, the human, or the personal in service to an overarching ulterior goal that trumps all. [p.26]

If we want to foster a broad social consensus to protect and heal the planet, then we need to undo this logic at the source. The mind that is steeped in Separation protests, “But it is true! None of these things are relevant if the atmosphere warms by ten degrees.” This belief depends on a world-story the does not recognize the intimate interconnectedness of all things. …In interbeing we know that health for one is impossible to sustain without health for all. [p. 27]

The healing on any level contributes to healing on every level. …A society inhospitable to its vulnerable members will be mirrored by a planet that is inhospitable to society. [p. 28]

The question to explore then is what induces a shift to the consciousness of interbeing? Scrooge’s creator Charles Dickens knew. It is through a confrontation with beauty, suffering, and mortality. [p.29]

### The Perverse Consequences of Carbon Reductionism

Carbon reductionism sits comfortably within a broader, scientific reductionism, which rests on a more insidious and more fundamental reductionism: that of the world of number. [p. 29]

Our “science-based” opinion depends on what we include in our measurements. [p. 31]

We need to propagate a new story that values people and place, soil and water, biodiversity and life; the qualitative and the relational.

The problem here is not with biofuels per se. The problem, as with many other technologies, comes mostly with industrial scale and blindness to local ecological effects of production. [p. 33]

The real reason you want to stop the mine is because you love that mountain-top, that forest, those waters that would be poisoned. [p.34]

The failure of carbon-motivated policies has something in common—they emphasize the global over the local, the distant over the immediate, and the measurable over the qualitative. This oversight is part of a more general mentality that sacrifices what is precious, sacred, and immediate for a distant end. It is the mentality of instrumentalism that values other beings and the earth itself in terms of their utility for us.

Climate change is a symptomatic fever of a deeper disharmony, a disharmony that pervades all aspects of our civilization. [p. 35]

As with terrorism, drugs, or germs, if we crack down on the proximate cause without addressing the underlying condition, the symptoms will return in a new and more virulent form.

The biggest threat to life on earth is not fossil fuel emissions, but the loss of forest, soil, wetlands, and marine ecosystems.

### The Social Climate

This call to sacrifice to fight an overarching threat is identical to the way war is used to override social justice movements. …Social healing is indispensable to ecological healing.

It is hard to effectively enact love for others when one is hurting desperately oneself. [p.36]

While the poor are kept in a state of survival anxiety through sheer deprivation, the rich suffer poverty of another kind: lack of community, connection, meaning, and intimacy.

These narratives are born of trauma and give birth to trauma. Social healing and ecological healing are the same work.

From the causal logic of interbeing--morphic resonance—it is easy to understand how a society that exploits and abuses its most vulnerable will also exploit and abuse nature. [p.37]

### The Rush to a Cause

The quality of complex systems collides with our culture’s general approach to problem-solving, which is first to identify the cause, the culprit, the germ, the pest, the bad guy, the disease, the wrong idea, or the bad personal quality, and second to dominate, defeat, or destroy that culprit….

Reductionist thinking pervades the entire political spectrum, or certainly mainstream liberalism and conservatism. [p. 41]

That moment of humble, powerless unknowing, where the sadness of an ongoing loss washes through us and we cannot escape into facile solutioneering, is a powerful and necessary moment. [p.42]

### The Mother of all Causes

Climate change is the culprit *du jour* for nearly every environmental problem. *If we could identify one thing as the cause, the solution would be so much more accessible*. …. That cause is called the enemy, and the solution is to defeat that enemy. [p’43]

Among the many causal narratives available to apprehend Lyme [disease], or climate change, or any other issue, our culture chooses the one that best preserves the status quo. The dominant culture adopts the narrative that sustains its dominance.

The mere elimination of fossil fuels will not deliver us from the ecological crisis. A deeper revolution is afoot.

### The Place Where Commitment Lives

In the coming chapters I will present evidence that the climate effects of deforestation, industrial agriculture, wetlands destruction, biodiversity loss, overfishing, and other maltreatment of land and sea are far greater than most scientists had believed; by the same token the capacity of intact ecosystems to modulate climate is much greater than had been appreciated. That means that even if we cut carbon emissions to zero, if we don’t also reverse ongoing ecocide on the local level everywhere, the climate will still die a death of a million cuts.

…the health of the global depends of the health of the local. The most important global policies would be those that create conditions where we can restore and protect millions of local ecosystems. Today it is often the opposite; for example, global free trade treaties permit corporations to sue governments for lost profits from local environmental protections. [p.49]

When we transmit our love of earth, mountain, water, and sea to others, and stir the grief over what has been lost; when we hold ourselves and others in the rawness of loss without jumping right away to reflexive postures of solution and blame, we are penetrated deep to the place where commitment lives.