

CREDO¹

From SOUL CATCHER, by Frank Herbert, © 1972, 1979

"The fallacies of western philosophy fascinate me. No "Body English." Words-words-words, no feelings. No flesh. You try to separate life and death. You try to explain away a civilization which uses trickery, bad faith, lies, and deceit to make its falsehoods prevail *over* the flesh. The seriousness of your attack on happiness and passion astounds the man in me. It astounds my flesh. You are always running away from your bodies. You hide yourselves in words of desperate self-justification. You employ the most despotic rhetoric to justify lives that do not fit you. They are lives, in fact, not lived. You say belief is foolish, and you believe this. You say love is futile and you pursue it. Finding love, you place no confidence in it. Thus, you try to live without confidence. You place your highest verbal value on something called security. This is a barricaded corner in which you cower, not realizing that to keep from dying is not the same as "to live."



What is happening to us, human beings? We are rapidly getting more cruel, confused, complicit. We were never like that. We are getting detached from what is real, what is true — believing in ideas that are obviously unsustainable and inhuman. It would be easy to make up some explanation that it comes from outside. A virus, the whispering of aliens. But probably it is our own species that is going crazy. A tiny percentage of humans is pushing with all the might of their almost unlimited wealth to literally destroy the planet. If that is not crazy I don't know what is. In all of the history of Life on Earth have there been other species who systematically set out to destroy the ecology that is all Life? Hard to believe. And if there were they obviously did not survive because not that long ago we had a normally working ecology.

Now the planetary ecology is not healthy any more. We humans have been so successful with our digging and changing the face of the planet that the ecology is showing holes: a frightening reduction of biodiversity, a planet-wide process of warming that is no longer stoppable. A program for real and enduring improvement that was based on the foundation of modern science is now denying science in order to continue greed for personal power. That makes no sense at all. Are we, "they," not human any more?

All this in my lifetime. I grew up in a world that had its imbalances but was sustainable yet. It was not peaceful and not very pleasant in many other parts of the world. Where I grew up it was mostly peaceful and nobody starved or died too early. From what I thought was a normal, good life, I was dumped into the worst the world had to offer in the middle of the previous century, World War Two (why use capital letters for that abomination?). Five years I lived in the Netherlands under German Occupation. Yes, for us the Occupation lasted almost exactly five years; your war was the last three. I found out what people were able and willing to do to kill, maim, destroy — but I also experienced the strength and courage of the majority who fought what they knew was wrong. I also learned that hunger and the complete breakdown of the infrastructure of a broken society disables much of that strength and courage. It frightens me to see what is happening in this country now. We are well on the way to hunger and the breakdown of the blood and bones of what was a functioning society but we don't seem to realize that. We are mesmerized by the Main Media, the mouths of who I now think of as our owners.



¹ [Latin](#) for "I Believe"

Here, where I have lived now for more than ten years, roosters crow all through the day. For many years I have wondered whether there is a reason why they crow. Is there meaning to a crow? I have learned that crowing is something he cannot control. The roof of my little house continues about 10 ft beyond the house, originally meant to shade and protect a lanai, but somehow the lanai has become just a wide strip in the pathway. There is one place where two of the roosters love to be as loud as they can because they know that the roof doubles the sound. I spray the rooster with a hose. Any other time he flees as fast as he can, but in the middle of a crow he has to finish and only then can he run. Roosters have several voices, the crow, the gurgling sound that means having enough to eat, being content. A sly louder and shorter version of that gurgle sound tells nearby hens, “look, look, what I found — yum, yum, good to eat...” Only young, inexperienced hens will fall for that and rooster knows that so he does it only when there are girl hens around. Then he circles around the young hen, fluffing his considerable feather mantle, then mounts her. Literally on top of her, crushing her to the ground. Chickens do not have male and female parts, they have cloacas, something reptilian: a single outlet for the three fluids and firm stuff we excrete. What roosters and hens do is to somehow match their cloacas. Have wondered how they do it but however they do it, it works and eggs are fertilized. Reproductive magic.

Ducks are a step up the evolutionary ladder, drakes have a penis, female ducks have a vagina. But their mating looks exactly as the rooster-hen ceremony. That too works to make the cutest little duck babies who continue species duck. I like to watch ducks swimming on the pond. That and flying are their elements; walking on rocky ground is not their talent. In air and on water they are fast, make impossible changes in direction. Baby ducks are just fluff, of course they float. A grown duck has weight, yet they float and move as if they too were just fluff.



I like to change the look of my screen, so I have folders with many pictures that make good *wallpaper* I think it is called. I like tiger pictures if they look real, and as wallpaper the picture cannot have too many details, too wild a mix of colors. This afternoon felt kind of empty. Am working on a new piece of writing that is only now taking form, too slowly. I sort of have it in my head but not in words. To fill an empty afternoon googled *free tiger wallpaper*. Only two were useful; in the end I chose one. When I had installed it, I noticed that something was stuck to the tiger's nose.

The file that I am working is *on the nose*. This is the second time this is happening with a new desktop picture. The first time was also against a black background, a bud at the end of a stem with orchids, the bud clearly pointing to the icon of the file I was working on. I don't place the most current file. The icon stays where it appears. When it is *right on the nose* that feels like an affirmation of what I am doing. Probably there is no who behind it—and I don't care—but the coincidence encourages me. I have come to like synchronicities.



The first time I visited the Hawaiian Islands was five years after being declared a State. Five years after that we moved here. I had a ‘position’ at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. The first year I was invited to speak to a meeting of a well-known environmental organization about Hawai‘i and its population. I briefly sketched the ugly history of these islands, “discovered” by Captain Cook in 1776, losing close to 90% of its population in the next 70 years to the diseases we brought with us. Not at all unusual: western “discoveries” had the same effect almost everywhere. By the early 19th century the establishment of a Kingdom, recognized and guaranteed as independent by all the European countries and the United States. The overthrow of the monarchy by a small group of very rich white men, sons of the first missionaries who came here after 1820. Annexed by the US in 1899, made a State in 1957. Against all international and American laws. I talked less than 20 minutes. In the question period there was only one question, voiced several times with different words. “How do we prevent others from coming here?” I looked around the room. They were all newcomers, all white. *And now you want to prevent other Americans from coming here?* I did not say what I thought, “we got rid

of the Hawaiians now you want to prevent other whites from coming here?" Yes, yes. They had found paradise, and they knew themselves well enough to know that if others like them would follow paradise would be lost.

Now, half a century later this paradise is indeed lost.

The United States, perhaps the only nation in the world with an almost entirely immigrant population, immigrants who declared this "an empty land." We eradicated the local population with brute force and betrayal and broken treaties. Then we imported people to work for us from other ethnic backgrounds, slaves from black Africa, indentured laborers from China and a few other places. That same country now fights to get rid of and prevent other immigrants to come in? Ruthlessly, without mercy, deporting "illegals."

The burden of being white. My body expresses that by an extremely painful skin condition I have had since I was old enough to understand. It does not kill me but certainly affects my so-called quality of life.



Maybe a year and a half ago I was given a mess of black seeds, many of them sprouted. Baby papaya plants. All I knew about papaya growing is that they need deep soil for a straight down main root. The places where there is enough soil to go really deep are rare here. Spent hours and days planting each of the tiny little plantlets with amazing long roots in dozens of small individual pots. Most of them grew quickly to one, two, three, feet tall. I had probed with my staff and found quite a few sites where I expected there to be enough soil to plant one or two of my carefully nurtured babies. I planted thirty-six what seemed strong and sturdy papaya plants. Today seven survived; five of them bear fruit. Then, this year, another son announced he was going to plant 100 papayas on "the high lot", a quiet corner that is indeed higher than the rest of the land and already has some very adult and luscious fruit trees. Would I please get him a hundred starts. From somewhere in my mind I thought papaya seed need to be dried and then planted. Depending on the amount of sunshine it takes a long time for papaya seeds to dry. Then kept on a surface that is kept moist; I used shredded paper, have bags and bags of that. Nothing happened. Then someone suggested to just use the seeds as you scoop them out of a ripe papaya and put little globs in soil. Yep, that worked. In a few weeks there were at least 100 starts for 100 or more papayas trees. The trick is to find the right soil, maybe broken lava under the soil so that the root can find a crack.



My first reaction when I read what a Fox-famed politician had said was that it was not English; it must have meant something but the words did not connect. Yet she really said that. Almost unbelievable that someone with daily appearances on the screen and millions of followers can fling odds and ends of words, concepts, ideas, guesses, twists together and pretend it makes sense. Millions of people scream and holler in approval. I cannot imagine what they believe, but maybe that is not important. Perhaps this is the kind of communication that allows each listener to hear her/his own meaning in it.

They're angry; that is what they have in common. Angry that things are not as they were when grandma grew up. Yes, they probably are angry at the president because he is black. But he isn't, biologically. He is half white. The speaker, Senator Boehner, is darker than Mr Obama. And here that good German name is pronounced Bayner



Sitting on my little porch I see nothing but nature. Very little that is manmade in front; of course behind me the house. All 90° corners and straight lines. I try to break that inescapable geometry by putting the table at an angle, in line with the little "real Baluchistan" carpet I've had for half my life. This corner, my office, is also at an angle. And a black cover on my bed in another corner also sort of diago-

nal. That is why I spend so much time sitting on that porch: there are no straight lines in nature. And it all grows fiercely. Now this plant, now another, blooms or gets a foot taller when I'm not looking, seemingly overnight. Life eats life, but life also feeds life. All that green and red and orange around me gives me life, energy, enthusiasm, courage even.



Every now and then I have flashes of what I think is insight. Behind the various realities I am obsessed with there is a whole other reality, the cosmic reality. I, we, cannot grasp that reality where everything is connected to everything else on a cosmic scale. Or maybe it is that smallest particle, whatever the latest one is called, that is everywhere and here at the same instant. I imagine that when I die I may see that green flash on the horizon...



The Hawaiian word for horizon—we think of as a straight line—is po'ailani, literally sky-circle. On an island the sea is all around, and where sea meets sky, what we call horizon, is a full circle. That makes sense. What is a mystery to me is why in Hawaiian the word for left is also south, and right is also north. One word for what we think are very separate ideas. Why did Hawaiians see left and south the same? They must have been facing west.

I've always been intrigued with languages; they are windows to a culture, the many ways we see the world around us. I have always wondered about the French attributing gender to nouns. The village, le village (same spelling but pronounced differently) is masculine but la ville, the town, is feminine. Why?

I remember my first English teacher, Miss Eyken, who was so tall she had to sit on a high stool ("a single seat without a back or sides"). *"Don't imagine that you will ever learn to speak, write, read, English—any of the many kinds of English. The first thing to know is that the written and spoken languages have almost no relation to each other. You cannot know how to pronounce a word that you see for the first time on a piece of paper."* And on and on the whole hour. She was right, of course. After speaking English most of my life there are still words I have seen in print, I know what they mean, maybe even looked it up, but I cannot know pronunciation. English is not my mother tongue, it's my third. The funny thing is that even in second grade, when English was the first foreign language we had to learn, I felt that English 'fitted my tongue' better than Dutch, my parents' language. During the war (WWII, in the Netherlands) when any and everything English was forbidden, outlawed, illegal, executed on the spot, I kept a journal in English. Now, afterwards, I can hardly imagine why I took that risk; the Germans would no doubt have thought me a spy. I'm a rebel but spying is something I could never do.



We all have a different way we see reality, depending on how and by whom we were raised, augmented by our own experiences. But there is at least one assumption—I cannot think of another way to say that—that most of all westerners and perhaps now most of the world's people think. And that is how we think of ourselves, of humans. Western people, "civilized" people believe, without question (and that is what an assumption is) that we are different. Better than. We take it for granted that we must control nature, that we can, and that we do. When we find ourselves in a place and time of overwhelming natural events—a flood, drought, storm, a volcanic event, an earthquake—we call it an Act of God. Meaning that extreme situations are beyond our control; insurance companies exclude these events from what can be insured. There is a small but influential group of medical researchers who seriously try to find a way to have humans live "forever." Some—many?—doctors see themselves as fighting death.

To me this kind of thinking is extreme hubris, arrogance. Isn't it clear that all our

control is not managing but forcing nature to do our will, and isn't it all too obvious that we are making a total mess of it? I cannot think of anything we do of as good or even successful in the long run. Our human obsession with order, making trees grow in a straight line, exactly so many meters apart. Making straight paths, planting flowers of one kind together. All of it ultimately unsustainable. We have been taught to be afraid of Nature. We try to make it simpler, removing by any and all means what we call pests or weeds, insisting on monoculture although by now we know very well that monoculture does not work without immense efforts and ever stronger chemicals. This control of nature is taking most of our time, and is unsustainable.

But we cannot change our thinking.



And I cannot think my thinking either although I feel more and more alone in accepting that we are not the boss, it is not our place in the great ecology to control. That is what I write about and many people tell me that they really like when I write about the chickens and the trees, they like when I write about my experiences, but almost nobody can dig down to that basic assumption and question whether we really are so unique and special.

If I could I would stop writing. But I can't. It is so simple. Civilization is in our brain, it is moving ourselves out of the planetary ecology — as if we could. But evidently so fixed in how we are taught and how we live, that it will take the final collapse to make us see the real world again.



Politics is one of the games we play to reinforce our passion for control. We think of our country as democratic. Do we believe that who we choose to represent us actually do represent us? Isn't it more than obvious that they don't? They represent the money that bought them to play the game. We, citizens, workers, the bottom of society, have become like the animals we grow for food, jammed together in breeding cages. We are but fodder for the ever more lethal weapons we proudly invent. I suspect that it will be our weapons that will start the last war. Survivors will have to survive on a planet our owners have changed beyond recognition.

Can we survive their hubris?



Is this July? Less than an hour from noon and it has not stopped raining since 5am. Sometimes a drizzle, then a real rain. It is dark. Temperature is trying to rise above 70° but hasn't. Cannot even sit on my porch, the wind blows wet on the books I am reading. That seems to be one of the costs of being in the now: aware of weather. To most people today would be at most an inconvenience, but it would not fill anyone's mind as it does mine. I rejoice for the plants who had been dry for three days. I know and I can feel how the trees swell, leaves stand up straight—same principle as the tires on a bike or car, an erect penis, a balloon, those strings of sausage-like things that are meant to control an oil spill.

There are relatively few laws of nature that we all used to learn when we lived sustainably. Now we have the trillion manmade laws we make and break to make again. Laws of nature are not really laws at all, as we think of the word. The whims of Man. Laws of nature are realities that do not change. Pumping air or water or other substance into a hollow something that has only the one opening causes the something to swell and firm up. Or, another law of physics that applies also to nature and to people: applying force to a something that has a form or shape, an identity, always results in counterforce. Overwhelming, very asymmetrical force can annihilate the thing that it is applied to; we swat a mosquito. Great force can kill less force but there are always consequences.

We, humans, are very good at applying force, but we cannot imagine consequences.



Maybe, probably, our human change is the consequence of overpopulation. In the middle of the previous century a very farseeing scientist² did experiments with rats and mice to study population dynamics. What happens when a population grows? I attended one of his presentations—it must have been in the mid 60s. Brilliant, spellbinding. He told how he had placed Adam and Eve rodents in large cages (10 X 10 X 10 ft I remember). That did not work; there had to be more than two to begin a population. The cages had all the amenities rodents need, ramps, and straw to make nests. And unlimited food and water. He saw the rodent society forming, families produced offspring. The mice adopted definitely social behaviors. A working, peaceful society formed.

But the unlimited water and food continued, and thus the population increased, and increased again. There came a point when the mice changed. They were no longer social, males fought with other males, biting off tails. Females ate their young. And shortly thereafter the population crashed. They died out.

Early humans roamed an ancient world in small groups, maybe a dozen men, women, and children. They were nomads, finding food and shelter where they found themselves. As all animals they knew to not take a whole plant with edible leaves but leave the plant for next time they came to that place. They used the environment to make shelter; snow in the Arctic, trees in forests, sand and branches in a desert. They ate what the unique environment provided. Almost certainly they did not have "leaders," because they did not know owning, and knew not the idea of hierarchies. They knew themselves part of all Life around, no better, just different.

Scientists found that for the first maybe hundred thousand years of human existence there were never more than half a million people spread over the entire planet. In fact, much of that time considerable fewer.

Then, ten thousand years ago, a very short time in the context of our time on Earth, someone invented what we now call agriculture. Instead of living from what we found around us, we decided we could stay in one place and grow what we needed. In other words, instead of adapting humans to the world as we found it, adapt the world to our human needs and wants. We invented owning. Property. This is mine, you are not welcome here. We developed hierarchies. If I can own a plant, I can own, domesticate, an animal. Inevitably then I can also own another human. I can own my wife, my children. I strongly suspect that with it came male dominance. The earliest human art we have found have been female carvings. After all, it is the females who continue the species, the role of men is very minor. But when we settled down, it came to the women to take care of offspring, probably do the farming, cooking, keeping house. The man had to defend his properties.

That is when populations started to grow. There are now 700,000,000 people on this Earth, the great majority living in a kind of poverty never before known. Only a tiny percentage of us lives as emperors never dreamed they could live. The last half century has been a time when that tiny percentage at the top is sucking up all the wealth of the planet, and with that wealth acquired the power to own the rest of us.

The inevitable crash is coming. Unfortunately we also have mismanaged and so disturbed the planetary ecology in the last one or two hundred years (a few minutes in the time we have existed) that the first survivors of our species will find themselves in a world so changed that they may not be able to adapt to it.

I think (believe, hope, assume) we humans will adapt, evolve physically as well as psychologically and culturally. A few thousand years from now the then humans

² **John Calhoun** is an American ethologist noted for his fifteen-year population density behavioral study of Norway rats, which he conducted surrounding a farm in Rockville, Maryland. During his studies, Calhoun coined the term "behavioral sink" to describe aberrant behaviors in overcrowded population density situations.

may study the archeology of the last years of homo sapiens sapiens (that is what we call ourselves today). Probably plastics, almost certainly radioactive areas, maybe some metals, the remains of a road, a canal... Probably a shrunken planet, most of it either desert or ice.



Note: the orange-haired human-friendly ape is called Orang Hutan. O as in Log, A as in Hard, U as in Book, the H barely aspirated. Orang means human, Hutan is forest: Forest man, or man of the forest. Not a northern forest of all the same trees, but the tropical rainforest with an immense variety of plant and animal species. Orang Hutan lived on the islands of Sumatra (Indonesia) and Borneo (Indonesia and Malaysia). Now they are just about extinct. Why Americans say Uhrengiten is a mystery.

From Men At Arms, by Terry Pratchett:

"Consider Orangutans. In all the worlds graced by their presence, it is suspected that they can talk but choose not to do so in case humans put them to work, possibly in the television industry. In fact they can talk. It's just that they talk in Orngutan. Humans are only capable of listening in Bewilderment."



robert wolff, 18 july 2011