



Environmental Populism

The Politics of Survival in
the Anthropocene

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Environmental
Populism:
The Politics of Survival in the
Anthropocene



Academic work as therapy

Not terribly optimistic about prospects

Triumph of the will over the intellect

There are some encouraging signs

Not least the time in which some ideas/people can become known and influential.



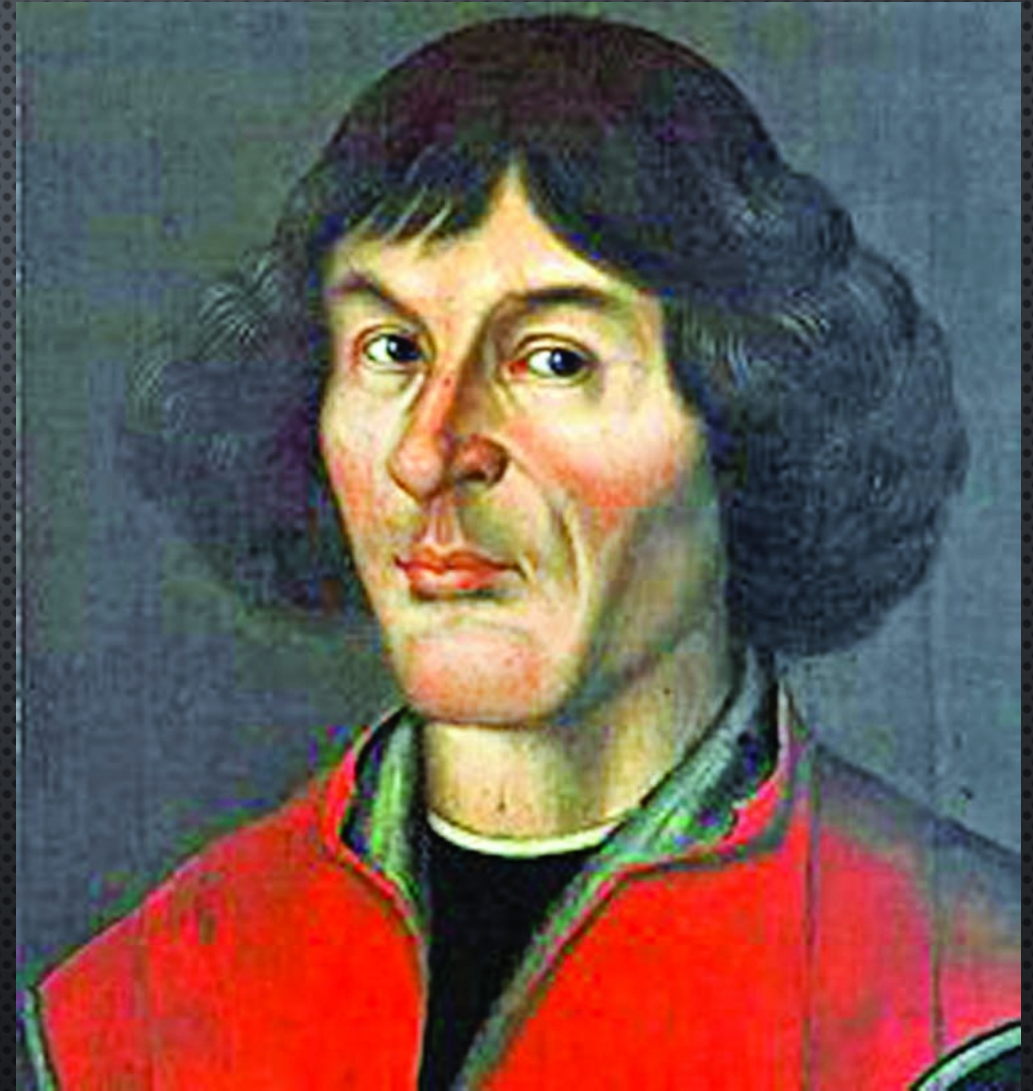
Science, progress and facts

I'm a believer in progress – at least the intellectual sort

I'm an admirer of the scientific method generally and of the 97% of climate scientists who seem to understand the basic drivers of climate change, global warming and our role in it

Hence the Anthropocene

'We' may not know everything but we know enough to know we ought to be deeply worried – especially if we're young or have children



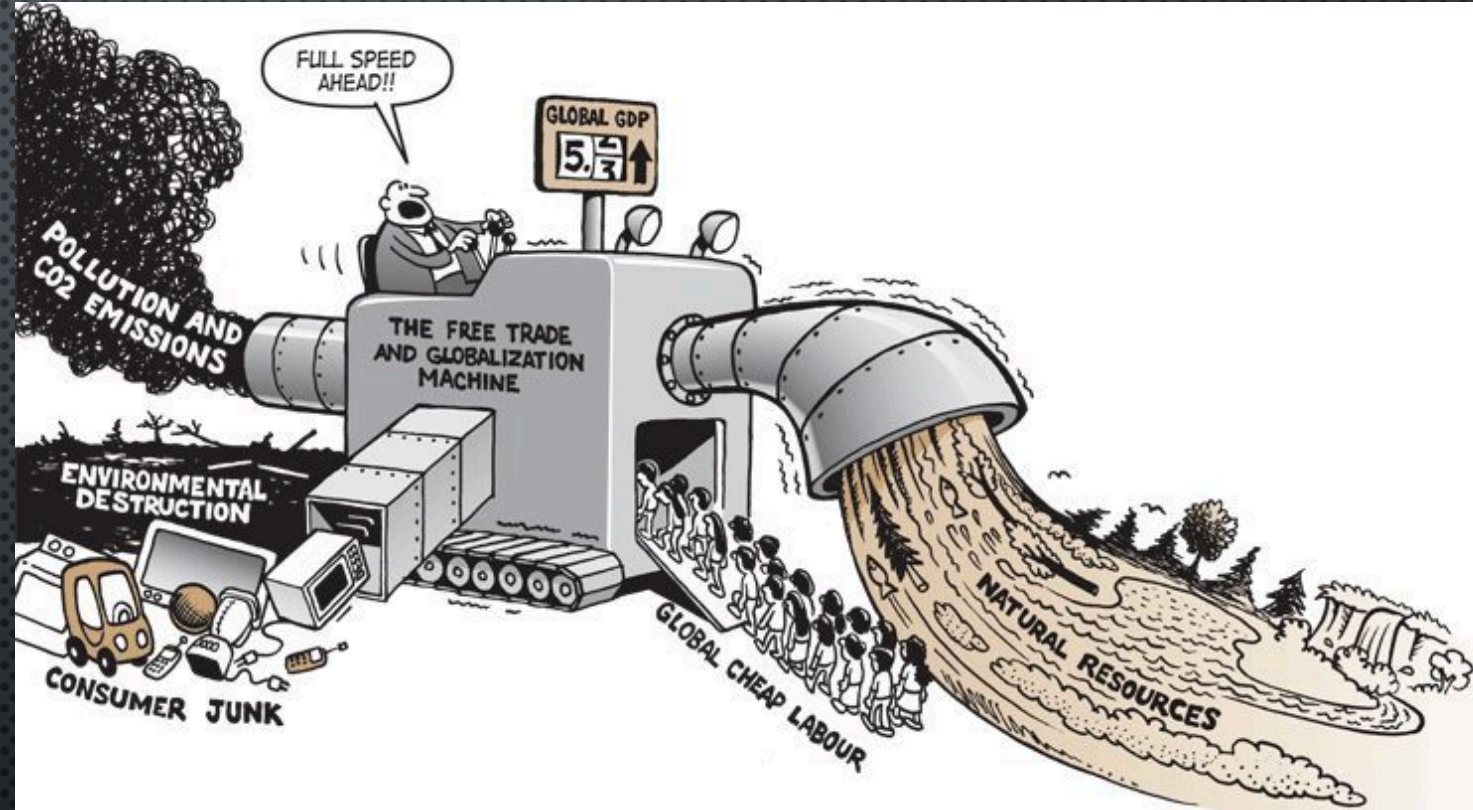
However...

- Even without Trump transformational change would be a challenge.
- Intergenerational justice and consciousness?
- Powerful vested interests deliberately spread disinformation (alternative facts)
- National interests continue to trump collective ones
- We are not immune in this country – the last election may mark the end of ambitious political agendas



We didn't mean to stuff things up...

- Is capitalism compatible with a sustainable environment?
- Are 'we' main culprits?
- Have the poor the right to exploit their resources (as we did)?
- Are there simply too many of us already trying to live fundamentally unsustainable lifestyles
- Are the realists right about the implications?
- "NO LIBERAL STATE HAS EVER SHOWN SERIOUS INTEREST IN HELPING OTHER STATES TO GAIN ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES AT ITS EXPENSE JUST TO FIGHT GLOBAL INJUSTICE, AND THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO THINK IT EVER WILL." (MEARSHEIMER)



And yet, hope springs...

- Populism usually associated with megalomaniacs who claim to embody the will of the people
- But even in US 'progressive' populism has existed - and still does?
- Arab Spring, Occupy Movement, and now Extinction Rebellion
- Groundswell of protest from 'below'
- Likely to intensify, but can it be directed/transformational – especially in the timeframe available?
- Green New Deal? Degrowth?



What could 'Australia' do?

- Leadership usually associated with 'great' rather than 'middle powers'
- Yet few countries have the advantages and capacities that Australia does
- Exemplar of good international citizenship and the benefits of reconfiguring domestic economy/international relations/spending priorities?
- But literally unthinkable for either Australia's main political parties and strategic elites?



The politics of transformational change

Policy change creates winners and losers – even if someone is capable of thinking beyond the next election

Convincing the latter about the benefits of collective action not easy and labor intensive

There is no doubt that the climate will impact – possibly completely transform – politics

Only question is how and whether its progressive or authoritarian....

