

# Child Prophets and Proselytizers of Climate Catastrophe

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## Footnotes

1. The main means to reinforce gas-mask discipline was repetition, very frequent drills at (UK) schools. And given that by WW2, significant numbers of male victims of WW1 gas attacks were still spread throughout the UK population, some fear of consequences was already present in children. However this was reinforced, and sometimes excessively so it seems, via live tear-gas tests: *‘The aim was twofold: to test the fit of gas masks, as any leak or gap would be immediately obvious; and, through forcing the children to breath a little of the gas before leaving, to train them rather brutally in the importance of gas protection.’* In some cases, teachers or officials deliberately pulled aside the mask seal, in others children had to actually take their masks off within the gas chamber (sometimes a fixed chamber, sometimes a van). Some accounts describe walking unprotected through a gas chamber. See much detail [here](#) and [here](#). *‘These accounts shed light on a hitherto neglected subject: the brutality of some of these tests aimed at the public in general and children in particular’.* That brutality is seen with a modern eye, but it’s hard to say in retrospect whether it was a truly necessary technique. Various other justifications have been raised, such as an excessive exercise of power by local petty officials, or a much more deliberate attempt by the government to impose and reinforce discipline (there was a very high level of juvenile delinquency during WW2, one presumes due to the lack of so many fathers plus other stressors on parents). This example is useful to demonstrate that there can be social complications even regarding apparently simple examples of instilling fear for reality-based purposes. But the main point is that even if in excess via mixed motives, this technique was tolerated by the population because there was a real prospect of gas being deployed, as it had been on the front only 20 years before (albeit this time around it would be via aircraft / gas-bombs). Ultimately, the moral acceptance to scare children came largely from real fears, not from cultural fears.

2. Recent examples of instilling religious fear:

[Secularism.org.uk example 1](#): *‘Recently, the National Secular Society was approached by a parent who felt she had no option other than to withdraw her 6 year old son from RE after he was left terrified by a lesson focussing on the story of the crucifixion. The lesson in question was taken by a vicar, who was teaching children the ‘Easter message’, and explaining how Jesus was betrayed, humiliated and then nailed to the cross until he died. The vicar showed the infants a basket of Easter eggs he’d brought along and proceeded to open them to reveal the nails he’d put inside. He wanted to pass them around for the children to feel. The teacher stepped in at this point, but why was a vicar allowed to teach RE in the first place?...*

*...The same group led the school's daily collective worship and proceeded to recreate a mock crucifixion nailing a soft toy bunny rabbit to a wooden cross in front of a stunned audience of 14 year olds.’*

The point about this example is that it caused objection because in societies that are more secular than religious (or trending that way), creating these fears is often viewed as no longer acceptable (this one is from the UK). Hence the parental complaint and withdrawal of the child. Yet where religion dominates (and only about a century ago religions essentially dominated everywhere), objections would not typically be raised and instilled fears would very much be the norm. Religion still holds great sway in some places (e.g. religious belief in the US is still strong), and absolute dominance in others:

[Secularism.org.uk example 2](#): *‘In Iran Islam rules in every aspect of education and school system. Belief in Islam and living according to Islamic values and norms and thoughts are pre- conditions*

*for survival. Teaching the Koran and learning it is compulsory from the first year in primary schools. Teachers must pass a religious exam to be permitted to teach. This exam includes Islamic rules, prayers, the Koran and Hadith. Islamic propaganda is done systematically. Free thoughts are forbidden and punishable. Superstition has influenced school curricula. This has created a dark and stagnated milieu for children. School pupils are taught that if they do not obey the rules, they will be burned in hell (jahannam).*

*...It is forbidden for girls to laugh loudly. They have to pray to god five times a day. They are told that if they do not wear the veil properly or if their hair appears out of the veil, they will be punished in hell and snakes will grow on their heads*

*...Children are normally keen to learn and experience, know about the world, learn about their bodies and their bodily functions. They want to know where babies come from and about the opposite sex. All these normal and necessary curiosities are answered by frightening tales about evil and hell. This system brings about nothing but backwardness and hypocrisy.'*

The same behavior / acceptability occurs with secular cultures. Where belief in imminent global climate catastrophism already holds sway, there will not likely be much appetite for objecting to fears propagated in its name. In social sub-domains where it's become a primary ethos, repetition of narrative fundamentals including a high certainty of scary outcomes, will be high, and fear reactions will be much greater as a consequence.

3. By Noah Rothman in *Commentary* magazine. See [Wiki entry](#) for publication context.

4. In relation to Greta Thunberg's Nobel prize nomination, [Madeline Grant](#) in [The Telegraph](#) reports a belief in this false meme thusly: *'The Nobel Committee is unwittingly adopting a common trope in contemporary debate, attributing, in biblical fashion, special insights to children despite their limited knowledge of complex subjects – "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings", as the saying goes.'*

This is correct, but not complete. Regarding 'complex subjects' that *aren't* tangled with culture, children, having less cognitive ability (due to this not being fully developed yet), less experience of using it, and normally less knowledge too, cannot on average out-perform adults regarding an understanding of the subject. Hence, they can't achieve more productive debate / insights about it. Grant is right. At best they might (again on average) do no worse than a group of adults who happen to possess a similar level of knowledge. But some subject domains *are* tangled with culture(s), and in the climate change case the domain is practically saturated with cultural influence, the nature of which also varies within different countries (e.g. [3 main cultural influences](#) in the US). In such cases, whether this is culture writ large (e.g. a major religion) or small (e.g. some group-think), the meme implies that children can 'see through' the adopted conventions, to the truth / reality beneath, along the lines of '[The Emperor's New Clothes](#)', and especially where the group-think has some corruptive nature. (Note: this simple, short story features a deliberate deceit spread to the populace. But the conformance and silence of the latter before the child speaks up is way too high to be credible in such a case; it's essentially a metaphor for cultural behavior especially as propagated by the elite, which is largely emotive and subconscious. However, that the story can be read either way in fact broadens its appeal). So, does at least this aspect of the meme hold up? Can children systemically see through cultural narratives that have lured in adults?

There seems to be more research on young children than adolescents (and for obvious reasons it's mostly about religion), as exposure to culture starts early. For the former, [this study](#) indicates per the abstract that the presence of God (a figurehead of a strong cultural narrative) in a story, increases the likelihood that

the story will be interpreted as reality. As also will family religiosity for the children. [This study](#), again per the abstract, agrees with the latter factor; i.e. stories containing normally impossible events were judged to have a real protagonist by religiously raised children, but were judged by children without exposure to religion to be fictional. [This meta study](#), which appears on the surface to be contradictory, suggests that children are just as likely to believe as to doubt regarding the reality status of novel entities and events (cultural narratives typically invoke these). However, digging deeper, this isn't so when the novelties are religious rather than merely 'fantastical' inventions (religions will feature all the correctly evolved forms for strong cultural engagement, and will also align to outside influence). *'Because these events (e.g., Moses parting the Red Sea) violate children's naive theories, one might expect them to be judged as fantastical. However these events are presented as historical by authority figures such as parents and Church leaders. Vaden and Woolley (2011) hypothesized that, whereas children would judge physical violation events as fantastical normally, when God was purported to play a role in such events, children would accept their veracity.'* This turned out to be the case for the older children within their study (4 – 6), so religious exposure is clearly again important, but so here is age (within a whole sample already very young).

Together, this quick look suggests that the level of skepticism of children to cultural concepts such as God / novel religious events, is very significantly dependent on exposure to the culture. Without this exposure, they'll be more skeptical. There is some suggestion a child may consider a story more real if God is in it whatever their exposure (and maybe exposure can't typically get down to zero, only low, because god is too pervasive). OTOH the meta-study claims if the children are young enough ( $\leq 4$ ), religious exposure loses its power of bias; 'Born Believers' cited above contradicts this to some extent, although even a strong 'affinity' needs first aligning to the local cultural details before it can act, hence significant learning time that necessarily has to come after a relatively adept level of language acquisition. This makes it hard to distinguish between affinity and indoctrination. However, all this contradicts the meme that children can 'see through' cultural narratives any better than adults, whether these narratives are indeed religious, or secular substitutes they're exposed to that work via the same mechanisms, e.g. catastrophist climate culture. Adults too will be more skeptical without exposure. Plus on average are more skeptical if part of or allied to, a different culture that happens to oppose the novel concepts (e.g. Dems are more likely to oppose the concept of creationism partially because of their identity that is in opposition to Rep culture, which via cultural alliance fosters the concept more). And further, adults can become skeptical if originally adherents or neutral but instinctively then detect that the culture is taking too many liberties (cultural resistance). It doesn't seem likely that these latter effects would be as strong for children still learning a complex cultural topography. Children may generally be less aware of the *consequences* of publicly contradicting a cultural norm, but on average they're no more likely to see through it than adults, and probably less.

There appears to be less research regarding adolescents. But the young age at which cultural exposure becomes significant, means this threshold will have been passed a decade before by adolescents. Their attitudes presumably remain somewhat more fluid than for adults, but during that long time they can't realistically be isolated from cultural exposure. Especially for dominant (e.g. religion) or up-and-coming cultures (e.g. climate catastrophism) that propagate throughout most aspects of society. Whether parents and guardians like it or not, whether they are adherents or skeptics of such cultures, the children in their charge are typically going to have significant levels of exposure up to adolescence. And adolescence is when identities crystallize, rites of passage are undertaken (see footnote 30b). In a world featuring many

influences, a particular culture may not have a primary claim on that identity even where there's been significant exposure, but the more the exposure, the more this is likely.

For Greta, who by [her own description](#) had from an early age significant exposure to climate crisis narratives, the above suggests she's much *less* likely to see through the cultural nature of these stories, and indeed she became a strong adherent. And far from aiding Greta see reality, it's possible that her Asperger's may have reinforced cultural concepts of the catastrophic to which she was exposed. See footnote 32 for further explanation. Of course, the mist that strong adherents want so ardently to believe that Greta can see through, is an endemic political denial of 'the science' of certain climate catastrophe. But they have this backwards, because the aspect of imminent global catastrophe (absent dramatic action) is itself cultural, as confirmed by an absence of support for this in mainstream science. Nevertheless, with or without ASD aspects (see 32) children are no more able to see through cultural narratives than adults. Unless we go down to four years old or less, also with children whom we know have not been subject to earlier-than-usual attempts at cultural narrative inculcation. Whence the other problem, that children are less adept at complex reality issues, also becomes dramatically worse for this highly undeveloped low-age-group.

5. This doesn't imply personal irrationality in the sense of any lack of intelligence or lack of integrity or mental illness. Cultural adherents are committed to grand-scale groupthink, which when engaged enables mechanisms (including passionate belief) that all of us possess, and which bypass reason. This is perfectly normal behavior for humans. The irrationality is carried in the cultural narrative forming the core of the group belief, and typically comes with a strong belief also that skeptics of the cultural narrative must have nefarious motives, or worse.

6. Both reality-based and cultural pitches can benefit from creating [emotional bias](#), and emotive angles may occur in many ways, not just via a presentation by innocent children. However, in the case of using emotion to appeal to existing cultural fears, these aren't based upon reason to start with (but emotive conviction!) so can quickly resonate with an aligned pitch, increasing the likelihood of irrational (but culturally consistent) responses. [Emotional bias in the climate domain](#) is systemic.

7. While extreme poverty has [fallen dramatically](#) in the last 30 years, and is projected to fall still further, it is a stubborn problem in some regions, and looks particularly set to remain at large scale in Sub-Saharan Africa. Added to which, '*virtually half of the people living in extreme poverty are under 18 years of age*' ([see here](#)), of which the great majority are under 15. Proper education in such conditions is impossible, and Malala is correct that eliminating poverty would also remove this impossible barrier to provision of a proper education for, *currently*, hundreds of millions of children. [Literacy by country](#) shows that poverty / Sub-Saharan Africa are not the only problem areas, and other countries, particularly those with religious (Islamic) regimes, have a current problem of poor education. This is partly a spending issue (e.g. Pakistan and Bangladesh [spend about half](#) what the UK and US spend on education as a percentage of GDP), and partly a cultural problem. Religious regimes unless very extreme don't tend to banish education, but they may give it low priority plus restrict the form, or those children who might benefit. E.g. [female education trails male education](#) in some such regimes, as again it does in the poverty area of Sub-Saharan Africa. These are all *current and real* problems Malala has expressed, which are reflected in the data. And while her own case demonstrates dramatically the effect that terrorists can have on repressing education, it's also the case that many religious adherents who are far less extreme, may nevertheless support educative restrictions. Even in her own country many [do not approve of Malala's efforts](#), and this shows that part of

her struggle is fighting against entrenched (religious) culture, which at least in a few countries has some mainstream representation.

8. Malala's ask is big, despite she hasn't dictated specific policy or demanded a drop-dead date. But a great deal of what has already been happening in the world for decades, mainly due to the spread of prosperity, means the biggest markers are heading in the right direction. As noted in footnote 8 above, extreme poverty has fallen dramatically, and is projected to continue falling for some years. And notwithstanding extremism / cultural resistance, the populational share of those without education is pretty much [falling everywhere](#), and is projected still to do. This doesn't mean the problem of Sub-Saharan Africa is easy, and indeed certain other countries elsewhere are lagging behind the curve, for instance by 2050 some will still have significant minorities of children out of education. Many *current* children won't be helped, even with major acceleration of programs. But most of the next generation could be, and it is not astronomical to ask for those programs to be accelerated or for the UN to pressure those regimes that restrict education (most such won't want *officially* to be seen, upon the world stage, to be supporting such restrictions). If just a very small fraction of the global time and effort and international co-operation and behavioral change needed for Greta's ask was fed into this aim, it would probably have a dramatic impact. And interestingly, the aims of the two girls are to some extent in contradiction. Just about everything civilization has would have to be thrown into Greta's ask; why have a new initiative to educate hundreds of millions of children for Malala's ask, if diverting resource / time to this means there may be 'no future' for these and all other children anyway?

9. *'Being here with such honourable people is a great moment in my life... Honourable Secretary General... Dear fellows... Dear sisters and brothers...'* [Full text](#).

10. From Greta's short UN speech: *'I speak on behalf of Climate Justice Now... Our civilization is being sacrificed... Our biosphere is being sacrificed... You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes.... We need to keep the fossil fuels in the ground... we are running out of time.'* [Full text](#). See also the extract from her pitch to the UK parliament in footnote 13 below.

11. See *'already suffering the consequences'* within the extract in footnote 13 below.

12. Her solution is: *'We need to keep the fossil fuels in the ground'*. Her UN speech implies that about 60 years away (her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday) would be way too late for this, from which we deduce that most fossil fuel usage must cease significantly (decades) before then. In her speech to the UK parliament, she states that (presumably world-wide) emissions must already be down by 50% at 'around 2030' (see the extract in footnote 13 below), i.e. only 11 years after the speech. While these two narratives are broadly consistent, the latter emphasizes big progress on emissions reduction in the very near term, as does Greta's further comment to Sky TV regarding the UK goal of net zero by 2050 (see footnote 14). She also appears to make [common cause with Extinction Rebellion](#), whose goal is [net zero by 2025](#) (though not always clear whether this applies to only to the UK, or globally).

13. Extracts from [Greta's speech to the UK parliament](#):

*'I know many of you don't want to listen to us – you say we are just children. But we're only repeating the message of the united climate science...'*

*...I was fortunate to be born in a time and place where everyone told us to dream big; I could become whatever I wanted to. I could live wherever I wanted to. People like me had everything we needed and more. Things our grandparents could not even dream of. We had everything we could ever wish for and yet now we may have nothing.*

*Now we probably don't even have a future any more.*

*Because that future was sold so that a small number of people could make unimaginable amounts of money. It was stolen from us every time you said that the sky was the limit, and that you only live once.*

*You lied to us. You gave us false hope. You told us that the future was something to look forward to. And the saddest thing is that most children are not even aware of the fate that awaits us. We will not understand it until it's too late. And yet we are the lucky ones. Those who will be affected the hardest are already suffering the consequences. But their voices are not heard.*

*Is my microphone on? Can you hear me?*

*Around the year 2030, 10 years 252 days and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where we set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control, that will most likely lead to the end of our civilisation as we know it. That is unless in that time, permanent and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society have taken place, including a reduction of CO2 emissions by at least 50%.*

*And please note that these calculations are depending on inventions that have not yet been invented at scale, inventions that are supposed to clear the atmosphere of astronomical amounts of carbon dioxide.*

*Furthermore, these calculations do not include unforeseen tipping points and feedback loops like the extremely powerful methane gas escaping from rapidly thawing arctic permafrost.*

*Nor do these scientific calculations include already locked-in warming hidden by toxic air pollution. Nor the aspect of equity – or climate justice – clearly stated throughout the Paris agreement, which is absolutely necessary to make it work on a global scale.*

*We must also bear in mind that these are just calculations. Estimations. That means that these “points of no return” may occur a bit sooner or later than 2030. No one can know for sure. We can, however, be certain that they will occur approximately in these timeframes, because these calculations are not opinions or wild guesses.*

*These projections are backed up by scientific facts, concluded by all nations through the IPCC. Nearly every single major national scientific body around the world unreservedly supports the work and findings of the IPCC.'*

**13a.** In her [speech](#) to the French National Assembly, Greta also cites from [IPCC SR15](#) (Chapter 2, page 108 table 2.2) the remaining carbon budget to stay under 1.5C temperature increase. Whatever one thinks regarding the accuracy of this figure as depicted at different claimed probabilities and associated uncertainties largely derived from model simulations, it doesn't underwrite the high certainty of stealing children's futures and an imminent end of civilization, per Greta's pitch at footnote 13 above. Based on this figure Greta points out that our budget will be gone (at current emission rates) in about 8.5 years, and then emphasizes that upon such figures from the IPCC 'the future of our civilization depends'. But even considering there'd be time for impacts to work through after the 8.5 years, AR5 / SR15 do not support a global catastrophe of this kind. She goes on, as in her previous speeches, to castigate adults for not being mature enough to grasp these issues, and 'even that burden you leave to us children.' She also claims that BAU, via 'tipping points', will 'likely' lead to 'irreversible climate breakdown', and raises the strawman that those who challenge (her, the children, and) the IPCC, are challenging the conclusion of a climate emergency and all this entails. Yet her judgement of climate breakdown / emergency / end of civilization

represents a very different position indeed than does the IPCC science per its technical chapters. Her proposed solution: *'has to include everything and everyone'*.

**13b.** Of which the main representation is the technical chapters of AR5. Also see footnote 21.

**14.** When [put to Greta](#) that the official UK target of net zero by 2050 (I think the first nation to declare such) was 'immensely ambitious', Greta says: "...*You could argue that is better than nothing but I think it's actually doing more harm than good...*" and therefore regarding UK politicians: "...*If they don't act now, then in the future they will be seen as some of the greatest villains in human history...*". She reasons that the UK policy 'sends a signal' which people will think means they can 'continue like now' for maybe about '20 years'. Presumably therefore, she'd want some very significant part of the net zero reduction to be committed within the next twenty years or sooner. In footnote 13, she implies a target of at least 50% reduction by 2030, only 11 years away.

**14a.** *'You are not mature enough to tell it like is. Even that burden you leave to us children.'* [Full text](#). See also footnote 14 above, where Greta speculates that UK politicians may be *'seen as some of the greatest villains in human history'* for adopting the ambitious 'net zero by 2050' as official UK policy, arguing they must *'act now'* instead; i.e. commit to much more sooner, one presumes.

**15.** See *'you lied to us'*, from the speech extract in footnote 13 above.

**16.** The main Xhosa homeland at the time was British Kaffraria. Numbers relating to the population drop appear to vary somewhat with source. [Wiki's](#) source for 40,000 starving is [here](#). Which also says: *'20,000 moved into the Cape colony to avoid that fate by becoming agricultural and domestic laborers. The result was that the population of British Kaffraria declined... ..from 105,000 to 37,000'*. This disagrees slightly with [wiki here](#), which claimed 27,000 remaining in Kaffraria (from which my drop of ~78,000). This still leaves 8000, or 18,000, who perhaps became slaves as mentioned in some sources. J.B. Pieres, who is the most quoted source on the cattle killings afaics, [agrees with](#) the 40,000 starving, but also says that another 40,000 *'left their homes in search of food'* (whatever their final destination / status). Assuming the same 105,000 original population, this leaves ~25,000 remaining in British Kaffraria, which matches the drop of about three-quarters. However, another [source](#) (also used by wiki for other points) claims less starved, about 30,000, and minority sources claim less still (at bottom error margin down to 20,000), presumably with higher numbers fleeing (assuming less uncertainty about the total population). The 40,000 could be a band upper limit, e.g. [here](#) claims 25 – 40,000, with uncertainty about how many fled or died. It's noted in some sources that there was no proper census in some of the tribal areas, hence it was impossible to assess the number of deaths there; at any rate 40,000 appears by far to be the most quoted figure.

**17.** There are summaries of the story at [wiki](#) and, much longer, at [South African History Online](#). Some complexities and ongoing debate include: the level of Christian influence inspiring the movement, the precise role and input of Nongqawuse's uncle (he'd spent some time among the Europeans apparently), the difficulty of seeing through differing lenses of colonial and indigenous witnesses, and the predatory role overall (some individual colonists tried to prevent disaster and help afterwards) of the Cape colony in taking advantage of the situation (to seize land and cheap labor when the Xhosa were no longer able to resist such), plus its attempt to warp history to justify this (e.g. via the manufacture of the *chief's plot* story). However, for the purposes of a reality / cultural determination, and notwithstanding the historical interest, it doesn't much matter what ratio of Christian beliefs to native spiritual beliefs existed within the

inspiring culture. (A few of the tribes had converted to Christianity, and earlier prophets touting similar themes, such as Nxele, preached a religious mix of Xhosa traditional thought and Christianity. Differing concepts of resurrection, a big feature of the cattle-killing narrative, appeared in both native tradition and Christianity). Nongqawuse's uncle provided access to authority, but didn't believe her at first, changing his mind after he recognized one of the 'ancestor spirits' as his dead brother. Whatever his later influence, there is nothing to suggest deliberate, conscious plotting (which later on would have had to involve many parties, and for no advantage – ruled out as per the false *chief's plot*), as opposed to primarily a powerful cultural belief (and indeed he is described as a very religious man by various sources). Of interest and in line with Nongqawuse's angle of innocence, included in her demands for salvation is that: 'The people abandon witchcraft, incest and adultery'. Per footnote 18 below, historians view this movement as a cultural one, a millennialist response to social stress.

**18.** *'Historians now view this movement as a millennialist response both directly to the lung disease spreading among Xhosa cattle, and to the stress to Xhosa society caused by the continuing loss of their territory and autonomy.'* [Wiki](#), from J. B. Peires, ['The Dead Will Arise'](#).

Note: while some sources hold the terms to be equivalent, e.g. see 19 below, others including wiki cite confusion between [millenarian](#) and [millennialism](#). But even in explaining this, wiki also seems conflicted. The first of the above links says: *'millenarianism is used to refer to a more cataclysmic and destructive arrival of a utopian period as compared to millennialism which is often used to denote a more peaceful arrival and is more closely associated with a one thousand year utopia.'* But also says that millenarian movements are *'not necessarily linked to millennialist movements in Christianity and Zoroastrianism'*, which implies a subset for those religions. Meanwhile other sources accommodate cataclysmic and more peaceful transformations both within the millenarian term. I think the right term is millenarian.

J.B. Peires also noted: *'This fusion of Xhosa and Christian prophecies created an apocalyptic tradition which outlasted the Cattle-Killing and remained potent well into the twentieth century.'*

John Zarwan, in the African Studies [article](#) *'the Xhosa cattle killings'* (1976), notes: *'The xhosa response [to pressure on their society] was firmly rooted in cultural patterns. The cattle killings had basic elements in common with the preachings of earlier prophets. Purification from witchcraft and sacrifice, especially of cattle, to the shades, are in strictly in accordance with, and play a major role in, Xhosa culture.'* It seems however at this date, the realization *'that it was not a unique event and has parallels throughout the world, as has been recognized by scholars dealing with these other, similar movements'*, was only just dawning on some scholars of the cattle killings. J.B. Peires' history above came about a dozen years later.

**19.** [Encyclopedia.com](#) says: *'Millenarianism, known also as millennialism, is the belief that the end of this world is at hand and that in its wake will appear a New World, inexhaustibly fertile, harmonious, sanctified, and just. The more exclusive the concern with the End itself, the more such belief shades off toward the catastrophic; the more exclusive the concern with the New World, the nearer it approaches the utopian.'* This source goes on to categorize types of millenarianism, from which I believe Greta and Nongqawuse's expressions would be 'transformative', but Greta's also tending more to the catastrophist end of the scale. The prominence of women leading millenarian movements is also noted, along with the issue that why this is so has not been given appropriate scholarly attention. The two main causal theories for millenarianism outlined here (social stress, and [compatibly] culture contact) appear incomplete in that they're essentially intermediate, i.e. not addressing that there could be more universal underlying reasons

for this common phenomenon, for instance as bequeathed by evolution. A plausible possibility is deep instinct from hunter-gatherer days; when a lot of things are going badly, there's a fair chance these could be environment related and so a complete change of environment may end the bad run. In hunter-gatherer times, there wasn't significant infra-structure at risk from this bet; just up-sticks and travel for a couple of weeks. At any rate, the stress theory as applied to modern Western civilization (the crucible of climate catastrophism) requires some explanation as to what the main stressor was in the modern world; perhaps anything from globalization to a response to massive and sometimes bewildering technological advance, to maybe a loss of cultural identity as traditional values have been undermined by huge (and otherwise beneficial) advances in knowledge. Or all of the above.

**20.** Though per 19 above, female representation at the top is more likely.

**21.** The single largest value judgement regarding these checks is whether science supports a high certainty of imminent (decades) global climate catastrophe (absent dramatic emissions reduction action), because conflict on this issue is not only within the public domain, but within the enterprise of science too. There are at least 4 viewpoints which can all boast at least some support from scientists with relevant experience and qualifications within the field: the skeptics, the luke-warmers, the mainstream, and the catastrophists, the latter of whom object to the IPCC for being too conservative, while skeptics and luke-warmers object to the IPCC view as being too alarmist. See notes 6,7,19 and 20 [here](#) for climate (and environmental) scientists who propagate the catastrophe narrative. The mainstream PoV has easily the largest formal support, probably by much more than an order of magnitude (so the thousands of papers sucked into the latest full integration, i.e. the IPCC AR5 tech chapters, and hence their authors, plus the 831 scientists who managed this process), although minorities from the other camps have actually contributed at some point in time to the IPCC process too. Science should not be a vote, but in the presence of conflict it is useful to see whether the vote matches the social characteristics, which say that climate catastrophism is a [cultural phenomenon](#). And indeed the vote matches, as 3 of 4 camps and including the huge mainstream camp, do *not* support a high certainty of imminent (decades) global climate catastrophe (absent dramatic emissions reduction). This is nevertheless a value judgement, as a vote from conflicted science, or social analysis, even added together, cannot be assumed to be infallible. But confirmation from different threads is very helpful, and only a small minority of catastrophist scientists are outside this position.

The future may present a different vote, for instance if AR6 comes out in favor of catastrophism. We'd then be faced with a 2 against 2, where the huge mainstream shifts its weight from one side to the other. This might be a) because that which we can see now ticking every box for a culture, finally biases the science enough to undermine the mainstream position, or b), because against the major weight of *current* scientific judgement, science later turned out to agree with what by all social measures reveals itself to be a cultural narrative. I think this would be a first in history, as the evolutionary 'purpose' of strong cultural narratives is incompatible with truth. From early efforts towards AR6, it seems unlikely we'll be faced with this choice anyhow. Support of [the catastrophe narrative as it is propagated by rafts of authorities](#), would be a huge change from AR5; reports have taken a gradual, evolutionary path so far, and it's not likely this will be different going forward.

**22.** Modern authority in the West, and to a lesser extent the rest of the world, has long absorbed the main cultural narrative of climate catastrophism, i.e. a narrative of high certainty of imminent (decades) global climate catastrophe, as is easily seen from official re-transmission of the same to their various publics. And their propagation is honest (all these leaders aren't lying, they're emotively convinced). The [common](#)

[footnotes file](#) for the 2018 Climate Etc. companion posts ‘[The Catastrophe Narrative](#)’ and ‘[CAGW: A Snarl Word?](#)’, contains about 180 example catastrophe narrative quotes from many authority / influencer sources originating in the US, UK, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Australia, Canada, India, South Africa, Bolivia, Croatia, Fiji and Grenada. 19 nations overall, of which 13 within the Western grouping, and also representation from supra-national bodies such as the UN and the Commonwealth of Nations, plus religious organizations and businesses and NGOs. The individuals quoted include the leaders, ex-leaders and candidate leaders (presidents / prime ministers) from of many of the represented nations, along with high national ministers, high UN officials including three General Secretaries, the Pope and representatives of other faiths, UK royalty, economists, high profile influencers and various others, delivered across the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the historic case of the Xhosa cattle killings, the people and the relevant leadership (the council of chiefs) were also strongly primed. From [South African History Online](#):

*‘...Prior to Nongqawuse’s prophecy, came forth a number of similar prophecies. By 1855, more than five prophets had emerged in British Kaffraria saying that they were in contact with the black nation across the sea that would come to the aid of the Xhosa. [94] The black nation was reference to the Russians who had killed George Cathcart in the Crimean War. [95] The prophets preached that the Xhosa people should stop cultivation and kill their cattle. [96] One prophetess even ordered the erections of new cattle enclosures that were anticipated to be filled. These prophets were largely anti-white in their sentiment. [97] Those who adhered to their words were the people affected the most by the spread of lungsickness, like Chief Phato’s district. [98] However, the trend of these prophecies died down by March 1856 when the Russians made peace with the British and the Crimean War ended. [99]*

*When Nongqawuse made her prophecy against the backdrop of impending destitution, it fell on fertile ground to be received by the Xhosa nation, weakened in their resistance against colonialism.’*

British Kaffraria is the main Xhosa homeland. George Cathcart had been a governor of the Cape Colony during the last stage of the 8<sup>th</sup> Xhosa war, about three years before the start of the cattle killing movement. See original for numbered references (note: ‘Ibid’ in these references means ‘the same source as last time’). The above cultural priming features both apocalypse and salvation, plus shares key aspects with Nongqawuse’s narrative:

*‘The element of cattle killing in the prophecy was also not unique in that both Nxele and Mlanjeni had advocated for it in their respective periods of influence. In fact it was Nxele who had made popular the notion of an apocalypse and brought forth the idea of resurrection to the Xhosa when “He ordered people to abandon witchcraft, to slaughter all red cattle and to destroy stores of corn.” [113] He too predicted the rising of the ancestors and new cattle. The key difference between these men and Nongqawuse is that they were also war doctors and led warriors in battle against the colonialists in the ‘frontier wars’. [AW note, or were strongly tied to politics / war, e.g. the prophetess councillor Bhulu’s wife who was also ‘inspired to dreams of resurrection by the outbreak of lungsickness.’] This was similar to the backdrop of the rebellion in Zimbabwe from 1896-1897. [114] Masses of cattle and crops had perished due to natural causes and a spiritual leader among the amaNdebele had risen to influence leading the people to take up arms against the white colonialists who were seen as responsible for their losses. [115]’*

So what likely clinched it for the young girl Nongqawuse was her ‘innocent’ disconnection from war and politics, along with her protected social status (which suppresses awkward questioning):

*‘...Nongqawuse was not advocating the killing of cattle in preparation for war. There was no intention to fight the colony. The distinction of the movement lay in the particular set of circumstances the Xhosa nation found themselves in and the number of factors at play against and within their society;*

*outlined as the context to this section. The prophecy was purely geared towards believers acting in faith and in preparation for the receiving of assistance from the spiritual world.'*

**22a:** These characteristics can unite opposite parts of a spectrum of belief. Those who are inclined towards belief yet are suspicious of cynical agendas (in this case inter-tribal competition or outright war with the European colonists) when political heavyweights push it, achieve emotive conviction when the prophet is innocent and apolitical and 'above questioning'. Those at the opposite end of the spectrum who already have strong belief, may nevertheless not get behind political heavyweights either, because they worry these may betray or delay or dilute the high purpose for reasons of political gain or maintaining appeal to the doubters. (Indeed, accusations that some didn't tow the line, didn't truly eliminate all their resources as was required, were common as the 'solution' was implemented, to the extent that this was cited as the reason salvation didn't come as expectation dates were passed. A minority of chiefs strongly resisted). Ardent believers can similarly back a young girl without having such qualms.

**Note:** Nxele, a Xhosa nationalist and religious prophet, died in 1819. Hence the Xhosa priming period before the cattle killings occurred, from a growing new cultural belief, was at least 35 years. Nxele allied himself by marriage to the chief of the Ndlembe, and preached a brand of religion synthesized from elements of Xhosa traditional thought and elements of Christianity, including from the latter the concept of resurrection. He also led an attack on Grahamstown in the fourth Xhosa war.

Greta shares similar characteristics with Nongqawuse. This creates a strong appeal for those already so culturally convinced of imminent global climate catastrophe, that even the mildest of objections against this strict narrative are perceived as a major political sell-out (to fossil fuel interests or the status quo, or capitalism, whatever). These adherents *want* to believe, at a deep emotional level, that by virtue of her disconnection from the dirty world of politics and even the compromises of adulthood, Greta has 'seen' these sell-outs for what they are. Especially as she [admonishes politicians for 'not doing anything at all'](#). Similarly, those inclined towards belief in climate catastrophism yet who are currently wavering or at the mild end of the spectrum, being wary of politicians' agendas that are intertwined with the 'cause', may be tipped into stronger commitment by prophets such as Greta, because she is not perceived as having an alternate agenda nor any reason to lie (although note: some here will be turned *away* not further into the culture, so despite optimal uniting there'll be fringe polarization too, a hardened cultural boundary). In practice, both ends of the spectrum are wrong regarding an agenda anyway; the main agenda does not belong to politicians but the culture itself, albeit not sustained by either agency or sentience. That agenda is merely for the culture to continue and to grow, and it is blind as to means or consequences.

The above also tells us that the cattle killings were very far indeed from being just about Nongqawuse; without Greta there would very likely be a Hreta or Ireta or whomever, similarly without Nongqawuse there'd likely be a Mongqawuse or Oongqawuse or whomever. Above a certain threshold of cultural adherence, a prophet best able to translate narrative to commands will be surfaced. It may take several passes for 'success'.

**22b.** Greta in Sky news interview about her pitch to UK politicians: '*...why should we care about our future, educating ourselves, if you don't care about our future. I think that is a very powerful message, and many people feel guilty when children say that'*. [Full interview](#). Greta's whole stance is based upon (understandably, given her history) the assumption that global climate catastrophe (absent dramatic action to cease emissions within very near decades) is an inevitability underwritten by mainstream (IPCC) science. Which could hardly fail to have a seriously detrimental impact on children's futures (and everything else). But mainstream science as represented by the AR5 technical chapters, simply doesn't

support the concept of imminent global catastrophe as represented by the [catastrophe narrative](#) that she and many authority sources propagate. Hence her ‘certain’ justification for pressuring leadership with guilt, is in actuality not at all validated.

**23.** As explained in detail in footnote 22 above, in both the Greta / modern case and the Nongqawuse / historic case, society and leadership were primed for decades by the relevant cultural narrative. Such narratives are not ‘imposed’ from the top down, although when they take hold within influential sections / organs of society, and especially within leadership, their ability to propagate more effectively to mass audiences is much increased. However, the basic mechanism remains the same, an umbrella narrative featuring a set of sub-narratives co-evolve, i.e. those stories / story combinations that propagate the best eventually come to dominate. And higher propagation, i.e. a higher selection value for people to absorb / believe / retransmit, comes from having higher emotive impacts. This doesn’t mean such narratives have it all their own way. They have to battle against systemic reasoning systems like the law (and in the modern case, science), which they can potentially bias or hi-jack; against competitive narratives that may be more established (e.g. older traditions / religions), and even against instinctive resistance from those who detect the culture is over-reaching. However, for those strongest adherents whom they do gain, and likely especially for youngsters in this position who haven’t the experience of having seen other cultural waves pass by, regarding matters in the domain of the culture they are simply mouthpieces who enact the narrative as it were; try to bring its tenets about. They are emotively committed at a deep level to belief in the narrative, advocating it as flawlessly and effectively as they can.

**24.** In Greta’s case this is very explicit: *‘We have not come here to beg world leaders to care. You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time. We have come here to let you know that change is coming, whether you like it or not.’* [Full text.](#)

**25.** The anti-nuclear sentiment nevertheless has strong roots which stretch back before the current climate catastrophism, which [according to Michael Shellenberger](#) grew at least in part from (fossil fuel) vested interests, although instinctive fears connected to nuclear weapons and fall-out are likely a big factor with or without exploitation of same. Cultures are often sweep older fears into their narratives; though this can sometimes create logical disconnects or outright contradictions, the truth is that strong cultural narratives are typically stacked with contradictions anyhow – they emerge from emotive selection, not reason.

**25a.** From [Apocalypse Nicked!](#) Clare Heyward and Steve Rayner, Climate Geoengineering Governance Working Paper Series: 006 (2013). Section 4: *‘Millenarian rhetoric ultimately aims to promote behavioural change. Humanity is admonished for its current failings and encouraged to pursue a different path. Most millenarian accounts prescribe that material goods must be redistributed, in some cases rejected outright. Conventional activities aimed at securing those goods must cease. In religious apocalypticism, this change is regarded as essential preparation for the new era of very different forms of social and spiritual relations. In narratives of cataclysmic forewarning, such as green millenarianism, the rejection and redistribution of key material goods is necessary in order to avert the impending catastrophe. In either case, the momentous nature of the changes required means that resistance is to be expected, but it is permissible to overcome it in order to achieve the desired ends.’* (underline mine).

**25b.** There is already a great deal of tension within adherents of climate catastrophism regarding support for nuclear power. This is epitomized by [Naomi Oreskes’ article in The Guardian](#), citing James Hansen, Kerry Emanuel, Ken Caldeira and Tom Wigley among others as ‘denialists’, because of their strong

support for nuclear as the backbone of emissions reduction. Hansen in particular is not only a prolific propagator of catastrophist narrative, he is perhaps the best-known climate scientist in the public domain.

As confirmed by the fact that the touted imminent global catastrophe requiring a solution is not supported by mainstream (or skeptical) science, both forks in a heretical split would remain cultural. However, the nuclear fork would adopt a workable physical solution to (much of) the imagined cultural issue (i.e. ‘our emissions will soon wreck the planet’), and this is not in the interests of the culture itself. Cultures tend to evolve in a direction which prevents any moves towards an actual solution for their imagined fears, as this would kill the culture. The ideal scenario from the PoV of the culture itself (it’s not sentient or even agential, this is just a useful way of looking at things), is that much of the population is tied up in virtue-signaling pseudo-solutions that could never actually address any of the underlying fears that the culture propagates; this maximizes a constant cultural presence. Depending on competition from other groups, and other pressures, this is not necessarily in the interests of the hosts, so there may well be resistance. But if climate catastrophism continues to grow, and eventually dominates, we’d expect the nuclear angle to be subject to suppression. Renewables are unlikely to form a realistic physical solution for the foreseeable future, so their promotion is an ideal path for climate catastrophism to evolve along.

**26.** The most obvious example of group cultural behavior is provided by religions / religious activity (which support shared group concepts). [According to Britannica](#), the oldest burials that attest to belief in life after death are around 30 to 50 thousand years old, although religious behavior could be far older: *‘Yet, since religious conceptions are not always bound to material objects, and since there is evidence that truly human beings existed even during early Paleolithic times, it is inadmissible to infer that earliest man had no religion from the mere fact that no [older] identifiable religious objects have been found.’* [As noted on wiki](#) some scholars push the date of religious behavior, or at least behavior that is ‘ancestral’ to religious behavior, back to 300,000 years ago. The earliest undisputed burial is about 100,000 years ago, including red ochre and grave goods, yet the motives for the burial are less clear. Beyond the obvious marker of religious activity, before writing culture was mostly expressed by sophisticated vocalization, aka speech, which probably arose to support it. This pushes back the date of the process to potentially as far as 800,000 years ago, with the emergence of homo heidelbergensis. As there is cultural transmission in some animals to a limited degree, the roots of gene-culture co-evolution could be far older.

**27.** [Book on Amazon](#) (2012), by cognitive scientist Justin L Barrett. Page 9: *‘Perhaps you remember a preschool shape-sorter toy that is a nearly round, hollow, red and blue plastic object with lots of different yellow shapes that fit into matching holes. Ordinary child development provides children with a number of conceptual holes that have particular shapes. One of these holes is a god-shaped hole. Children are naturally ready to receive the shape – the cultural idea – that fits well into the hole: gods of various sorts. Some gods fit the hole better than others, but many fit just fine. In playing with the toy, however, you might remember that you can cram the wrong shape into some of the holes because it is a close enough fit. Similarly, the god-shaped conceptual hole can be filled with beings and ideas other than gods such as human idols, or a personified Natural Selection or Chance. To put these misfits into the holes takes a little shoving – extra conceptual work – but they can be forced.’* Barrett names his underling concept as ‘natural religion’, supporting god concepts that he claims are detectable in children very early indeed.

Note: [According to wiki](#), Barrett believes in God. This seems a curious position for someone arguing as to why we are so prone to such beliefs (albeit especially as children). This may explain why his advice later in the book, for promoting atheism against the instincts of religious belief, comes across very weak if not dangerous; see footnote 28 below.

Note: the author disagrees with Dawkins and others regarding the main mechanism of religious uptake in children, yet the clash seems somewhat mis-perceived to me from both sides. For instance, Barret objects to Dawkins' 'gullibility theory', and indeed such uptake goes a lot deeper than the proposal that children are merely trusting everything their parents / elders tell them. What is relayed has to have the appropriate emotive pay-loads / mixes, i.e. it needs the right profile to trigger deep cultural behaviors. So fine, thus far. But if Barret's 'affinity' is indeed a main factor, this can only have come from long gene-culture co-evolution, which necessarily includes a memetic side that Barret also seems to have some issues with; he seems to associate this with the 'gullibility'. This is not the case (as religious memes work within a whole group social context, and bypass reason via emotive engagement, which is very different to gullibility). On Dawkins' side, while parents / elders are preferenced, this can't be to the extent that the environment in which cultural memes compete is lost by virtue of them all being accepted en-masse; it is the emotive competition that drives the cultural emergence and long-term development. Memes survive / propagate / adapt via their emotive punch, but if children are transferred to parents of a completely different culture they will indeed take-up different memes; yet the details of one religion over another don't impact too much the underlying fundamental nature of cultural behavior, which evolved universally.

So, religions have a memetic nature. But they are also very dependent upon our brain architecture and specifically emotive machinery, with the combo system having been a big net benefit (why it evolved) rather than religions / culture being purely negative 'viruses' on a kind of more neutral neural substrate (Dawkins tends this way). This doesn't rule out very negative *instances* of culture! And what was once a huge advantage before systemic science and reason at large social scale, is possibly now net negative, or at least much less of an advantage when summing the upsides and downsides.

**28.** Barret says (pg 218): *'I have argued that a steady regime of religious indoctrination is insufficient to account for the global and panhistorical commonness of religious thought. People seem to have natural tendencies to religious thought and action...'* Indeed, our brains and culture co-evolving over a very long period having produced this tendency. He goes on: *'...but this does not mean that a steady dose of counterreligious indoctrination might not be helpful in fighting these natural tendencies, much in the same way that regular practice with statistical or scientific reasoning improves our abilities to think statistically or scientifically, even though such thought is relatively unnatural.'* So far so good. But then, as also in the quote in footnote 27, he essentially suggests adapting concepts (e.g. 'government', 'natural selection'), to fit children's conceptual 'hole', saying: *'this counterreligious indoctrination could include offering children alternative ways to interpret their perception of design and purpose in the natural world and their detections of non-human agency. Chance, government, natural selection (as an intentional, directional agent of change), and other pseudo agents could do nicely here.'* But there is great danger in this approach. If the desired concepts are reframed too much to fit, they will end up triggering the same cultural convictions that we are trying to avoid with religion! It is not the details of religious set-up that cause the convictions (there is a vast range of these, and more lost to history than currently exist). It is their underlying existential and emotive payloads, which can potentially subvert any topic. For instance, Barret already reveals above this danger, via his word 'intentional'. Natural Selection is not in any way intentional, and to imbue it with that characteristic would soon evoke the whole emotive paraphernalia that accompanies strong culture. At least once already, the theory of evolution has highly inappropriately come to 'scientifically' legitimize a cultural movement, via Eugenics. Adapting science and reason to 'fit' the cultural profile that we (and especially children) are sensitized to easily adopt, is a bad way to go. We must instead slowly wean ourselves off strong culture and the emotive convictions it imposes, with as little cultural compromise as we can manage. As noted in the main post, no *reasonable* framing can

imbue the theory of Natural Selection with existential hopes and fears, cogent emotive cocktails and of course deeply felt identity, that all exist for the required cultural / religious profiles we have affinity for. Hence only *unreasonable* framings would remain.

**29.** From climate scientist [Mike Hulme](#)'s 2011 paper '[Reducing the Future to Climate](#)': *'In this new mood of climate- driven destiny the human hand, as the cause of climate change, has replaced the divine hand of God as being responsible for the collapse of civilizations, for visitations of extreme weather, and for determining the new twenty- first- century wealth of nations.[18] And to emphasize the message and the mood, the New Economics Foundation and its partners have wound up a climate clock that is now ticking, second by second, until December 1, 2016, when human fate will be handed over to the winds, ocean currents, and drifting ice floes of a destabilized global climate: "We have 100 months to save the planet; when the clock stops ticking we could be beyond the climate's tipping point, the point of no return."*[19] *Such eschatological rhetoric offers a post- 2016 world where human freedom and agency are extinguished by the iron grip of the forces of climate. Such a narrative offers scant chance for humans to escape a climate- shaped destiny.*[20] See original for numbered references. NOTE: this paper was [discussed at Climate Etc](#) back in 2011.

**30.** I am making no statement about the efficacy or otherwise of renewables as part of an energy mix to address, for instance, what polices would genuinely stem from mainstream science, or from Lukewarmer science, or in geographical areas / circumstances where they may or may not be particularly applicable. I merely point out that if one believes in imminent global climate catastrophe (for instance 'a point of no return' by around 2030 per Greta), then renewables (and especially with no partnering nuclear as many adherents advocate), could never eliminate fossil fuels to bring the salvation from said catastrophe in the specified timescale. (While any new breakthroughs will help, these would take far too long themselves to emerge and get deployed). At least assuming that civilization does not suffer a self-imposed and different kind of catastrophe stemming from a precipitate strictly renewables-only path. Hence for believers in the catastrophic, they are indeed an article of faith.

**30a.** [This teacher toolkit](#), approved by the Senior Policy Advisor at the (UK) National Association of Headteachers, starts off in the bullets under the heading '*Headline facts about climate breakdown*', (my underline), with: '*We have 12 years to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 45% to avoid catastrophe*', and '*More than one million species face extinction*'.

**30b.** Plus, it's possible that the children's climate strikes including anti-authority chants and dressing up, are actually fulfilling the function of 'rites of passage', in the context of cultural identity within climate catastrophism (i.e. becoming a recognized member of this cultural group who advocate 'emergency' action, fighting for authority and voice against older cultural norms). [Abstract](#): '*Throughout the world adolescence is deemed the appropriate life stage to "learn religion."* Nearly three-quarters of societies conduct adolescent rites of passage transmitting sacred rituals and beliefs. Neurophysiological changes that occur during adolescence render this an "experience-expectant" period for the transmission of religious schema and values. Brain regions critical to emotional, social, and symbolic processing mature, creating a plastic neural substrate for imbuing social and symbolic schema with emotional meaning and reward value. Religion in general, and adolescent rites of passage in particular, are optimally adapted for this task. Music-based ritual and emotionally evocative elements of religion optimize reinforcement learning. The costly and autonomically arousing ordeals of many rites ensure fear conditioning. Such learning shapes maturing neural networks, impacting choices and behaviors. Evolutionary

*anthropologists view religion as a costly signal of group commitment. Adolescent rites of passage are a powerful proximate mechanism for creating and maintaining cooperative, cohesive groups.* Climate catastrophism [ticks all the boxes for culture](#), and in theory the above shouldn't be much different for secular or religious culture.

**31.** Not only the fears inculcated by cultural entities aren't real; the hopes (e.g. of salvation from that which causes the fear), joys, anxieties etc. are not based upon reality either. Cultural narratives are essentially emergent group deceptions fulfilling the connective role of holding the group together, and via gene-culture co-evolution (*...genes and culture depend on each other for the evolution and expression of deceptive and self-deceptive adaptations* [\[link\]](#)), they trigger a range of behaviors (including narrative policing and out-group demonization), which do just this. But how group self-deceptions work isn't easy to determine. The more trodden ground of ordinary deception (aka lying), and self-deception within an individual (not group) context (so for instance convincing oneself that one's abilities are much greater than they actually are), plus the likely evolution of same, provides some clues. But in many words circling the topic there doesn't appear to be much progress on the actual mechanisms of group self-deceptions (especially directly relating to core narrative propositions within strong cultures, as opposed to say rather generalized feelings of group superiority or biases related to general group perceptions / actions) that I can find. While cultural adherents don't behave as though their core narratives are literally true (e.g. see footnote 33), *except for* minority cases where there *is* literal belief (per main post section 4 and footnote 32), and aren't conscious of resultant contradictions, how the brain accomplishes this appears not to be understood. The clues raise possibilities such as one half of the brain lying to the other half, or more generically, one part lying to several other parts, with the 'internal lying' not consciously perceived.

**32.** Some while ago, theory seemed to indicate that those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) were less likely to hold religious or spiritual beliefs than neurotypical (NT) people. Note 'neurodiverse' is also a term used for the former people. For instance see [here](#) (which partly seems to miss the point from my perspective, in not fully appreciating how deep cultural beliefs go [albeit an 'evolutionary heritage' is acknowledged] or that religions are just one example, and so it is group social process not the particular narrative content [thus whichever god / gods / spirits / ancestors / whatever] that matters most). At any rate, this theory seems not to be standing the test of time. [Later work](#) indicates that: *'...factors more related to religious or spiritual perception did not reveal an inferior sensitivity in the neurodiverse or autistic sample compared to the control group. Furthermore, a spiritual factor with items like belief in ghosts, the supernatural and the paranormal had higher prevalence in autism and neurodiversity.'* In childhood, those with ASD may have a somewhat different route to belief, more personalized as it were, but on average they are not less likely to be believers. *'...NTs and autistics work out the integration of mind and culture, not only regarding religion, in specific ways'*. And from the ASD community itself, there's plenty of anecdotal [expression](#) of belief, plus [questioning](#) and [more formal](#) reservation regarding the earlier theory.

However, the relative numbers of ASD people who believe / disbelieve in religion (which is just one class of cultures), is to some extent beside the point (unless the number of believers was very small compared to NT people, which neither older or newer research indicates). The path of ASD believers to belief, and *how that belief is interpreted*, is more interesting wrt Greta and others like her who've taken onboard a secular culture of climate catastrophism that is not supported by mainstream science. A key feature of cultural narratives, aka 'group deceptions', is that they are *not real*. And (see footnotes 31 and 33) a key

corresponding feature of strong cultural belief is that at some *subconscious* level, adherents ‘know’ this is the case. Their belief is via an emotive conviction that bypasses reasoning, and appears very strong, yet at the same time adherents *don’t act* as though the narrative is literally true (footnote 33). Given it’s actually a flag for in-group / out-group definition and reinforcement, this makes sense. Notwithstanding we don’t appear to know how close cooperation between brain and cultural cues actually works, this involves an interpretation of the cultural narrative *which isn’t taken as literal*. Plus, we know both from research and the ASD community itself that confusion about literal meanings, e.g. of slang and common metaphors, is a primary characteristic of ASD. E.g. see [here](#) and [here](#). And yet ‘normal’ group adherence to a strong culture, of which religions are the most familiar example, depends upon a (subconscious) *non-literal* interpretation (see also 32b below). To make things worse, when the culture is secular and has hi-jacked the authority of science as a cloak, as happened in the early twentieth century with eugenics and is now happening in the climate domain, even many NT people are lured into emotive belief via what was at first just confidence about the veracity of science. It seems plausible at the very least that people with ASD, and especially children (see footnote 4), will be *more susceptible* to an emotive and very *literal* belief in global climate catastrophism via this path (even if, later, the cultural nature does register). Hence, they’ll suffer the corresponding *and genuine* fears that *literal* belief in imminent global catastrophe must bring.

### 32a:

An irony here is that Greta has correctly identified the apparent major hypocrisy between the [catastrophe narrative put out by authority sources for decades](#), and the lack of corresponding urgency that one would expect if this narrative was *literally* true. Her conclusion of adult irresponsibility almost certainly comes from two main factors: 1) that mainstream science supports the catastrophe narrative, and 2) that everyone who’s told her about this catastrophe can’t be lying. However, unknown to her, mainstream science does not support certain global climate catastrophe absent dramatic emissions shut-down in near decades. And the vast majority of the people propagating the catastrophe narrative (inclusive of its claim of support by mainstream science), are indeed not lying at all, they are emotively *believing*, just as she now does too.

### 32b:

Professor of anthropology Chris Knight [says](#): ‘...all expressions of human symbolic culture may in this light be understood as ‘collusion in deception’ (Knight, Power & Watts 1995; Rue 1994) — collaboration in the maintenance of fictions which have social support. Trust in the founding fictions is not given lightly. Durkheim (1965) indeed showed long ago that a community will place ultimate confidence only in those fictions which are emblematic of itself. If all collude, then on another level the deceptive signal may constitute a performative, constructing its own truth. Ritual specialists may assume the burden of sustaining such circular ‘truths’ on which group identity depends (Rappaport 1979). Note, however, that ingroup/outgroup polarity is central here: one group’s most sacred truths may be another’s transparent deceptions.... ...An ability to handle fictional representations, then, is the essence of human symbolic competence. Distinguishing between surface and deeper meanings poses a major cognitive challenge; involvement in ‘pretend play’ during childhood is crucial to the development of the necessary cognitive skills.’

**33.** There seems to have been considerable effort over the years in exploring how literal or otherwise are religious beliefs. While finding that indeed many people believe metaphorically or symbolically rather than literally\* (or at least selectively so, depending on a particular aspect explored), much of this has to rely upon self-reporting that necessarily has some conscious input. But this doesn’t address how people actually react subconsciously, whatever they think they believe regarding their own particular religious

narratives. And this may matter particularly for strong emotions: hopes / joys, fears / anxieties. However on the latter, [Cranney et al \(2018\)](#) notes that the ‘...*enormous potentiality for anxiety caused by a strong Hell belief is compounded even farther when the fate of family members and other associates is also potentially interpreted through this framework.*’ Following this with ‘...*from a purely rational choice perspective the question might be raised as to why the widespread belief in Hell does not cause even more fear and religious motivation than it does.*’ After all, ‘...*if Hell is equivalent to a large negative utility multiplied by eternity, then, in the spirit of Pascal’s Wager, any non-negligible, positive probability of going to Hell should logically be met with as much fear and religious devotion and activity as is possible for an individual, since any negative utility incurred in this life is automatically outweighed by the infinite multiplier of Hell for eternity.*’ But commensurate fear / anxiety and strict conformant behavior is simply not seen. As the authors note: ‘*To frame this another way, if 13% [those who actually thought they would be going to hell] of a population thought it was more likely than not that they would spend the last 10 years of their life being brutally tortured [i.e. an equivalent, or actually much less as it’s only 10 years, **reality-based** fear], one might expect a crippling amount of anxiety from this group. Furthermore, if they knew that they could evade this fate by following religious dictates, this group would undoubtedly score very high in terms of religious practice and observance.*’ Though not the main thrust of the paper, the authors offer some possibilities as to why this doesn’t happen. But underlying these is likely, as noted per footnote 31, an *internal / subconscious* knowledge that the concept of Hell simply isn’t true / real, but merely a cultural narrative, aka group deception.

\*young children also have more literal belief, and for a Christian sample by 5-7 years a growing sense of awe and religious fear, by 6 to 11 years God is less anthropomorphic, and by 12 regarded as invisible and everywhere.

#### 34. From psycho analyst Rosemary Randall:

*‘What happens to the child who is overwhelmed by stories of disasters he or she cannot influence?’*

*‘...Climate change makes most adults working on it feel powerless. We compare the actions we are capable of with the scale of the problem and feel weak. We look at the extent of our influence and feel helpless. We struggle to combat our contrary desires to consume and feel shame. We feel like children. Children – who are actually socially and politically powerless – are an ideal receptacle for the projection of these uncomfortable and unacceptable feelings.*

*By focusing on the weakest members of society and influencing them, the not-very-powerful adults make themselves feel better at the expense of the absolutely-not-powerful children. By making them act, we prove that we are not as powerless as we feel.’* [Full Text](#) (h/t Susan Crockford).

Note: In case of doubt Randall’s theory of projection is from someone who fully believes that climate change is a very serious and urgent global problem that ‘*will make some parts of the world uninhabitable and others inhospitable*’, meaning ‘*we can’t continue to live like we do – our economic systems, social practices and personal lifestyles are unsustainable. Everything we are used to, much of what we hold dear and many of our dreams and aspirations have to go.*’ [Interview here](#). This appears to be stepping outside of what mainstream science (AR5 technical chapters) say, albeit not necessarily amounting to full emotive commitment on imminent global catastrophe. I didn’t look any further, but the point is that this theory about projection from adults to children is not coming from any kind of climate skeptical perspective, i.e. the pressure on the adults is assumed to be mainly real, not mainly cultural.

35. From climate scientist [Mike Hulme](#)'s 2011 paper '[Reducing the Future to Climate](#)': *'I suggest that the climate reductionism I have described here is nurtured by elements of a Western cultural pessimism that promote the pathologies of vulnerability, fatalism, and fear.[100] It is these dimensions of the contemporary cultural mood that provide the milieu within which this particular form of environmental determinism has reemerged. By handing the future over to inexorable nonhuman powers, climate reductionism offers a rationalization, even if a poor one, of the West's loss of confidence in the future.'* See original for numbered references. NOTE: this paper was [discussed at Climate Etc](#) back in 2011.

36. From [Nature.com](#) : *'**The political danger of deadline-ism.** Pushing hard to meet a deadline may also cause (unintentionally) dangerous political side effects. For example, deadline-ism incubates the political opportunism of declaring a climate emergency. It is no surprise that new political movements calling for the declaration of a climate emergency in parliaments, cities, schools and universities have arisen in the months after the release of the IPCC SR15 (see <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/climate-emergency-campaign>). The rhetoric of emergency emerges from the worldview of millenarianism and its conception of 'compressed time' that calls for immediate actions before it is too late<sup>20</sup>. However, regardless of the original intentions, an empty call for emergency actions can be interpreted in myriad ways. In the worst case, the emergency rhetoric could become 'stolen rhetoric', used as justification for solar geoengineering and potentially for more authoritarian forms of governance and regulation<sup>20,21</sup>.* (Underline mine. See original regarding reference numbers).

37: Latterly there has been [a call](#) by some French right-wing politicians for a boycott of Thunberg's speech in the National Assembly.