



The Great Intervention

A message is coming to us, arriving through changes in the weather, atmosphere, oceans, soils, rivers, forests, coral reefs—and the entire living community of our fellow earthlings. Through an unprecedented series of record high temperatures, through the death of the Great Barrier Reef, through wildfires and floods and superstorms, they're crying out for us to humbly pay attention!

Even though no one can predict the future, the ample evidence is telling us something important: It's time to change the way we live fundamentally, and without delay. What we are doing, just by living our lives, is only making things worse. It's time to act "as if" there's no time. Not to panic, but to wake up—and take appropriate action.

This is very like a family sitting down an addict for an "intervention." Our whole species is being told by all our ecological relations that we have a destructive addiction, that we're ruining our home and destroying the lives of our family members. We're hearing that we have to "stop right now," and go into radical rehab. It is a loving voice, truly, but it is also firm, even fierce. If we don't listen it will only get louder and louder.

This seems to break the bounds of decency. No one has the right to speak this most unwelcome message! I do not presume to "do an intervention" here on anyone else. But I am inviting you to do what I have done—to speak it to ourselves. And to hear it.

I am an addict to my middle class comforts, pleasures, and freedoms. But I can see the moral imperative. And I can affirm my willingness, at least in principle, to start over, recognizing "you must change your life," in Rilke's prophetic words.

When we let this reckoning transform us (and it is most definitely a transformational ordeal) we join a brother-sisterhood. We can recognize anyone else who has faced the facts and gone through the dark night of grieving. It's an invisible fellowship, growing rapidly, powered not by enthusiasm but by moral clarity, intellectual honesty and existential seriousness. It is growing slowly, heart-mind to heart-mind, but inexorably,

and it will continue to ripple through our culture across the years of our maturity. We are all in conversation with it, even those who most fiercely or calmly refuse it.

In a time of real urgency, the most profound wisdom expresses itself in gravitas and equanimity, yes, but also in timely and decisive action, right here in the moment. So on the other side of the intervention, I know I will have to find a way to give myself over to the good work, to a new creative life, to the grief work, to compassion, to the repairing of the world, and to the building of conversations and communities.