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THE SOCIAL WORLD

A PLAY / ACTS ON NATURE

ACTORS

ATMOSPHERE

WATER

SOIL

ORGANISMS

PLATES

CORE

ACTS : SET #1

Early morning. 1,500,000,000 years ago.

PLATES approaches the bar. WATER rushes in.

PLATES: Drink?

WATER [exasperated]: Of course! Why do you always ask that, when you know the answer?

PLATES: What's up with you?

WATER: It's all go, go, go with ORGANISMS. There are just so many of them. They are so different! They have no idea how to act together. We have no idea how their acts will change us. We need to cut our losses, and end these networks before we lose control.

PLATES: Here's your drink, now calm down and we'll go through this again. We were all there ... You, me, CORE, ATMOSPHERE, SOIL and ORGANISMS. Freezing our asses off... Nothing to do... Anyone passing by would have thought we were just a big boring snowball. Remember how we ended up there?

Water: I liked it when oxygenation first came along. But then...

Plates: Yes... then. Who knew CORE's inaction and all that oxygen would work up such a big freeze. We made a social contract, we needed something original ... position ourselves with equal power and act for our mutual benefit. Things were going better, but we didn't know enough about ourselves, our powers or how to use them...together.

And then those two big impacts hit us out of the blue. We needed to adapt, extend our experiment and include non-natural actors. We agreed ORGANISMS would lead. We thought about how we wanted to be in 1.5 billion years and started to work toward that. We still need more knowledge about who we are, how we all work together, and how we protect ourselves from the others, sticking their noses in. It's not like any of us can just pack up and leave!

ACTS : SET #2

Early afternoon. 150,000 years ago.

SOIL and WATER have been called to the bar by ORGANISMS.

ORGANISMS [excited]: So, you will tell the others when they come along, won't you? I think these might be really interesting subjects. The ants and bees are interesting, but I think these "people" might be something special.

SOIL: Will you please just remember to clean up your mess? CORE and PLATES may not be too put out by your actions, and we all know the power they have in this community, but we need more reciprocity here ORGANISMS. A bit more give and take. I mean, how else can we build the trust that we need to get through this?

WATER: I'd take plate movements and volcanos any day ahead of these plants and animals. There are just so many of them, and they are all so different! And they have no idea how to act...

SOIL: OK WATER, we've heard it all before, every day, for almost one and a half billion years.

WATER: Well, I still think we should cut our losses before we lose control.

ACTS : SET #3

Late afternoon. 150 years ago.

ORGANISMS addresses ATMOSPHERE, WATER and SOIL.

ORGANISMS: ...and that's where they are with "the Natural Sciences".

ATMOSPHERE: Just so I'm clear, are they still divided into separate groups, each working on different areas of the "Natural Sciences"?

ORGANISMS: Yes.

SOIL: Getting the details right is important, but so is getting the details to fit together. Will they start working together soon? And why don't they factor in their own influence on the work they do? Don't they get interrelationships and interdependencies?

ORGANISMS: They are trying to understand themselves. There are asylums, prisons, hospitals, schools... all kinds of institutions where they are doing experiments on themselves. And not just Natural Science experiments, but social experiments too, mostly around control for now. But I'm sure before long we'll start seeing some pretty interesting results.

WATER: Look, I know I have been giving you a hard time about this experiment over the years. And you did a good job getting the animals and plants to clear up after themselves. But I'm just not sure about these people. There are just so many of them, and they are all so different! And they have no idea how to act...

SOIL: I'm beginning to agree with WATER. These people are different to the others that have come and gone over the years. They just use so much stuff.

ORGANISMS: They've surprised even me. Look how they got over the plague. Speaking of which, WATER, have you cleared up dysentery yet?

WATER: I am only the messenger here. I carry things along, that's what I do. I can't fix it on my own. You may as well ask ATMOSPHERE to stop them burning fuel. We need to work on these together, and the humans need to realise their acts are involved too. They may be exceptional creatures but that doesn't mean they get a free pass. Why do they think they are exempt from the rules? They think we're just one big resource pool.

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v525/n7568/index.html>



<http://www.nature.com/nclimate/archive/issue.html?year=2016&month=04>



ACTS : SET #4

Early evening. 15 weeks ago.

PLATES and WATER read Nature Vol. 525 No. 7568 and Nature Climate Change Vol. 6 No. 4 at the bar

PLATES: I sometime wonder why we read these things.

WATER: Well they are some of their most prominent journals, especially in the area of...

PLATES: Here's an article that says published research is not reproducible. Click bait. Commerce acts and Science follows, Politics and Law institute a protectionist global state of affairs. An environment of laissez-faire that's far from fair. Put it all in a black box and try to keep the lid closed, like that guy Latour said.

WATER: Latour...isn't he one of those sociologist types?

PLATES: Sociologist, Ethnographer, Philosopher...

WATER: Does anyone care what sociologists say? The Natural Sciences? The other social sciences? Homo Economicus? Take this article. It says that people don't act on facts alone, that values matter too. Do they really need some academic to tell them that?

PLATES: What about Marx and Weber? Or that guy Durkheim, his work on nature and the Australians...

WATER: Durkheim said they used the nature around them to construct an understanding of themselves. Now they abuse the nature around them. They construct and they destruct. And as for Marx...look at the "proletariat" now. The working man is given scraps from the top table, revolts are suppressed, workers' unions corrupted and now they're the precariat. Zero hours, fully commodified and alienated. The Power of the 1% of the 1%.

The sociologists have some good arguments. Its just, like the other sciences, there's too much division and separation and not enough cohesion. It weakens the argument. And when the elites control the knowledge that gets approved, funded and disseminated, and stifle any movements that try to break the chain...

PLATES: That sounds like one of their conspiracy theories.

WATER: Foucault, Latour, lots of them tried to lift the lid on the knowledge box, the distribution of power. But not a lot has changed. The Net appeared to offer a lot, but it's working against them as much as with them.

PLATES: Latour thinks when it comes to "Nature" all their powers are separated, law, commerce, territory, community, all divided. He wants them to act like we do, he wants them to act on our behalf and together think about the planet we want to have in thirty-five years and how we get there.

WATER: And what happens if they fail? Maybe they should just figure out how to leave instead.

EPILOGUE

Late at night. 15 days ago

CORE, PLATES, SOIL, WATER and ATMOSPHERE remove themselves from the bar.

ATMOSPHERE: Nobody saw that comin', right? .

WATER: Maybe ORGANISMS did. Maybe ORGANISMS knew all along.

CORE: I can't believe ORGANISMS would hide it from us.

What about the trust we have built through the years? I just can't believe it's a fact.

PLATES: So where is ORGANISMS now? Giving an interview to Brietbart?

SOIL: Still trying to figure out if that Latour idea can work.

The actors leave the stage as an eerie orange glow emanates from the bar.

THE END