

Human Learning in the Anthropocene

Prompts to a Lakeside Conversation



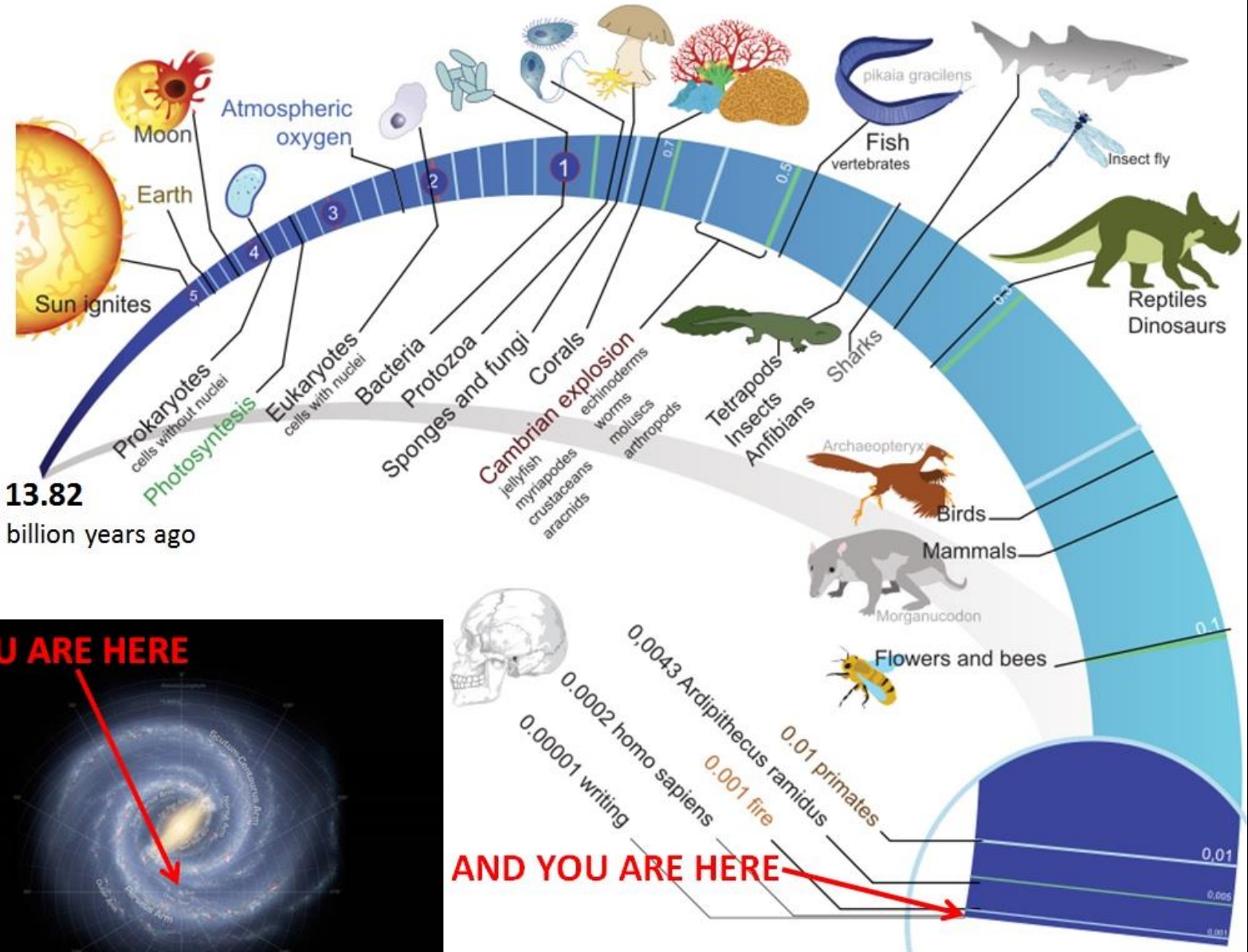
Pristine earth

Photo credit: Jan Visser

The co-evolution of humans and rocks



Where we came from and where we are now



IN SPACE AND IN TIME

Sixth mass extinction:

A question of life and death, also for us, as a species.

- ▣ Barnosky, A. D., *et al.* (2011). Has the Earth's sixth mass extinction already arrived? *Nature*, 471, 51-57.
- ▣ Kolbert, E, (2014). *The sixth mass extinction: An unnatural history*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- ▣ Ceballos, G. *et al.* (2015). Accelerated modern human-induced species losses: entering the sixth mass extinction. *Science Advances*, 1(5) e1400253. Retrieved from <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/1/5/e1400253.full>.

Should we care? Should the Anthropocene last long or be short-lived? Are there reasons why we should be concerned about the preservation of intelligent life? If so, what are such reasons? What can we do if we want to do anything at all?

The importance of thinking in terms of different temporalities

| Time frame in years | Object of evolution |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | The rise of Trumpism |
| 10 | The financial crisis |
| 300 | String quartet |
| 6,000 | Urbanization |
| 40,000 | Religious practices |
| 200,000 | Homo sapiens |
| 3,000,000 | Genus Homo |
| 200,000,000 | Mammals |
| 3,800,000,000 | Terrestrial life |
| 13,820,000,000 | Universe |

What timeframe for this conversation?

Not my children

or my grandchildren and great-grandchildren,

nor their children and their grandchildren and great-grandchildren,

but way beyond the progeny of our imagination there should still be a human habitat as an integral part in the wider ecology of evolving rocks and non-human life forms.

You are invited to think about the human condition some 500 to 1000 years from now.

Some tentative questions

- What does it mean to be human in the second half of the third millennium? How will we have changed while dealing with the challenges and opportunities of the Anthropocene? What, then, characterizes most essentially human behavior at that time?
- As humans will have changed, how will the human habitat have co-evolved? What will it look like?
- What about the role of religion, philosophy, the arts and sciences in the world of the Anthropocene?
- What does the above imply for our visions of human learning now and in the future?
- What does that imply for current educational policy and practice?

Learning, a lifelong feature of human existence

Learning is the disposition of human beings, and of the social entities to which they pertain, to engage in continuous dialogue with the human, social, biological and physical environment, so as to generate intelligent behavior to interact constructively with change.