

**Humans and Other Animals—
An Essential Connection?
Making the Case
for a Holistic Approach**

April 24, 2018

IAWS 2018 Animal Welfare Summit

“Welfare” from Old English *wel faran*

- “the condition of being or doing well”
- I want to speak to a series of connections among all living beings as a way of asserting the need for a robust notion of “welfare.”
- I intend to be “provocative” ... to call forth basic realities that much of today’s discourse ignores.
- I suggest also that our handling of “welfare themes” is *extremely* important to each of us *precisely because we are animals.*

“Welfare” from Old English *wel faran*

- In some contemporary circles, it is considered rude or “radical” to talk plainly of humans’ animality.
- But we live in times where our own animality has been obscured and forgotten.
- What else have we obscured?
 - marginalized humans
 - the environment
 - nonhumans as fellow citizens on a more-than-human Earth
- So I intend to be “radical” in the sense of “going to the root” of the problem.

Speaking truth to power

- My point is to bring us home ...
- ... to make a connection by challenging the modern dualism “humans and animals.”
- Each human is, of course, a primate, mammal, vertebrate and
- member of one animal species among so many others.
- By my choice of words, I seek to convey directly that
- (1) *humans’ realities matter*, and should not be denied, &
- (2) *chimpanzees’ realities*, and *those of elephants and cetaceans*, the large number of *bird species we collect in the “corvid” group*, and *so many other mammals, birds, and more also matter* and thus should not be denied.

There is an essential connection

- between our own animality
- and our recognition of the dignity, importance, abilities, and communities of those neighbors who happen to be members of nonhuman species.
- So when we speak of *the welfare* ... “the condition of being or doing well”
- we use a distinguished concept ...
- ... an idea we know *perfectly well how to use forcefully*.
- Each of us knows intuitively how to recognize good welfare ...
- ... precisely because we are living beings who thrive **when the distinguished, robust sense of “welfare”** is applied to us.
- We are an example of a living being that can thrive,
- and our shared animality with nonhuman animals is a basis for knowing that other animals can thrive or suffer.

The inquiry is difficult ...

- Especially for “others” whom we do not know well.
- But we are *clearly* capable of
- ... **detecting serious suffering** ...
- ... & **taking responsibility for our own actions.**
- These are **existential certainties** with us,
- conferring on each of us the abilities we name “ethics.”
- Both of these certainties played a role in the birth of “animal welfare science.”
- The practice in **modern sciences** often addresses “welfare” by measuring it ... and this is **a heartening development.**

Caveat: “the tyranny of metrics”

- Muller, Jerry Z. *The Tyranny of Metrics*. (Princeton University Press, 2018).
- Ethology as an important science ...
- ... but one in which quantification and objectifying language often dominate.
- The effect of quantification, however, is a denial of other animals’ volition or intention,
- thereby creating what one critic described as “mechanomorphism” regarding nonhumans (*Animal Studies*, 92).

Beyond quantification

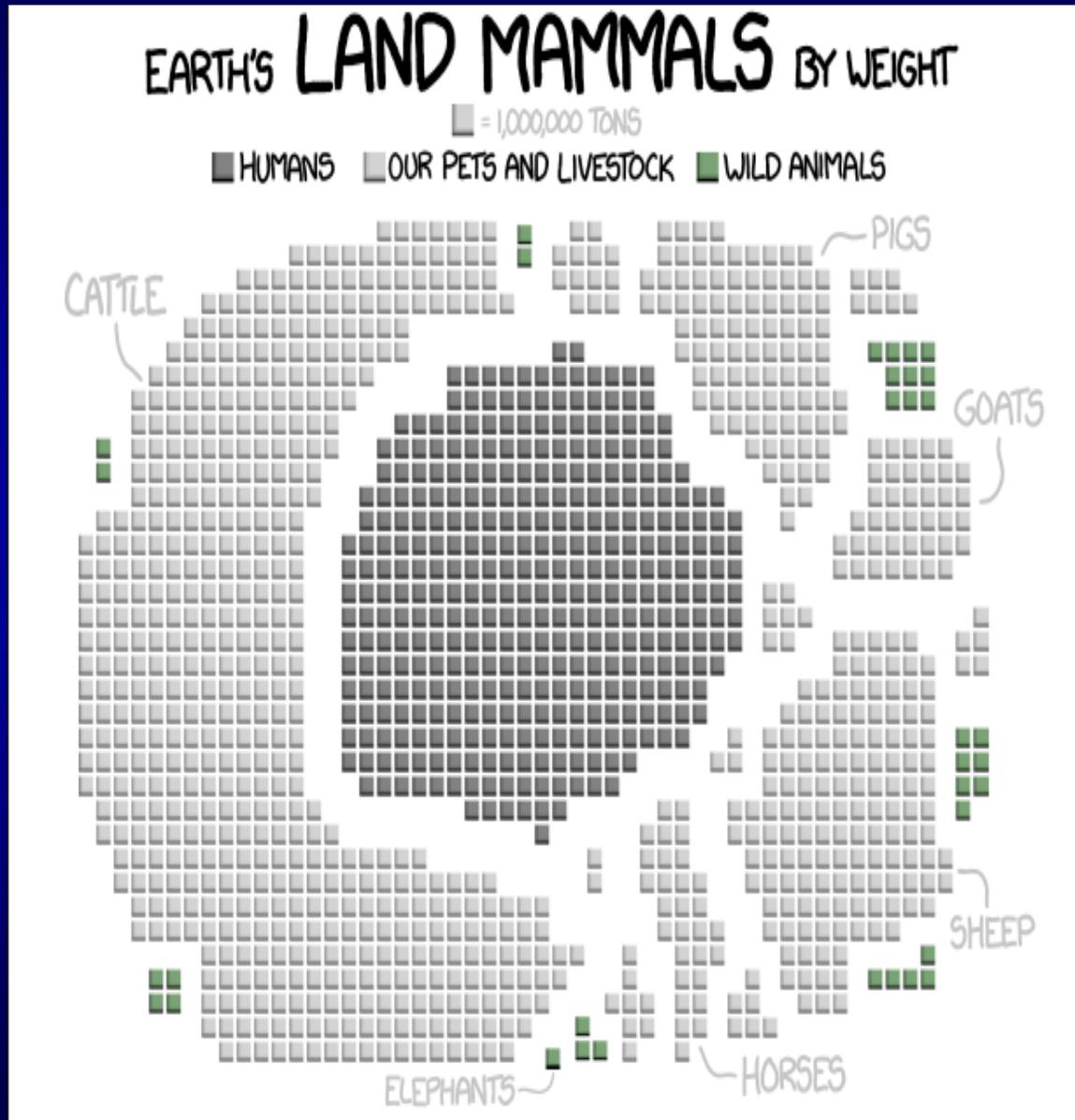
- If we look beyond quantification's parameters and methods, and work with **ethology as our own species'** science-based attempt to notice other animals *and take them seriously*,
- we can detect **two heartbeat issues**:
- (i) our species' pursuit of a science-informed version of **noticing and taking seriously other animals' realities**; **and**,
- (ii) our ability to notice and take seriously the plain fact that ***our own species' domination of other animals causes much suffering, harm, and death.***

Our role?

- It is, of course, **not** our primary role to prevent other animals' suffering.
- Our ethics-intensive human awareness does, however, prompt us to take responsibility for harms we obviously cause,
- and then to avoid unnecessary harms unless they are absolutely necessary.

Imbalance as violence to the possibility of place

<https://www.explainxkcd.com/wiki/index.php/1338>: Land Mammals



Beyond the visual image

- The weight of invisible others ...
- Microorganisms weigh on the order of 10x as much as the “macro animals” represented.
- Further, most of life lives in the ocean.
- But the image speaks forcefully to what we have done to the places we inhabit.
- In this, it reveals how we have damaged the natural world and the possibilities of place and beauty that our ancestors thought sacred and holy.

Return to a robust sense of *wel faran*

- “the condition of being or doing well”
- The importance of place and community in true welfare is easily understood by us,
- for this is our own lot as mammals.
- *A radical suggestion, going to the root of a key problem:*
- **Only a robust sense of animal welfare allows us to fully actualize our human potential.**

Other senses of *wel faran*?

- Why is this important?
- **We do *not* transcend our tendency to self-importance** in those contemporary situations
- “where the word ‘welfare’ signals that only minor concessions to the well-being of nonhuman animals,
- such as larger cages or providing toys that ‘enrich’ a sterile environment,
- will be made even as the overall situation of human domination continues.” (*Animal Studies—An Introduction* p. 118)

How do we self-actualize thru robust *wel faran*?

- Education as the ground on which I stand
- ... an observation drawn from decades of running graduate programs in the U.S. (and teaching Animal Law at Harvard Law School from 2002-2014):
- A robust notion of animal welfare is a wonderful vehicle for getting all of us to think **as well as we can** regarding our relationship with other animals.

How do we self-actualize thru robust *wel faran*?

- Students in Animal Studies courses recognize early and often
- that such education offers a profound exemplification of Viktor Frankl's observation
- “self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence.”

[*Man's Search for Meaning*, 4th edition, p.115]

Education, formal and informal

- Animal Studies courses help develop learning dynamics ... **leaning into the subject**
- For example, **Harvard Summer Term online course** “The Animal-Human Divide”
- For example, the Canisius graduate program’s success educationally, demographically, financially
- Student petitions led to the expansion of U.S. animal law courses
- **Just as important ... informal precursors, informal outcomes ...**

In the balance of this presentation

- Focus on the intersection of animal studies, law, ethics, religion, and cultural studies.
- **Beyond education**, it is important that today's upcoming presentations by a truly international panel name **specific problems**

the power of questions ...

- ... goes well beyond their answers
- Enterprises where the operative principle is “question everything”
- **The Science Channel**
- This is a particularly fitting motto for many educational domains today

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"A remarkable book by a
remarkable scientist."
—EDWARD O. WILSON

ARE WE
SMART
ENOUGH
TO KNOW
HOW
SMART
ANIMALS
ARE?

FRANS
DE WAAL



How might our *law* foster robust *wel faran*?

- ... a key human achievement, although
- contemporary law is *not yet in particularly good dialogue with contemporary science.*
- Can our modern societies develop legal systems that are sensitive to other animals' realities and our larger community?
- “Of course we can.”

How might our *law* foster robust *wel faran*?

- Cicero once commented, “we are all, in the end, slaves of the law that we might be free.”
- The human-centeredness of “we” in this claim is typical of much discussion in law, legal philosophy, and legal education.
- But human-centeredness is no more necessary in law than is bias for one race, or one gender, or one ethnic group.
- Can we choose forms of law based on a robust sense of animal welfare rather than privileged status for humans alone?
- “Of course we can.”

Law's weak sense of "welfare"

- "It is common in **first-wave animal law** for discussions about companion animals, research animals, or food animals to reflect some **acceptance of human domination over other living beings**.
- This is so because a weak sense of welfare prevails, that is, **the word 'welfare' signals that only minor concessions** to the well-being of nonhuman animals,
- such as larger cages or providing toys that "enrich" a sterile environment, **will be made even as the overall situation of human domination continues**.
- **Such a use of 'welfare' falls far short of its original meaning**, which relates to the more substantial issue of quality of life from the captive animal's point of view."

Might **religious communities** foster robust *wel faran*?

- Can we have versions of **religion, spirituality, wisdom traditions** that are sensitive to our larger, more-than-human community?
- **“We already do.”**
- But there continues to be profound human-exceptionalism at the level of **mainline religious institutions**.
- Suggestion—when human exceptionalism becomes a dominant force in religious, spiritual and wisdom traditions,
- what results is a dysfunctional way of asserting humans’ dignity and importance.

religious communities and robust *wel faran*?

- As in law, such an exclusion creates imbalances and violence.
- Our species has long featured, and today increasingly features,
- versions of religion, spirituality, wisdom traditions sensitive to both other animals and the holistic concerns of ecology.
- Just as we can choose forms of law based on a robust sense of animal welfare rather than privileges for humans alone,
- we can choose the same in and through our religious communities.

Can our **ethics** education foster robust *wel faran*?

- Of course ... **we undoubtedly can achieve this.**
- But ... recent history in ethics education at academic institutions has featured one **major ethics theory** after another being **discussed as if the only living beings that matter are members of our own species.**
- Such radical human-centeredness has been a mainstay of the human domination evident in “Earth’s Land Mammals by Weight.”
- **But our ethical abilities are *always* personally alive**
- ... rooted in caring, an eminently animal ability in us.
- ***Of course, then,*** a robust sense of animal welfare is an essential element in any ethics instruction.

Can our **sciences** as practiced foster robust *wel faran*?

- A tougher question than in the values-driven fields of law, religion and ethics.
- Despite the common claim that “science is value-free”, human exceptionalist values are evident in today’s science as practiced.
- But, oh, “**What a thing is the passionate mind with the dispassionate motive!**”
- Without science, we walk blind in the world.
- With *only science*, we are empty of values, devoid of ethics.

Integrated humans = concern for robust welfare

- Historically, humans have been dominated
- ... by inherited social constructions about each other (a lower race, an inferior people, a group we are licensed to despise and harm) ...
- **and we have been further blinded**
- ... by self-inflicted ignorance about our nonhuman neighbors, &
- **by a weak, self-serving sense of “animal welfare.”**
- The result has been predictable:
- many people today use the idea of “animal welfare” to preserve human domination over certain animals.

Integrated humans = concern for robust welfare

- A weak sense of “animal welfare” remains the underpinning of those arguments suggesting that **conceding minor welfare improvements to farm animals or research animals makes our domination of these animals “gentler” or “less harsh”, and thus ethically adequate.**
- Similar arguments abound for minor concessions we make to wildlife communities.

Drawing conclusions: All animals benefit

- Would we ever argue that **ameliorating in minor ways** terrible working and living conditions **suffered by marginalized humans** makes those conditions ethically acceptable?
- *It is plain that in some modern circles, some policymakers, economists and businesses assume this is true regarding the plight of marginalized humans.*
- Being concerned for all humans is one way to test the insight that “**self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence.**”
- The same is true of concern for lives across the species line
- **When you leave this conference, see if it is true in your world that both human animals and nonhuman animals benefit when a robust sense of welfare prevails.**

In this sense, **welfare concerns are good news**

- So are **science-based** questions about any living being's actual realities.
- So are **legal systems** responsive to humans' concerns for the more-than-human community.
- So, too, are **religious, spiritual & wisdom traditions** that work to stay in touch with
- (i) **our own species' deep past of concern for all living beings,**
- (ii) **the fact that our ethical abilities are truly alive,** and
- (iii) **the fact that such abilities are anchored each day in our powerful abilities to wonder "who are the others whom I might respect and protect?"**

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"A remarkable book by a
remarkable scientist."
—EDWARD O. WILSON

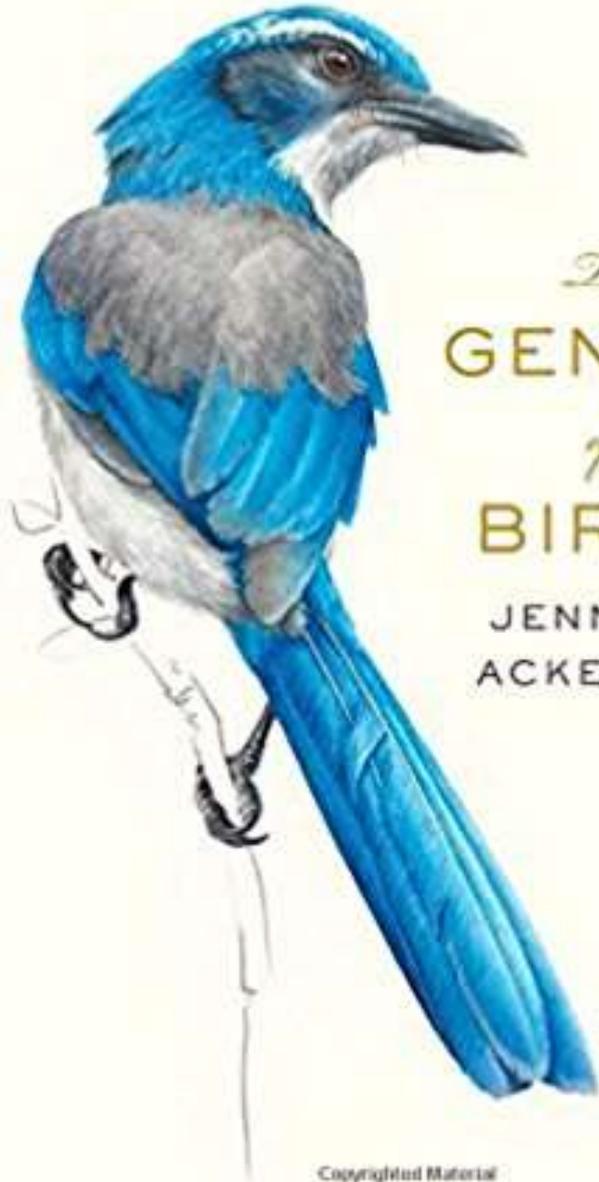
ARE WE
SMART
ENOUGH
TO KNOW
HOW
SMART
ANIMALS
ARE?

FRANS
DE WAAL



Copyrighted Material

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



The
GENIUS
of
BIRDS

JENNIFER
ACKERMAN



Copyrighted Material

JONATHAN BALCOMBE

... WHAT A ...

FISH

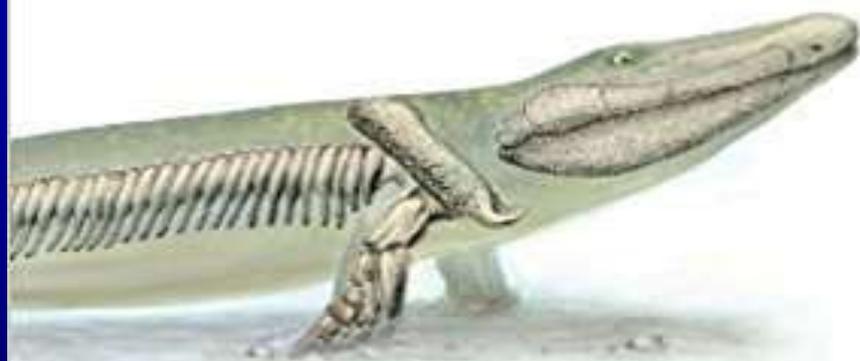
..... KNOWS



THE
INNER LIVES
OF OUR
UNDERWATER
COUSINS

YOUR INNER FISH

A JOURNEY INTO
THE
3.5-BILLION-YEAR HISTORY
OF THE
HUMAN BODY



NEIL SHUBIN

Who is studying whom in the following?

PAUL WALDAU
ANIMAL
STUDIES

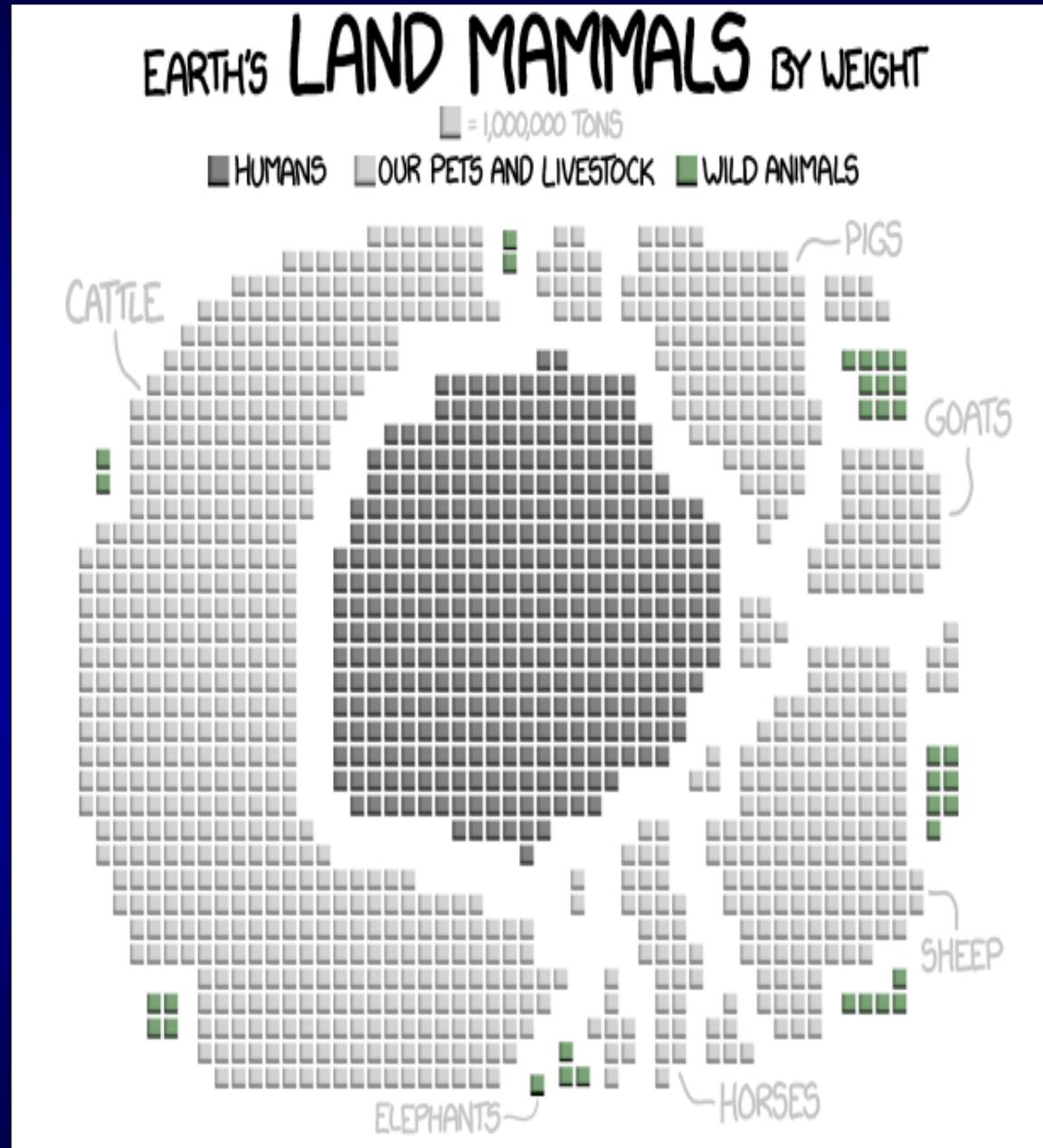
AN INTRODUCTION



The Challenge

- Making community
 - is making morals,
 - and
 - Making morals
 - is making community.

We give to all life when we challenge imbalance as violence



Now for the hardest part of this journey

- ... the return to civilization.
- Some **advice in 2014 book** and some wisdom bequeathed to us by so many small scale human societies:
- ***Go Wild***
- in ways that free “our larger community”
- from “*the afflictions of civilization*”
- Ratey, John, Richard Manning & David Perlmutter, 2014. ***Go Wild: Free Your Body and Mind from the Afflictions of Civilization***, New York: Little, Brown and Co.

The Animal Invitation

- “Animals invite us.
- This world-constituting fact is true whether we are talking about humans inviting humans, or, the focus of this book, nonhumans inviting human awareness, co-existence, appreciation, and even awe.
- One domain after another of our human existence, including often our daily lives, reveals the astonishing variety and depth of these invitations.”

The End

Extra ...

- x