

BOOK REVIEW

WES JACKSON AND ROBERT JENSEN. 2022. **An Inconvenient Apocalypse, Environmental Collapse, Climate Crisis, and the Fate of Humanity.** (ISBN 978-0-268-203665, pbk; 978-0-268-203658, hbk; 978-0-268-204672, ebook PDF; 978-0-268-203641, epub). University of Notre Dame Press, 310 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556, U.S.A. (**Orders:** <https://undpress.nd.edu/>). \$18.99 US, 184 pp, no illustrations or photographs, 6"×9". [2022 recipient of the Giles Family Fund Book Award. This award selection is based on engaging the readership to consider the most enduring questions of our time.]

The evolutionary history of humans, known by the scientific name *Homo sapiens* (wise man), is the last living representative of a long fossil lineage of human-like populations. This book explores the wisdom of the current human populations, whose eight billion plus population growth and spread dominates present-day earth, and the possibility that these sheer numbers if left unchecked without the right choices, may sooner or later, destroy planet earth and perhaps go extinct. This book explores the questions posing human survival. Therefore, if you care about the survival of the most recent human species, you must read this book and consider the options that confront the future of our existence. Many other life forms that make up living components of ecosystems have gone extinct, and/or have merged with other extant species, so will human evolution follow the same time course?

The introduction (pages 1–13) explores the background in time and space of both authors' belief systems as this relates to a "multi-cascading crisis." There are several bullets in the book that readers will encounter such as "catastrophic risks that require immediate attention," "the decline of natural resources and an emerging global resource crisis, especially in water; the collapse of ecosystems that support life, and the mass extinction of species; human population growth and demand, beyond Earth's carrying capacity; global warming, sea-level rise, and changes in the Earth's climate affecting all human activity; universal pollution of the Earth system and all life by chemicals; rising food insecurity and failing nutritional quality; nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction; pandemics of new and untreatable diseases [witness COVID-19 and variants as a current example]; the advent of powerful, uncontrolled new technologies; national and global failure to understand and act preventively on these risks." I would add to this list the "warring nature" of peoples and nations over the history of planet Earth. The instinctive nature of "fight or flight" ingrained in the evolution of humans.

Topical chapters include: Who is "we"?; Four Hard Questions, size, scale, scope, and speed; We Are All Apocalyptic Now; A Saving Remnant; Ecospheric Grace; Conclusions: the sum of all hopes and fears. We means all of us, a universal WE, all human beings past, present, and future. The authors accept their role as being part of WE and also their culpability as being part of environmental problems Earth faces. This self-effacing approach to ecosystem problems is refreshing to recognize that WE are all part of larger environmental problems Earth faces now and in the future. Even so, human individual similarities and differences are described within the context of human populations.

The Who is We chapter has a discussion, comparison, and assessment of capitalism and socialism's impactive destructive effects on environmental degradation that is worth careful consideration. The Four Hard Questions chapter are worth repeating here: "What is the size of a human population? What is the **scale** of a human community? What is the **scope** of human competence to manage our interventions into the larger living world? At what **speed** must we move toward different living arrangements if we are to avoid catastrophic consequences." The book attempts to answer these questions. The book will give you a better understanding of "technological fundamentalism."

The concepts related to systems of power such as royal, prophetic, and apocalyptic are discussed, in part, with examples from the Christian Bible Old Testament and New Testament. The authors are white, raised in the Protestant Christian tradition, and use biblical stories as part of their narrative. Readers need to consider especially the chapter "We Are All Apocalyptic Now" to realize the full impact of what the authors believe the future holds. This book will challenge your very existence, the way you live, and perhaps a belief system and lifestyle for a better tomorrow. You may disagree with the author's assessments, recommendations, and forecasts but readers should consider their impact on future generations of humans. The modest cost of this book in paperback should put it on every reader's bookshelf.

—Harold W. Keller, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Botanist and Mycologist, Researcher,
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About the Authors:

Wes Jackson is past president of The Land Institute and author of many books on environmental subjects. He was awarded the Pew Conservation Scholar in 1960, a MacArthur Fellow in 1962, and the Right Livelihood Award in 2000, sometimes referred to as the Alternative Nobel Prize. His more recent book "Hogs Are Up: Stories of the Land, with Digressions" was recently reviewed in *JBRIT*.

Robert Jensen is an emeritus professor from the University of Texas at Austin in the School of Journalism and Media. He authored the book in 2021 "The Restless and Relentless Mind of Wes Jackson: Searching for Sustainability" also reviewed in *JBRIT*. He currently collaborates with the Ecosphere Studies Program at The Land Institute and is the author of many other books.