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ARTICLE

Toward a Thrutopian Metacrisis Curriculum

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Abstract

Humanity is facing a confluence of existential environmental and material crises threatening socio-economic sustainability and the web of life that predicates human existence. At the same time, the erosion of spiritual, social, political and economic assemblages is undermining social cohesion, the fabric of democratic societies and humanity's ability to change course. The dynamics in which humanity now finds itself has been termed the *metacrisis*, an embodiment of a mythical, all-consuming Moloch, emerging from collective akratic actions. Here, the consequences of the metacrisis for education are discussed from Rupert Read's (2017) thrutopian perspective, which sidesteps the paralysis arising from dystopian laments and major-utopian fantasies. This paper argues for a thrutopian curriculum that enacts Read's call for attention to the present and a focus on adaptation through resilience building, environmental care, positive relations and enjoyment of the possible. Such a curriculum confronts dystopian visions as no longer avoidable challenges while pulling utopian concepts from the permanent deferral inherent in major utopias down to minor-utopian realisations in the daily here-and-now of adaptive survival. The paper contends that thrutopian thinking can empower curriculum writing, teaching and environmental education and defuse the rise of debilitating crisis anxiety across the age spectrum.

Keywords: Curriculum; education; metacrisis; moloch; thrutopia

Introduction

This paper proceeds as follows: I introduce the existential metacrisis dynamics as an embodiment of a mythical *Moloch* who consumes humanity and the ecosystems that predicate our existence (Cooley et al., 2023; Pineault, 2019; Schmachtenberger et al., 2023). Referring to Rupert Read's (2017) concept of *Thrutopia* as a frame, defusing Moloch emerges as the educational challenge of our time. To position Thrutopia, I follow with a discussion of the dialectic between utopian idealisms and dystopian outcomes, Margaret Atwood's (2015) Ustopia. I then propose ways to move beyond akrasia[1], denial and paralysis toward anchoring hope in dire circumstances as a prerequisite for educational engagement with the Moloch. With reference to the *minor theory* of Katz (1996), I suggest minor-utopian strategies and focus areas for the development of a thrutopian curriculum that can disrupt the metacrisis Moloch. I conclude with the comment that we already have many of the required educational and pedagogical tools at hand, but need to activate them with purpose in deriving a curriculum for thrutopian times and environmental education, in particular.

[1]Acting against one's own better judgement due to a lack of will.

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The Polycrisis, Metacrisis and the Moloch

The world is becoming engulfed in an accelerating maelstrom of existential crises, including the climate emergency (Ripple et al., 2024), a multitude of interconnected ecological overshoot, over-extraction, pollution and species extinction trajectories (Cowie et al., 2022; Fanning et al., 2022; Herrington, 2021; Merz et al., 2023), as well as the destabilisation of the post-WWII global and social world order, as right-wing, populist, nationalist, neofascist, neoliberalist and neocolonial ideologies gain traction (Ayers, 2024). Extreme floods and storms alternate with severe droughts and wildfires. Not a week passes, as it seems, without destructive climatic extremes somewhere on Earth that turn entire regions into dystopian disaster zones (Iles et al., 2024). A major war is currently being fought in Europe, and the Middle East conflict has entered a genocidal phase for the people of Palestine (Pieris, 2024). Artificial hyperintelligence threatens to make human existence expendable through exponential developments in computation and robotics (Kasirzadeh, 2025). Dystopia is encroaching on the collective consciousness, while perceptions of peaceful and abundant normality within liberal Western democracies are receding into utopian domains. Summarily, these crises have been called the *polycrisis* (Lawrence et al., 2024).

The current political, psychological and spiritual condition in which humanity finds itself has been termed the *metacrisis* (Neal, 2023; Rowson, 2021; Schmachtenberger et al., 2023). Arendt's (1958) insights into the paradoxical and dystopian dimensions of humanity's ever-increasing capabilities are playing out in our time. Rowson (2020) argues that the metacrisis is a crisis of identity and likens it to a living, self-propelling process that defines us from within and usurps our "social imaginary" (para. 6). The metacrisis is "educational, epistemic and spiritual in nature" (Rowson, 2020, para. 5). Contemplation of the metacrisis perspective induces a sense of finitude (Read & Alexander, 2019) with profound consequences for education. Stein (2022) made the point that education precedes politics and, therefore, is generative for civilisations. Consequently, he saw the metacrisis as a result of educational failure and argued, "that there is no viable future for civilisation that does not include a radical change in the nature of our educational systems" (p. 6). The metacrisis is education's ultimate challenge today.

The metacrisis dynamics and the game-theoretical imperatives that keep society stuck in its accelerating destructive spiral have been referred to as *Moloch* (Schmachtenberger et al., 2023), a mythical "abomination who calls for the ritual sacrifice of children" (Cooley et al., 2023, p. 8) and now demands "the whole world as a sacrifice" (Pineault, 2019, p. 119). The Moloch is fed by the actions of humanity in competition for dwindling resources, the unsustainable demand for economic growth and the struggle for power and dominance in the capitalist monopoly game.

The Moloch metaphor was recited in Allan Ginsberg's (2010) poem "Howl", which led to Alexander's (2014) comprehensive meditations on Moloch and the capitalist entrapment. Alexander asks, "The implicit question is—if everyone hates the current system, who perpetuates it?" (p. 2), and he then lets Ginsberg answer: "'Moloch'. It's powerful not because it's correct—nobody literally thinks an ancient Carthaginian demon causes everything—but because thinking of the system as an agent throws into relief the degree to which the system isn't an agent" (p. 2).

The Moloch is not an agent that can be argued with, but rather an automaton, an emergent, self-organising monstrous assemblage generated and coded by the competitive capitalist socio-economic system that feeds with exponential appetite and growing powers on limited planetary resources and, ultimately, on humanity itself. It is now racing to replace people with robots and human minds with AI systems. The emergent Moloch has *downward causation* affecting the lives of humans and the more-than-human world (Voosholz & Gabriel, 2021). In the language of Deleuze & Guattari (1983, 1987), the Moloch is an emergent assemblage of individuals, organisations and nations, with territorialising behaviour and internal self-maintenance through the coded actions its structure and dynamism demand from its constituents. Cole (2021, 2022) argues that, in confronting the Anthropocene, as he frames the metacrisis, the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari is perhaps finding its most important application today. I built the

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theoretical foundations of my thesis on climate change education on their work and provided an accessible summary of their concepts (Everth, 2024, pp. 11–17 and pp. 21–36).

The personification of the metacrisis dynamics as an entrapping Moloch provides a powerful, revealing and educationally useful metaphorical framing that can mobilise thinking, generate useful narratives and unmask false moral compromises. With reference to the environmental movement, Lakoff (2010) argues that "[t]he truth must be framed effectively to be seen at all" (p. 80). The Moloch metaphor portrays the complex network of interacting metacrisis dynamics as an emergent assemblage that territorialises the planet and its constituent heterogeneous elements, including individuals, organisations and flows of matter. Human agency and actions are revealed as conditioned by Moloch's coding. The Moloch metaphor enables effective pedagogical mirroring but also personal distancing as part of the struggle to break free eventually: "I am not the Moloch, but I too have been feeding it. What can I do to change my behaviour?" The Moloch framing provides a powerful lens for the development of the anti-complicity pedagogy discussed by Zembylas (2019). A depiction of the Moloch from the early eighteenth century by Johann Lund is shown in Figure 1. For a comprehensive critical discourse on the pedagogy of vilifying evil, I recommend Kessel et al., (2024).



Figure 1. Moloch Idol, Public Domain.

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Defusing Moloch: Thrutopia and the Educational Challenge of Our Time

Education has traditionally served as a mechanism for intergenerational cultural reproduction (Nash, 1990; Webb et al., 2020). During the exuberance of exponential economic expansion of the post-WWII decades, education in Western societies focused predominantly on socialising students into productive and rewarding roles within the evolving planetary domination of humans. Narratives of dystopias and utopias featured as warnings and inspirational contexts on the sides of educational curricula (Papastephanou, 2016; Priyadharshini, 2019; Sypnowich, 2018). A wide scope of rewarding pathways could be envisioned between dystopian and utopian extremes toward relatively benign and prosperous futures. Today, the tables have turned, and modernity, either because it remains incomplete or, more likely, because it is fundamentally predicated on exponentiality and inevitable overshoot, reveals itself as utopian in a one-planet reality with dystopian consequences (Vieira, 2021). The enviro-material consequences of the metacrisis dynamics are rapidly becoming dominant features of contemporary events. The situation we find ourselves in calls for a radical redefinition of the purpose of education in response to the realities in which young people are thrown today (Stein, 2019, 2022).

Realising that dystopias and utopias are unsuitable narrative guardrails to guide humanity through the coming time, Rupert Read (2017) coined the term Thrutopia to bring into focus visions of life ahead that can shape expectations, adaptations and agency to help us navigate the long trajectory of climate and related emergencies. Read (2017) proposed that a thrutopian narrative can inform us "how to live and love and vision and carve out a future, through pressed times that will endure" (para. 5). He argues:

> The climate crisis is going to be a long emergency, probably lasting hundreds of years. It is useless to fantasise a shining sheer escape from it to utopia. But it's similarly useless, dangerously defeatist, to wallow around in dystopias. We need ways of seeing, understanding, inhabiting, creating what will be needed for the very long haul. *Visioning the politics and ecology of getting through*. (Read, 2017, para. 5, emphasis added)

Read (2017) argues that visions of a world being returned to balance cannot remain static but must become dynamic, adapt to the growing dystopian realities and be "continually remade" (para. 6) on a permanent basis. This continual adaptation is giving rise to the thrutopian narrative in which society pragmatically navigates emerging dystopian challenges without succumbing to defeatist despair or deferring our dreams of a better world to ever-distant utopias. Instead, Read (2017) prompts us to pay indefinite attention to the present, the here and now.

> The concept of thrutopia says: Don't defer your dreams. We need those dreams now. Experience the present as paradisiacal, and change it where it isn't, and then we might just get through. (Read, 2017, para. 8)

Read is not channelling hedonism here. The human capacity to persevere and build a better world necessitates positivity, energy, dreams, love and compassion. These qualities must be cultivated despite and as an essential antidote to the dire circumstances of the metacrisis.

Read's pragmatic approach and his focus on the nearfield of events and relationships make his thrutopian concepts appealing for educational theory and praxis and provide a useful framing in which educational strategies for overcoming Moloch can emerge. I propose a thrutopian curriculum that enacts his call for attention to the present through a focus on daily steps of resilience building, environmental care, positive relations and enjoyment of the possible. This would be a curriculum where dystopian possibilities are pre-emptively confronted as present-day challenges, and utopian concepts are pulled from the permanent deferral inherent in major utopias down into minor-utopian (Katz, 1996; Parrinder, 2012) realisations in the daily here-and-

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now of education and active survival. I contend that thrutopian thinking can be empowering, help to defuse the rise of debilitating climate and eco-anxiety (Jarrett et al., 2024) and provide a framework in which strategies to defy Moloch can emerge. However, before tracing thrutopian educational strategies, it is helpful to contrast Thrutopia with Utopia, Dystopia and "Ustopian" (Atwood, 2015) dialectics.

Utopias, Dystopias and Ustopian Dialectics

Visions of how the future ought to be, as envisioned from historical and contemporary subjective perspectives, have inspired literature and philosophy and guided social movements, power struggles, wars and revolutions throughout human history. However, seductive utopian visions of better futures carried within them the seeds of dystopian hellscapes. Religious utopias were generative of dystopian outcomes, the crusades, the Inquisition and witch-burnings or the dystopian life of women under the Taliban (Penn, 2024). The grand utopian propositions of the early 20th century produced arguably the most profound dystopian human suffering, from the utopian hubris of Nazi Germany resulting in the Holocaust and a world-consuming war, the Stalinist collapse of communist utopian ideals into mass-murder in the Gulag, the utopian phantasies of the Khmer Rouge ending in killing fields or the consequences of Israeli utopianism ending in dystopian suffering of the people of Palestine. As the consequences of the metacrisis grow exponentially, capitalist modernity is being unmasked as a utopian ideal with the dystopian consequence of giving rise to Moloch, global overshoot, environmental destruction and the looming replacement of humans by AI systems (Wojewoda, 2023). Utopian idealisms, when observed from the point of view of those not fit for or included in their perfectionist aims, can be as hellish as the dystopias they might wish to escape from. Utopia and dystopia are entwined in a dialectic entanglement.

To describe the dialectic inseparability of utopias from their corresponding latent dystopian potentials, Atwood (2015), in her "Dire Cartographies" of literary utopianism, coined the word "ustopia" (p. 66) and argued that ustopian literary fantasies are frequently bound with cartography through which imaginary landscapes are linked with idealist or hellish mindscapes in which place and being are interwoven through mutually generative relationships. The utopian promises of modernity evoke a successive transformation of growing areas on Earth into dystopian sceneries. Real-world utopian idealism remains Earth-bound and is, therefore, inseparable from mitigating and surviving the dystopian environmental trajectory of the metacrisis. Atwood's (2015) ustopian dialectic is central to the metacrisis discourse. Read's (2017) Thrutopian vision arises as an interstice between utopian and dystopian imaginations within a "restless dialectic [that] resists the calm ossifying into complacency" (Gunderson, 2021, p. 156). Within this dialectic, we need to find the seeds for radical hope (Lear, 2009) and a curriculum to get us through.

Anchoring Hope: From Akrasia, Denial and Paralysis to Love and Forgiveness

Envisioning thrutopia will require the radical hope (Lear, 2009; Mosley et al., 2020) that oppression through Moloch and collective complicity in the destructive rituals of capitalism can be overcome through collaborative resistance. Alexander (2014) sets Elua, the God of love and the pursuit of "niceness, community and civilisation" (p. 22), who "embodies the principles of altruism, empathy and coordination" (Peborgh, 2023, p. 2) as a foil to Moloch. However, the obstacles are significant. The complexity of the metacrisis and the breakdown of science-informed, progressive democracies under neofascist, right-wing populism—the "organic crisis of neoliberal capital accumulation" (Ayers, 2024, p. 413)—is eroding major-utopian (Parrinder, 2012) ideals of a global state-led sustainability transition. Greta Thunberg's astonishing appeal and impact raised hopes that students and schools could become a centre for cultural transformation (Everth &

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Bright, 2022). However, five years after she inspired the first global school strikes, her momentum has faded, and a majority of students appear to be in denial or akrasia, while education systems continue to pay only lip service to the climate crisis. After his fateful re-election in 2024, Donald Trump has thrown the official position of the USA into a dystopian denial of reality and is deliberately destroying the capacity of the USA to address the climate and sustainability crises he denies. Moloch reigns supreme in Trump's MAGA America. "Fixing this world" in a grand global action seems to recede from reach.

The weight of the situation is becoming increasingly difficult to bear for educators working to implement climate change education and for their students (Bright, 2023; Everth, 2024). What do we tell our children? Little shoulders cannot bear this. Being conscious of this situation can turn life into a rollercoaster of fear, culpability and dread, resulting in a paralysing inability to form a persuasive response. Active participation in the socio-economic milieux that is generative of the metacrisis almost inevitably results in cognitive dissonance, akrasia and depression. Reflecting on Lutheran Christian Ethics, Swenson-Lengyel (2017) turns to a *proclamation of forgiveness* as the gateway to survival, to getting through in the face of anthropogenic dystopia, practical denial and moral weakness. With this move, the author provides a fitting segue to thrutopian education:

> Christian ethics, then, cannot only proclaim the norm but must also include (again and again) a proclamation of forgiveness, a reminder of freedom, and an encouragement of love. Our failure can be our starting point rather than that from which we hide in denial and in moral paralysis. We must recognise and work with these moral weaknesses rather than seeing them solely as that which must be overcome for environmental ethics to flourish. (Swenson-Lengyel, 2017, p. 183)

This move toward forgiveness, freedom and the encouragement of love has universal appeal and is not bound to any particular religious doctrine. I argue that in these words, Swenson-Lengyel (2017) has found an anchor stone from which a successful thrutopian educational stance can emerge, dovetailing with the insights of Alexander (2014) and Peborgh (2023) regarding the weakness of Moloch. I draw attention here to the realisation that the polycrisis (Lawrence et al., 2024), while having direct, major existential physical implications for the future, is only part of the issue. However, it is Moloch, the metacrisis dynamics within the social discourse and the behaviour-inducing or blocking psychology it entails, that troubles the human capacity to escape from our predicament and to educate us out of it. Getting through will require addressing the psychological drivers of the metacrisis to enable the human capacity to respond effectively to the physical, cognitive and emotional challenges. It will require the deterritorialisation of the Moloch assemblage in billions of minds, and especially in the minds of those who come after we are gone. In this context, deterritorialisation in the language of Deleuze & Guattari (1983, 1987) refers to liberation from the Moloch assemblage and ultimately its dissolution and disempowerment[2].

Minor-Utopian Strategies: Toward a Thrutopian Curriculum

In sketching steps towards a thrutopian curriculum, I will connect to Read's (2017) insight of focusing on the present, the here and now, the non-deference of life and dreams, the small steps, the local resilience building and the minor-utopian deterritorialisations (Katz, 1996) of the metacrisis dynamics through Alexander's (2014) invocation of Elua, and Swenson-Lengyel's (2017) acts of love and forgiveness. I also acknowledge the work of Wheatley (2025), who addressed the question of how PK-16[3] education should tackle the metacrisis by developing 21

[2]For readers unfamiliar with the philosophy and terminology of Deleuze and Guattari I refer to Cole (2021) and also Everth (2024).

[3]PK-16 is a US-label for education from pre-kindergarten (PK) up to bachelor's degrees (16th grade).

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educational goals, which encompass much of the spectrum of recommendations that my Thrutopian curriculum perspective would agree with.

Like in Rosen's (2003) children's book on making it successfully through obstacles that cannot be circumvented, we need stories that focus on the beauty in the day, and the pragmatic realisation that obstacles can be experienced, and passed through, one step at a time, whereby each individual step becomes a *minor-utopian interstice* within the dominant major context of the crisis dynamics. I contend that this minor-utopian step-by-step progress offers a core learning that can get us through.

I am building here on the work of Katz (1996) on "minor theory" flowing from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1986). Katz (1996) argued that minor theory creates an interstice in dominant major contexts and "tears at the confines of major theory; pushing its limits to provoke 'a line of escape', a rupture – a tension out of which something else might happen" (p. 489). As Katz (1996) states, minor theory invokes a continual rupturing of the oppressive powers of the major narratives by "subversion, escape, transformation. It is metamorphic – 'a becoming'" (p. 491). The political power of minor theory, as Katz (1996) argues, enables minorities to create interstitial disruptions of dominant powers. The embrace of minority, or "'Becoming-minor' is a subversive act" (Katz, 1996, p. 496)[4]. I contend that pragmatic minor thinking is crucial for disrupting the oppressive and disempowering impact of the major crisis mele and defeating Moloch through the aggregation of a multitude of minor, achievable and liberating steps. See Figure 2, for a vision of Moloch's deterritorialisation.

Moloch and the metacrisis are global phenomena. However, they derive their devastating impact from the summation over the actions, inactions and psychological conditions of billions of people, their families, communities and local contexts, and the large-scale systems and structures of capital and political power that have emerged from them. The major-utopian response to the situation is an appeal to global solutions and society-wide, programmatic system change on a grand scale. However, in light of the ustopian dilemmas, hoping for the materialisation of major-utopian solutions is likely futile and disempowering. The Moloch will usurp grand utopias and direct their enactment to grow its powers. The strategy I propose for the deterritorialisation and disempowerment of Moloch is a *minorisation* of the problems, a refocusing on the minor contexts and relationships, from family to community and local place-based politics, the molecular tapestry from which the crises arise, within which we live and must get through and within which solutions can emerge. In my view, we already possess much of the educational theoretical and practical toolset to enact such a strategy, but we need to employ this deliberately now to form a thrutopian curriculum that defies Moloch and guides us and the next generations through.

Key Strategies for a Thrutopian Curriculum

I focus on the following strategic areas for such a curriculum. Most of these will be familiar to the reader, and in those cases, I will refer in this paper only briefly to the relevant literature.

Philosophy of Existence, Purpose and Meaning, in and of Life
Resilience Building through Nature Connectedness
Place-Based Contexts and Community Building
Learning from Indigenous Cultures and Wisdoms
Ecofiction and Environmental Storytelling

[4]I acknowledge resonances and dissonances of Katz' work with the feminist, decolonial and Indigenous discourses which Katz (1996) addresses (p. 492). However, this paper doesn't have the room to unpack these further and I refer to Katz and also Spivak (2015).

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Figure 2. The deterritorialisation of Moloch through minor-utopian interstice.

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Philosophy of existence, purpose and meaning in and of life

Moloch challenges the purpose of our existence and questions the meaning of life, and impacts teacher capacity to lead young people toward discovering meaningful perspectives in an increasingly meaning-deprived world. Rousell and Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles (2022) talk about the "political and moral contortions" (p. 29) that trouble "Education at the Ends(s) of Worlds(s)" (p. 36). They point to cognitive dissonance, where our actions feed the Moloch despite our insights on the metacrisis and speak of the moral obligation for teachers to provide a meaningful outlook on life for their students. Generating hope while simultaneously teaching to take the metacrisis seriously requires the engagement of young people with philosophies of existence and a quest for purpose. It must take young people's questions, ideas, concerns, despairs and hunger for a deep connection to meaning and purpose seriously. Education must address the "Inauthenticity at the level of personal experience" (Stein, 2022, p. 9) with which questions of meaning are too often alienated by inauthentic engagement with the big questions of the meaning *of life* and meaning *in life*, the "fundamental cornerstone of wellbeing and flourishing" (Steger et al., 2021, p. 551). These questions begin in early childhood, when young people often ask very big questions, only to be deferred and disappointed by inauthentic deflections, because many adults may never engage authentically and deeply with these questions themselves.

I paraphrase here Steger et al., (2021, p. 558), who referred to three foundational dimensions from the literature on meaning-making in life: *coherence of cognition* and experience of self; *purpose of pursuits* and goals; *significance of mattering* in and for the world. I argue that in a world of growing virtualisation of existence and globalisation of contexts, these three dimensions are becoming eroded and lose the essential intimacy of authentic anchoring in the immediate surroundings and human connections. Humans have been "ushered into a new kind of alienation" (Tease, 2025), resulting in a lack of authenticity in *viva activa*, the enacted life (Arendt, 1958) and a vulnerability to intersectional oppression and disempowerment (Tease, 2025). The dimension of significance and mattering is fundamentally linked to authentic relationships within the human and the more-than-human world. Confronting the meaning crisis and overcoming the sense of futility induced by the crisis focus is an essential prerequisite to galvanise thrutopian action. Steger et al., (2021) emphasise that "meaning in life is a process not an outcome" (p. 570). This is an important insight for outcome-oriented education systems, focused on assessments, grades, achievements and the acquisition of status (Everth, 2022).

Addressing the three educational foundations Steger et al., (2021) referred to is linked to the realisation that the material impacts of the world crises are experienced locally, and the responses to these impacts call for local engagement. Minorisation of the crises through local place-based engagement, connection with nature and the building and nurturing of local community is a continual interstitial process of becoming (Katz, 1996). The following thrutopian education strategies focus on local relationships, action, engagement and authentic experiences in the natural and human worlds that surround us.

Resilience building through nature connectedness

Nature connectedness is well regarded as a pathway for generating environmental awareness, providing emotional grounding and spiritual growth and instilling ecological behaviour (Otto & Pensini, 2017; Restall & Conrad, 2015), all of which will be crucial for a successful thrutopian curriculum. The experience of joy in nature fosters a sense of freedom and meaning-making, as well as a sense of independence from daunting global issues, and can induce threshold events that lead to life-changing personal spiritual transformation (Hollingsworth, 2022). Nature-connectedness and outdoor education can foster the generation of hope and galvanise environmental action (Chawla, 2020; Mcphie & Clark, 2015; Pirchio et al., 2021). Bringing climate change into discourse with respect to experiences in the students' local environment was

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found to be especially productive (Duke & Holt, 2022). Local nature-based education is a minor theoretical interstice that disrupts the psychological distance and akrasia arising from major theoretical environmental issues. Teachers who have experienced the value of nature connection in their own lives often show a desire to incorporate it into their teaching (Everth, 2024). Making it through the coming hard times will, without a doubt, require working with nature in local settings to generate physical and emotional sustenance by fostering a deep connection with the more-than-human life.

Place-based contexts and community building

Place-Based Education (PBE) has gained significant traction in curriculum reforms. "PBE is a promising and meaningful pedagogical approach" (Yemini et al., 2023). Extensive literature argues that PBE is an effective strategy for climate change education and strengthening community resilience in the face of hazards and emergencies (e.g., Hata et al., 2021; Mbah et al., 2021; O'Sullivan, 2019; Rousell & Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, 2020; Winograd, 2016). Nusche et al., (2024) explore education as a driver of transformative change with regard to climate change in an OECD working paper and argue that local contexts offer "microcosms in which sustainability solutions could be tested and piloted" (p. 9) to induce tipping points for social behaviour change. Education in local place-based contexts provides opportunities to engage in minor-utopian disruptions and lines of escape from the major crisis discourse. Engagement with "local obstacles" offers teachers opportunities to make a difference, build resilience and undertake steps of "getting through", one small issue at a time.

A thrutopian lens on sustainability education and PBE must be critical of techno-fixes and, paraphrasing what Adam et al., (2019) argued, "unlearn what sustainability means before we can authentically engage with the wicked problem it presents" (Everth, 2024, p. 75).

Backwards to the future: learning from indigenous cultures and wisdoms

Deterritorialising Moloch is a part of a decolonial process (Thornton et al., 2019; Whyte, 2017). A thrutopian response and adaptation may greatly benefit from a rediscovery of Indigeneity, Indigenous knowledge and intercultural collaboration (Lazrus et al., 2022; Mbah et al., 2021; Mustonen et al., 2021). We may find that "walking backwards into the future" (O'Sullivan, 2019) by embracing Indigenous wisdoms can be a key strategy for a thrutopian pathway. In this sense, education can foster a process of becoming re-indigenised with planet Earth, what Whyte (2017) calls "*renewing relatives*" (p. 158, emphasis in the original). Freeing ourselves from Moloch is also a process of "decolonisation and reinhabitation" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 8) of our place in the world. Indigenous and postcolonial perspectives can turn dystopian realities into a thrutopian stance (Ashcroft, 2021; Whyte, 2018) and refuse the colonial linear time (Rowland, 2019; Wright, 2006) that replaced natural cycles with exponentiality and collapse trajectories. The thrutopian stance relates to the realisation that for Indigenous cultures, the looming apocalypse is not an "impending future to be dreaded" (Whyte, 2018, p. 227) but already a contemporary and post-apocalyptic struggle. For Indigenous people, "the present has already been dystopian" (Rousell & Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, 2022, p. 132) due to the impact of colonialism and the displacement of Indigenous life by the unsustainable expansion of modernity. As Katz (1996) argues, the embrace of Indigeneity and solidarity with minorities constitutes minor theoretical disruptions of dominant powers. Learning with and from Indigenous cultures is a crucial component of a thrutopian curriculum.

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Ecofiction and environmental storytelling

A thrutopian curriculum will rely on generating collective moral imaginations. Ecofiction and environmental storytelling (Manwaring, 2024; Molthan-Hill et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2022) can elicit these imaginations. Stories are like mirrors through which the self and the world are reflected. In thrutopian times, "[w]e truly need 'rainbow mirrors' – diverse visions that reflect the plurality of social norms, collective aspirations, and the potential of technology to support human and planetary Flourishing" (Mytka & Isakovic, 2024, p. 54). Navigating the ethical dilemmas of entrapment in Moloch feeding behaviours while envisioning otherwise must be undertaken in the present, with reference to the immediate future and within the scope of our own relationships. Reflective storytelling and imagining are continual and procedural, not focused on outcomes. If storytelling is supposed to elicit action, then these stories must refer to local and personal contexts (Manwaring, 2024). The rainbow must be grasped and turned into the proverbial "pot of gold" of love, care, community and difference-making in the here and now instead of being chased as it recedes over the horizon, never drawing closer. Positive, hope-inspiring stories in which the reader or listener can see themselves are far more likely to result in action-taking (Moltan-Hill et al., 2020).

Meeting moloch: understanding the metacrisis

Teaching about the metacrisis responsibly and effectively is undoubtedly a complex and challenging task. Older students will need to develop a deep understanding of the dynamics that drive the metacrisis and are generative of Moloch. In his 21 educational goals, Wheatley (2025) begins with six life goals aimed at "Understanding the global metacrisis" (p. 3). All of his goals for understanding the severity of the metacrisis are valid and important. However, meeting Moloch requires solid preparation. This is the reason I put this point last on my list, but not least. Coming to realise the gravity of the situation can be emotionally crushing and deeply life-altering. I recommend Shugarman's (2020) book on how to talk to children about climate change as a practical guide for teachers. Foremost, we must remain authentic and, as Shugarman (2020) argues, tell the truth when talking to our students about climate change. Shugarman holds that "[t]he crisis unfolding is still within our control" (p. 9). While I argue otherwise, nobody controls the Moloch because it is an emergent system and can best be defused from the bottom up, I agree with her affirmation of hope as an essential element when teaching about the metacrisis:

> In order to keep going, we must be unafraid to look truth in the eye. There is no one magic seed that will grow the beanstalk to help us reach the castle high in the clouds. Instead, there are billions of seeds, overflowing handfuls for every person on our planet. Each one of us is part of the larger solution, a piece of the puzzle of climate hope. Some of the pieces fit easily together; others are much more challenging to find. Even once we find them, we may still have difficulty seeing how they fit together. (Shugarman, 2020, p. 9)

Conclusion

In my view, entering into a thrutopian stance on education is a new beginning. It is a move to take the situation we are in seriously with all its implications and respond accordingly. The thrutopian perspectives on the here and now and on local contexts are dovetailing with the focus on engagement with process instead of outcomes and the experience of continually making a difference from which meaning is derived. At present, the world is on a rapidly ascending trajectory of increasing ecological and material effects of the metacrisis, and at a minimum, it will take centuries to undo the consequences of our actions. Thrutopia is a process and will be ongoing

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for a very long time, spanning our lives and those of our descendants for generations to come. The Moloch emerged from the collective akratic actions and reactions of billions of people. Something different can emerge in its place if we dream and educate the conditions for it into being. The rising instability in the world presents an obligation to become involved because small actions matter most when systems are out of balance. Generating thrutopian curricula will be a continual process, not an endpoint, but the frameworks of reference we can produce will likely endure. Foremost, education must generate and amplify local vision and action, again and again, in a recursive spiral to get us through. This will not be accomplished through imaginations of grand utopias but through a persistent focus on the next beautiful day, the next step in the nearfield of our gaze, while enacting minor-utopian acts of love and care for the relationships that matter. Then, eventually, Moloch might run out of minds to feast on, and we might get through.

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