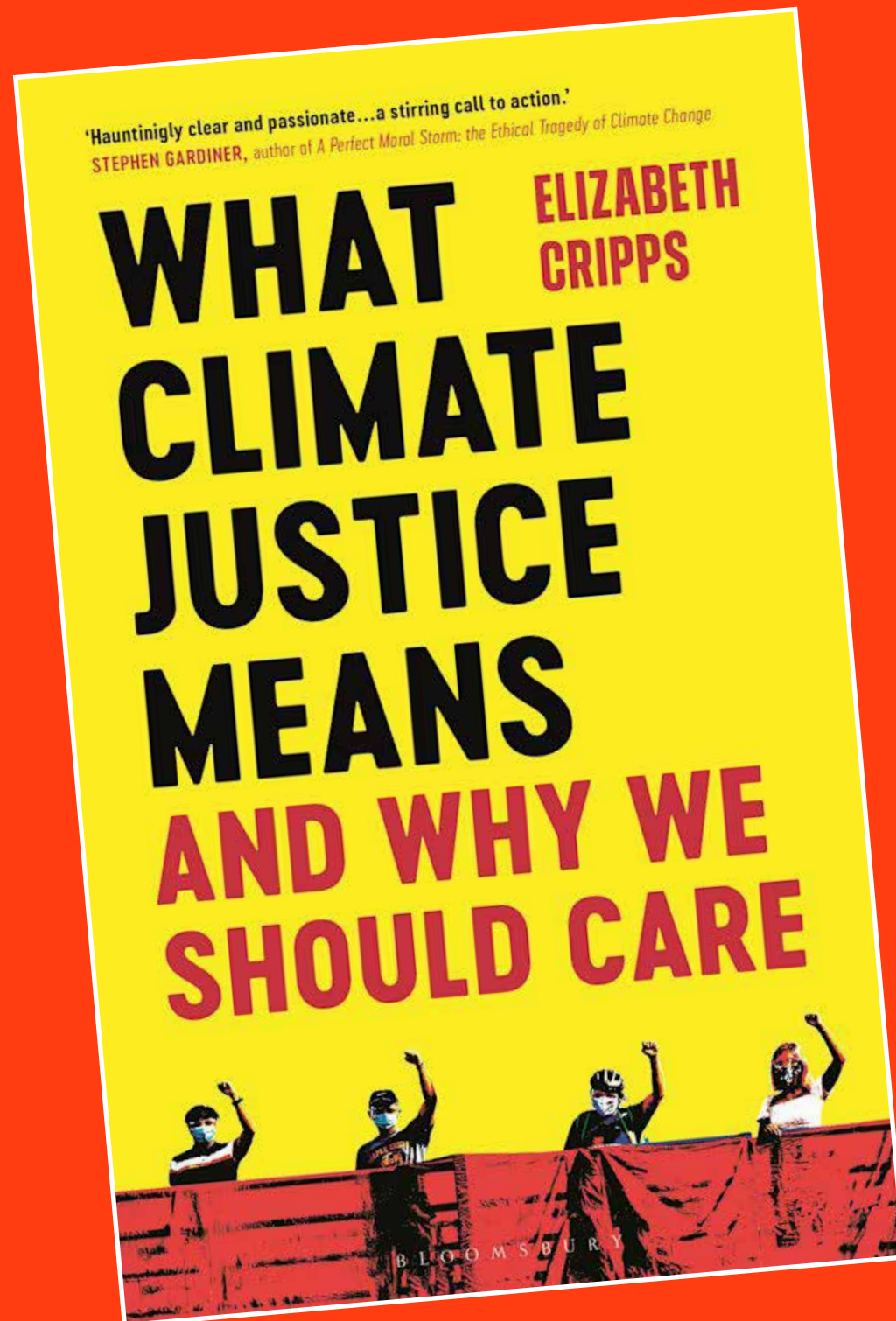


How goes it ... for awareness of the justice perspective?



Click on band to visit publisher: Bloomsbury

Darius Jackson [from the Elephant Times team]

Reviews 'What Climate Justice Means'

Every now and again you find a book that is not only easy to read, but is a mix of insight, tightly set out arguments and relevant world experience. All you can do is sit back and read it, safe in the knowledge that it is changing the way you look at the world. This is one of those books.

Elizabeth Cripps takes hold of your hand and leads you on a journey through ideas of justice, our consequent responsibilities to each other, and to nature, and then ends up with what we should do about it based on our bonds of mutual responsibility to each other. Not only that, but at no point does she become preachy, hyperbolic or unrealistic with her arguments, but still burns with indignation and passion throughout.

So why is it such a wonderful book?

Firstly, it does exactly what is says on the cover - it focuses on the issues of '*What is climate justice?*' and '*Why we should care?*'. It starts by exploring the nature of justice. It balances complex arguments with references to popular culture (Thanos from the Marvel film series), thought experiments and finishes with the example of three men jumping into a river to help rescue a man drowning in his car after it came off the road. She concludes her first chapter with the deceptively simple comment '...climate justice is about having institutions fit for purpose: **institutions to fulfil the shared obligations that we all have, as humans, to protect one another's most vital interests**'.

Secondly, she goes beyond just humans. The natural world is under threat. In the UK the annual survey of garden birds has shown huge falls in bird numbers and once common birds such as house sparrows, lapwings and song thrushes are in serious decline, whilst the fall in bee numbers has even been mentioned in episodes of Dr Who, as well as the BBC's Wild Isles series. Habitat loss is a global issue and as more animals move into towns across the world the risks of more viruses crossing from one species to another only increases. However, Cripps' argument is even more profound than that, she argues that **environment needs to be protected for itself as we are part of the same ecosystem**. If nature cannot flourish, then humans can't either simply because of our 'dependence on the world' (p127).



Climate change is a global issue
It needs global co-operation to respond
Thinking about solutions raises questions of global justice



“

Climate harm is about lack of privilege. It hurts those already disadvantaged worst of all. In sweeping terms, that means the global south. ‘I can tell you,’ writes Vanessa Nakate, ‘a 2°C hotter world is a death sentence for countries like mine’.

For millions of Africans. 1.2°C of warming is a living hell: a life sentence of depleted food, cyclones, floods, droughts.”

Elizabeth Cripps

Thirdly, she looks at structure and agency. It is all too easy to wrap climate change in an individualistic narrative, recycling cans and bottles, using public transport, turning lights off and not printing emails. Cripps highlights the importance of corporations and government in fighting climate change. If there are no buses, how can people use public transport? It’s not that corporations are inherently evil, or CEOs are gleeful about destroying the world as they stroke their white blue-eyed Persian cats. It is much simpler than that; **the market is not a democracy, one person does not equal one vote, with respect for diverse opinions and human rights.** It is based on money, and one pound does equal one vote.

Consequently, the rich have more influence as they have more demand in the market. The market, by its very nature, must prioritise the demands of the well-heeled over the demands of the poor and marginalised. This becomes a hugely important point when, as she points out, the richest 22 men in the world own more wealth than all the women in Africa. **Those who suffer the most from climate change are those with the least...**the global poor, women, children, people of colour and the natural world rather than the rich whose consumption is itself a driver of climate change.

Cripps is also critical of technological dreams of converting the upper atmosphere into giant mirrors over the ice caps, so they refreeze. As she points out these ideas are untested, they sound great, but are probably too good to be true. There are similarly fantastic ideas such as moving the world population into mega cities, thus, freeing up half of the planet for re-wilding or fertilising the seas to stimulate plant and algae growth ... OK, this would wreak havoc with the oceans’ ecosystems. What these projects have in common is that they are fantasies of the global elite, so they can continue to live their affluent lifestyle.

These ‘solutions’ ignore the simple problem that ‘there is no global government to organise and finance the project, so how will this be arranged?’. If it is financed by heroic billionaires we need to ask, ‘What gives them the right to decide that people, who are not the causes of Climate Change, will have to move to live in a megacity?’. As Cripps puts it so well, **‘the only thing standing between the global rich and non-evil alternatives is their own refusal to adopt them’** (p104).



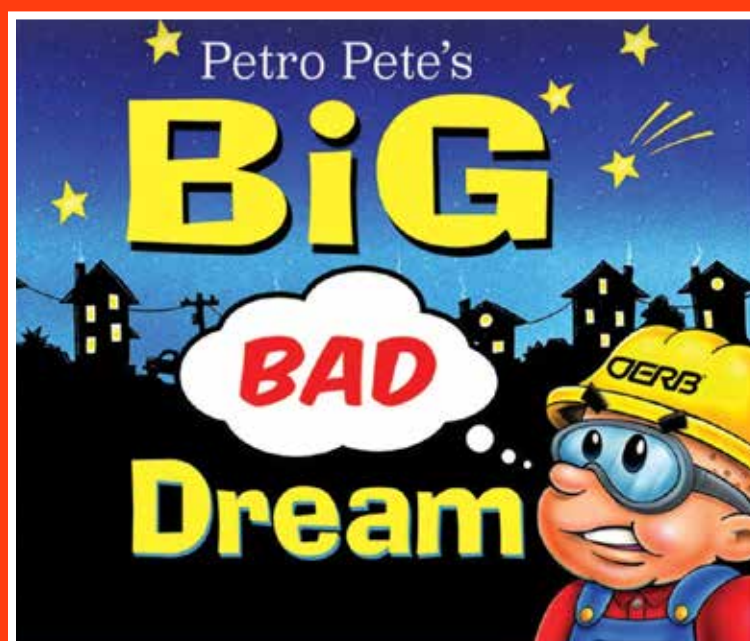
“*Money talks to children. In 2017, a conservative think-tank circulated a book to hundreds of thousands of American science teachers. It was called Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming, credited to the carefully named Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change*

..... the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board funded pro-fossil fuel educational materials: curriculums, speakers, after-school programmes. The highlight? A series of books about a cartoon character, ‘Petro Pete’. Pete thrives on oil products, but occasionally faces the nightmare that they might be snatched away, leaving his life empty.

(I wish I were making this up, but I’m really not.)

”

Elizabeth Cripps



Take a quick look at
Petro Pete's children's book

Click on visual to read

Fourthly, she is realistic. She is not outlining the solution, unlike the technologists above. She is suggesting ways to change public opinion and government policy. There will be opposition to the campaign, but she highlights the need for a broad based approach to encompass local and global issues, enlisting conservation volunteers to entrepreneurs (p174) all driven by the practical question ‘what works?’.

Early in the book she outlines the need for a range of responses to climate change, **mitigation + adaptation + compensation + polluter pays + removing the power of the wealthy to ride roughshod over everyone else + pressure on governments...** etc.

In the final chapter she is explicit that the outcome is not some kind of William Morris promised land, idyllic though it sounds, but ‘The fairest [society] we can get. The baseline? Not killing people; protecting basic interests’ (p174). This is without losing sight of the long-term project, a better greener future, **‘a society-and-world that people can thrive in’** (p152). This last phrase puts her firmly in the long and noble tradition of writers who critiqued their world and sought to build a better fairer future for all ‘citizens... of a global eco-political community’ (p159).

I will leave the last word to my daughter Inga -

“It’s one of the best books I’ve read. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it”.

Dr Elizabeth Cripps, a philosopher, is senior lecturer in political theory at the University of Edinburgh. She joined the Tide~ conversation. In the next article she reflects on that.

She is author of :

- *What Climate Justice Means and Why We Should Care*

Publication due: *‘Parenting on Earth: A Philosopher’s Guide to Doing Right By Your Kids – and Everyone Else’.*

