



At the dawn of the Anthropocene, a "crude look at the whole"

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This lecture provides an informed lay reflection on evidence that, for the first time in planetary history, a species is both a planet-scale force and slowly becoming aware of that potency. The presenter, a veteran science journalist who is also a member of the Anthropocene Working Group, will argue for the value of a rough overview by alluding to Nobelist Murray Gell-mann's strategy for finding meaning in complex systems by taking a "crude look at the whole."

The debate around the dawn of the Anthropocene, whether it is accepted as a geological epoch or remains an informal construct, is really a debate about the burdens that come with increased knowledge.

Human beings are essentially in a three-pronged race – between their environmental potency; their awareness of the expressed and potential ramifications of impacts on Earth's operating systems; and growing awareness of the deeply embedded perceptual and behavioral traits that shape how our species does, or doesn't, address certain kinds of risks.

The outcome of this race remains an open question, this lecture will argue, and whether the outcome can be judged good or bad is not just a function of more science. The talk will focus on the role of communication innovation in tipping the odds in a positive direction.