Bart Flos OUR INNER LIMITS



<u>ADDENDUM V</u> The Beginning of The End: Ignorance



Bart Flos

OUR INNER LIMITS

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Previously published by Bart Flos:

Het anti-klaagboek – Het anti-sleurboek – Het perfecte project De kenniskermis – Vooruitkijken voor gevorderden

De mens als grens ('Our Inner Limits')

The Anti-Complain Book - The Perfect Project

De hoogvolwassen organisatie - De klimaatconfrontatie

De zelfmoordsoort – The Suicide Kind

As addenda to 'De mens als grens':

Addendum I – Het begin van het einde: onwetendheid Addendum II – De frontale confrontatie: klimaatverandering Addendum III – Het grote probleem: overconsumptie Addendum IV – Het laatste taboe: ineenstorting

As addenda to 'Our Inner Limits':

Addendum V – The Beginning of The End: Ignorance Addendum VI – De Frontal Confrontation: Climate Change Addendum VII – The Big Problem: Overconsumption Addendum VIII – The Final Taboo: Collapse Addendum IX – The Next Step: Collapse Awareness Addendum X – The Last Resort: Collapse Acceptance Addendum XI – The Tough Choice: Collapse Resilience

Self-knowledge is the first step to adulthood. Jane Austen

Civilization begins with order, grows with freedom, and dies with chaos.

Will Durant

We are only allowed to live on this planet as long as we treat all of nature with compassion and intelligence. Aldous Huxley

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Introduction

In 2015 I published my fifth book, *Vooruitkijken voor gevorderden – Hoop voor de toekomst van mensaap en moederplaneet* ('Futurology for Fanatics – Hope for the Future of Man Ape and Mother Planet'). It is an easy-to-read book with the same design as its predecessor *De kenniskermis – Overleven in een zee van informatie* ('The Knowledge Fair – How to Survive in an Ocean of Information'). Short chapters of approximately 800 words, provided with QR codes and TED(x) talks, nice pictures and numerous references to other interesting books.

In *Futurology for Fanatics*, I not only discuss humanity's major problems, but I also provide hopeful solutions. By (daring to) look ahead 100, 1.000 and even 10.000 years, I paint a picture of the limitless possibilities that Homo sapiens has to shape its own future. The final goal? Preserving our planet to prepare it as a home base for the exploration of the cosmos.

I still remember someone calling me a 'naive idealist' then. I defended this fiercely at the time and replied that I preferred to call myself an 'incorrigible optimist'. "Yeah, yeah," was the response, "Dream on." But it really was true, I was sitting on a comfortable pink cloud and I was looking through rose-colored glasses, which turned out to be a cold, metal telephoto lens and microscope. It wasn't until I got into my helicopter, flew as high as I could and started looking down that the scales fell from my eyes.

Fast forward to 2022

Since the publication of *Futurology for Fanatics* more than half a billion people have been added to the population, we have emitted another 285 gigatons of CO2 and the atmospheric CO2-level has risen from 400 to 418 ppm. That has categorically transformed me from an incorrigible optimist to a 'confrontealist', someone who confronts those around him head-on with hard science, with observation, research, facts and evidence.

My own research over the past two years has led me to write my sixth book, my Magnus Opus, which brings together all my previous work. *De mens als grens* – *Over de onbuigzame barrières van ons bestaan* ('Our Inner Limits – On the Unbending Barriers of Being') is much less hopeful as a plea, unfortunately, but it still contains solutions. These are now the last solutions we have left.

I'm sorry that this time I don't share hopeful dreams about the human species, which first preserves its planet and then seeks refuge among the stars. But it is time that we recognize, acknowledge and confess what we are: social group primates and hunter-gatherers, who are extremely proficient at surviving and reproducing. At the expense of everything and everyone. It's the nature of the beast.

Fast forward to 2024

When I delivered the final manuscript of *Our Inner Limits* to my publisher in October 2022, I could not have imagined how quickly things would get so much worse. The year 2023 is the year that we passed the 'elbow' of the exponential curve. This means that from now on, events affecting the environment,

biodiversity and climate will no longer follow a relatively linear path, but a chaotic, completely unpredictable one.

Since the publication of my sixth book, I have written almost 1.000 posts on *LinkedIn*, about 60 per month, 2 every day. In order not to let them go to waste in the endless timelines, I have included them in eleven addenda to *Our Inner Limits*: four in Dutch and seven in English. In these addenda I'm taking you on that accelerating path of decline as we embark on a journey from ignorance to climate change to overconsumption and collapse.

I would have liked to tell you something different, but it's not 2015 anymore. It is no longer 1970 either, when we could still dó something. Or 1990, pretty much humanity's last chance to avoid collapse. I was forced to give up the 'hopeful future of man ape and mother planet'. In turn, I hope you'll stick with it to work your way through the addenda, because it's a story that needs to be told. Science, truth and reality now tell us that we have actually waited too long. It is too late. Collapse is now locked into the system.

With these eleven addenda, I hope to arm you not only with facts and evidence and the latest insights from the scientific community. I especially hope that it will make you and your loved ones more collapse aware and resilient to what is coming. Because our future is no longer a few hundred years away, or in the next century, or at the end of this century, or in 2070 or 2050. Our future takes place in the next ten years.

To conclude, I don't think it would be prudent to wish you 'much reading pleasure'. I wish you lots of wisdom and strength instead.

About this book

The great thing about writing a post on *LinkedIn* is that, even more so than on Twitter and unlike Facebook, you are forced to limit your message to about 500 words (3.000 characters) for a post and about 200 words (1.250 characters) for a comment. *Schrijven is schrappen* ('To write is to delete' – thank you Simon Carmiggelt) is, as it were, enforced here, accurate to the very punctuation mark and that is good. Because it forces authors to shorten the message to a length that should be manageable even for the hurried, overloaded, *I'm-very-busy*-reader, without losing sight of the core message.

This book is an addendum, a supplement to my sixth book *Our Inner Limits*. There are a total of eleven addenda, four in Dutch and seven in English. The English addenda are not direct translations of the Dutch addenda. On *LinkedIn* I often respond to English posts in English. Sometimes I translate them into Dutch, but they also stand alone. The same applies the other way around: sometimes I translate a Dutch post into English, sometimes I do not. So, if you speak the English language – and who doesn't in the Netherlands? – and if you want to be completely informed, read all eleven. (If you don't master the Dutch language, I'm glad I am able to offer you seven English addenda. The gist of my message is just the same).

At an average reading speed of about 250 words per minute, each subchapter in this book will only take you a few minutes. So, I would like to say: do you have a little less time now? Then choose a few chapter titles that appeal to you and spend ten or fifteen minutes on them. Each post stands alone and all I did was put them into a book template and made sure that the information I referenced and responded to was not lost. So, you can pick up the addenda and

put them away whenever you want. In any case, it is best to take in the information in steps. I wouldn't want you to be overwhelmed.

Because the addenda are published as PDF books, the website links remain active. So, you can step out and take a trip to related information elsewhere and look for further depth there. In addition, you can find more links and information that apply generically in the appendices.

Each of the eleven addenda is the size of an average management book, between 30.000 and 40.000 words. The layout is like a complete book, so if you prefer to read on paper, you can easily submit the PDF as a print file to a print shop and voilà, you have a physical book in your hands, *easy peasy*.

The almost thousand posts were written from October 2022 through March 2024. All posts are presented in more or less chronological order and even though I present them in the form of a book, it is still a relatively loose collection of stories, insights and reflections. So don't be surprised by repetition and progressive insight. For a more structured foundation of my view on the coexistence and collaborating of the human species, I recommend that you read my book first or check out the website, which acts as a management summary to my book.

Each addendum is classified into 11 fixed chapters:

- 1. The frontal confrontation
- 2. The collapse
- 3. Economy versus ecology
- 4. The Almighty Algorithm
- 5. Distraction, deception, doubt and deceit.

- 6. The climate collision
- 7. About climate stupidity
- 8. Looking down from above
- 9. Pollution, waste and destruction
- 10. Global consultation doesn't work
- 11. Science, truth and reality

Please note: not all chapters appear equally in all addenda.

If you've worked your way through all eleven books, you'll have taken a journey from ignorance to climate change to overconsumption, collapse and acceptance. Not all journeys are equally enjoyable to make, and this journey is part of the beginning of the end, of frontal confrontation, major existential problems and the very last, ultimate taboo: the collapse of human civilization as we know it today. That, by the way, does not necessarily mean 'the end of the world': the extinction of the human species. But it has now become a serious option indeed.

Finally: while in my book *Our Inner Limits* I leave it to the dear reader to draw their own conclusions about where the human species is going, I am much more explicit in these eleven addenda, more 'right to your face' and perhaps a bit blunt here and there. Because as a self-proclaimed *confrontealist*, I passionately believe that only a frontal confrontation with truth and reality can, perhaps, open our eyes to what is coming our way.

Good luck and success!

Bart Flos, Helmond | February 2025

Chapter 1

The frontal confrontation

1.1

SM142

This is what needs to happen to mitigate overconsumption

My reaction to a post stating that 'climate change is getting worse', that it's 'affecting every place on Earth' and that 'it's accelerating', but that 'it's not too late and we can still do something about it':

"Good story. Informative read. It explains what 'we must do' to make this world a better place.

Allow me to be blunt here.

We knów this already! We already know for more than half a century that the excessive emission of greenhouse gasses warms up the atmosphere and disrupts the climate. We've had 27 climate conferences, produced thousands of climate studies by hundreds of climate scientists. Each report is more dire than the previous one.

We as a species are in a state of overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. That process has not just started, it's been going on for more than half a century and is currently in its accelerating phase.

We have produced countless books, reports, articles, blogs, vlogs and TED(x)talks, done 'a million' presentations, workshops, conferences and summits on the matter. None of these works, none I tell you, has had any durable influence on the inclination curve of the emissions of greenhouse gasses.

Do you want some more frontal confrontations with reality?

- CO2-emissions of fossil fuels and industry were 37,5 gigaton in 2022 (a gigaton is one billion tons), the highest ever recorded, rising to 43 gigaton in 2050.

- CO2-level in the atmosphere is currently 420 ppm (parts per million), rising to 500 ppm in 2050.

— We burn 100 million barrels of oil, 22 million metric tons of coal and 11 billion cubic meters of natural gas each day, adding 100 million tons of CO2 to the atmosphere daily.

- The average surface temperature is 1,2 degrees C above preindustrial levels. We might see the 1,5 degrees C barrier broken within the next 10 years.

If you put a marker on the curve of greenhouse gas emissions for all of the climate books, reports and conferences of the past century, there's no impact. None.

What does that tell you?

This post and article about our existential predicament are one of many. Too many maybe, because what is the point? The world population is growing by 1% each year, bringing us to 10 billion people in 2050. Each one of those will want to get rich, healthy, happy and grow old.

Here's a frontal confrontation for you. This is what needs to happen if we want to mitigate the consequences of overconsumption:

- 1 All poor people must remain poor.
- 2 All rich people must abdicate their wealth.
- 3 Population growth must become population decline.
- 4 Economic growth must become economic decline.
- 5 We all must decrease our income by 20%
- 6 We all must give up 50% of our savings.
- 7 We all must go in complete lockdown for another ten years.

That is the energy-equivalent of our collective effort to dó something about overshoot.

Who's first in line to volunteer?

1.2

SM163 You do the math

Somewhere in April 2023 I read an article about the state of affairs with human-caused climate change, that it is getting worse every day, but that it is not too late, that we can still do something about, as long as we start nów and do it fast.

The date of the article? October 2019. So, I did the math. Here's what I wrote:

"Since that time:

 We have burned 125 billion barrels of oil, 27 billion metric tons of coal and 14.000 billion cubic meters of natural gas.

- We have produced 238 million non-electric vehicles, 1.247 million tons of plastics and 6.860 million tons of generic waste.

This is our current status:

- The average global surface temperature is 1,2 degrees C above preindustrial levels.

- CO2-level in the atmosphere is 420 ppm rising to 500 ppm in 2050.

- Global population is at 8 billion people, growing to 10 billion in 2050. Each and every one of them will want to get rich, healthy, happy and grow old.

- We're expected to surpass the 1,5C warming marker within the next 10 years.

- The 2,0C marker is expected to be reached by 2050, to further trigger multiple climate tipping points.

- By the end of this century we're looking at 3 to 4C of warming, if we keep this up.

— Onwards from 4C of warming we create hell on Earth. Beyond 5 or 6C of warming organic life on the surface and in the oceans can no longer be maintained.

We've had 27 international climate conferences and six IPCC assessment reports. None of them have changed the increasing global emission of greenhouse gasses. The 28th climate conference is chaired by an oil sheik.

I think it is time that we change our 'pre-apocalyptic preventative attitude' into a 'post-apocalyptic mitigative attitude'.

What do you think?

PS By the time you read this, the above-mentioned statistics will have increased by 100 million barrels of oil, 22 million metric tons of coal, 11 billion cubic meters of natural gas, 190.000 non-electrical vehicles, 1 million metric tons of plastic, 5,5 million tons of waste and 11 million tons of concrete, per day. Now you do the math."

1.3

SM173

The venom is always in the tail

A watched a 12-minute video about our existential predicament, you know, with environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change and all, and the venom was definitely in the tail.

The first 10 minutes of this video described our predicament in full detail:

Please note: we are currently following the worst-case scenario of greenhouse gas emissions: global warming slipping into a 'runaway climate' resulting in a 'hothouse Earth'.

After 10 minutes of dire straits the last 2 minutes of the video are devoted to solutions. I'm paraphrasing here but it boils down to the following:

"Yes, we are in deep trouble. It's all bad. We're really messing up a perfectly good deal here. Look at these numbers! Look at those graphs! We can't go on like this. We must dó something. Only if we all work together, everywhere on the planet, we can still limit the damage. But we must start nów! The entire world must come together to finally act. The time to sit together at the campfire and sing Kumbaya is over. It is now time to act. It's not too late. We can still dó something. Come on folks, let's go! Let's do it! (*)"

Does this sound familiar? Do you see the resemblance with every other climate report, assessment or conference that we have produced over the past half

century? Do you think nów everything is finally going to change? That this video will finally 'do it' en makes us come to our senses?

(*) Did you know that Nike's slogan '*Just Do It*' is based on the last words of a criminal in the electric chair? It's just one of those ironies of life, I guess.

1.4

SM182 When the shit hits the fan

Every once in a while, an initiative of some kind floats by that suggests 'we might save the planet if we plant a lot of trees', casually mentioning that 'when we plant billions of trees, we'll all be just fine and dandy' (I'm paraphrasing my quotes here).

In my comments to this kind of hopeful but misguided statements it can be useful to be a tad blunt, to shake down the naivety and shortsightedness of these theories:

In order to compensate for the yearly emissions of greenhouse gasses we would have to 'plant trees' in the amount of a few times the size of India. We wouldn't have land left to grow our food. Growing trees won't make a difference if we keep heating up the atmosphere. Forrest fires will increase dramatically due to extreme heatwaves and droughts. All that newly planted carbon will just go up in flames.

Global warming is not the core problem here. Environmental pollution, destruction of the biodiversity and climate change are mere symptoms of overshoot or overconsumption; when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. Overshoot is not just starting to happen. It's been going on for over half a century now and is currently in its accelerating phase. Climate change is just one of the symptoms that stands out the most.

To date there's no consorted global effort to mitigate overshoot. All efforts are limited to individual, local or regional levels. CO2-emissions for fossil fuels and industry were at record levels in 2022. This year they will be higher. Global consumption of coal, oil and natural gas are up, not down. Plastics and cement production is up, not down.

The GWP (Gross World Product), a measure of economic growth, is at \$ 104.000 billion dollars and rising. We are with 8 billion people, growing to 10 billion in 2050. Each and every individual wants to get rich, healthy, happy and grow old. The 'world population' doesn't exist. Countries don't exist. We are splintered into hundreds of millions of small social groups of family, household, friends, colleagues and teammates.

Each of these small groups are, formally or informally, led by individuals. Each individual wants to at least keep what they've got, preferably a little more. Nobody wants to decline. We all point to others to change. We are, as a species, not meant to be with 8 or 10 billion. We are meant to roam the savannas in small social groups.

The Earth's atmosphere, biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and cryosphere are getting destroyed by our own doing. We are triggering countless tipping points beyond repair. We've simply waited too long. It has become inevitable, unavoidable and immanent: our suprasystemic infrastructure will collapse. It's just a matter of time.

When that starts to happen, when the shit hits the fan, we won't have an off switch.

1.5

SM192

The heart of our existential predicament

I read an article with the title 'Oil & gas & coal dominance is over' [sic]. I contained hopeful statistics that renewables were about to take over the world and everything would be dandy real soon.

This was my reaction:

"Look, I'm glad that we try to counter all the negativity about climate change with this positive news. Hurray! Ending the dominance of oil, gas and coal, sure, that would be awesome. We only have to replace the 1,6 billion combustion engine vehicles on Earth by electrical ones and everything will be alright.

Forgive me for being the rational skeptic here, but at some point, you would expect all this positive news to show in the global numbers on the opposite side. Allow me to explain.

We know for over half a century now that we're messing up the environment. We are exceeding the carrying capacity of our habitat in accelerated pace -a process called overshoot or overconsumption -and we keep pumping greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere:

CO2-emissions for fossil fuels and industry were at a record high in 2022:
37,5 gigaton. It will rise to 43 gigaton in 2050.

— CO2-level in the atmosphere is 420 ppm, rising to 500 ppm in 2050. In order to survive we need that to be between 200 and 300 ppm.

- Global average surface temperature is at 1,2C above pre-industrial levels, rising to over 2,5C in 2050.

- Global oil, gas and coal consumption is up.

With all this positive news, you would expect these global numbers to fall, not rise. Can somebody please explain that to me? Like I'm eight years old? It just doesn't add up. There's something ominous going on and that has to do with the concept of overshoot.

Environmental pollution, destruction of the biodiversity and climate change are mere symptoms of overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. We shouldn't treat them as separate core problems, because we would be guilty of *symptoms fighting*. Overshoot is not just beginning. It's been going on for over half a century now and is currently in its accelerating phase.

What we don't seem to understand is that overshoot is always met with collapse. It's a natural law. In our case this implies the suprasystemic collapse of our infrastructure. After collapse, the entire system seeks a new equilibrium.

The first thing that goes is electricity. Everything we do is based on electricity. We are completely dependent on it, and we wouldn't know where to crawl when we're suddenly deprived of it. All our devices would turn black within a day, but that wouldn't matter because the internet would fail a couple of days later.

Look at what's happening right now, all over the planet. Our habitat is in a state of feedback loop: climate tipping points are triggering climate tipping points that pass planetary boundaries to the point of no return.

This year the El Niño / La Niña cycle is reversing. It will go from a cooling effect to a heating effect which will show in extreme heat and drought the next few years. It's not a run against time. We're already out of it.

For over half a century now we know what the problem is. We have analyzed it to the bone. We have produced thousands of climate books, reports, analysis, videos and conferences. None of these have had any effect on the emission of greenhouse gasses. None!

We've had 26 international climate conferences that had no effect on consumption of oil, gas and coal. It's still going up. The 27th conference is chaired by an oil sheik, for crying out loud.

Currently there's no consorted global effort to mitigate overshoot. All action is on individual, local or regional level. Global population is at 8 billion, growing to 10 billion in 2050. All of these people want to be rich, healthy, happy and grow old. Nobody wants to decline or reduce. Everybody wants to at least keep what they've got, preferably get a little bit more.

I understand that we put our trust in technology. And yes, there's some positive trends to be mentioned. But if we look at the numbers at the highest level, the global level, all of the bad numbers are still going up, not down. All of our efforts to mitigate climate change are based on a stable global infrastructure. But we're headed for the suprasystemic collapse of that infrastructure.

I've spent two years doing research on the matter and published my 6th book about it in December of 2022. I'm really quite worried that we've 'fucked it up this time, in real time (Thank you movie 'Don't Look Up').

The extreme weather and the climate disasters that are washing over the planet: we really had it coming. We've been talking about it for over half a century and essentially changed nothing about our status quo. We're so good a writing reports and organizing conferences that we forgot to put it into practice on a global scale.

Well, we didn't forget. We talked about it. And then some more. And we made plans. And expressed intentions. But we didn't commit to it. All of the agreements from climate conferences were optional. No obligation at all. No consequences for not acting. No penalties, no sanctions of any kind. Because who would enforce these sanctions? We are not a United World of Nations with a World Government and a World Leader. This is not StarTrek.

Early signs of suprasystemic infrastructural collapse are: inflation, rising prices of goods and energy, polarization, division, isolationism, nationalism, conflict, crisis and war. Do you recognize any of these events? Why do we, 'the people', don't take control? Why don't we step up and turn this around? That's because 'the people' don't exist. There's no such a thing as a 'global community'. Allow me to explain.

Current world population is 8 billion, growing to 10 billion in 2050. We are divided across 200 nations. But these nations don't exist either. Each nation consists of countless communities, but they don't even exist. Each community holds counties, provinces, cities and villages. But they don't exist either.

The world's population is divided, splintered and fragmented into hundreds of millions of small social groups of family, household, friends, colleagues and teammates. Each of these small groups is led by individuals who primarily take care of themselves and their small social groups. The only reason why we as a species cooperate on a global scale is because it benefits individuals and their small groups.

That's something worth contemplating because it lies at the heart of our existential predicament."

In 2015, author, public speaker and change specialist Bart Flos published his fifth book, *Vooruitkijken voor gevorderden* ('Futurology for Fanatics'). In this book he paints a hopeful picture of the limitless possibilities of the human species *Homo sapiens* to shape its own future.

Fast forward to 2022

Since the publication of that book, things have quickly gotten out of hand with the environment, biodiversity and climate. It prompted Flos to write his sixth book: *De mens als grens* ('Our Inner Limits'). It was much less hopeful as a plea, unfortunately, but it still contained solutions to turn the tide.

Fast forward to 2024

"After the publication of *Our Inner Limits*, I could not have imagined how quickly things would get so much worse. The year 2023 is the year that we passed the 'elbow' of the exponential curve. What we are left with now is chaos and unpredictability. I wrote almost a thousand posts about it, and I didn't want them to get lost in the endless timelines of our social media platforms," says Flos.

This is one of the eleven addenda to *Our Inner Limits*, in which Flos's posts are included in book form. It takes you on a head-on confrontational journey from ignorance via climate change to overconsumption and collapse. We will break the last ultimate taboo together: daring to say that we have waited too long, that it is now too late and that we will have to suffer the consequences of our destructive collective behavior as a human species.

Want to learn more? Go to www.demensalsgrens.nl

The Beginning of The End: Ignorance

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