

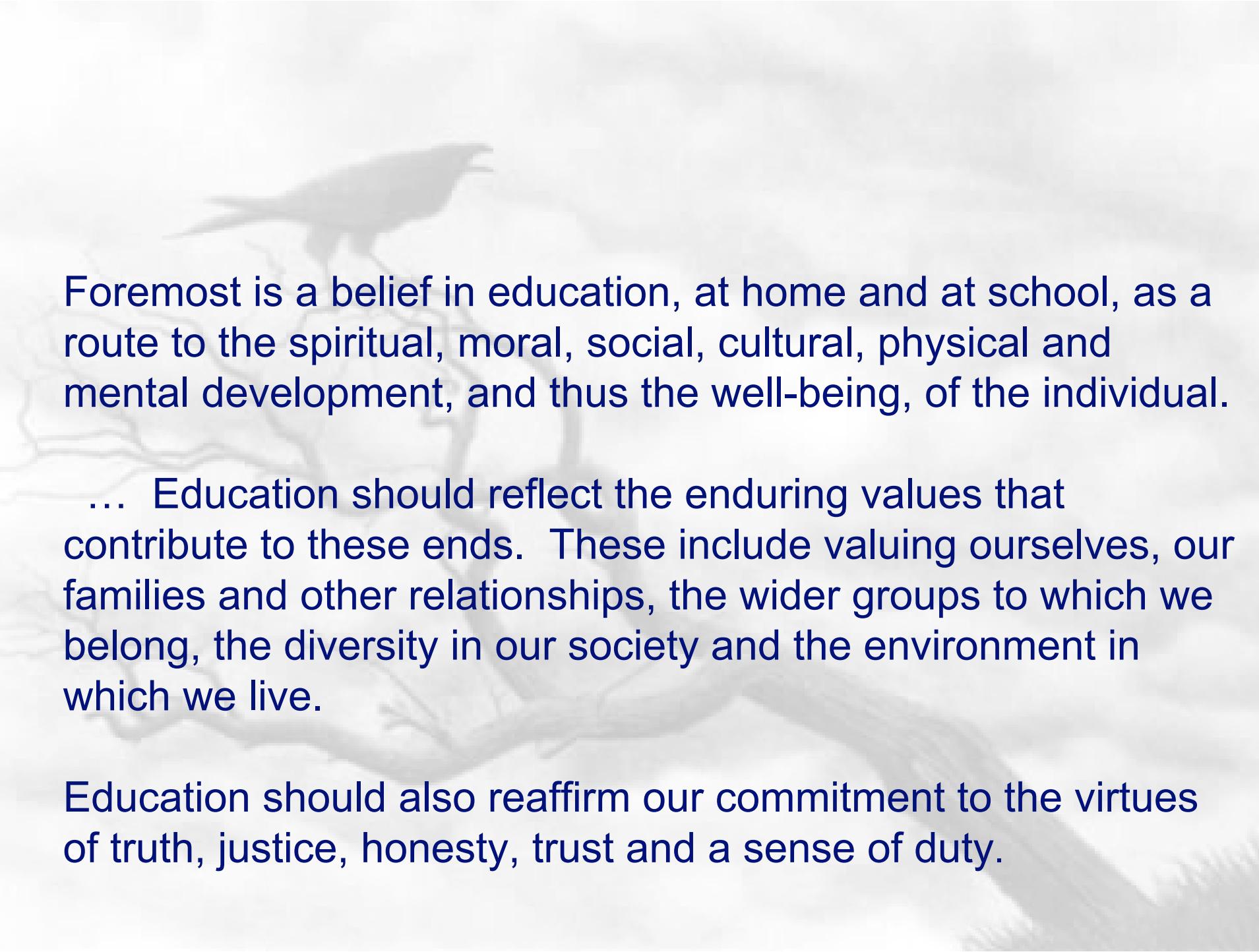
# **ESD: What sort of Education? What sort of Learning? What sort of Decade?**

**William Scott**

**Centre for Research in Education and the Environment**

**University of Bath**

**cree@bath.ac.uk**



Foremost is a belief in education, at home and at school, as a route to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, physical and mental development, and thus the well-being, of the individual.

... Education should reflect the enduring values that contribute to these ends. These include valuing ourselves, our families and other relationships, the wider groups to which we belong, the diversity in our society and the environment in which we live.

Education should also reaffirm our commitment to the virtues of truth, justice, honesty, trust and a sense of duty.

## **Sustainable development –**

A process of change with the future in mind

A process where the exploitation of resources, the orientation of technological development and institutional change, are made consistent with the future as well as present needs.

## **The goal of sustainable development –**

A capacity of human beings to continuously adapt  
to their non-human environments by means of  
social organisation.



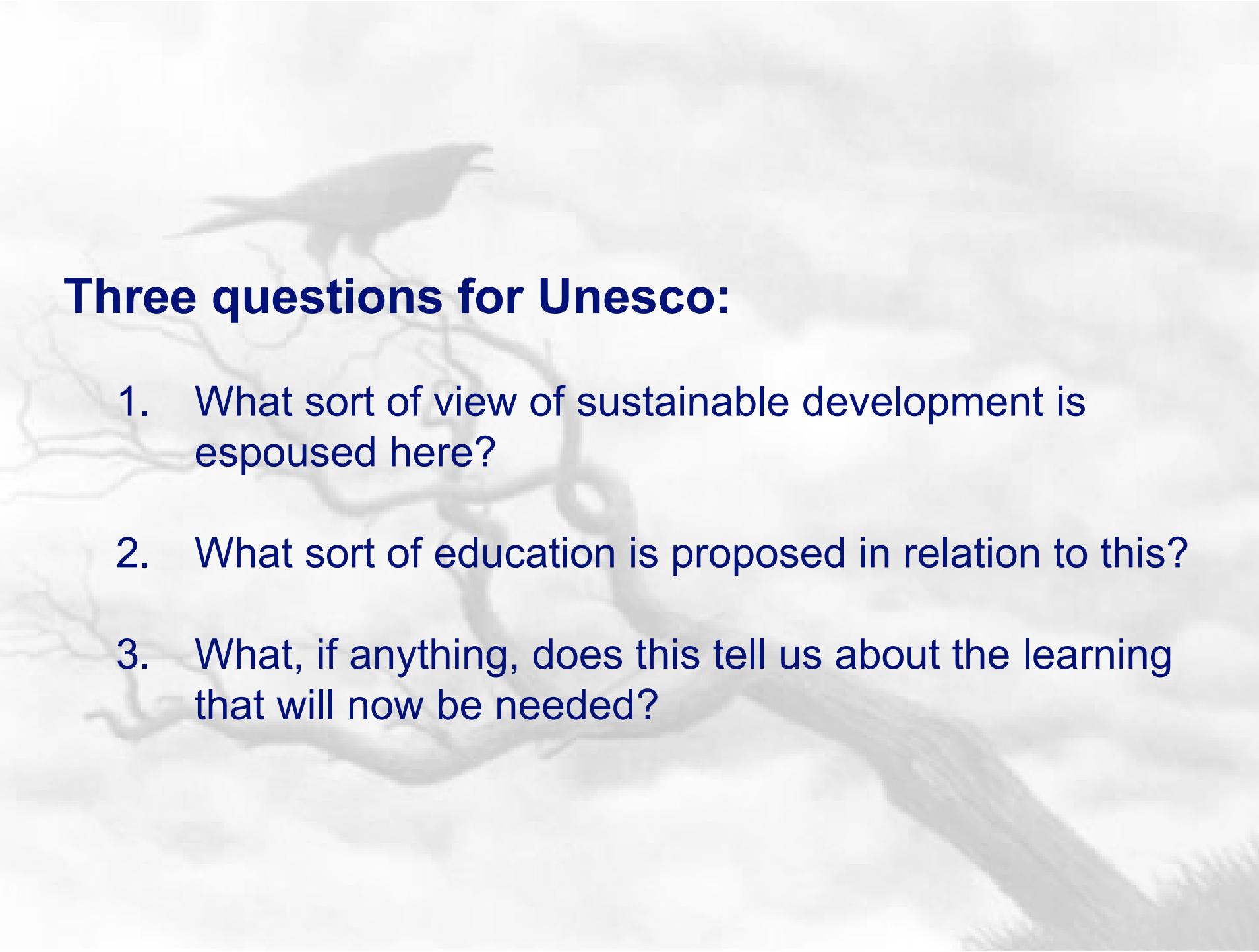
## The goal of sustainable development –

A capacity of human beings to continuously adapt to their non-human environments by means of social organisation.

A capacity of human beings to *learn* to adapt to their non-human environments by means of social organisation.

## **Sustainable development –**

A learning process through which we can (if we choose) learn to build our capacity to live more sustainably.



## **Three questions for Unesco:**

1. What sort of view of sustainable development is espoused here?
2. What sort of education is proposed in relation to this?
3. What, if anything, does this tell us about the learning that will now be needed?



**ESD**

– What sort of sustainable development?



# ***The Sustainable Development Strategy: Illusion or Reality?***

A report by the UK Parliament's Environmental  
Audit Committee



## ***The Sustainable Development Strategy: Illusion or Reality?***

The concept of environmental limits is fundamental to sustainable development. While such limits cannot, as yet, be firmly established in many areas of human activity, it is nonetheless certain that they exist.

The new [sustainable development] framework and strategy should place greater emphasis on the concept of environmental limits, and the Government should devote more effort to developing this concept.



## **Two perspectives:**

Development ... should occur in such a way that the capacity of the natural environment to meet present and future needs is not compromised

[Brundtland]

Improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

[IUCN]

## Contrasting texts:

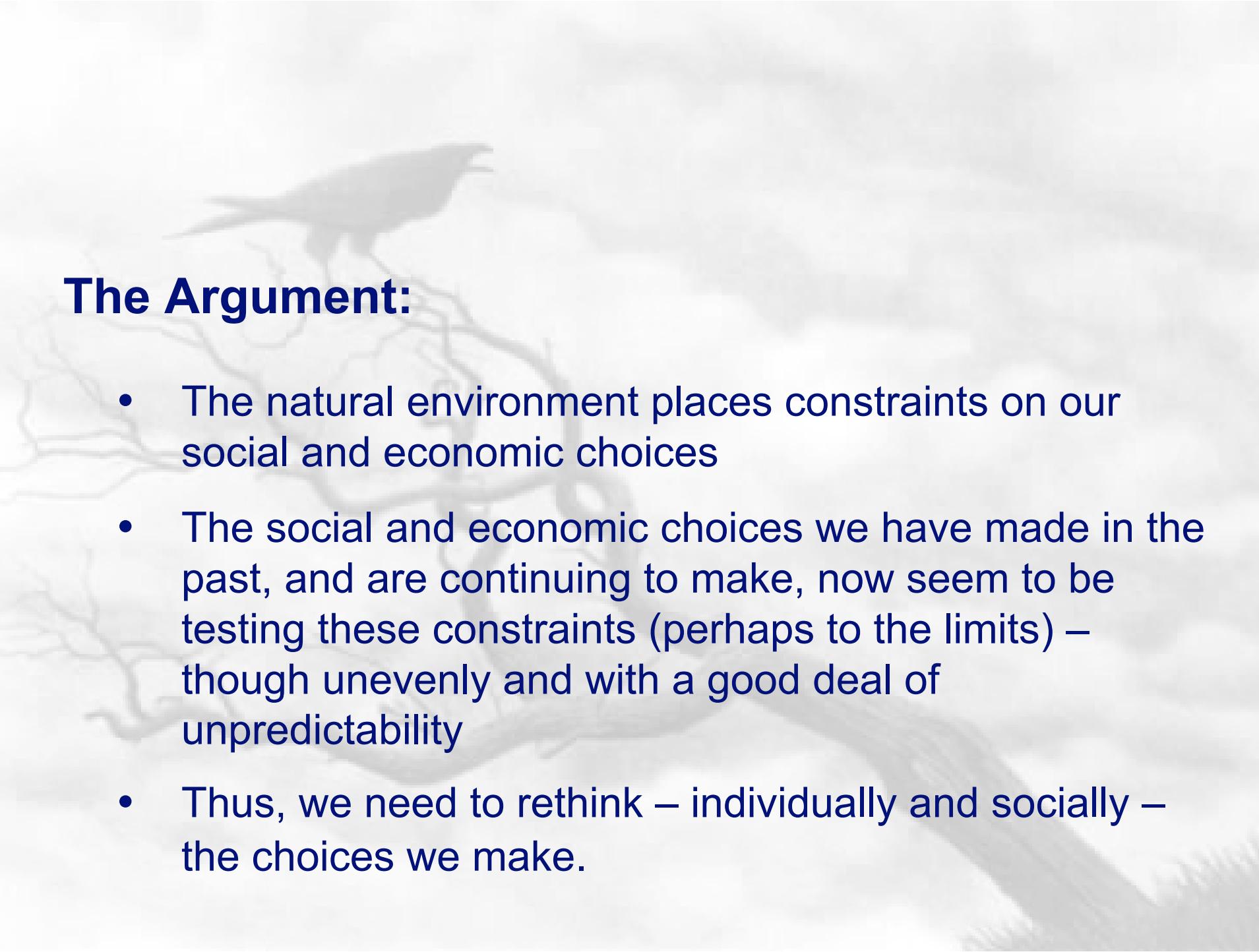
A respect for human rights is a *sine qua non* of sustainable development

The protection of the Earth's ecosystems is an important challenge.

## **Balance and Respect:**

The need to *balance* economic and social progress with concern for the environment and the stewardship of natural resources

*Respect* and care for the greater community of life in all its diversity which involves the protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems.



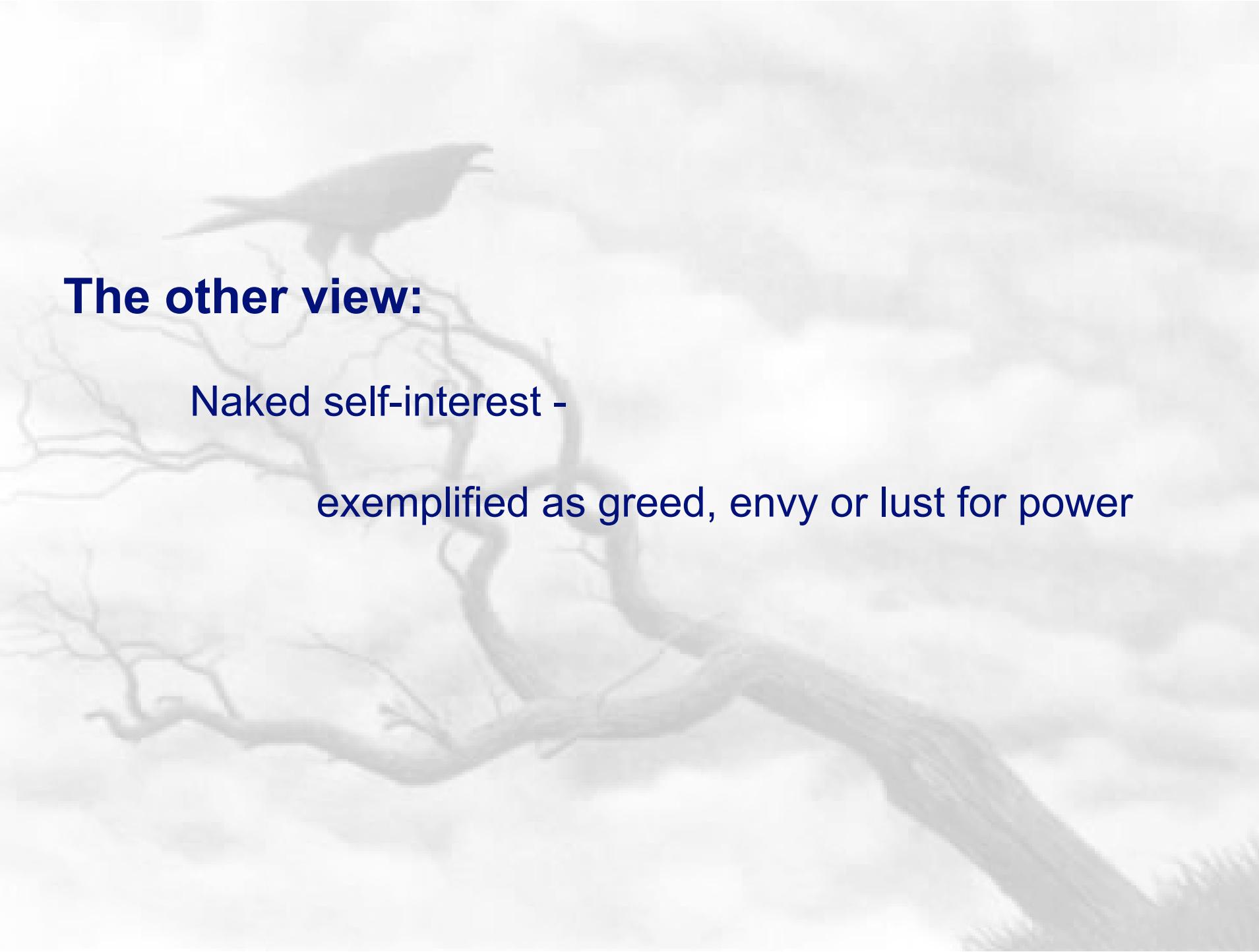
## The Argument:

- The natural environment places constraints on our social and economic choices
- The social and economic choices we have made in the past, and are continuing to make, now seem to be testing these constraints (perhaps to the limits) – though unevenly and with a good deal of unpredictability
- Thus, we need to rethink – individually and socially – the choices we make.

## **Human relationships ...**

characterised by justice, peace, and negotiated, mutual interests lead to greater equity, respect and understanding

It is these qualities that will underpin strategies of sustainable development.



## **The other view:**

Naked self-interest -

exemplified as greed, envy or lust for power



## Real World Coalition objectives:

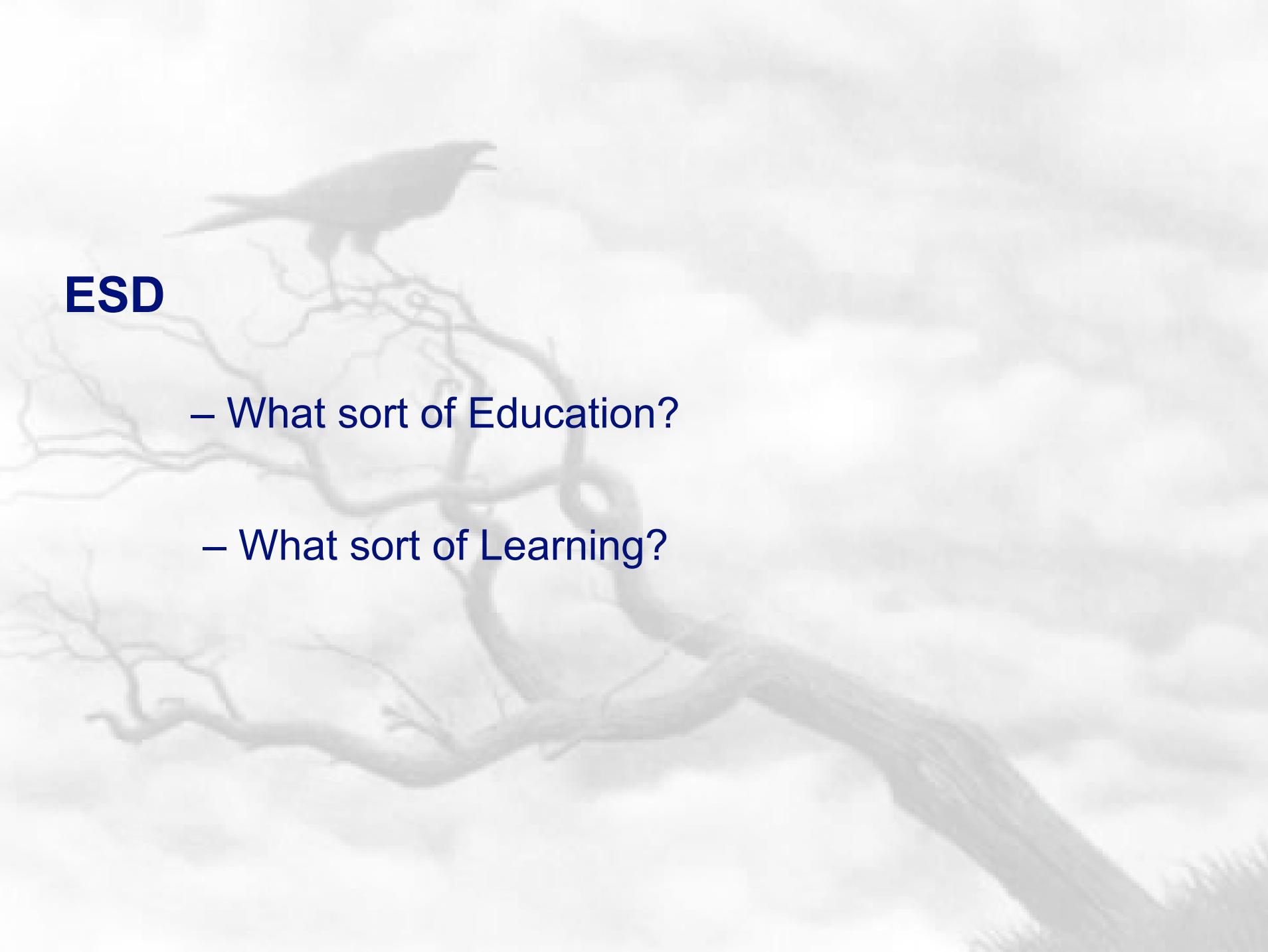
- social justice
- eradication of poverty
- peace and security
- democratic renewal
- environmental sustainability

All of these, taken together, are described as the “key policy constituencies of sustainable development”.



## **Unesco mandates ...**

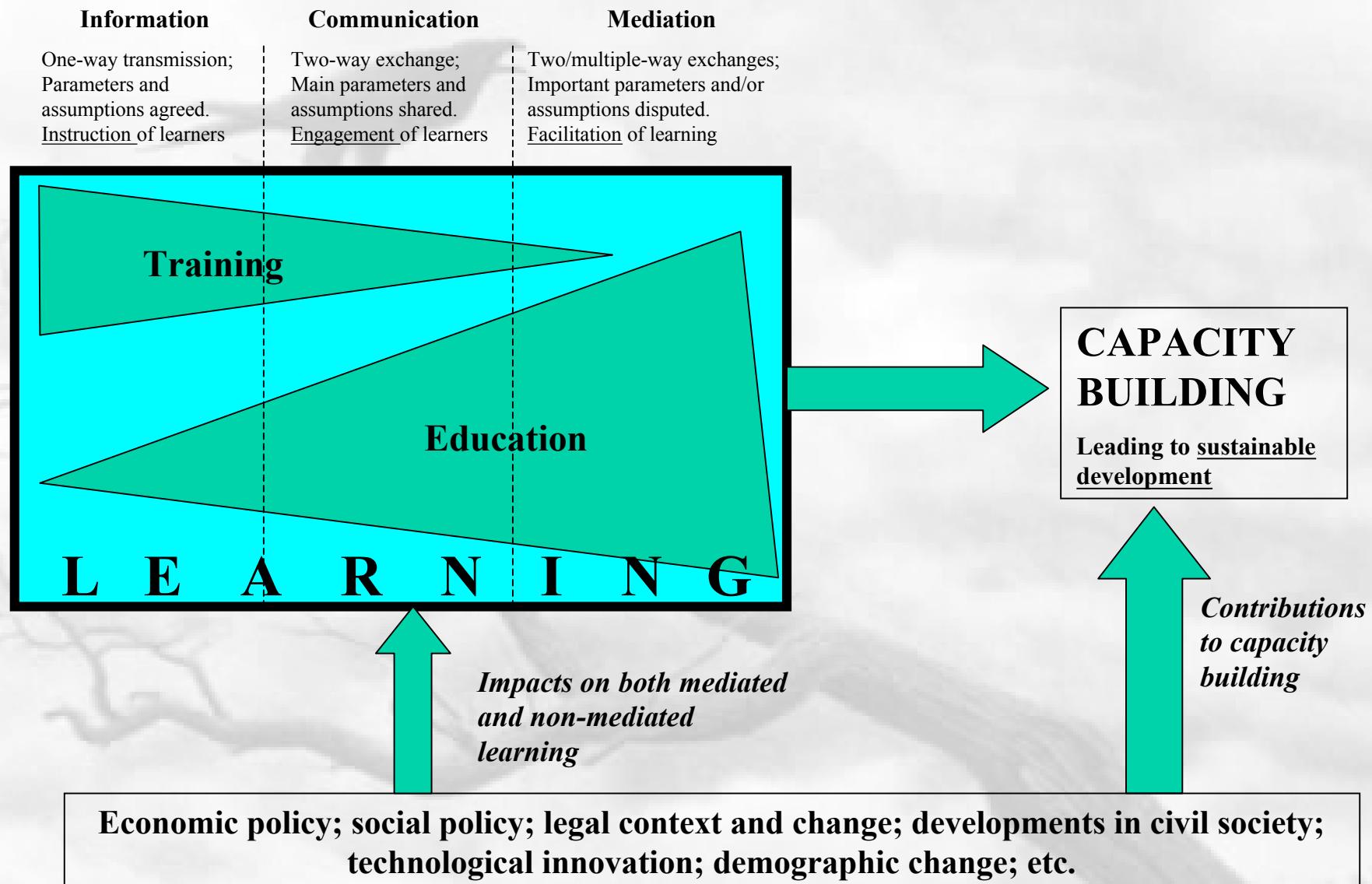
balancing economic and social progress with concern  
for the environment and the stewardship of natural  
resources.



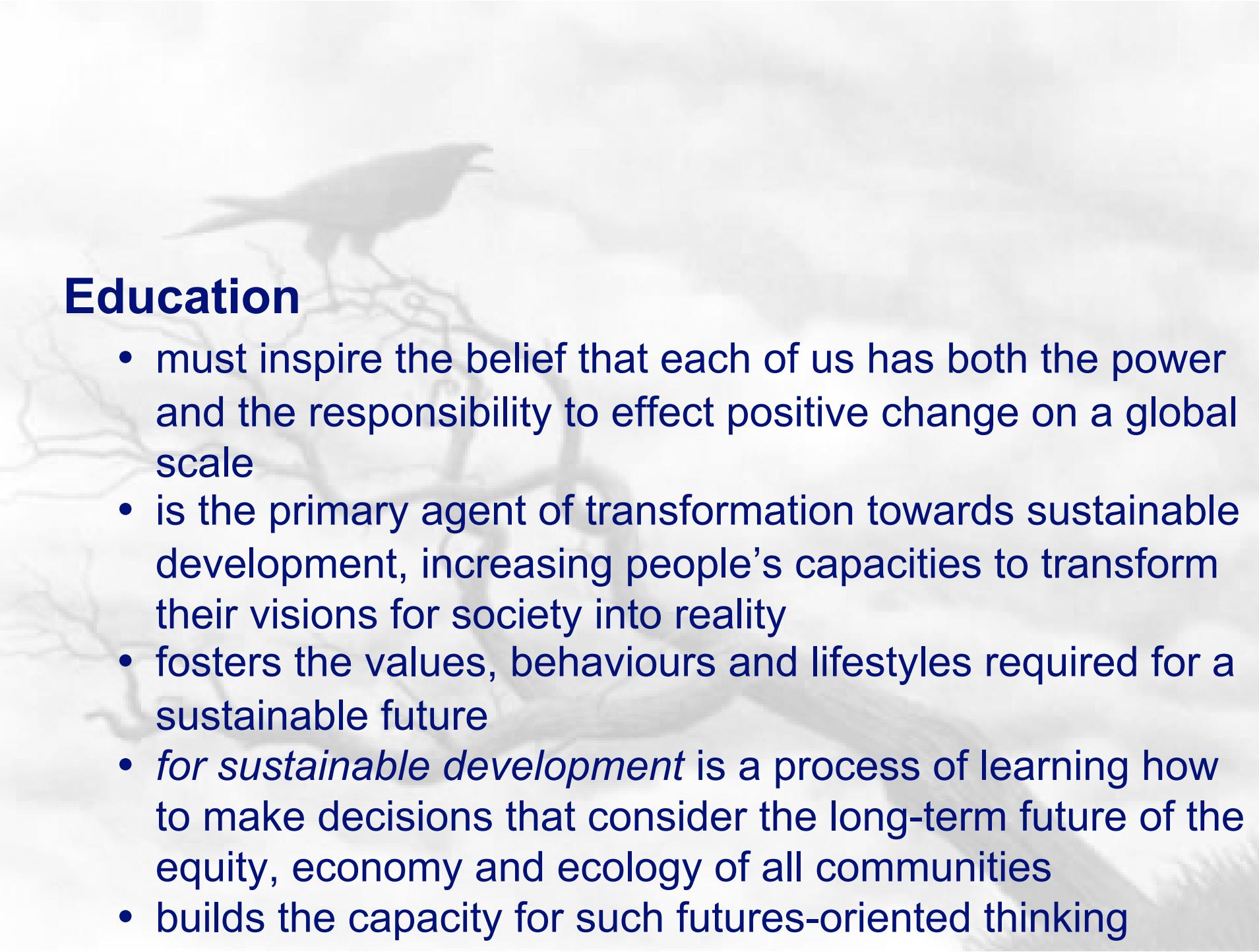
**ESD**

- What sort of Education?
- What sort of Learning?

# INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, MEDIATION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO CAPACITY BUILDING

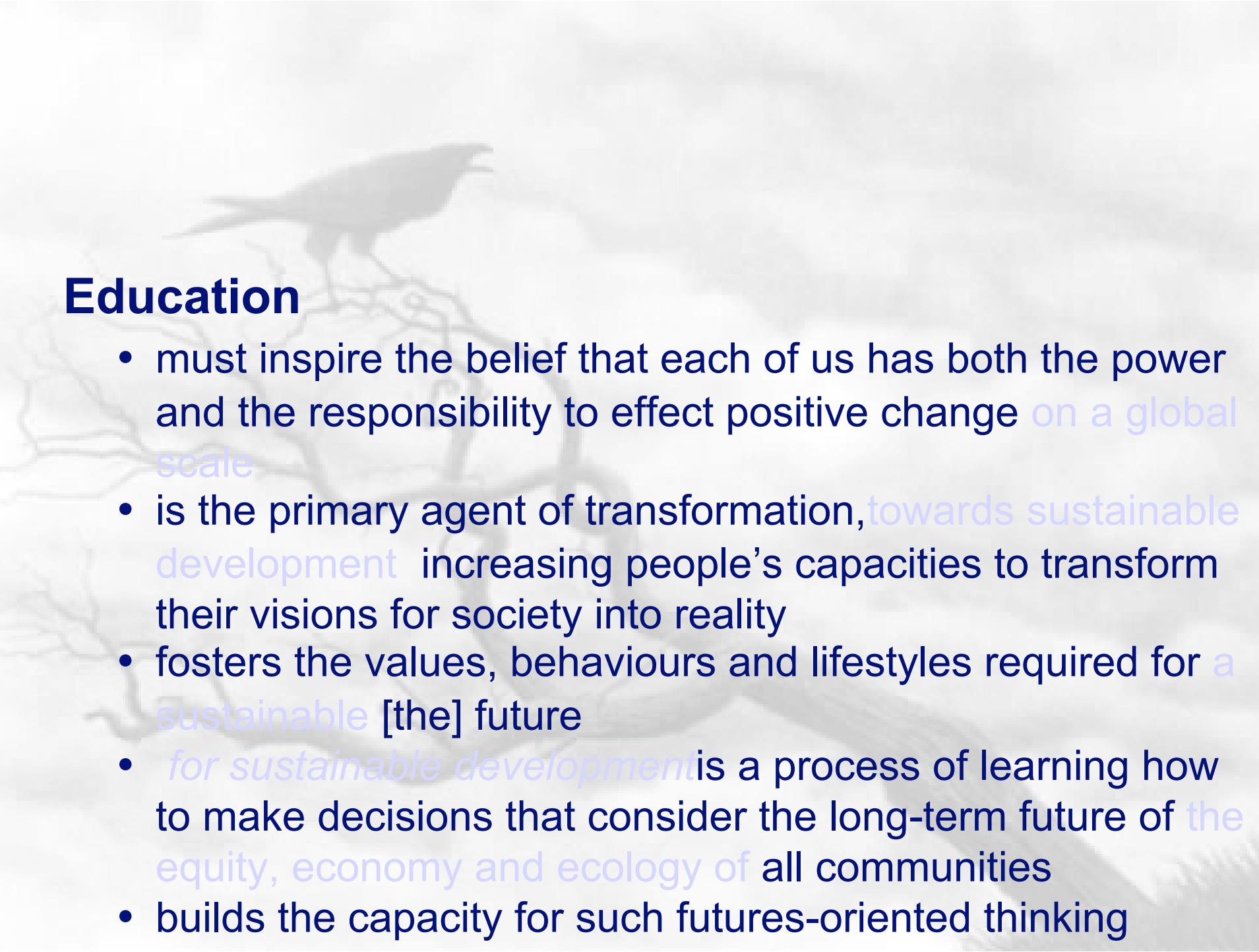


NB. Information, communication and pedagogy do not contribute to learning or capacity building if they are false, useless to the recipient, domineering or exploitative. Some learning occurs without any deliberate third party intervention. Taken from Scott WAH & Gough SR (2003) Sustainable Development and Learning: framing the issues; London/New York: RoutledgeFalmer



## Education

- must inspire the belief that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to effect positive change on a global scale
- is the primary agent of transformation towards sustainable development, increasing people's capacities to transform their visions for society into reality
- fosters the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for a sustainable future
- *for sustainable development* is a process of learning how to make decisions that consider the long-term future of the equity, economy and ecology of all communities
- builds the capacity for such futures-oriented thinking

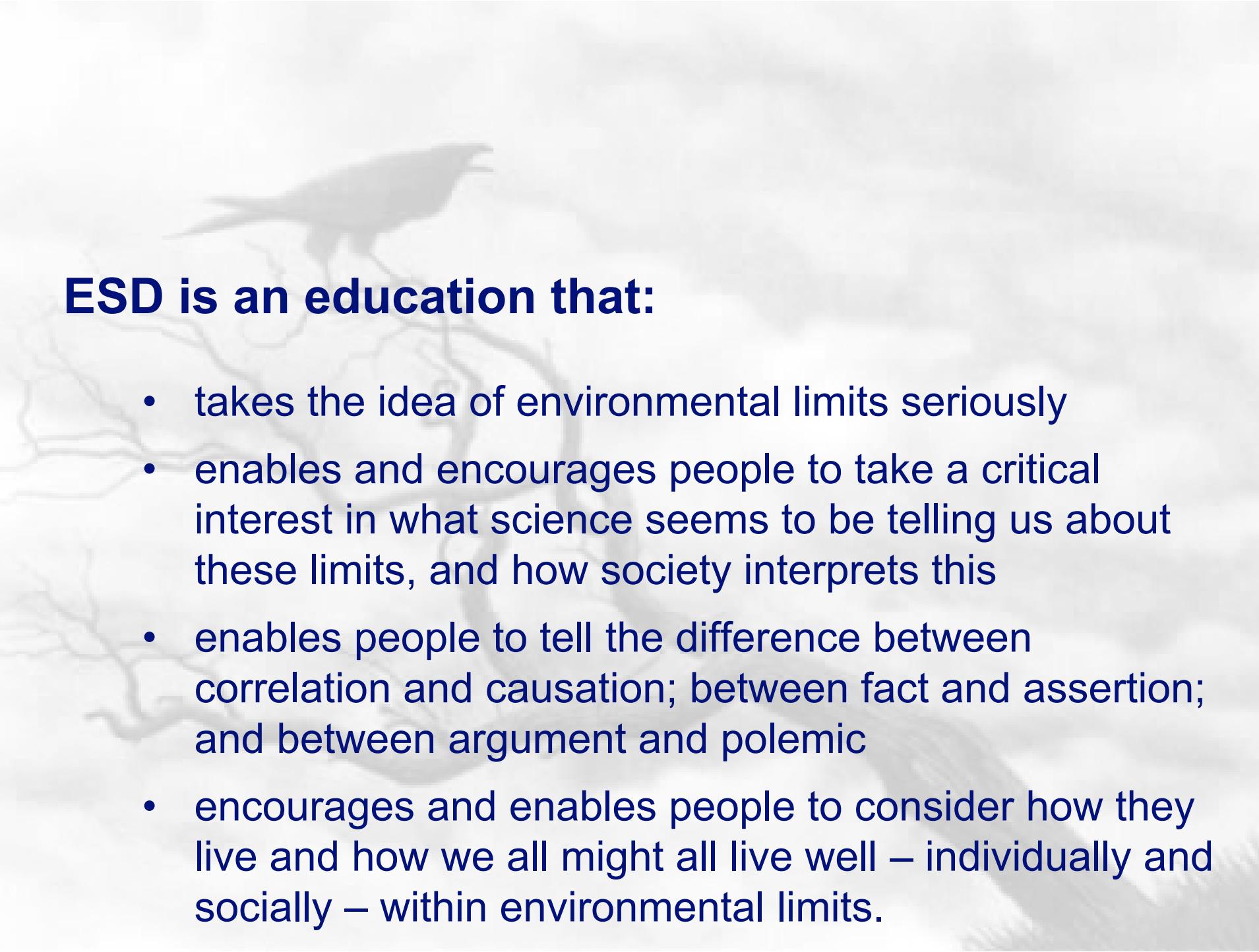


## Education

- must inspire the belief that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to effect positive change *on a global scale*
- is the primary agent of transformation, *towards sustainable development* increasing people's capacities to transform their visions for society into reality
- fosters the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for *a sustainable [the] future*
- *for sustainable development* is a process of learning how to make decisions that consider the long-term future of *the equity, economy and ecology of all communities*
- builds the capacity for such futures-oriented thinking

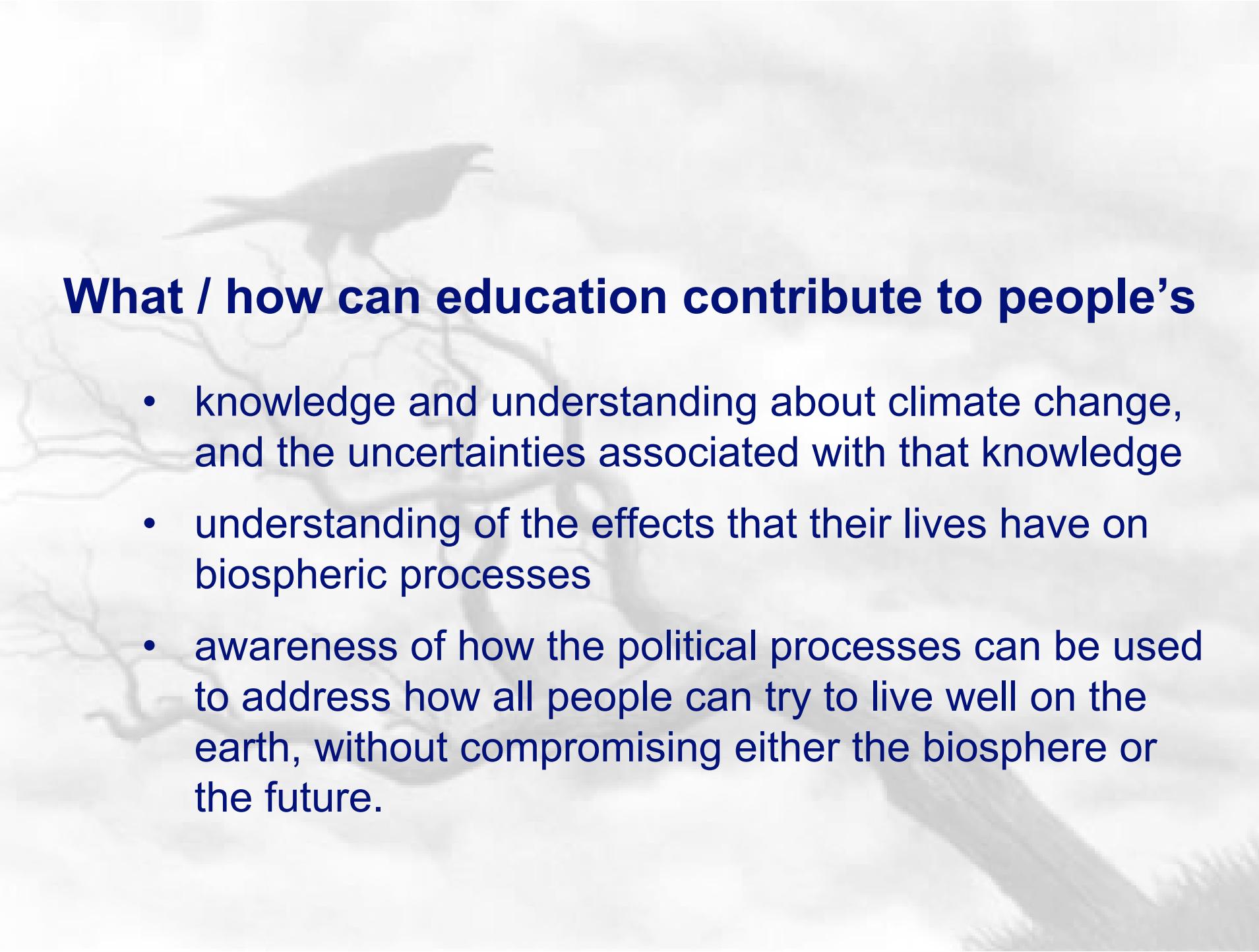
## **Six features of ESD**

- *Interdisciplinary and holistic*
- *Values driven*
- *Critical thinking and problem solving*
- *Multi-method*
- *Participatory decision-making*
- *Locally relevant*



## **ESD is an education that:**

- takes the idea of environmental limits seriously
- enables and encourages people to take a critical interest in what science seems to be telling us about these limits, and how society interprets this
- enables people to tell the difference between correlation and causation; between fact and assertion; and between argument and polemic
- encourages and enables people to consider how they live and how we all might all live well – individually and socially – within environmental limits.

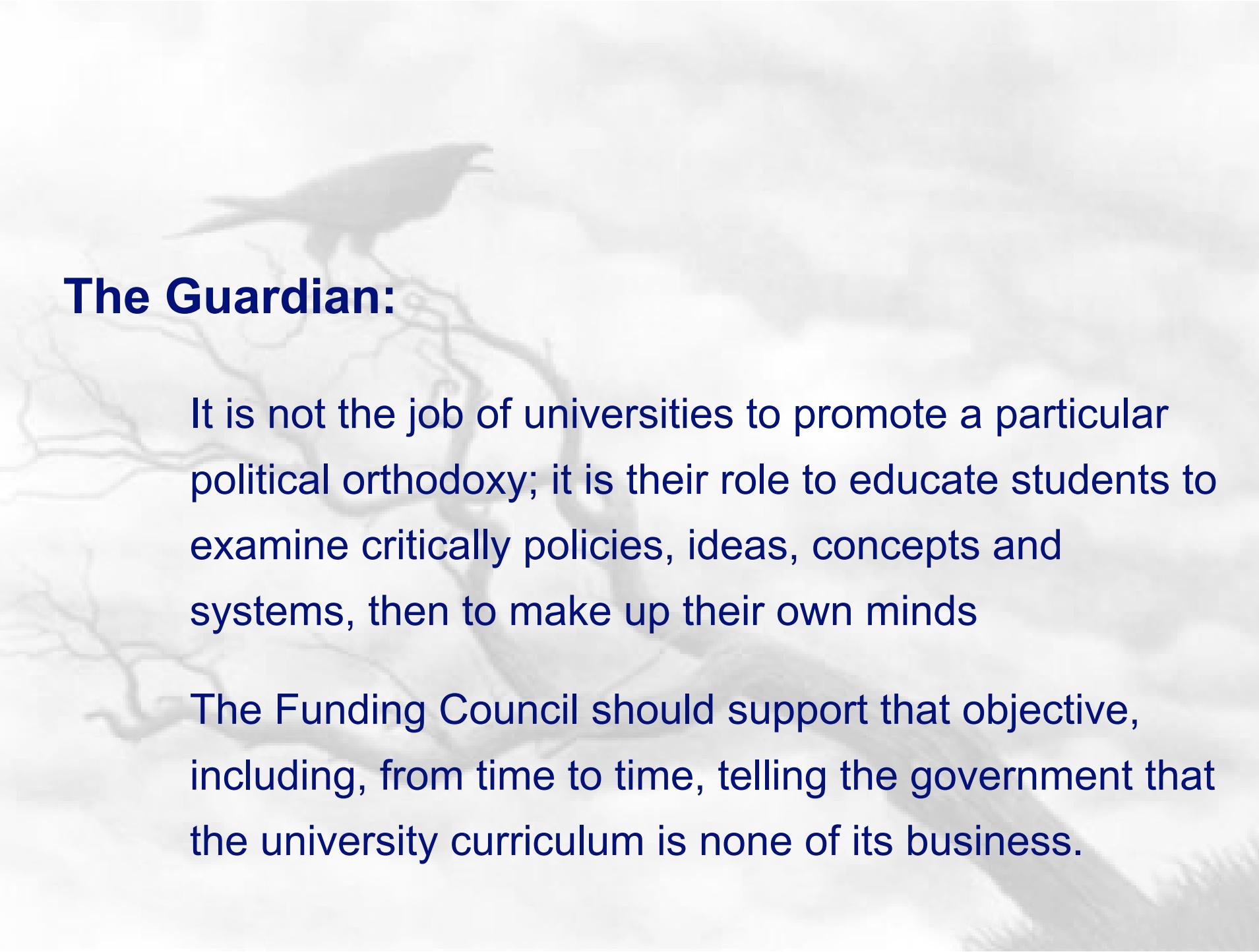


## **What / how can education contribute to people's**

- knowledge and understanding about climate change, and the uncertainties associated with that knowledge
- understanding of the effects that their lives have on biospheric processes
- awareness of how the political processes can be used to address how all people can try to live well on the earth, without compromising either the biosphere or the future.

## **Universities are:**

- places of learning and research, forming & informing the leaders and decision-makers of the future
- major businesses, where prudent resource use not only saves money but safeguards reputations
- key community players, as employer, purchaser and amenity provider with a major impact on the wider world of influential ideas and technological development.



## The Guardian:

It is not the job of universities to promote a particular political orthodoxy; it is their role to educate students to examine critically policies, ideas, concepts and systems, then to make up their own minds

The Funding Council should support that objective, including, from time to time, telling the government that the university curriculum is none of its business.



## Two comments:

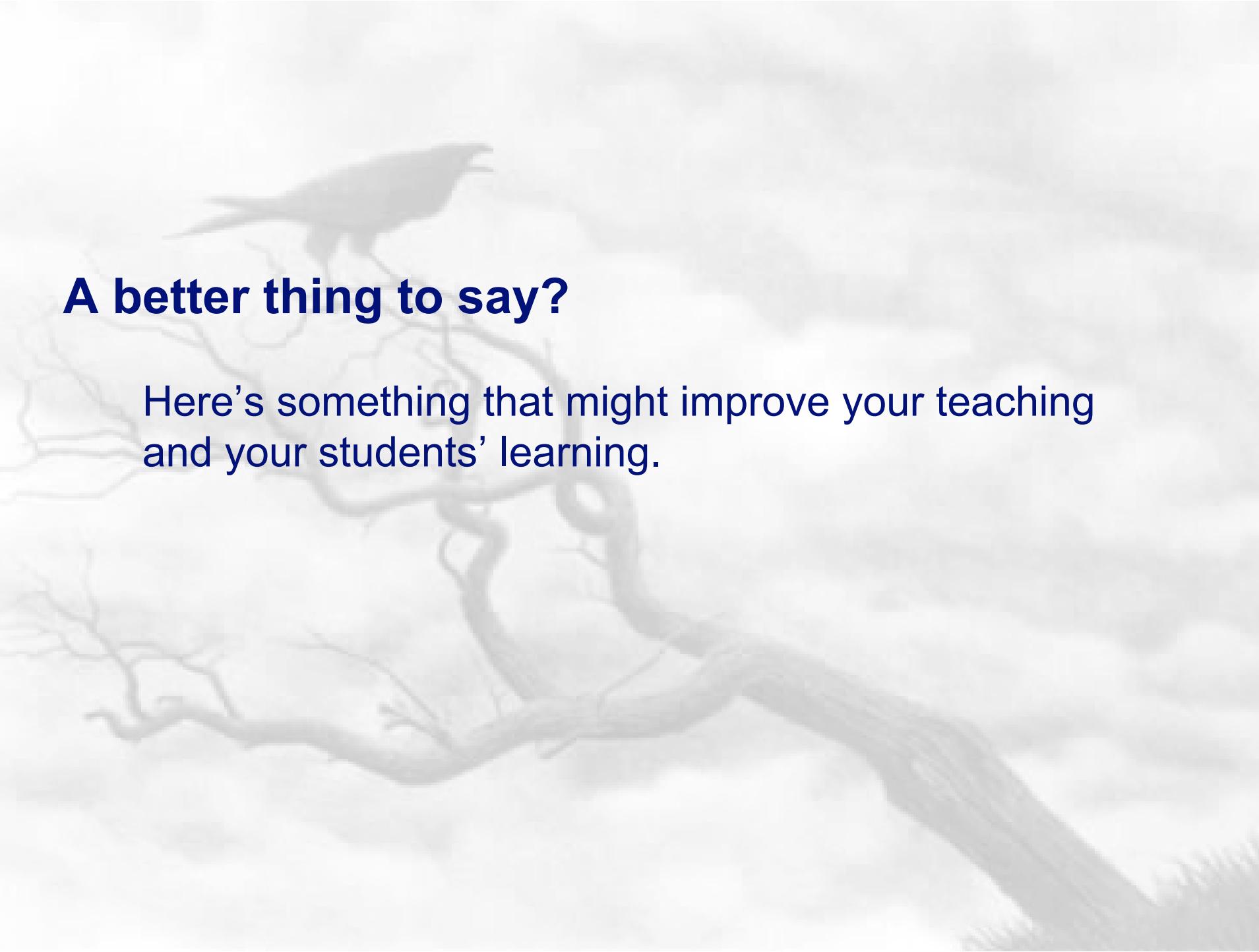
At present, the paper takes an optimistic and uncritically view of university staff's awareness of sustainable development

and

We think you have got the relationship between universities and sustainable development wrong:  
it's *not* the universities' role to *promote* sustainable development.

## **What not to say?**

Here's a way of changing how / what you teach so you can address sustainable development.



## A better thing to say?

Here's something that might improve your teaching  
and your students' learning.



## **Two questions:**

1. How do your university's teaching programmes engage students with the idea of sustainable development?
  
2. How does your university contribute to sustainable development through how it engages with students?

A black and white photograph of a tree with a bird perched on a branch. The tree has many intricate, winding branches. A small bird is perched on one of the branches in the upper left quadrant. The background is a soft-focus view of the tree's canopy.

**ESD**

– What sort of Decade?

## **Sustainable development –**

A process of making the emergent future ecologically sound and humanly habitable as *it emerges*, through the continuous responsive learning which is the human species' most characteristic endowment.

## **The dynamics of social learning**

By learning throughout our lives we equip ourselves to choose most advantageously as the future unfolds

## **The dynamics of social learning**

By learning throughout our lives we equip ourselves to choose most advantageously as the future unfolds

This would not bring about sustainable development.  
Rather, it would be evidence that sustainable development was happening.

## **Sustainable development –**

A social learning process of improving the human condition

A process which can be continued indefinitely without undermining itself.



# **ESD: What sort of Education? What sort of Learning? What sort of Decade?**

**William Scott**

**Centre for Research in Education and the Environment**

**University of Bath**

**cree@bath.ac.uk**