

The Schizophrenic Society: Lost in a Make-Believe World While We Destroy the Real One

Roger Boyd

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To encourage action, this eloquently written and well-researched work paints a startlingly bleak picture of human civilization's future.

The Schizophrenic Society is an urgent wake-up call, primarily centered around the damage humanity continues to do to its home planet. "The underlying crisis that humanity faces," writes author Roger Boyd, "is the unsustainability of the exponential growth of its claims upon the earth."

The book focuses on expected key issues, such as an overdependence on fossil fuels and the damaging effects of climate change, but the author's real target appears to be the "group-level schizophrenia" he believes is caused by "complex modern human societies." Specifically, Boyd addresses the pervasive fallacy that economic growth is the engine that "will fix everything"; instead, he writes, "incremental economic growth above a given point does not increase social welfare." He also points to a fundamental challenge in modern society—that the rich, who live in a "gilded cage," control the world's resources. According to the author, "With their conspicuous consumption they can enjoy the majority of the dwindling cheap energy resources and produce the majority of climate-change gas emissions, while outsourcing the consequences to others in the present and to the future in general."

Boyd views the media as the coconspirators of the rich. He claims that "media output acts in the same way as the images created by the mind of a hallucinating individual" and that "media groups become vehicles to sell things to consumers, rather than the independent purveyors of information about the wider world." Boyd takes an equally dim view of economists, whom he accuses of being "high priests or shamans" who help push society "towards the ecological and resource-depletion cliff."

The Schizophrenic Society is forcefully written. Chapter titles such as "Celebrating Mass-Murder-Suicide" and "Endless Layers of Delusion" are clearly intended to grab attention. Although many paragraphs are overly long, the text is generally well constructed. Bullets or other visual elements to break up the text would enhance the page design. The cover design is uninspired.

While *The Schizophrenic Society* does much to highlight a number of the world's most pressing problems, it offers little in the way of specific solutions, other than the author's call for a loosely defined "mass movement." Nevertheless, the author presents his argument boldly and authoritatively in relatively short chapters. The overall effect is dramatic.

Readers of *The Schizophrenic Society* could easily come away with a distinct feeling of impending doom and hopelessness, and some may find the author's views extreme. Still, those who share Boyd's belief in the urgency of the situation may well be compelled to take constructive action.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (May 15, 2015)

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