is depicted as a beautiful being with butterfly wings – a delicate, mutable object of desire.

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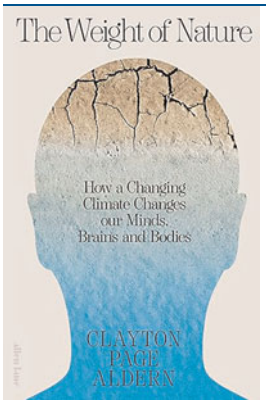
doi:10.1192/bjp.2024.95



The Weight of Nature: How a Changing Climate Changes Our Minds, Brains and Bodies

By Clayton Page Aldern. Allen Lane. 2024. £25.00 (hb). 336 pp.
ISBN 978-0241597378

Clayton Aldern is an environmental journalist with a background in neuroscience. *The Weight of Nature* is his thought-provoking first book, in which he offers a wide-ranging and ambitious exploration of how climate change is changing human (neuro)physiology and psychology. In my view, this book will most appeal to psychiatrists who are interested in the climate crisis and its implications for humanity, because Aldern brings a novel perspective to this complex and interdisciplinary topic.

Some sections of the book work better than others. For example, I found the linked chapters on how heat affects cognition and behaviour particularly compelling, albeit that Aldern steered clear of some of the strongest environmental epidemiological evidence linking hot weather to suicide and self-harm. However, Aldern's approach is not drily academic and neither is his purpose to provide a systematic review of how heat has an impact on neurological and mental health – that can be found elsewhere. Rather, his exploration of the mechanisms by which heat alters the function of our brains is thought provoking and draws on interviews with scientists and his neuroscientific expertise.

In another notable chapter, Aldern somehow manages to bring Karl Friston's work into his thinking. Quite how he gets from clown fish neurophysiology to Christopher Nolan's films to Friston's neuroscientific theories to the antics of Just Stop Oil activism in one chapter was quite a ride, but he should be commended for attempting to link these issues in one chapter! For me, one of the most enjoyable chapters was found towards the end of the book with his exploration of linguistics – specifically the implications of regional language loss on cognition and, therefore, our ability to understand our changing world.

I occasionally felt a little unmoored as I was working my way through the chapters and I might have felt more contained had I understood in advance where Aldern's text was going to take me. It was only as I finished the book, looked back at the chapter structure and re-read the prologue that I grasped quite how Aldern had mapped out this vast interdisciplinary landscape. But perhaps he means the reader to feel unmoored. Certainly, Aldern's writing is whimsical, his style expressive and metaphorical rather than academic.

Having started the book assuming Aldern would cover mostly what I already knew, by the end I was considering something unexpected and far more nuanced – namely how we as humans unknowingly, and with responsiveness and reciprocity, interact with our changing environment. And for that novel perspective I am pleased to have read this book.

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doi:10.1192/bjp.2024.103