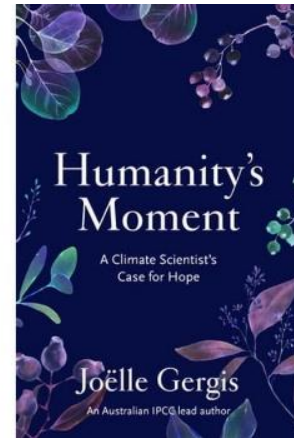


“Humanity’s Moment: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope”

by Joëlle Gergis (2022)



Reviewed by [Kara Nicholson](#)
September 1, 2022

If there is only one nonfiction book you read this year, it really should be this one. Its author, Joëlle Gergis, is one of Australia’s leading climate scientists and she believes this book is the most important one she will ever write.

Gergis has spent the last few years as a lead author working on the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report. This work (done on a voluntary basis and on top of her day job as a scientist and university lecturer) has radically changed her outlook on life; it has kept her awake at night and led to feelings of anxiety and despair. Before the IPCC process, Gergis had found she could remain relatively emotionally detached from her work, but the cumulative effect of compiling the latest science on climate change from all over the world was overwhelming. She wrote an article about her emotional response and was contacted by other climate scientists who felt the same but were too afraid to share their feelings lest it might compromise the image of a dispassionate, data-driven scientist. With this book, Gergis wants to humanize and reframe climate change as a ‘cultural issue’, and she manages to do this beautifully by blending personal narrative with a distillation of the science.

Divided into three parts – the head, the heart and the whole – the book first outlines the latest science in clear and straightforward language. This is ‘the head’ and it makes for incredibly grim reading. ‘The heart’ looks at our connection to nature across different cultures and how this has changed over time. Here, Gergis outlines the ongoing catastrophes caused by colonization and capitalism. Finally, in ‘the whole’, Gergis imagines what we as a community can achieve. She looks at the important role of art and literature to inspire us and the necessity of heeding Indigenous knowledge if there is to be a brighter future. Many of the solutions already exist and Gergis’ ultimate hope with this book is that it will remind us how ‘human history is an endless tug-of-war for social justice. We are each part of an eternal evolutionary force that can transform our world.’ The first step may just be to read this book.