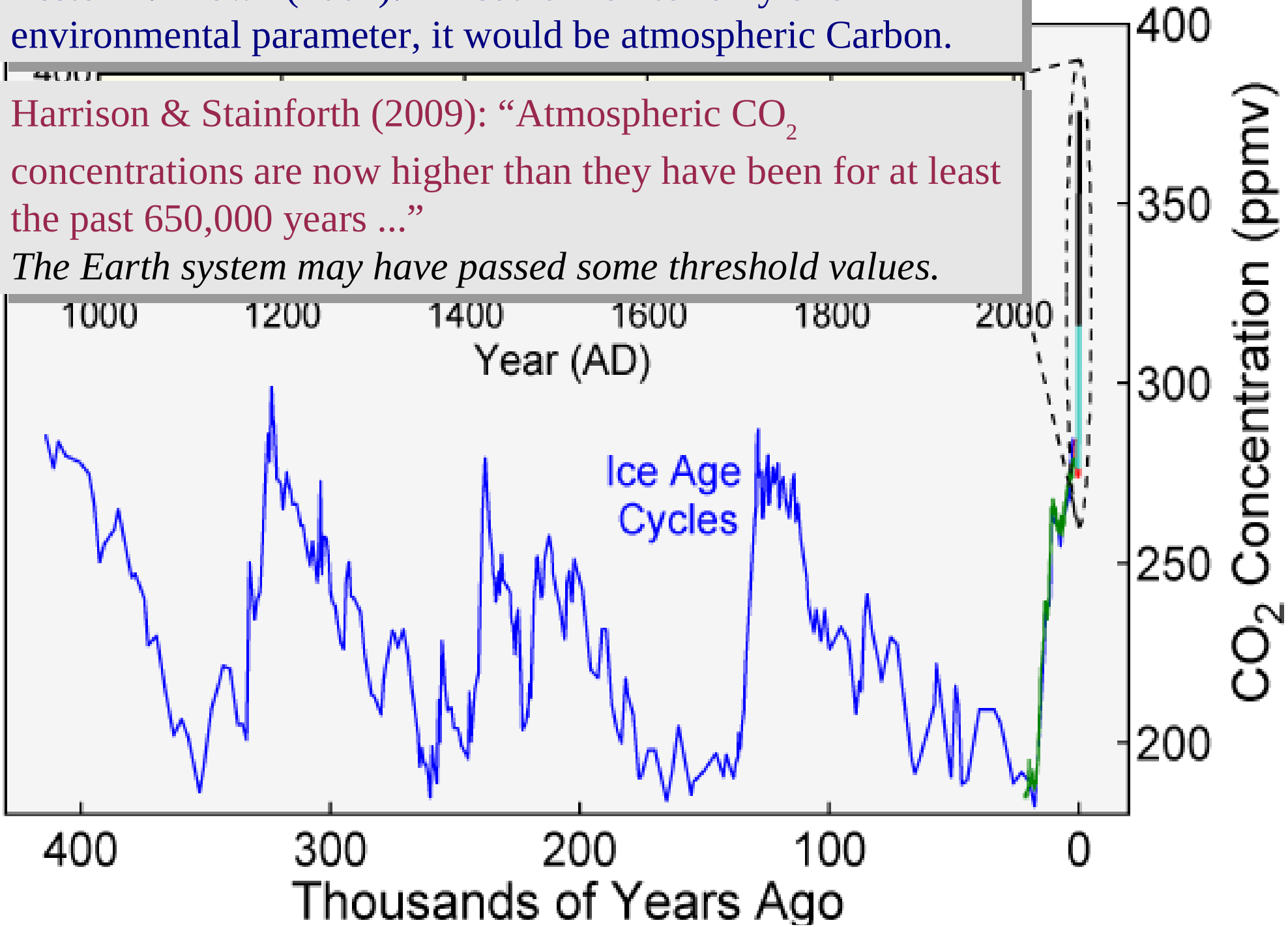
Lester R. Brown (2007): If I could monitor only one environmental parameter, it would be atmospheric Carbon.

Harrison & Stainforth (2009): "Atmospheric CO_2 concentrations are now higher than they have been for at least the past 650,000 years ..."

The Earth system may have passed some threshold values.