# Ch 1 - fever dream

How is it that in the nation of the free, in the homes of the privileged and plentiful, there exists this great big nothing weighing on the hearts and minds of millions every day? How is it that such a nation continues to benefit from putting its people through the wringer of fear for some “far off” economic and environmental collapse, yet no one seems to want to fight to survive such an exodus? Is there really something so massive and powerful yet totally invisible that dictates the totality of our lives—from enjoying Cincinnati-style chili to creating a domestic terrorist? If this thing essentially controls society, how can we ever overcome it? Questions like these are only the fuel for the beginning of a social revolution that’s pleading to be heard & demanding to matter.

I am pursuing this project primarily because I suspect I can’t be confident in any ideology until I properly analyze it and its practicality in depth. I used to espouse my core beliefs along the lines of “perspectivism” and “ecofeminism,” but what are they to me other than gestural hot-button descriptors of how I live my life? Does it even mean anything to anyone else and, if it doesn’t, will anyone really be bothered to go look it up for themselves? It feels a lot like when I had “activist” in my Twitter bio at some point in high school-ish. A friend asked me what I was even involved in... Pfft, *I wasn't*. I had been to the March for Science protest at the Capital in 2017, but there was no reason for me to claim to be an activist when I’m sat here at home doing virtually nothing all day. Sure, these causes—ecofeminism and the like—are great things to anchor to, but something never felt right to me. More so, it felt like a display of intelligence when I did it; “Ooo, look at these big words and complex ideologies and political movements! Aren't I clever and informed?” That certainly isn't the case for everyone, but for me, as much as I wanted to believe I was all of those things, something felt off. A big something, it turns out. It need not be that complicated. Compassion checks all those boxes, is easily understood, and is *universal*.

One might ask how perspectivism and compassion differ, and while that’s a good question, it seems to me that they each have their own limiting scopes—like camera lenses. Perspectivism is a widely liberal ideology, attempting to treat the ailments of each and every individual instead of the source of their collective pain. Liberalism, in American politics, does essentially the same thing, though, in reality, they justify the pain and suffering as just another means to an end. And the American “left” really isn’t liberalism, but relative to the political action of the GOP, it certainly seems like it...

Anyway, relativity is an interesting philosophical framework in that it is really only useful to those who seek to benefit from the comparisons being drawn: The contemporary liberal party in the United States is the best option we have, *relatively speaking*. Using nuclear power as a transitory source of energy is a bad idea, *relative to the concerns of those that live near the plants*. Woven bags are better than plastic ones, *relatively speaking*. Access to clean drinking water is not a “public right”, *relative to the corporate interests of Nestle*.1

See, perspectivism is *like* relativism in that you try to consider the widest breadth of possibilities, but it differs in that it doesn’t validate individual atrocities. Essentially, there is a *limit* to what is relatively more or less moral because although one thing may be *technically* more moral than another, you also have to consider its full impact. If, for example, it is causing enough valid distress, it doesn’t bear well against the perspectives of those being done harm. Perspectivism is a tricky ideology to feel confident in, especially when socio-economic struggles manage to put together any semblance of resistance toward their oppressors. But we circle back to the liberalism of it all—it can’t help but overlook the bigger picture. Compassion on the other hand exceeds the goals of perspectivism and certainly of relativism. Compassion understands power differences and the intoxicating temptations of wealth and greed whispered to us in our sleep. Compassion is at odds with the great systems of oppression that plague us now and in embracing a certain empathy for all life on Earth, we may be able to forge a new way of living that explicitly benefits no one, oppresses no one, and is built for all.