# 1AC

### 1AC---Climate Denialism

#### Vote affirmative to reject climate denialism

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Abstract The way fossil fuel companies frame climate change in their annual sustainability reports shines light how the fossil fuel industry is addressing pressure from stockholders, investors, and the public to become less environmentally harmful. Through a qualitative frame analysis and critical discourse analysis of fossil fuel company sustainability reports, four major frames emerged: (1) techno-optimism, or, the belief that innovative technologies and fuels, without social change, can help solve the issue of climate change; (2) necessitarianism, or, the notion that the fossil fuel industry provides a necessary service; (3) compliance, or, adherence to established regulations and standards; and (4) countermeasures, or, strategies that indirectly counteract harms done. Two frames central to discourses surrounding fossil fuels and climate change are notably absent: (5) potential environmental and societal risks of fossil fuels (risk minimization) and (6) potential future scenarios that are significantly different from the growing economy powered by increased energy output (possibility blindness). Together, the frames are a subtle form of climate change denialism that acknowledges climate change as a problem without diagnosing the root cause of the problem (ideological denial), conceals environmentally harmful actions with the rhetoric of environmental friendliness (greenwashing), and justifies the status quo as necessary (reification). 1. Introduction The fossil fuel industry has a tenuous history with the public regarding information about climate change (for summary, see [1]: 310f). Major players in the industry, most notably ExxonMobil, actively sought to cover up and deny the reality of climate change despite knowing about the contribution of fossil fuels to global warming long before the public [2]. In addition to secrecy and denial, the fossil fuel industry worked to discredit climate scientists in the eyes of the public [3], [4], [5]. With growth in the public’s belief in anthropogenic climate change, and the increasing difficulty of denying climate change given the reality of climate change-related impacts, stockholders in the fossil fuel industry, other stakeholders, and members of the public, are increasingly demanding change from fossil fuel companies. These demands range from completely phasing-out fossil fuels to transitioning to greener sources of energy [6]. The industry is reacting to these demands in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways. For example, most fossil fuel companies now acknowledge that climate change is real and should be addressed, yet some are simultaneously members or leaders in organizations that spread disinformation about climate science or seek to block climate action [1], [3], [7], [8]. There is a wealth of literature on strategies the fossil fuel industry employs to actively undermine climate change policy (e.g., [5], [9]). However, there is not an extensive body of research, save the exceptions reviewed in Section 2, regarding how the industry frames, beyond outright denial, the causes, moral dimensions of, and solutions to climate change. This is a large gap in the literature considering the industry’s recent attempts to become, at least in appearance, more environmentally conscious by, for example, publishing sustainability reports. The way fossil fuel companies frame climate change in their sustainability reports opens a window into how the fossil fuel industry is managing the pressure from stockholders, investors, and the public to become more sustainable. The goal of this analysis is to identify the most coherent and polished framing strategies used by the fossil fuel industry to reconcile the demand to “go green” with the reality of extracting and distributing the commodity most responsible for carbon emissions [10], [11]. Through a qualitative frame analysis of fossil fuel company sustainability reports, four major frames emerged: (1) techno-optimism, or, the belief that innovative technologies, without fundamental social changes, can help solve the issue of climate change, as well as invoking the future potential of renewable and cleaner nonrenewable sources; (2) necessitarianism, or, the notion that the fossil fuel industry provides a necessary service that improves the quality of life of many people; (3) compliance, or, adherence to established regulations and standards; and (4) countermeasures, or, strategies that indirectly counteract harms done, especially through participation in other organizations that do work to benefit the environment and investing in other environmental projects. Furthermore, two frames central to discourses surrounding fossil fuels and climate change are notably absent in the annual sustainability reports: (5) potential environmental and societal risks of purely technological solutions and continued fossil fuel use (risk minimization) and (6) potential future scenarios that are significantly different from the growing economy powered by increased energy output (possibility blindness). Both omissions help overcome the paradox between the demand to “go green” with the reality of extracting fossil fuels by implicitly disregarding the existence of the contradiction. Below, we review of the concepts of frames and framing, as well as pertinent existing information regarding how fossil fuel companies framed climate change in the past (Section 2). Section 3 reviews the methods used to analyze fossil fuel industry sustainability reports. We then discuss the major frames that emerged during the analysis (Section 4), followed by a critical analysis of these framing strategies (Section 5). We conclude by examining the implications of the findings for climate change mitigation and the future of the fossil fuel industry in climate action (Section 6). 2. Research approach The concept of “frame” draws attention to the way experience is conditioned by the selection and salience of information [12]. The use of frames is prevalent in society, and perhaps an inherent feature of all perception [13], though we may not always be cognizant of their use and existence. Individuals and organizations can explicitly adopt framing strategies that select aspects of perceived reality that the individual or organization wants to make more salient. By enhancing salience, we mean that the piece of information selected is made more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable. Frames can be used as tools by organizations to control how they represent themselves to the public. Successfully employed frames can define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest treatments or remedies [12]. Frames can shape the perception of information. By controlling what information is conveyed, and how salient that information is, the audience can be swayed, find other facts or perspectives irrelevant, etc. Furthermore, frames can provide insight into the ideals and priorities of the people or organizations using the frames. Frames are employed by the fossil fuel industry, a powerful actor in mainstreaming specific framings of climate change [14]. In an analysis of 38 previous studies on industry actors’ communications on climate change between 1990 and 2010, three overarching and evolving frames were used by industrial actors: scientific uncertainty, socioeconomic consequences of mandatory emissions reductions, and, most recently, industrial leadership in climate protection [15]. The latter frame, which took hold globally and is still prevalent today, refers to “industrial actors acknowledg[ing] responsibility for the climate. However, they portray technological innovations as the primary assets to combat climate change” ([15]: 505). The industrial leadership frame was pioneered by European oil and gas companies. The initial pushback towards carbon emission regulation was much more aggressive among US corporations than European corporations [16]. US corporations formed industry associations, lobbied politicians, cast doubt on climate science, and emphasized the high economic cost of forced emission reductions. In contrast, industries in Europe expressed a willingness to invest in technologies that would reduce emissions. Earlier, Le Menestrel et al. [17] also found that oil and gas actors emphasized technological investments (e.g., in green energy) to address a dilemma: that constraining emissions would lead to lower profits. However, these companies simultaneously invested substantially more money in fossil fuels and lent support to anti-climate action lobby groups. Green marketing and strategic framing help address this contradiction, and similar paradoxes. For example, in their Helios Power campaign, BP used background images of wind turbines, environmental buzzwords (reduce waste, conserve energy, etc.), green color schemes, a conservation advocacy section of the campaign, and a new green logo [18]. BP appears to align itself with green ideals and advocate for the pro-environmental movement. However, closer analysis shows that this behavior primarily serves to maintain company profits while appeasing environmentally friendly stakeholders and climate activists. The use of green images and rhetoric despite, or to mask, environmental harms and manipulate consumers is sometimes termed “greenwashing” [19]. A common form of greenwashing among fossil fuel companies is the hidden trade-off, where a product is framed as green or environmentally friendly based on a single attribute while other attributes are ignored [20]. Companies also often enhance these greenwashed frames by highlighting and amplifying science and technology, and the expertise of authorities. Pulling these historical trends together, Brulle [3] examined how the fossil fuel industry initially engaged in explicit denialism, despite knowing about climate science and the role of fossil fuels in climate change. More recently, the industry has shifted toward a more subtle framing that feigns positive change or provides minimal support towards a pro-environment agenda while continuing to harm the environment and prioritize profit outside of the public eye. This strategy includes the use of frames to shape public opinion, industrial leadership, community involvement, and focused campaigns to control the company’s public image. In summary, previous studies on fossil fuel framings of climate change focused on overarching frames or the evolution of frames and industry behaviors over long periods of time, such as Levy [16], Schlichting [17], and Brulle [3]. The goal of this project is to examine the most coherent and polished climate change-related framing strategies officially employed by the fossil fuel industry to date via an analysis of their annual sustainability reports to answer one overarching question: What framing strategies do fossil fuel companies employ to reconcile the demand for addressing the climate crisis with the reality that their product is the most significant immediate cause of climate change? This research question provides insight into the industry’s views on the interesting ethical dilemma they face, as described by Le Menestrel et al. [17], where the industry is trying to address a problem in which they are the primary contributor. This dilemma has snowballed due to growing pressure from stockholders, investors, and the public to become environmentally friendly. Answering this overarching question will require an examination of the four dimensions of frames identified in Entman’s [12] classic conceptualization: (1) How do fossil fuel companies define the problem of climate change?; (2) How do fossil fuel companies diagnose the problem of climate change? (i.e., Who or what is causing the problem of climate change, according to fossil fuel companies?); (3) How do fossil fuel companies evaluate the problem of climate change (i.e., What moral judgements do they make)?; (4) What solutions to climate change do fossil fuel companies propose? Addressing these questions will illuminate how the industry balances its role in driving climate change with its need to stay profitable, as well as how it works to shape the perceptions and opinions of its stakeholders and critics. 3. Methodology and materials 3.1. Qualitative frame analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) Typically, frames are identified via content analysis [21]. A distinct frame can be categorized as the definition of a problem or an issue, causal attribution, a moral evaluation, and a treatment [12]. Frames can be analyzed quantitatively and/or qualitatively. Qualitative content analysis identifies and categorizes the central themes or frames of interview transcripts, reports, or other forms of text [22], [23]. As the data was collected and analyzed, any recurrent concepts (such as faith in technology or an emphasis on adherence to regulation) were identified and, over time, categorized into specific frames (see Section 3.3). We adopt a qualitative approach here, which emphasizes focusing on, and understanding, frames as they relate to conceptual issues and societal contexts as opposed to solely the prevalence of the frames [24]. In addition to qualitative content analysis, the methodological approach also overlaps with critical discourse analysis (CDA), specifically a form of CDA that examines how language can be used to reproduce existing social conditions and contextualizes discourse with the sometimes-obscured social forces that influence it (for overview, see [25]: 8ff). Like CDA, we think the social context in which language is employed is of critical importance because discourse is shaped or “constituted” by this context. CDA has proven to be a valuable method in studying frames used in environmental and energy discourse [26], [27], [28], [29]. Our normative aim is to “demystify” frames employed by fossil fuel companies and analyze them as strategies to reproduce the status quo via minor reforms. This critical spotlight is based on the premise that to effectively reduce emissions at the pace and scale needed to avoid catastrophic climate change, fossil fuel companies must “end exploration, wind down extraction, [and] invest in low-carbon energy” ([30]: 3). Anything less than explicit plans to phase out nearly all fossil fuel extraction—for example, proposals to merely increase miniscule investments in renewables [31] or co-fund another carbon capture and storage facility—are inadequate for staying within internationally recognized climate targets [30]. For those who argue that this standard is unrealistic, we think our counterfactual is more realistic than meeting climate targets while simultaneously maintaining or expanding fossil fuel extraction – even if the companies extracting fossil fuels allocate a bit more than 0.22% (ExxonMobil) to 2.3% (BP) of total capital expenditures in low-carbon investments [31]. Following others, we make the case that minor reforms in lieu of phase-out are strategies of greenwashing, or even a new form of climate change denial (see Section 5). 3.2. Data The data was collected from the following eight companies: Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP, Royal Dutch Shell (hereafter Shell), ConocoPhillips, Peabody Energy (hereafter Peabody), CONSOL Energy (hereafter CONSOL), and Arch Coal. These eight companies were chosen because they are responsible for 15% of carbon emissions since 1850 [11], [32]. There are significant differences between these companies in terms of market focus and climate strategy. Most glaringly, Peabody, CONSOL, and Arch Coal are primarily coal companies, whereas Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, BP, and Shell derive most of their profits from oil and gas. This difference not only impacts the viability of future markets—for example, some investor-owned coal companies are on their last leg ([30]: 8)—, but also climate strategy. For example, in “planning for a world free from carbon pollution,” all three coal companies were ranked as “egregious” by the Union of Concern Scientists [8], whereas the oil and gas companies were ranked as “poor” (BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil) to “fair” (Shell). Despite these differences, we found that all eight companies employed the same four frames: techno-optimism, necessitarianism, compliance, and countermeasures. (These frames are discussed in detail below.) The only exception is Peabody’s sustainability report, which employs two of the frames (techno-optimism and necessitarianism), rather than all four. The consistency in framing across all eight companies is notable. As pressure from stockholders and investors may have more immediate financial consequences for companies when compared to public pressure, sustainability reports are a perfect data source to examine how fossil fuel companies reconcile the demand to address climate change with the fact that they are fossil fuel companies. Further, as explained above, our goal is to examine the most polished climate change-related frames produced by fossil fuel companies. Sustainability reports are fitting for this research goal as well. To use an analogy, sustainability reports show “the ideal self” of fossil fuel companies’ green self-presentation, one that conforms with the expectations of environmentally minded investors and other stakeholders. Fossil fuel companies can use sustainability reports to construct an ideal green self-image because, in contrast to financial statements, there are no established legal or regulatory risks in being excessively optimistic in sustainability reports.1 Thus, corporate sustainability reports, as a PR exercise, are a window into this ideal green self-image. A web search and a search of company websites uncovered sustainability reports for most of the companies listed above. A second, more directed search uncovered sustainability reports for every company except Arch Coal. The most recent sustainability report for each company available at the time (July 2020) was used as data. The reports analyzed are as follows: (1) Chevron’s “Climate Change Resilience: A Framework for Decision Making” [34], (2) ExxonMobil’s “2018 Sustainability Report Highlights” [35], (3) BP’s “Energy with Purpose: BP Sustainability Report 2019” [36], (4) Shell’s “Sustainability Report 2019: Delivering Energy Responsibly” [37], (5) ConocoPhillips’ “2018 Sustainability Report” [38], (6) Peabody’s “Delivering Results, Generating Value: Environmental, Social, and Governance Report 2019” [39], and (7) CONSOL’s “Forward Progress: 2019 Corporate Sustainability Report” [40]. We could not locate a sustainability report for Arch Coal, as mentioned above. Instead of using data from their annual report, data for Arch Coal was collected from the company’s website. The website has an “Our Approach” page with nine links to other sections (pages) that all deal with various sustainability and environmental issues [41]. Each of these nine other sections, as well as the original page, were examined for relevant data. 3.3. Analysis The data were analyzed by the first author in accordance with the qualitative content analysis of frames as described above in Section 3.1. The second author was consulted throughout the analysis to help conceptualize emergent codes. Relatively open coding was used when analyzing the data, which ensured that any prominent frames would emerge during analysis. Although open coding was used, the analysis was guided by the research questions and purpose (see Section 2), which was to identify what framing strategies fossil fuel companies use to reconcile the demand for action to address the climate crisis with the fact that their products are the most immediate cause of this crisis. Identifying these frames required attention to how fossil fuel companies define the problem of climate change; how fossil fuel companies diagnose the problem of climate change; how fossil fuel companies evaluate the problem of climate change; and what solutions fossil fuel companies propose to solve climate change. Further, past literature informed the “naming” of codes in cases of clear overlaps (e.g., “techno-optimism”). Finally, the analysis purposefully recorded what potentially relevant climate change information (e.g., risks of continuing fossil fuel extraction) was not discussed in sustainability reports. Drawing attention to what is “unsaid,” “backgrounded,” or “omitted,” despite being potentially relevant, is consistent with CDA (e.g., [27]) and frame analysis in general [12]. 4. Results All the reports analyzed discussed the fossil fuel industry’s relationship to environmental health and climate change. The extent and breadth of this discussion varied between reports. As discussed above, the analysis was guided by Entman’s [12] classic conceptualization of framing as the definition, diagnosis, evaluation, and prescription of a given issue or problem. One notable finding is that the sustainability reports did not diagnose or evaluate the problem of climate change. Instead, frames are almost entirely prescriptive. The problem itself, and its causes, are taken for granted. The absence of diagnosis is especially notable because diagnosing climate change requires an analysis of the primary immediate driver of climate change: fossil fuels. The only frame that can be interpreted as an evaluation of climate change is “necessitarianism,” which frames fossil fuels as a prerequisite for a decent standard of living (see 4.2 Necessitarianism, 4.5 Omissions). Four prescriptive frames emerged from the data: (1) techno-optimism, (2) necessitarianism, (3) compliance, and (4) countermeasures. Each frame is described with examples below, followed by a section on key omissions from the reports (Section 4.5). Table 1 below provides a summary of the prescriptive frames identified.

#### Advertising and big oil collude to “greenwash” fossil fuels

Cunningham 22, an independent journalist covering the oil and gas industry, (Nick, Over 450 Climate Scientists Say Advertising Industry Must End ‘Complicity’ in Climate Crisis, <https://www.desmog.com/2022/01/21/450-climate-scientists-advertising-climate-crisis/>)

As DeSmog has reported, a peer-reviewed study published late last year looked at the role that the PR industry has played in promoting climate denial and delay over three decades. The Brown University study uncovered that a relatively small group of the top ad agencies loomed large as the creative minds behind climate misinformation. “This study adds a new cast of characters to our understanding of the key actors in climate change politics,” Robert J. Brulle and Carter Werthman of Brown University wrote in their study. “Along with ExxonMobil, Koch Enterprises, Greenpeace, the Heartland Institute, and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, we need to add in PR firms such as Edelman, Glover Park, Cerrell, and Ogilvy.” PR and ad firms rake in substantial sums of money for this work. A 2019 study by the Climate Investigations Center found that the lobbyists and trade associations affiliated with the fossil fuel industry spent an estimated $1.4 billion on advertising and PR between 2008 and 2017. The American Petroleum Institute accounted for nearly half of that total, with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce ranked second. The PR firms on the receiving end of that spending included Edelman, DDC Advocacy, FleishmanHillard, and Blue Advertising (once part of Edelman). “We climate scientists have been trying to raise the climate crisis alarm for decades, but we’ve been drowned out by these fossil fuel industry-funded PR campaigns,” said climate scientist Michael Mann. “Greenwashing is a primary tactic in what I call the ‘New War’ on climate action and it must be called out for what it is — denial under another name.”

#### Disinformation campaigns are rampant and dangerous

Greenpeace 21, (WORDS VS ACTIONS The truth behind fossil fuel advertising, <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-netherlands-stateless/2021/10/3b500e9b-words-vs-actions-the-truth-behind-fossil-fuel-advertising.pdf>)

Fossil fuel companies use advertising and sponsorships to promote false solutions which are a dangerous distraction from the real renewable solutions we need. A recent investigation by Influence Map found that over $9.5 million was spent on over 25,000 adverts and promotions by oil and gas companies on Facebook adverts and promotions that promoted fossil gas as a clean alternative to younger target audiences16. These attempts from companies such as Exxon Mobil to promote the climate benefits of fossil gas (which is a fossil fuel) are a clear demonstration of the fossil fuel industry’s tendency to actively deny climate science or manipulate facts via their advertising in order to serve business interests. It can be considered likely that we will see an increase of false solutions promoted by fossil fuel companies as we get closer to the COP26 negotiations in November 2021 as fossil fuel companies continue to attempt to ‘green’ their brands. False solutions are often presented, even sometimes alongside renewable energies as a constructive solution and a legitimate part of decarbonisation plans which misleads the public, as well as decision makers as to which ‘solutions’ are safest for the planet.

#### Climate disinformation undermines climate solutions

Pals 21, J.D. NYU Law School and Editor-in-Chief, New York University Environmental Law Journal. (Bridget, TAXES V. TORTS: WHICH WILL MAKE FOSSIL FUEL PRODUCERS SHARE CLIMATE CHANGE BURDENS?, <https://www.nyuelj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Pals-Taxes-v.-Torts.pdf>)

Fossil fuel producers have known for decades that the use of fossil fuels would cause irreparable harm to the environment and, in response to that knowledge, led a massive misinformation campaign to prevent the public from understanding the full expected scope of damages.27 Prior to 1988, Exxon and other fossil fuel producers contributed to climate change research, however, when Congress began taking testimony and considering policy solutions to climate change, “oil-and-gas executives beg[an] to consider the issue’s potential to hurt their profits.”28 Indeed, within six weeks of important congressional testimony, Exxon passed around an internal memo encouraging the company to “emphasize the uncertainty in scientific conclusions,” a strategy that has continued to the present day.29 Between 2000 and 2016, over $2 billion was spent on climate change lobbying, with fossil fuel producers, electric utilities, and the transportation industry outspending pro-environmental lobbying groups by a factor of ten.30 This misinformation campaign has been wildly successful. While the American public increasingly understands the risks of climate change,31 even today, climate denialism percolates through the highest levels of government. In 2015, a U.S. Senator famously threw a snowball on the Senate floor to demonstrate that, given the presence of snow in Washington, D.C. in February, climate change was a hoax.32 This misinformation campaign by fossil fuel producers, perpetrated to secure their own future financial stability with little to no regard for the immense costs imposed on the rest of the world, is morally repugnant. To quote one of the climate change tort litigation complaints, “[a]ccounting for their wrongful promotion and marketing activities, Defendants bear a dominant responsibility for global warming generally.”33 Arguably, if fossil fuel producers had not fought, tooth and nail, to cloud society’s understanding of the damages associated with carbon emissions, a policy response may have been developed earlier.

#### Warming causes suffering, violence, and eventual uninhabitability---emissions, ocean acidification, extreme weather, and food shortages

Ripple and Wolf 20, are affiliated with the Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society at Oregon State University, in Corvallis and contributed equally to the work. Thomas M. Newsome is affiliated with the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at The University of Sydney, in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Phoebe Barnard is affiliated with the Conservation Biology Institute, in Corvallis, Oregon, and with the African Climate and Development Initiative, at the University of Cape Town, in Cape Town, South Africa. William R. Moomaw is affiliated with The Fletcher School and the Global Development and Environment Institute, at Tufts University, in Medford, Massachusetts. (William & Christopher, 11-5-2019, “World Scientists’ Warning of a Climate Emergency,” American Institute of Biological Science, https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806)

Scientists have a moral obligation to clearly warn humanity of any catastrophic threat and to “tell it like it is.” On the basis of this obligation and the graphical indicators presented below, we declare, with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency. Exactly 40 years ago, scientists from 50 nations met at the First World Climate Conference (in Geneva 1979) and agreed that alarming trends for climate change made it urgently necessary to act. Since then, similar alarms have been made through the 1992 Rio Summit, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, and the 2015 Paris Agreement, as well as scores of other global assemblies and scientists’ explicit warnings of insufficient progress (Ripple et al. 2017). Yet greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are still rapidly rising, with increasingly damaging effects on the Earth's climate. An immense increase of scale in endeavors to conserve our biosphere is needed to avoid untold suffering due to the climate crisis (IPCC 2018). Most public discussions on climate change are based on global surface temperature only, an inadequate measure to capture the breadth of human activities and the real dangers stemming from a warming planet (Briggs et al. 2015). Policymakers and the public now urgently need access to a set of indicators that convey the effects of human activities on GHG emissions and the consequent impacts on climate, our environment, and society. Building on prior work (see supplemental file S2), we present a suite of graphical vital signs of climate change over the last 40 years for human activities that can affect GHG emissions and change the climate (figure 1), as well as actual climatic impacts (figure 2). We use only relevant data sets that are clear, understandable, systematically collected for at least the last 5 years, and updated at least annually.

[Graphs Excluded]

The climate crisis is closely linked to excessive consumption of the wealthy lifestyle. The most affluent countries are mainly responsible for the historical GHG emissions and generally have the greatest per capita emissions (table S1). In the present article, we show general patterns, mostly at the global scale, because there are many climate efforts that involve individual regions and countries. Our vital signs are designed to be useful to the public, policymakers, the business community, and those working to implement the Paris climate agreement, the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Profoundly troubling signs from human activities include sustained increases in both human and ruminant livestock populations, per capita meat production, world gross domestic product, global tree cover loss, fossil fuel consumption, the number of air passengers carried, carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, and per capita CO2 emissions since 2000 (figure 1, supplemental file S2). Encouraging signs include decreases in global fertility (birth) rates (figure 1b), decelerated forest loss in the Brazilian Amazon (figure 1g), increases in the consumption of solar and wind power (figure 1h), institutional fossil fuel divestment of more than US$7 trillion (figure 1j), and the proportion of GHG emissions covered by carbon pricing (figure 1m). However, the decline in human fertility rates has substantially slowed during the last 20 years (figure 1b), and the pace of forest loss in Brazil's Amazon has now started to increase again (figure 1g). Consumption of solar and wind energy has increased 373% per decade, but in 2018, it was still 28 times smaller than fossil fuel consumption (combined gas, coal, oil; figure 1h). As of 2018, approximately 14.0% of global GHG emissions were covered by carbon pricing (figure 1m), but the global emissions-weighted average price per tonne of carbon dioxide was only around US$15.25 (figure 1n). A much higher carbon fee price is needed (IPCC 2018, section 2.5.2.1). Annual fossil fuel subsidies to energy companies have been fluctuating, and because of a recent spike, they were greater than US$400 billion in 2018 (figure 1o). Especially disturbing are concurrent trends in the vital signs of climatic impacts (figure 2, supplemental file S2). Three abundant atmospheric GHGs (CO2, methane, and nitrous oxide) continue to increase (see figure S1 for ominous 2019 spike in CO2), as does global surface temperature (figure 2a–2d). Globally, ice has been rapidly disappearing, evidenced by declining trends in minimum summer Arctic sea ice, Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, and glacier thickness worldwide (figure 2e–2h). Ocean heat content, ocean acidity, sea level, area burned in the United States, and extreme weather and associated damage costs have all been trending upward (figure 2i–2n). Climate change is predicted to greatly affect marine, freshwater, and terrestrial life, from plankton and corals to fishes and forests (IPCC 2018, 2019). These issues highlight the urgent need for action. Despite 40 years of global climate negotiations, with few exceptions, we have generally conducted business as usual and have largely failed to address this predicament (figure 1). The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected (figure 2, IPCC 2018). It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity (IPCC 2019). Especially worrisome are potential irreversible climate tipping points and nature's reinforcing feedbacks (atmospheric, marine, and terrestrial) that could lead to a catastrophic “hothouse Earth,” well beyond the control of humans (Steffen et al. 2018). These climate chain reactions could cause significant disruptions to ecosystems, society, and economies, potentially making large areas of Earth uninhabitable. To secure a sustainable future, we must change how we live, in ways that improve the vital signs summarized by our graphs. Economic and population growth are among the most important drivers of increases in CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion (Pachauri et al. 2014, Bongaarts and O’Neill 2018); therefore, we need bold and drastic transformations regarding economic and population policies. We suggest six critical and interrelated steps (in no particular order) that governments, businesses, and the rest of humanity can take to lessen the worst effects of climate change. These are important steps but are not the only actions needed or possible (Pachauri et al. 2014, IPCC 2018, 2019). Energy The world must quickly implement massive energy efficiency and conservation practices and must replace fossil fuels with low-carbon renewables (figure 1h) and other cleaner sources of energy if safe for people and the environment (figure S2). We should leave remaining stocks of fossil fuels in the ground (see the timelines in IPCC 2018) and should carefully pursue effective negative emissions using technology such as carbon extraction from the source and capture from the air and especially by enhancing natural systems (see “Nature” section). Wealthier countries need to support poorer nations in transitioning away from fossil fuels. We must swiftly eliminate subsidies for fossil fuels (figure 1o) and use effective and fair policies for steadily escalating carbon prices to restrain their use. Short-lived pollutants We need to promptly reduce the emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, including methane (figure 2b), black carbon (soot), and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). Doing this could slow climate feedback loops and potentially reduce the short-term warming trend by more than 50% over the next few decades while saving millions of lives and increasing crop yields due to reduced air pollution (Shindell et al. 2017). The 2016 Kigali amendment to phase down HFCs is welcomed. Nature We must protect and restore Earth's ecosystems. Phytoplankton, coral reefs, forests, savannas, grasslands, wetlands, peatlands, soils, mangroves, and sea grasses contribute greatly to sequestration of atmospheric CO2. Marine and terrestrial plants, animals, and microorganisms play significant roles in carbon and nutrient cycling and storage. We need to quickly curtail habitat and biodiversity loss (figure 1f–1g), protecting the remaining primary and intact forests, especially those with high carbon stores and other forests with the capacity to rapidly sequester carbon (proforestation), while increasing reforestation and afforestation where appropriate at enormous scales. Although available land may be limiting in places, up to a third of emissions reductions needed by 2030 for the Paris agreement (less than 2°C) could be obtained with these natural climate solutions (Griscom et al. 2017). Food Eating mostly plant-based foods while reducing the global consumption of animal products (figure 1c–d), especially ruminant livestock (Ripple et al. 2014), can improve human health and significantly lower GHG emissions (including methane in the “Short-lived pollutants” step). Moreover, this will free up croplands for growing much-needed human plant food instead of livestock feed, while releasing some grazing land to support natural climate solutions (see “Nature” section). Cropping practices such as minimum tillage that increase soil carbon are vitally important. We need to drastically reduce the enormous amount of food waste around the world. Economy Excessive extraction of materials and overexploitation of ecosystems, driven by economic growth, must be quickly curtailed to maintain long-term sustainability of the biosphere. We need a carbon-free economy that explicitly addresses human dependence on the biosphere and policies that guide economic decisions accordingly. Our goals need to shift from GDP growth and the pursuit of affluence toward sustaining ecosystems and improving human well-being by prioritizing basic needs and reducing inequality. Population Still increasing by roughly 80 million people per year, or more than 200,000 per day (figure 1a–b), the world population must be stabilized—and, ideally, gradually reduced—within a framework that ensures social integrity. There are proven and effective policies that strengthen human rights while lowering fertility rates and lessening the impacts of population growth on GHG emissions and biodiversity loss. These policies make family-planning services available to all people, remove barriers to their access and achieve full gender equity, including primary and secondary education as a global norm for all, especially girls and young women (Bongaarts and O’Neill 2018). Conclusions Mitigating and adapting to climate change while honoring the diversity of humans entails major transformations in the ways our global society functions and interacts with natural ecosystems. We are encouraged by a recent surge of concern. Governmental bodies are making climate emergency declarations. Schoolchildren are striking. Ecocide lawsuits are proceeding in the courts. Grassroots citizen movements are demanding change, and many countries, states and provinces, cities, and businesses are responding. As the Alliance of World Scientists, we stand ready to assist decision-makers in a just transition to a sustainable and equitable future. We urge widespread use of vital signs, which will better allow policymakers, the private sector, and the public to understand the magnitude of this crisis, track progress, and realign priorities for alleviating climate change. The good news is that such transformative change, with social and economic justice for all, promises far greater human well-being than does business as usual. We believe that the prospects will be greatest if decision-makers and all of humanity promptly respond to this warning and declaration of a climate emergency and act to sustain life on planet Earth, our only home.

#### Fossil fuel giants promote climate denial, disparately affect minority communities, and crush activist climate movements

Funes 21, is a New Yok based journalist focusing on the intersection of race and the environment. (Yessenia, 8-11-2021, “’Abolish these companies, get ride of the’: what would it take to break up big oil?” The Guardian, https://bit.ly/3ArW0yh)

Ayisha Siddiqa doesn’t want fossil fuel companies to determine her future anymore. The industry has promoted climate denial for longer than the 22-year-old has been alive. Rather than watch companies pad their profits as the world burns, Siddiqa has a radical solution in mind. “Abolish these oil companies, finish them, get rid of them, no more,” she said. Siddiqa’s words echo a rallying cry for climate and environmental advocates who see limited options in finding justice for the low-income and communities of color whose lives the industry have ravaged – and will continue to as the climate crisis unfolds. Siddiqa is the founder of Polluters Out, a youth-led coalition dedicated to removing the oil and gas industry’s influence from international climate negotiations. She created the group in response to the failed COP25 climate talks in 2019, which made little progress toward curbing carbon emissions. In her mind, the major petroleum giants don’t deserve to be involved in the clean energy revolution. “The next stop cannot be for us to let the people who previously harmed us have a seat in the new world,” she said. For many frontline communities, the industry’s climate crimes aren’t matters of the future. They’re here. The climate denial propaganda machine, funded by big oil and gas, has left humanity with the earth spiraling into chaos: homes crushed by wildfires, loved ones dying from heat and crops withering from drought. In the past five years, extreme weather disasters have cost the US more than $525bn, with taxpayers footing the bill, not major carbon polluters. In 2020 alone, the global price tag tied to climate change adaptation towered at $150bn. Throughout all the damage, human lives were harmed, too. Now they’re asking: when will their voices matter? The push to hold the industry accountable for the climate emergency by breaking up powerful companies follows a string of similar movements that have bubbled up in recent years. Ideas that were once considered fringe – like defunding police departments or busting big tech – are now filtering into mainstream discourse. And as the climate crisis increases in urgency, activists are taking aim at oil and gas companies. Communities bearing the brunt of harm caused by climate change say that for too long the fossil fuel industry has prioritized profits over the public good. During the Texas winter storm in February, for example, gas and oil giants raked in billions by selling assets for exaggerated prices as the state struggled to provide consumers with power and heat. The state knew 10 years ago that cold temperatures could threaten the grid, but it left the decision on upgrading infrastructure up to private companies. As a result of the storm and subsequent power outages, some 700 people died, according to a BuzzFeed investigation. Carla Skandier, manager of the climate and energy program at the Democracy Collaborative, says groups like hers are now researching ways to end the cycle of harm through nationalizing segments of the fossil fuel industry. In the simplest terms, the process would involve the federal government buying out entire oil and gas companies to take ownership of their infrastructure and assets. “When we talk about abolishing the fossil fuel industry, we are really talking about the urgent need for an endgame to manage the industry’s fast decline,” Skandier said. Pro-abolition groups say this process would entail putting elected officials – not corporate executives – in charge of fossil fuel assets. The US government would slowly stop drilling or buying leases as it prioritizes lowering emissions and investing in clean energy. Nationalized ownership would allow the US to leave oil and gas reserves in the ground while simultaneously shrinking the fossil fuel company’s grip on the nation. Such public intervention would also prevent oil companies from simply shutting down operations, laying off their workers and leaving behind devastated towns and counties, as coal companies have done, Skandier said. “We need to consider that a lot of these communities are highly dependent on fossil fuel revenues, so we need to plan how we’re going to build community wealth and diversify their economies to make sure they’re not only economically stable but resilient to climate impacts in the future.” The US could take the land or reserves currently owned by the fossil fuel industry via eminent domain, the legal right governments have to seize land or infrastructure for the public interest. The federal government has done this before to create national parks and even to convert a private energy company in Tennessee into the now publicly owned Tennessee Valley Authority during the Great Depression. Any movement to break up big oil, however, will inevitably face enormous headwinds. The industry benefits from being deeply ingrained within American society, and it’s expected that oil and gas interests would push back hard in courts. Nationalizing profitable industries would also take an unprecedented amount of political will, which has yet to materialize. Law expert Sean Hecht warns that breaking up energy companies may lead to unintended ripple effects. History suggests that simply erasing a company’s existence may make it easier for them to ignore their financial responsibilities when they’ve caused harm. Hecht, the co-executive director of UCLA Law’s Emmett Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, saw this firsthand in Los Angeles, where he lives. When the Department of Justice shut down Exide Technologies in 2015 for illegally poisoning neighborhoods with lead for decades, the company filed for bankruptcy and left taxpayers to foot the cleanup bill. “An industry disappearing doesn’t mean that that industry is going to necessarily be accountable, and sometimes it’s the opposite of that,” Hecht said. “It creates a sense of justice but doesn’t materially help the conditions in communities.” A company simply signing a check may not help either, said Kyle Whyte, a professor of environment and sustainability at the University of Michigan, who also Environmental Justice Advisory Council. That won’t eliminate the root cause of the issue: companies responsible for driving the climate crisis are also stripping communities of the social, cultural and political capital to decide what happens to their homes and bodies. “Justice would mean a world where, for example, Native people and tribes are no longer in a dependency relationship with industries,” Whyte said. “There’s no dollar amount that could be spent in a community right now that would actually replace decades and generations of violations against self-determination.” There’s no cookie-cutter approach to rectifying what communities have inherited from big oil. And even if calls to break up the fossil fuel industry sound improbable in the current political climate, activists hope the conversation will expand the realm of possibilities for leaders to take action on climate change. For Siddiqa, any solution must also incorporate international players as well. “We vote for our world leaders,” Siddiqa said. “They represent us. If they are actively refusing to represent us, then their position is in question.” Siddiqa wants to see a cultural shift – a moment of political reimagination. She knows business as usual won’t stop the climate crisis – perhaps neither will the end of oil and gas – but she says it’s a good start.

### 1AC---Plan

#### Text: The United States federal government should substantially increase prohibitions on anticompetitive business practices by the private sector by establishing corporate climate disinformation as anticompetitive.

### 1AC---Solvency

#### Antitrust is best for challenging corporate deception

Carrier and Tushnet 21, Distinguished Professor, Rutgers Law School, and Professor of the First Amendment, Harvard Law School, (Michael & Rebecca, An Antitrust Framework for False Advertising, https://ilr.law.uiowa.edu/print/volume-106-issue-4/an-antitrust-framework-for-false-advertising/)

An antitrust-based framework for false advertising claims is necessary because of the unique role that the discipline can play. When companies engaging in false advertising have monopoly power, they possess the ability to harm not only an individual competitor but also the market as a whole. The consequences can be significant, especially for nascent competitors not able to enter the market, as the deception of consumers deprives them of the opportunity to obtain lower prices, more options, or enhanced quality. One way to understand the harms of false advertising to the market as a whole is revealed by George Akerlof’s classic explanation of the market for lemons. As Akerlof explains, in the absence of some way to guarantee the truth of claims about products, such as a used car’s quality, consumers reasonably respond by discounting all such claims. This distrust means that producers with actually superior products cannot charge the amount consumers would pay if they believed the superiority claim, which pushes superior (but more expensive to produce) products out of the market. If truthful advertisers are not able to guarantee their claims, producers unable to compete on their product characteristics suffer. And consumers are harmed by an unattractive (and perhaps even harmful, in the case of false health or safety claims) mix of products. Meanwhile, many false advertising techniques can be readily repurposed for new uses, meaning that a false advertiser can go from success to success in the absence of false advertising liability. Regulation that suppresses false claims—especially where such claims are most likely to have an effect—thus does more than protect individual consumers from fraud. It allows truthful producers to compete on a level playing field. In other words, addressing false advertising protects competition, not just competitors. The Supreme Court relied on Akerlof’s insights when it endorsed the pro-competitive effects of restrictions on false advertising. In California Dental Ass’n v. FTC, the Court addressed a dental association’s attempts to restrict “false or misleading” advertising that imposed significant limits on advertising “low prices” or other general price claims. The Court rejected the idea that such limits were inherently anticompetitive. Especially where information is hard to evaluate, even broad restrictions with the aim of preventing false advertising can be procompetitive. When false advertising threatens harms to the market as a whole, antitrust liability offers advantages over false advertising law. For starters, antitrust offers a more powerful toolkit deterring this conduct. Although false advertising law allows recovery of damages (albeit not as a penalty) and disgorgement of the profits from false advertising, courts impose high barriers to disgorgement, including requiring a showing of willfulness. In addition, courts have required plaintiffs to show a robust connection to the harm suffered to receive damages or disgorgement of profits. As a result, courts have denied awards in precisely the cases of concern: where there are a small number of potential competitors and where some of the monopolist’s gains from false advertising likely came at the expense of the overall market rather than a single plaintiff, making it difficult to allocate false advertising-based damage awards. There are two key ways in which antitrust offers more powerful protection against monopolists’ false advertising than federal false advertising law: remedies and eligible plaintiffs. First, antitrust offers the more powerful remedies of treble damages and automatic (as opposed to the Lanham Act’s exceptional) attorneys’ fees that promise to provide robust deterrence against companies considering this behavior. Antitrust also offers injunctive relief preventing the continuation of the conduct. While a Lanham Act false advertising injunction generally is limited to the specific false claims that have been proven, an antitrust injunction could more generally target false advertising and marketwide harm to competition. Antitrust offers a more expansive territorial jurisdiction. Second, unlike the federal Lanham Act, which denies consumers standing to sue despite the direct harm they suffer from false advertising, antitrust law, importantly, allows customers to challenge the harms they experience from false advertising. State consumer protection laws are limited in important ways, including state-law variation that makes multistate consumer class actions all but impossible and restrictions in many states that preclude businesses from bringing claims in their roles as consumers even though businesses are often important customers for the subset of false advertising cases involving monopolists and would-be monopolists. Thus, antitrust provides remedies that would otherwise be unavailable to plaintiffs who were themselves deceived by a monopolist or threatened monopolist’s false advertising. A separate and independently compelling reason to use antitrust where appropriate is that, in antitrust law, it would be possible to consider false advertising as part of an overarching scheme used to harm a competitor, something false advertising law by definition can’t do. In fact, the inclusion of this behavior could push the range of conduct over the threshold of antitrust liability. For example, in In re Suboxone Antitrust Litigation, the court found that the plaintiff could not demonstrate that its claim that the defendant had refused to participate in a safety program required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (“FDA”) individually made out a violation of antitrust law. But it found that “a plaintiff can allege a series of actions that when taken together make out antitrust liability even though some of the individual actions, when viewed independently, are not all actionable.” Such global assessment can allow consideration of a monopolist software provider’s practices of promising “vaporware” that it couldn’t deliver to prevent customers from turning to competing software alternatives and of creating fear, uncertainty, and doubt about the competition as part of a larger constellation of anticompetitive activities. As the Third Circuit noted in LePage’s Inc. v. 3M, “courts must look to the monopolist’s conduct taken as a whole rather than considering each aspect in isolation.”

#### Specifically, the oil industry gets dismantled by litigation

Bennett 19, Postgraduate research fellow at the University of Southampton. (Briony, 'Big Oil, Big Liability: Fossil Fuel Companies and Liability for Climate Change Harm' (2019) 23 New Zealand Journal of Environmental Law 153, KU Library)

Litigation against fossil fuel companies ultimately serves more than one purpose. 8 ' It helps separate facts from fiction and disseminate information regarding climate change to the public and political leaders. Also, even if claimants lose their case, it may serve to increase local, national and global awareness of the plight of victims suffering losses and damages resulting from climate change. Courts provide a forum for public debate, especially if a case attracts significant media attention.181 This may influence public and political opinion and eventually lead to a legislative response for victims. If cases continue to be dismissed on the grounds that political leaders ought to address losses and damages, both globally and within the US, then litigation is a means to draw attention to the failure of international and domestic legislation and regulation, and the need to lobby for reform. And, of course, some claimants may eventually win significant settlements, as happened with the tobacco suits. 182

#### Litigation will transform public understanding of climate change and lead to effective solutions

Benjamin 20, Assistant Professor, Lewis & Clark Law School. (Lisa, THE ROAD TO PARIS RUNS THROUGH DELAWARE: CLIMATE LITIGATION AND DIRECTORS’ DUTIES, <https://www.cssn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/16741-the-road-to-paris-runs-through-delaware-climate-litigation-and-directors-duties.pdf>)

Courtrooms have become key battlegrounds in the public debate over climate change.326 As Blumm and Wood note, courts offer a deliberative fact-finding forum that can balance both scientific and political climate-related concerns.327 Corporatizing climate litigation, therefore, has expository value. It lays bare the previously secreted role of carbon-major corporations and relates it to the human pain and suffering, as well as financial costs caused by climate-induced extreme events. It also exposes the persistent refusal by the most regressive corporations to act in a societally responsible manner. Many of these corporations have pursued a self-fulfilling prophecy; the absence of regulation would ensure that fossil fuels would be a good investment and that corporations would, therefore, maximize their profits to the detriment of the world.328 As Fromhoff, Heede, and Oreskes note, many carbon-major corporations “are actively creating the future that they claim to accept the need to avoid.”329 The public narrative told in these cases is important, and provides a public forum for “an understanding of social and factual issues [to be] co-produced and settled.”330 The corollary of this understanding is the proposition that these corporations are also well placed in terms of their capacities in access to political power, wealth, technological advancement, and expertise to lead the transition to clean, safer energy.331 Having shed their previous reluctance to engage with climate science, judicial actors now recognize the important role that new scientific disciplines play in the arena of tort law. New scientific processes could also provide progressive judges with the opportunity to rethink older interpretations of legal and evidentiary thresholds around tort, burdens of proof and causation, as well as obligations under corporate law.332 This second wave of climate litigation demonstrates an evolving global conversation between courts, government actors, private victims, tortfeasors, directors, and investors in the context of climate change.333 As the negative impacts of climate change increase, the global responses are likely to increase in a corresponding fashion. While political will in the United States may still be lacking at the federal level, state-based actions have gained traction.334 Federal resistance may also wane as the impacts of climate change become more severe and apparent, more information is forthcoming due to improved climate science and corporate disclosures, and carbonmajors begin to spend less money opposing the science on climate change. State and local actions can also increase the costs of operating for carbon-majors through increased regulation and permitting processes and enhanced incentives for clean energy. New scientific processes give climate-focused political groups new tools to target these companies and increase public pressure. As a result, anti-carbon-major movements may grow, implicating directors and requiring that they respond to social media and other public campaigns. As a public forum to highlight the importance of climate science, courts can also act as drivers of public and private sector action on climate change, even if the cases themselves are unsuccessful.335 As Ganguly et al. note, these cases could be “sublime failures,” achieving the aims of the litigants without achieving judicial success.336 The simple act of adjudicating climate change can help to shape the norms and beliefs of the broader public about the importance of climate change, and the contributory role and responsibilities of carbon-major companies.337 These cases highlight the importance of the evolving nature of climate risk, even if no damages or liability awards are ever made. The public attention these cases garner should capture the attention of responsible directors, as these litigation trends may lead to shifting social norms and political contexts. While it is unclear what the causal relationship is between litigation and strengthened climate governance, enhanced regulatory obligations are certainly emerging.338 Common standards on disclosure are likely to become global industry norms, and therefore will affect the nature of what information directors should both consider and disclose to their shareholders.339 Disclosure obligations will put the issue of climate change directly on the agendas of AGMs, becoming an increasing concern for shareholders and, therefore, directors. The impacts of climate change are costly to corporations, and the bidirectional risk metrics of climate change should now necessarily inform directorial duties, significantly boosting the potential contribution of private law to resolving the climate crisis.

#### Academic debate is required to build a social consensus on the validity of climate science

Hoffman 12, is the Holcim (US) Professor of Sustainable Enterprise at the University of Michigan; a position that holds joint appointments in the Stephen M. Ross School of Business and the School for Environment & Sustainability. (Andrew, Fall 2012, “Climate Science as Culture War,” Stanford Social Innovation Review, https://ssir.org/books/reviews/entry/climate\_science\_as\_culture\_war)

In May 2009, a development officer at the University of Michigan asked me to meet with a potential donor—a former football player and now successful businessman who had an interest in environmental issues and business, my interdisciplinary area of expertise. The meeting began at 7 a.m., and while I was still nursing my first cup of coffee, the potential donor began the conversation with “I think the scientific review process is corrupt.” I asked what he thought of a university based on that system, and he said that he thought that the university was then corrupt, too. He went on to describe the science of climate change as a hoax, using all the familiar lines of attack—sunspots and solar flares, the unscientific and politically flawed consensus model, and the environmental benefits of carbon dioxide. As we debated each point, he turned his attack on me, asking why I hated capitalism and why I wanted to destroy the economy by teaching environmental issues in a business school. Eventually, he asked if I knew why Earth Day was on April 22. I sighed as he explained, “Because it is Karl Marx’s birthday.” (I suspect he meant to say Vladimir Lenin, whose birthday is April 22, also Earth Day. This linkage has been made by some on the far right who believe that Earth Day is a communist plot, even though Lenin never promoted environmentalism and communism does not have a strong environmental legacy.) I turned to the development officer and asked, “What’s our agenda here this morning?” The donor interrupted to say that he wanted to buy me a ticket to the Heartland Institute’s Fourth Annual Conference on Climate Change, the leading climate skeptics conference. I checked my calendar and, citing prior commitments, politely declined. The meeting soon ended. I spent the morning trying to make sense of the encounter. At first, all I could see was a bait and switch; the donor had no interest in funding research in business and the environment, but instead wanted to criticize the effort. I dismissed him as an irrational zealot, but the meeting lingered in my mind. The more I thought about it, the more I began to see that he was speaking from a coherent and consistent worldview—one I did not agree with, but which was a coherent viewpoint nonetheless. Plus, he had come to evangelize me. The more I thought about it, the more I became eager to learn about where he was coming from, where I was coming from, and why our two worldviews clashed so strongly in the present social debate over climate science. Ironically, in his desire to challenge my research, he stimulated a new research stream, one that fit perfectly with my broader research agenda on social, institutional, and cultural change. Scientific vs. Social Consensus Today, there is no doubt that a scientific consensus exists on the issue of climate change. Scientists have documented that anthropogenic sources of greenhouse gases are leading to a buildup in the atmosphere, which leads to a general warming of the global climate and an alteration in the statistical distribution of localized weather patterns over long periods of time. This assessment is endorsed by a large body of scientific agencies—including every one of the national scientific agencies of the G8 + 5 countries—and by the vast majority of climatologists. The majority of research articles published in refereed scientific journals also support this scientific assessment. Both the US National Academy of Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science use the word “consensus” when describing the state of climate science. And yet a social consensus on climate change does not exist. Surveys show that the American public’s belief in the science of climate change has mostly declined over the past five years, with large percentages of the population remaining skeptical of the science. Belief declined from 71 percent to 57 percent between April 2008 and October 2009, according to an October 2009 Pew Research Center poll; more recently, belief rose to 62 percent, according to a February 2012 report by the National Survey of American Public Opinion on Climate Change. Such a significant number of dissenters tells us that we do not have a set of socially accepted beliefs on climate change—beliefs that emerge, not from individual preferences, but from societal norms; beliefs that represent those on the political left, right, and center as well as those whose cultural identifications are urban, rural, religious, agnostic, young, old, ethnic, or racial. Why is this so? Why do such large numbers of Americans reject the consensus of the scientific community? With upwards of two-thirds of Americans not clearly understanding science or the scientific process and fewer able to pass even a basic scientific literacy test, according to a 2009 California Academy of Sciences survey, we are left to wonder: How do people interpret and validate the opinions of the scientific community? The answers to this question can be found, not from the physical sciences, but from the social science disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and others. To understand the processes by which a social consensus can emerge on climate change, we must understand that people’s opinions on this and other complex scientific issues are based on their prior ideological preferences, personal experience, and values—all of which are heavily influenced by their referent groups and their individual psychology. Physical scientists may set the parameters for understanding the technical aspects of the climate debate, but they do not have the final word on whether society accepts or even understands their conclusions. The constituency that is relevant in the social debate goes beyond scientific experts. And the processes by which this constituency understands and assesses the science of climate change go far beyond its technical merits. We must acknowledge that the debate over climate change, like almost all environmental issues, is a debate over culture, worldviews, and ideology. This fact can be seen most vividly in the growing partisan divide over the issue. Political affiliation is one of the strongest correlates with individual uncertainty about climate change, not scientific knowledge.1 The percentage of conservatives and Republicans who believe that the effects of global warming have already begun declined from roughly 50 percent in 2001 to about 30 percent in 2010, while the corresponding percentage for liberals and Democrats increased from roughly 60 percent in 2001 to about 70 percent in 2010.2 (See “The Growing Partisan Divide over Climate Change,” below.) Climate change has become enmeshed in the so-called culture wars. Acceptance of the scientific consensus is now seen as an alignment with liberal views consistent with other “cultural” issues that divide the country (abortion, gun control, health care, and evolution). This partisan divide on climate change was not the case in the 1990s. It is a recent phenomenon, following in the wake of the 1997 Kyoto Treaty that threatened the material interests of powerful economic and political interests, particularly members of the fossil fuel industry.3 The great danger of a protracted partisan divide is that the debate will take the form of what I call a “logic schism,” a breakdown in debate in which opposing sides are talking about completely different cultural issues.4 This article seeks to delve into the climate change debate through the lens of the social sciences. I take this approach not because the physical sciences have become less relevant, but because we need to understand the social and psychological processes by which people receive and understand the science of global warming. I explain the cultural dimensions of the climate debate as it is currently configured, outline three possible paths by which the debate can progress, and describe specific techniques that can drive that debate toward broader consensus. This goal is imperative, for without a broader consensus on climate change in the United States, Americans and people around the globe will be unable to formulate effective social, political, and economic solutions to the changing circumstances of our planet. Cultural Processing of Climate Science When analyzing complex scientific information, people are “boundedly rational,” to use Nobel Memorial Prize economist Herbert Simon’s phrase; we are “cognitive misers,” according to UCLA psychologist Susan Fiske and Princeton University psychologist Shelley Taylor, with limited cognitive ability to fully investigate every issue we face. People everywhere employ ideological filters that reflect their identity, worldview, and belief systems. These filters are strongly influenced by group values, and we generally endorse the position that most directly reinforces the connection we have with others in our referent group—what Yale Law School professor Dan Kahan refers to as “cultural cognition.” In so doing, we cement our connection with our cultural groups and strengthen our definition of self. This tendency is driven by an innate desire to maintain a consistency in beliefs by giving greater weight to evidence and arguments that support preexisting beliefs, and by expending disproportionate energy trying to refute views or arguments that are contrary to those beliefs. Instead of investigating a complex issue, we often simply learn what our referent group believes and seek to integrate those beliefs with our own views. Over time, these ideological filters become increasingly stable and resistant to change through multiple reinforcing mechanisms. First, we’ll consider evidence when it is accepted or, ideally, presented by a knowledgeable source from our cultural community; and we’ll dismiss information that is advocated by sources that represent groups whose values we reject. Second, we will selectively choose information sources that support our ideological position. For example, frequent viewers of Fox News are more likely to say that the Earth’s temperature has not been rising, that any temperature increase is not due to human activities, and that addressing climate change would have deleterious effects on the economy.5 One might expect the converse to be true of National Public Radio listeners. The result of this cultural processing and group cohesion dynamics leads to two overriding conclusions about the climate change debate. First, climate change is not a “pollution” issue. Although the US Supreme Court decided in 2007 that greenhouse gases were legally an air pollutant, in a cultural sense, they are something far different. The reduction of greenhouse gases is not the same as the reduction of sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, or particulates. These forms of pollution are man-made, they are harmful, and they are the unintended waste products of industrial production. Ideally, we would like to eliminate their production through the mobilization of economic and technical resources. But the chief greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, is both man-made and natural. It is not inherently harmful; it is a natural part of the natural systems; and we do not desire to eliminate its production. It is not a toxic waste or a strictly technical problem to be solved. Rather, it is an endemic part of our society and who we are. To a large degree, it is a highly desirable output, as it correlates with our standard of living. Greenhouse gas emissions rise with a rise in a nation’s wealth, something all people want. To reduce carbon dioxide requires an alteration in nearly every facet of the economy, and therefore nearly every facet of our culture. To recognize greenhouse gases as a problem requires us to change a great deal about how we view the world and ourselves within it. And that leads to the second distinction. Climate change is an existential challenge to our contemporary worldviews. The cultural challenge of climate change is enormous and threefold, each facet leading to the next. The first facet is that we have to think of a formerly benign, even beneficial, material in a new way—as a relative, not absolute, hazard. Only in an imbalanced concentration does it become problematic. But to understand and accept this, we need to conceive of the global ecosystem in a new way. This challenge leads us to the second facet: Not only do we have to change our view of the ecosystem, but we also have to change our view of our place within it. Have we as a species grown to such numbers, and has our technology grown to such power, that we can alter and manage the ecosystem on a planetary scale? This is an enormous cultural question that alters our worldviews. As a result, some see the question and subsequent answer as intellectual and spiritual hubris, but others see it as self-evident. If we answer this question in the affirmative, the third facet challenges us to consider new and perhaps unprecedented forms of global ethics and governance to address it. Climate change is the ultimate “commons problem,” as ecologist Garrett Hardin defined it, where every individual has an incentive to emit greenhouse gases to improve her standard of living, but the costs of this activity are borne by all. Unfortunately, the distribution of costs in this global issue is asymmetrical, with vulnerable populations in poor countries bearing the larger burden. So we need to rethink our ethics to keep pace with our technological abilities. Does mowing the lawn or driving a fuel-inefficient car in Ann Arbor, Mich., have ethical implications for the people living in low-lying areas of Bangladesh? If you accept anthropogenic climate change, then the answer to this question is yes, and we must develop global institutions to reflect that recognition. This is an issue of global ethics and governance on a scale that we have never seen, affecting virtually every economic activity on the globe and requiring the most complicated and intrusive global agreement ever negotiated. Taken together, these three facets of our existential challenge illustrate the magnitude of the cultural debate that climate change provokes. Climate change challenges us to examine previously unexamined beliefs and worldviews. It acts as a flash point (albeit a massive one) for deeper cultural and ideological conflicts that lie at the root of many of our environmental problems, and it includes differing conceptions of science, economics, religion, psychology, media, development, and governance. It is a proxy for “deeper conflicts over alternative visions of the future and competing centers of authority in society,” as University of East Anglia climatologist Mike Hulme underscores in Why We Disagree About Climate Change. And, as such, it provokes a violent debate among cultural communities on one side who perceive their values to be threatened by change, and cultural communities on the other side who perceive their values to be threatened by the status quo. Three Ways Forward If the public debate over climate change is no longer about greenhouse gases and climate models, but about values, worldviews, and ideology, what form will this clash of ideologies take? I see three possible forms. The Optimistic Form is where people do not have to change their values at all. In other words, the easiest way to eliminate the common problems of climate change is to develop technological solutions that do not require major alterations to our values, worldviews, or behavior: carbon-free renewable energy, carbon capture and sequestration technologies, geo-engineering, and others. Some see this as an unrealistic future. Others see it as the only way forward, because people become attached to their level of prosperity, feel entitled to keep it, and will not accept restraints or support government efforts to impose restraints.6 Government-led investment in alternative energy sources, therefore, becomes more acceptable than the enactment of regulations and taxes to reduce fossil fuel use. The Pessimistic Form is where people fight to protect their values. This most dire outcome results in a logic schism, where opposing sides debate different issues, seek only information that supports their position and disconfirms the others’, and even go so far as to demonize the other. University of Colorado, Boulder, environmental scientist Roger Pielke in The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics describes the extreme of such schisms as “abortion politics,” where the two sides are debating completely different issues and “no amount of scientific information … can reconcile the different values.” Consider, for example, the recent decision by the Heartland Institute to post a billboard in Chicago comparing those who believe in climate change with the Unabomber. In reply, climate activist groups posted billboards attacking Heartland and its financial supporters. This attack-counterattack strategy is symptomatic of a broken public discourse over climate change. The Consensus-Based Form involves a reasoned societal debate, focused on the full scope of technical and social dimensions of the problem and the feasibility and desirability of multiple solutions. It is this form to which scientists have the most to offer, playing the role of what Pielke calls the “honest broker”—a person who can “integrate scientific knowledge with stakeholder concerns to explore alternative possible courses of action.” Here, resolution is found through a focus on its underlying elements, moving away from positions (for example, climate change is or is not happening), and toward the underlying interests and values at play. How do we get there? Research in negotiation and dispute resolution can offer techniques for moving forward. Techniques for a Consensus-Based Discussion In seeking a social consensus on climate change, discussion must move beyond a strict focus on the technical aspects of the science to include its cultural underpinnings. Below are eight techniques for overcoming the ideological filters that underpin the social debate about climate change. Know your audience | Any message on climate change must be framed in a way that fits with the cultural norms of the target audience. The 2011 study Climate Change in the American Mind segments the American public into six groups based on their views on climate change science. (See “Six Americas,” below.) On the two extremes are the climate change “alarmed” and “dismissive.” Consensus-based discussion is not likely open to these groups, as they are already employing logic schism tactics that are closed to debate or engagement. The polarity of these groups is well known: On the one side, climate change is a hoax, humans have no impact on the climate, and nothing is happening; on the other side, climate change is an imminent crisis that will devastate the Earth, and human activity explains all climate changes. The challenge is to move the debate away from the loud minorities at the extremes and to engage the majority in the middle—the “concerned,” the “cautious,” the “disengaged,” and the “doubtful.” People in these groups are more open to consensus-based debate, and through direct engagement can be separated from the ideological extremes of their cultural community. Ask the right scientific questions | For a consensus-based discussion, climate change science should be presented not as a binary yes or no question,7 but as a series of six questions. Some are scientific in nature, with associated levels of uncertainty and probability; others are matters of scientific judgment. Are greenhouse gas concentrations increasing in the atmosphere? Yes. This is a scientific question, based on rigorous data and measurements of atmospheric chemistry and science. Does this increase lead to a general warming of the planet? Yes. This is also a scientific question; the chemical mechanics of the greenhouse effect and “negative radiative forcing” are well established. Has climate changed over the past century? Yes. Global temperature increases have been rigorously measured through multiple techniques and strongly supported by multiple scientific analyses.In fact, as Yale University economist William Nordhaus wrote in the March 12, 2012, New York Times, “The finding that global temperatures are rising over the last century-plus is one of the most robust findings in climate science and statistics.” Are humans partially responsible for this increase? The answer to this question is a matter of scientific judgment. Increases in global mean temperatures have a very strong correlation with increases in man-made greenhouse gases since the Industrial Revolution. Although science cannot confirm causation, fingerprint analysis of multiple possible causes has been examined, and the only plausible explanation is that of human-induced temperature changes. Until a plausible alternative hypothesis is presented, this explanation prevails for the scientific community. Will the climate continue to change over the next century? Again, this question is a matter of scientific judgment. But given the answers to the previous four questions, it is reasonable to believe that continued increases in greenhouse gases will lead to continued changes in the climate. What will be the environmental and social impact of such change? This is the scientific question with the greatest uncertainty. The answer comprises a bell curve of possible outcomes and varying associated probabilities, from low to extreme impact. Uncertainty in this variation is due to limited current data on the Earth’s climate system, imperfect modeling of these physical processes, and the unpredictability of human actions that can both exacerbate or moderate the climate shifts. These uncertainties make predictions difficult and are an area in which much debate can take place. And yet the physical impacts of climate change are already becoming visible in ways that are consistent with scientific modeling, particularly in Greenland, the Arctic, the Antarctic, and low-lying islands. In asking these questions, a central consideration is whether people recognize the level of scientific consensus associated with each one. In fact, studies have shown that people’s support for climate policies and action are linked to their perceptions about scientific agreement. Still, the belief that “most scientists think global warming is happening” declined from 47 percent to 39 percent among Americans between 2008 and 2011.8 Move beyond data and models | Climate skepticism is not a knowledge deficit issue. Michigan State University sociologist Aaron McCright and Oklahoma State University sociologist Riley Dunlap have observed that increased education and self-reported understanding of climate science have been shown to correlate with lower concern among conservatives and Republicans and greater concern among liberals and Democrats. Research also has found that once people have made up their minds on the science of the climate issue, providing continued scientific evidence actually makes them more resolute in resisting conclusions that are at variance with their cultural beliefs.9 One needs to recognize that reasoning is suffused with emotion and people often use reasoning to reach a predetermined end that fits their cultural worldviews. When people hear about climate change, they may, for example, hear an implicit criticism that their lifestyle is the cause of the issue or that they are morally deficient for not recognizing it. But emotion can be a useful ally; it can create the abiding commitments needed to sustain action on the difficult issue of climate change. To do this, people must be convinced that something can be done to address it; that the challenge is not too great nor are its impacts preordained. The key to engaging people in a consensus-driven debate about climate change is to confront the emotionality of the issue and then address the deeper ideological values that may be threatened to create this emotionality. Focus on broker frames | People interpret information by fitting it to preexisting narratives or issue categories that mesh with their worldview. Therefore information must be presented in a form that fits those templates, using carefully researched metaphors, allusions, and examples that trigger a new way of thinking about the personal relevance of climate change. To be effective, climate communicators must use the language of the cultural community they are engaging. For a business audience, for example, one must use business terminology, such as net present value, return on investment, increased consumer demand, and rising raw material costs. More generally, one can seek possible broker frames that move away from a pessimistic appeal to fear and instead focus on optimistic appeals that trigger the emotionality of a desired future. In addressing climate change, we are asking who we strive to be as a people, and what kind of world we want to leave our children. To gain buy-in, one can stress American know-how and our capacity to innovate, focusing on activities already under way by cities, citizens, and businesses.10 This approach frames climate change mitigation as a gain rather than a loss to specific cultural groups. Research has shown that climate skepticism can be caused by a motivational tendency to defend the status quo based on the prior assumption that any change will be painful. But by encouraging people to regard pro-environmental change as patriotic and consistent with protecting the status quo, it can be framed as a continuation rather than a departure from the past. Specific broker frames can be used that engage the interests of both sides of the debate. For example, when US Secretary of Energy Steven Chu referred in November 2010 to advances in renewable energy technology in China as the United States’ “Sputnik moment,” he was framing climate change as a common threat to US scientific and economic competitiveness. When Pope Benedict XVI linked the threat of climate change with threats to life and dignity on New Year’s Day 2010, he was painting it as an issue of religious morality. When CNA’s Military Advisory Board, a group of elite retired US military officers, called climate change a “threat multiplier” in its 2006 report, it was using a national security frame. When the Lancet Commission pronounced climate change to be the biggest global health threat of the 21st century in a 2009 article, the organization was using a quality of life frame. And when the Center for American Progress, a progressive Washington, D.C., think tank, connected climate change to the conservation ideals of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon, they were framing the issue as consistent with Republican values. One broker frame that deserves particular attention is the replacement of uncertainty or probability of climate change with the risk of climate change.11 People understand low probability, high consequence events and the need to address them. For example, they buy fire insurance for their homes even though the probability of a fire is low, because they understand that the financial consequence is too great. In the same way, climate change for some may be perceived as a low risk, high consequence event, so the prudent course of action is to obtain insurance in the form of both behavioral and technological change. Recognize the power of language and terminology | Words have multiple meanings in different communities, and terms can trigger unintended reactions in a target audience. For example, one study has shown that Republicans were less likely to think that the phenomenon is real when it is referred to as “global warming” (44 percent) rather than “climate change” (60 percent), but Democrats were unaffected by the term (87 percent vs. 86 percent). So language matters: The partisan divide dropped from 43 percent under a “global warming” frame to 26 percent under a “climate change” frame.12 Other terms with multiple meanings include “climate denier,” which some use to refer to those who are not open to discussion on the issue, and others see as a thinly veiled and highly insulting reference to “Holocaust denier”; “uncertainty,” which is a scientific concept to convey variance or deviation from a specific value, but is interpreted by a lay audience to mean that scientists do not know the answer; and “consensus,” which is the process by which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) forms its position, but leads some in the public to believe that climate science is a matter of “opinion” rather than data and modeling. Overall, the challenge becomes one of framing complex scientific issues in a language that a lay and highly politicized audience can hear. This becomes increasingly challenging when we address some inherently nonintuitive and complex aspects of climate modeling that are hard to explain, such as the importance of feedback loops, time delays, accumulations, and nonlinearities in dynamic systems.13 Unless scientists can accurately convey the nature of climate modeling, others in the social debate will alter their claims to fit their cultural or cognitive perceptions or satisfy their political interests. Employ climate brokers | People are more likely to feel open to consider evidence when a recognized member of their cultural community presents it.14 Certainly, statements by former Vice President Al Gore and Sen. James Inhofe evoke visceral responses from individuals on either side of the partisan divide. But individuals with credibility on both sides of the debate can act as what I call climate brokers. Because a majority of Republicans do not believe the science of climate change, whereas a majority of Democrats do, the most effective broker would come from the political right. Climate brokers can include representatives from business, the religious community, the entertainment industry, the military, talk show hosts, and politicians who can frame climate change in language that will engage the audience to whom they most directly connect. When people hear about the need to address climate change from their church, synagogue, mosque, or temple, for example, they w ill connect the issue to their moral values. When they hear it from their business leaders and investment managers, they will connect it to their economic interests. And when they hear it from their military leaders, they will connect it to their interest in a safe and secure nation. Recognize multiple referent groups | The presentation of information can be designed in a fashion that recognizes that individuals are members of multiple referent groups. The underlying frames employed in one cultural community may be at variance with the values dominant within the communities engaged in climate change debate. For example, although some may reject the science of climate change by perceiving the scientific review process to be corrupt as part of one cultural community, they also may recognize the legitimacy of the scientific process as members of other cultural communities (such as users of the modern health care system). Although someone may see the costs of fossil fuel reductions as too great and potentially damaging to the economy as members of one community, they also may see the value in reducing dependence on foreign oil as members of another community who value strong national defense. This frame incongruence emerged in the 2011 US Republican primary as candidate Jon Huntsman warned that Republicans risk becoming the “antiscience party” if they continue to reject the science on climate change. What Huntsman alluded to is that most Americans actually do trust the scientific process, even if they don’t fully understand it. (A 2004 National Science Foundation report found that two thirds of Americans do not clearly understand the scientific process.) Employ events as leverage for change | Studies have found that most Americans believe that climate change will affect geographically and temporally distant people and places. But studies also have shown that people are more likely to believe in the science when they have an experience with extreme weather phenomena. This has led climate communicators to link climate change to major events, such as Hurricane Katrina, or to more recent floods in the American Midwest and Asia, as well as to droughts in Texas and Africa, to hurricanes along the East Coast and Gulf of Mexico, and to snowstorms in Western states and New England. The cumulative body of weather evidence, reported by media outlets and linked to climate change, will increase the number of people who are concerned about the issue, see it as less uncertain, and feel more confident that we must take actions to mitigate its effects. For example, in explaining the recent increase in belief in climate change among Americans, the 2012 National Survey of American Public Opinion on Climate Change noted that “about half of Americans now point to observations of temperature changes and weather as the main reasons they believe global warming is taking place.”15 Ending Climate Science Wars Will we see a social consensus on climate change? If beliefs about the existence of global warming are becoming more ideologically entrenched and gaps between conservatives and liberals are widening, the solution space for resolving the issue will collapse and the debate will be based on power and coercion. In such a scenario, domination by the science-based forces looks less likely than domination by the forces of skepticism, because the former has to “prove” its case while the latter merely needs to cast doubt. But such a polarized outcome is not a predetermined outcome. And if it were to form, it can be reversed. Is there a reason to be hopeful? When looking for reasons to be hopeful about a social consensus on climate change, I look to public opinion changes around cigarette smoking and cancer. For years, the scientific community recognized that the preponderance of epidemiological and mechanistic data pointed to a link between the habit and the disease. And for years, the public rejected that conclusion. But through a process of political, economic, social, and legal debate over values and beliefs, a social consensus emerged. The general public now accepts that cigarettes cause cancer and governments have set policy to address this. Interestingly, two powerful forces that many see as obstacles to a comparable social consensus on climate change were overcome in the cigarette debate. The first obstacle is the powerful lobby of industrial forces that can resist a social and political consensus. In the case of the cigarette debate, powerful economic interests mounted a campaign to obfuscate the scientific evidence and to block a social and political consensus. Tobacco companies created their own pro-tobacco science, but eventually the public health community overcame pro-tobacco scientists. The second obstacle to convincing a skeptical public is the lack of a definitive statement by the scientific community about the future implications of climate change. The 2007 IPCC report states that “Human activities … are modifying the concentration of atmospheric constituents … that absorb or scatter radiant energy. … [M]ost of the observed warming over the last 50 years is very likely to have been due to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.” Some point to the word “likely” to argue that scientists still don’t know and action in unwarranted. But science is not designed to provide a definitive smoking gun. Remember that the 1964 surgeon general’s report about the dangers of smoking was equally conditional. And even today, we cannot state with scientific certainty that smoking causes lung cancer. Like the global climate, the human body is too complex a system for absolute certainty. We can explain epidemiologically why a person could get cancer from cigarette smoking and statistically how that person will likely get cancer, but, as the surgeon general report explains, “statistical methods cannot establish proof of a causal relationship in an association [between cigarette smoking and lung cancer]. The causal significance of an association is a matter of judgment, which goes beyond any statement of statistical probability.” Yet the general public now accepts this causal linkage. What will get us there? Although climate brokers are needed from all areas of society—from business, religion, military, and politics—one field in particular needs to become more engaged: the academic scientist and particularly the social scientist. Too much of the debate is dominated by the physical sciences in defining the problem and by economics in defining the solutions. Both fields focus heavily on the rational and quantitative treatments of the issue and fail to capture the behavioral and cultural aspects that explain why people accept or reject scientific evidence, analysis, and conclusions. But science is never socially or politically inert, and scientists have a duty to recognize its effect on society and to communicate that effect to society. Social scientists can help in this endeavor. But the relative absence of the social sciences in the climate debate is driven by specific structural and institutional controls that channel research work away from empirical relevance. Social scientists limit involvement in such “outside” activities, because the underlying norms of what is considered legitimate and valuable research, as well as the overt incentives and reward structures within the academy, lead away from such endeavors. Tenure and promotion are based primarily on the publication of top-tier academic journal articles. This is the signal of merit and success. Any effort on any other endeavor is decidedly discouraged. The role of the public intellectual has become an arcane and elusive option in today’s social sciences. Moreover, it is a difficult role to play. The academic rules are not clear and the public backlash can be uncomfortable; many of my colleagues and I are regular recipients of hostile e-mail messages and web-based attacks. But the lack of academic scientists in the public debate harms society by leaving out critical voices for informing and resolving the climate debate. There are signs, however, that this model of scholarly isolation is changing. Some leaders within the field have begun to call for more engagement within the public arena as a way to invigorate the discipline and underscore its investment in the defense of civil society. As members of society, all scientists have a responsibility to bring their expertise to the decision-making process. It is time for social scientists to accept this responsibility.

#### Antitrust can be used for socially beneficial purposes

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The central function of antitrust law is to allocate economic coordination rights. This means that private decisions to engage in economic coordination are always subject to public approval, which antitrust law grants either expressly or tacitly. Currently, its methods for accomplishing this function have the effect of anointing control and concentrated power as the preferred form of economic coordination, and to frown upon forms of economic coordination in which power and decision making are more broadly dispersed. Antitrust law's current methods for allocating coordination rights include what I call its firm exemption, as well as its preference for vertical over horizontal coordination beyond firm boundaries. Antitrust's methods of allocating coordination rights are ultimately indigenous and cannot be explained away by external referents: neither by other areas of law, nor by putatively neutral conclusions of social science. They are also historically contingent and have shifted over time.

Practically speaking, the reigning antitrust paradigm authorizes large, powerful firms as the primary mechanisms of economic and market coordination, while largely undermining others: from workers' organizations to small business cooperation to democratic regulation of markets. While deploying the legal concept of competition to undermine disfavored forms of economic coordination, antitrust law also quietly underwrites certain major exceptions to principles of competition, notably, the business firm itself. In surfacing the firm exemption, this Article also isolates the underlying, largely unexamined decision criteria for allocating coordination rights that it employs.

The current paradigm for thinking and decision making within antitrust law has a professed commitment to implementing the insights of neoclassical economic theory in legal decisionmaking.1 According to that framework, the aggregate of individual market transactions, rather than direct coordination, will result in an optimal allocation of society's resources. But this process of market allocation, which the law is supposed to facilitate but not displace, itself has no existence independent of prior legal allocations of economic coordination rights. Those coordination rights are shaped by numerous areas of law-from property to corporate to labor to antitrust, among others. This Article focuses on antitrust law, where this function is rarely acknowledged. Although the law and economics paradigm has enormous institutional sticking power in current antitrust law, the basic purposes and methods of antitrust law are also up for debate today in a way that they have not been in decades. Recent contributions to the antitrust revival have emphasized the law's traditional concerns with corporate power and fairness, which were largely written out of antitrust law in the Chicago School revolution? Dissenting voices asserted these as legitimate antitrust concerns even prior to the current challenge. 3 Mirroring the reformist call to put some limits upon the broad coordination rights of the powerful, a growing chorus of scholarship has emphasized the need to expand the coordination rights of small players to some extent or another, beginning with the question of workers and microenterprises caught between labor and antitrust regulation.4

However, proposals to reform antitrust, or to reconceptualize it, have thus far generally stopped short of questioning the basic premise that its primary function is to promote competition. At least officially, if increasingly uneasily, competition is still king. To be sure, many posit that antitrust performs this stated function badly, or does not perform it at all in certain markets.' Even when reintroducing values such as fairness and deconcentrating power, for the most part the reform camp has characterized those values as flowing from-or at least coextensive with-promoting or protecting competition. Thus, the political debate over antitrust has been characterized by all sides claiming the idea of competition and defining what it means to promote competition in different ways.

#### Antitrust debates are valuable

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IV. Antitrust in Civil Society

Competition issues are also part of the general civic discourse separate from the campaign rhetoric and legislative proposals offered by politicians. This is also a significant sign that antitrust has begun to be an important source of small “p” politics that engages substantial segments of the public at large. One example is the increased number of non-technical books intended for a lay audience that deal with the role of antitrust in a healthy economy and democracy. Recent and forthcoming books dealing with these themes include Tim Wu’s “The Curse of Bigness,”109 Matt Stoller’s “Goliath,”110 Maurice Stucke and Ariel Ezrachi’s “Competition Overdose,”111 Zephyr Teachout’s “Break ‘em Up,”112 and David Dayan’s “Monopolized.”113 On the academic side, there are a plethora of government and NGO studies of competition policy on digital competition114 and new works are flourishing which explore the broader ramifications of antitrust and competition in society.115 Long form and more mass-market journalism have also taken up the mantle of exploring the role of antitrust and competition policy. Such diverse magazines as The Atlantic,116 Time, 117 New Republic,118 American Prospect,119 Rolling Stone,120 New York Times magazine,121 Variety,122 National Review, 123 Foreign Policy,124 and other policy and opinion magazines have all run recent stories or profiles of individuals involved in antitrust issues. Before the COVID-19 pandemic effectively monopolized press coverage in the United States, there were thirty-three antitrust related stories on the front page of the New York Times or the front page of its business section over a three-month period in late 2019. 125 A majority of the stories focused on tech giants such as Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Facebook.126 In addition, the New York Times also covered stories about mergers, merger policy, local issues such as the Chicago taxi market, and various smaller industries.127 This is separate from coverage during the same period of campaign issues and candidate statements relating to the field. A similar increase in coverage during this same period can be observed anecdotally in more business-oriented publications like Forbes, Barron’s, Wired, and the Wall Street Journal; general newspapers like USA Today, Washington Post, and Huffington Post; more local newspapers; as well as radio and television.128 Web pages and social media accounts on these issues have similarly proliferated on all ideological perspectives.129 Lobbying and public policy groups are growing in number and influence. Beyond the traditional trade associations and general think tanks there are now a number of active groups with antitrust as a large part of their focus. These include the Open Markets Institute, 130 American Antitrust Institute, 131 Anti-Monopoly Fund,132 Institute for Self-Reliance,133 Public Citizen,134 Public Knowledge,135 Demos, 136 and the International Center for Law and Economics.137 At the more technical legal end of the debate, antitrust is similarly flourishing as a field. One sees increased law school hiring in the field for the first time in decades. Academic institutes and centers abound with a wide variety of perspectives ranging from libertarian to enforcement oriented.138 Most major antitrust cases now feature multiple amicus briefs from legal and economic experts on both sides of an issue both in the Supreme Court or the Courts of Appeals.139 Conclusion Antitrust has always been political in nature. Antitrust law provides broad legal commands dealing with how governments and private individuals can challenge different types of market behavior. In this way, antitrust has not changed. Antitrust will never take the place of sports, the Dow Jones index, or the weather for conversation at the breakfast table, but it has become a meaningful part of the political and policy debate for candidates, the legislature, and important segments of civil society. What has changed, however, is the degree that antitrust has reentered the political arena. Once mostly the domain of technocrats, antitrust issues have been proposed and debated by Presidential candidates, political parties, legislators, pundits, journalists, lobby groups, and voters alike. There are also a flurry of serious proposals and investigations that would make significant changes to the current system if adopted. This is all to the good. Even if none of the current proposals come to fruition, the antitrust debate is part of a broader engagement with political economy issues dealing with fundamental concerns such as economic concentration, globalization, income inequality, social and racial justice, and even recently the proper response to the COVID-19 emergency. The many proposals, initiatives, and pressure groups represent at a minimum the return of antitrust as part of the progressive agenda.

#### Default to consequentialism

Sikkink 8, Professor of political science at the University of Minnesota (Kathryn Sikkink, 2008, “The Role of Consequences, Comparison, and Counterfactuals in Constructivist Ethical Thought,” <http://www.polisci.umn.edu/centers/theory/pdf/sikkink.pdf)>

Ethical arguments of these different types are ubiquitous and necessary. But because they are also slippery and open to manipulation and misuse, we also need to be very careful and precise about how we go about using them. I would recommend that first we distinguish very carefully between the comparison to ideals and historical empirical comparison. I believe that many critical constructivist accounts rely on the comparison to the ideal or to the conditions of possibility counterfactual argument. In almost every critical constructivist work there is an implicit ideal ethical argument. This argument is implicit because it is rarely clearly stated, but it is found in the nature of the 36 critique. So, for example, in her discussion of U.S. human rights policy, Roxanne Doty critiques a human rights policy carried out by actors who sometimes use it for their own self aggrandizement and to denigrate others. 42 The implicit ideal this presents is a human rights policy that is not used for denigration or surveillance or othering those it criticizes or conversely, of elevating those who advocate it. What would be examples of such a policy? The book does not provide examples. We do not know if examples exist in the world. So the implicit comparison is a comparison to an ideal – a never fully stated ideal, but one present in the critique of what is wrong with the policies discussed. Nicolas Guilhot makes a similar argument in his recent book. The promotion of democracy and human rights, he argues, are increasingly used in order to extend the power they were meant to limit. “The promotion of democracy and human rights defines new forms of administration on a global scale and generates a new political science.” He historically examines how progressive movements for democracy and human rights have become hegemonic because they “systematically managed to integrate emancipatory and progressive forces in the construction of imperial policies.” But once again, the book offers no alternative political scenario. In the final sentence of the book, the author clarifies that “this book has no other ambition than to contribute to the democratic critique of democracy.” 43 In the introduction, he clarifies, “This book does not provide answers to these dilemmas. At most, its only ambition is to highlight them, in the hope that a proper understanding constitutes a first step toward the invention of new courses of action.”44 Ethically, I believe this is a cop-out. Politically and intellectually, I find it too comfortable and too easy. This critique has a crucial role to play in pointing to hypocrisy (as Price highlights in the introduction). It could also serve as a catalyst for policy change in the direction of policy that would include less surveillance or less cooptation of human rights discourse. But it is unlikely to serve as a catalyst for new action or policy change unless it ventures something more than pure critique, unless it risks a political or ethical proposal. Without that, it has the impact of delegitimizing any human rights policy without suggesting any alternative. Any policy to promote human rights of democracy policy is shown to be deeply flawed or even pernicious. It is portrayed as part of the problem, certainly not as offering any kind of solution. Human rights policy appears to make the situation worse, not better. The critique has the effect of telling us clearly what we do not want, what we can not support—human rights policies by imperfect and hypocritical actors like the U.S. In its historical comparisons, it also lumps human rights policy together with colonialism and does not provide any elements to distinguish between one policy of surveillance and other. All are equally flawed. The ethical effect is to remove normative support from existing policies without producing any alternatives. This is similar to what Price means when he says that “critical accounts which do not in fact offer constructive normative theorizing to follow critique ironically lend themselves to being complicit with the conservative agenda opposing erstwhile progressive change in world politics.” Neither Doty nor Guilhot, for example, contrast two human rights policies to give examples of policies that are more of less hypocritical or where there has been more or 44 Guilhot, p. 14. 38 less surveillance. They don’t contrast human rights policies or democracy promotion policies to previous policies that were also hypocritical and self aggrandizing, but more pernicious – e.g. national security ideology and support for authoritarian regimes in the third world. By presenting no contrasts, the critique would appear to say that there is no ethical or political difference between a policy that supports coups and funds repressive military regimes and a policy that critiques coups and cuts military aid to repressive regimes. These policies would appear to be ethically indistinguishable. Indeed, by these standards, a realist policy (a la Kissinger) might be preferable. Kissinger didn’t denigrate his authoritarianism allies. He took regimes as they were. He treated them as valuable allies. He didn’t lecture them on how they should change. He also, in doing so, encouraged, in some cases, coups and mass murder. But at least he didn’t “Other”. Doty and Guilhot give me no ethical criteria to distinguish between the policies of the Kissinger administration, the Carter administration, and current Bush administration policy. Because the comparison is an implicit ideal, never an empirical real world example, the critique is very telling and can delegitimize the critiqued policy. But nothing is put in its place. So, it demobilizes any support we might have for any human rights policy. It puts the analyst in an ethically comfortable position, but by not proposing any explicit comparison, it demobilizes the reader. We learn what to oppose, to critique, but we don’t learn explicitly what to support in its stead. The result can be political paralysis. One finds it difficult to act.

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#### Analysis DA ⁠— the iterative process is valuable, even if their offense is correct

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Classical policy analysis, however absent from actual policy making, remains an important vehicle for teaching policy analysts the connections between their analysis and the policymaking world in which their recommendations would live. Even if it implies more power than analysts will ever have, classical policy analysis teaches that politics, law, implementation, social structures, organizational behavior, and other factors are critical to policy outcomes and must play key roles in thinking through possible ways to address policy problems. Bringing policy ideas to fruition, bridging the worlds of research and policy making, is a critical skill for analysts to develop. In addition, policy schools are instilling in prospective policy analysts the structure and habits of mind to engage successfully in the policy enterprise. 28 Teaching disciplined thinking for public service is important. Policy analysts not only have a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach to policy and the ability to synthesize and bring policy relevance to problems that social scientists are not trained for, but they understand the "rational lunacy of policy-making systems" (Weiss 2009). In the absence of written classical policy analyses, policy analysts become their human embodiment. Their training will provide a mental picture of how a classical policy analysis should be performed. They can derive elements of policy analysis from writing position papers, briefing policy makers, and controlling meetings. They anticipate counterarguments and frame their analyses recognizing alternative options. In short, the mental map of a policy analysis allows good policy analysts not only to be effective in their jobs but also to advance into the public debate the appropriate elements of a policy analysis. Further, the problem orientation of policy analysis focuses at least some attention on social problems, not just political expediency. The role of policy analysts is not merely to translate research for policy makers, but to use creative means to turn available knowledge about the implications of various policy options into actionable policy recommendations appropriate for their clients. This is a subtle skill requiring attention to both political realities and the best available research. Finally, prospective policy analysts are instructed repeatedly about the importance of their relationship to the client(s), yet far less attention is paid to the other part of the policy analyst's relationship: to the community of knowledge producers. Policy analysts play critical roles as intermediaries between "custodians of the knowable" and policy makers. Their training should include the ability to understand and interpret the academic literature on a topic at a far deeper level than most journalists have the time or, often, the analytic skill set to uncover. Identifying and connecting pertinent knowledge and analysis with policy makers should be a core principle of a public policy education. Policy analysts may offer the central means to provide policy makers with the key elements of classical policy analysis, though not in the way, through written reports, it was originally conceived. Creating a profession for committed, accomplished, and well-trained individuals to participate in the world of public policy may be among the most important contributions of policy analysis education.

#### Even if political liberalism currently excludes the disabled, discussing questions of implementation can revise it and bailing on it is worse

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I argue that any proposal abandoning the language of political justice would not seem to do enough for those individuals with disabilities who fall outside the basic idea of persons as depicted by Rawls. In fact, the intuitions supporting the idea that concepts like rights and opportunities are indispensable are very strong.11 Let us go back to the examples of individuals falling outside Rawls’s idea of persons because their disabilities prevent them from being a net beneﬁt to social cooperation. They are individuals who need multiple carers to work, or whose disabilities prevent them from providing a beneﬁt to social cooperation that is large enough. To put the point more sharply, it is worth noticing that the disabilities in question are compatible with being in full possession of one’s logical and moral powers. Now, should we accept that those individuals ought to be given no rights or opportunities? An afﬁrmative answer would strike us as implausible, and for a good reason. In a liberal society, having one’s rights, opportunities and basic distributive entitlements acknowledged is one and the same as being recognized as an equal. And what is missing from Rawls’s political liberalism is precisely the idea that falling below a threshold of full cooperation should not be enough to prevent the disabled from being regarded as persons on an equal footing with anyone else. In sum, Rawls’s political liberalism is not amenable to any extension that, keeping the basic ideas of society and persons intact, is able to include a concern with the status of individuals with disabilities. In addition, the proposal that the interests of the disabled are not for public reason to protect is not satisfactory. Consequently, a substantial revision is the only way to reconcile political liberalism with our intuitions concerning what is due to the disabled.

5. Revising political liberalism I: beyond Hartley’s contractualism The aim of this section and the next is to propose a substantial revision of Rawls’s theory that accommodates the justice claims of the disabled while upholding the project of political liberalism. A question that needs to be answered at this point is: why should we uphold the project of political liberalism, rather than endorsing a different model that more neatly ﬁts with our intuitions concerning what is due to the disabled? First, the general project of political liberalism is compelling. Rawls’s political liberalism aims to identify a common ground of political ideas that can work as the basis on which the most important political decisions should be made. This project is of the greatest importance because, if successful, it creates legitimacy by building institutions on the basis of concepts that are acceptable to each reasonable individual. Moreover, it promotes stability in societies that are characterized by deep pluralism. Second, despite Rawls’s failure to take the interests of the disabled into consideration, political liberalism is well suited to support the justice claims of individuals with disabilities. This is because the idea that the disabled are citizens who deserve our respect is part of the common culture of our societies. In other words, there is an overlapping consensus on the idea that rights, opportunities and distributive shares must be granted to individuals who are not fully cooperating members of society, including those who fall below full moral powers. It is widely believed that those with physical disabilities should have the same rights as their fellow citizens, live in a social environment that does not excessively limit their opportunities and receive beneﬁts that help meet their special needs. Besides, although the state or third parties are given exceptional rights to interfere with the autonomy of individuals with severe cognitive disabilities, it is widely recognized that the mentally disabled are citizens whose basic interests must be protected by the law.12 In the public space, any proposal that individuals who are not fully cooperating members of society should have their basic interests neglected would be widely received with outrage. Such proposal would be said to ﬁt a fascist society, not a decent one. Among other legal documents, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN General Assembly, A/61/611) can be taken as the epitome of this widespread attitude. Adopted in 2006, the Convention requires that all individuals with disabilities should share in the enjoyment of equal fundamental rights.

#### Anti-state politics prevents action against climate crises

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You mention mutual aid and how it was overhyped by the left in the aftermath of Katrina. I’m thinking of the same thing in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. You’ve been critical of the left in the US for not approaching and using the state apparatus when dealing with climate change and other ecological issues. Can you talk about your critique of the US left and why you think the state can, and should, be used in a positive manner? Just to be clear, I think it is absolutely heroic and noble what activists have done. My critique is not of peoples’ actions, or of people; it’s of a lack of sophistication, and I hold myself partly accountable, as part of the US left, for our deficiencies. With Hurricane Sandy, the Occupy folks did some amazing stuff. Yet, at a certain level, their actions became charity. People were talking about how many meals they distributed. That’s charity. That is, in many ways, a neoliberal solution. That’s exactly what the capitalist system in the US would like: US citizens not demanding their government redistribute wealth from the 1% to the 99%. The capitalists love to see people turn to each other for money and aid. Unwittingly, that’s what the anarcho-liberal left fell into. This is partly due a very American style of anti-state rhetoric that transcends left and right. The state is not just prisons or the military. It’s also Head Start, quality public education, the library, clean water, the EPA, the City University of New York system – a superb, affordable set of schools that turns out top-notch, working-class students with the lowest debt burdens in the country. There’s a reason the right is attacking these institutions. Why does the right hate the EPA and public education? Because they don’t want to pay to educate the working class, and they don’t want the working class educated. They don’t want to pay to clean up industry, and that’s what the EPA forces them to do. When the left embraces anarcho-liberal notions of self-help and fantasies of being outside of both government and the market, it cuts itself off from important democratic resources. The state should be seen as an arena of class struggle. When the left turns its back on the social democratic features of government, stops making demands of the state, and fails to reshape government by using the government for progressive ends, it risks playing into the hands of the right. The central message of the American right is that government is bad and must be limited. This message is used to justify austerity. However, in most cases, neoliberal austerity does not actually involve a reduction of government. Typically, restructuring in the name of austerity is really just a transformation of government, not a reduction of it. Over the last 35 years, the state has been profoundly transformed, but it has not been reduced. The size of the government in the economy has not gone down. The state has become less redistributive, more punitive. Instead of a robust program of government-subsidized and public housing, we have the prison system. Instead of well-funded public hospitals, we have profiteering private hospitals funded by enormous amounts of public money. Instead of large numbers of well-paid public workers, we have large budgets for private firms that now subcontract tasks formerly conducted by the government. We need to defend the progressive work of government, which, for me, means immediately defending public education. To be clear, I do not mean merely vote or ask nicely, I mean movements should attack government and government officials, target them with protests, make their lives impossible until they comply. This was done very well with the FCC. And my hat goes off to the activists who saved the internet for us. The left should be thinking about the ways in which it can leverage government. The utility of government was very apparent in Vermont during the aftermath of Hurricane Irene. The rains from that storm destroyed or damaged over a hundred bridges, many miles of road and rail, and swept away houses. Thirteen towns were totally stranded. There was a lot of incredible mutual aid; people just started clearing debris and helping each other out. But within all this, town government was a crucial connective tissue. Due to the tradition of New England town meeting, people are quite involved with their local government. Anarchists should love town meetings. It is no coincidence that Murray Bookchin spent much of his life in Vermont. Town meetings are a form of participatory budgeting without the lefty rigmarole. More importantly, the state government managed to get a huge amount of support from the federal government. The state in turn pushed this down to the town level. Without that federal aid, Vermont would still be in ruins. Vermont is not a big enough political entity to shake down General Electric, a huge employer in Vermont. The Vermont government can’t pressure GE to pay for the rebuilding of local infrastructure, but the federal government can. Vermont would still be a disaster if it didn’t get a transfer of funds and materials from the federal government. Similarly in New York City, the public sector does not get enough praise for the many things it did well after super storm Sandy. Huge parts of the subway system were flooded, yet it was all up and running within the month. As an aside, one of the dirty little secrets about the Vermont economy is that it’s heavily tied-up with the military industrial complex. People think Vermont is all about farming and boutique food processing. Vermont has a pretty diverse economy, but agriculture plays a much smaller role than you might think, about 2 percent of employment. Meanwhile, the state’s industrial sector, along with the government, is one of the top employers, at about 13 percent of all employment. Most of this work is in what’s called precision manufacturing, making stuff like: high performance nozzles, switches, calibrators, and stuff like the lenses used in satellites, or handcrafting the blades that go in GE jet engines. But I digress … As we enter the crisis of climate change, it’s important to be aware of the actually existing legal and institutional mechanisms with which we can contain and control capital. I often joke with my anarchist and libertarian friends and ask if their mutual-aid collectives can run Chicago’s sanitation system or operate satellites. Of course, on one level, I’m joking, but on another level, I’m being quite serious. I don’t think activists on the left properly understand the complexity of modern society. A simple example would be how much sewage is produced in a single day in a country with 330 million people. How do people expect to manage these day-to-day issues? In your opinion, is there a lack of sophistication on the left in terms of what, exactly, the state does and how it functions in our day-to-day lives? It’s sobering to reflect on just how complex the physical systems of modern society are. And though it is very unpopular to say among most American activists, it is important to think about the hierarchies and bureaucracies that are necessarily part of technologically complex systems. A friend of mine is a water engineer in Detroit, and he was talking to me about exactly what you’re mentioning. The sewer system in Detroit is mind-bogglingly enormous and also very dilapidated and very expensive. To not have infrastructure publicly maintained, even though the capitalist class might not admit this, would ultimately undermine capital accumulation.¶ You asked if there is a lack of sophistication. Look, I’m trying to make helpful criticisms to my comrades on the left, particularly to activists who work so hard and valiantly. I’ve criticized divestment as a strategy, yet I support it. I criticized the false claims that divesting fossil fuels stocks would hurt fossil fuel companies. The fossil fuel divestment movement started out making that claim. To its credit, the movement has stopped making such claims. Now, they say that it will remove the industries "social license," which is a problematic concept that comes from the odious world of "corporate social responsibility." However, now, students are becoming politicized, and that’s always great news. For several years, some of us have been trying to get climate activists, the climate left, to take the EPA and the Clean Air Act seriously. The EPA has the power to actually de-carbonize the economy. The divestment logic is: Schools will divest, then fossil fuel companies will be held in greater contempt than they are now? Honestly, they’re already hated by everybody. That does what? That creates the political pressure to stop polluting? We already have those regulations: the Clean Air Act. There was a Supreme Court Case, Massachusetts v. EPA, that was ruled on in 2007. It said the EPA must regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Lots of professional activists in the climate movement, at least up until very recently, have been totally unaware of this. Consequently, they are not making demands of the EPA. They are not making demands of their various local, state and federal environmental agencies. These entities should be enforcing the laws. They have the power. It’s not because the people in the climate movement are bad people or unintelligent. They’re dedicated and extremely smart. It’s because there’s an anti-state ethos within the environmental movement and a romanticization of the local. On a side note, I don’t think all of this stuff about local economies is helpful. Sometimes I think this sort of thinking doesn’t recognize how the global political economy works. The comrades at Jacobin magazine have called this anarcho-liberalism. I think that is a great way to describe the dominant ideology of US left, which is both anarchist and liberal in its sensibilities. This ideology is fundamentally about ignoring government, and instead, being obsessed with scale, size, and, by extension, authenticity. Big things are bad. Small things are good. Planning is bad. Spontaneity is good. It is as insidious as it is ridiculous. But it is the dominant worldview among the US left. Do you really think that this is the best way to approach the industry, through mobilizing state resources? Look, the fossil fuel industry is the most powerful force the world has ever seen. Be honest, what institution could possibly ~~stand up to~~ rebuff them? The state. That doesn’t mean it will. Right now, government is captured by these corporate entities. But, it has, at least in theory, an obligation to the people. And it also has the laws that we need to wipe out the fossil fuel industrial complex. This sounds fantastical and nuts, but I don’t think it is. I’ve been harping on this in articles and a little bit at the end of Tropic of Chaos. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, Nixon-era laws can be used to sue developers, polluters, etc. You might not be able to stop them, but you can slow them down. The Clean Air Act basically says that if science can show that smoke-stack pollution is harmful to human health, it has to be regulated.¶ If there was a movement really pushing the government, and making the argument that the only safe level of CO2 emissions is essentially zero … We have the laws in place. We have the enabling legislation to shut down the fossil fuel industry. We should use the government to levy astronomical fines on the fossil fuel companies for pollution. And we should impose them at such a level that it would undermine their ability to remain competitive and profitable. Part Two: Vincent Emanuele: Much of the green washing, or capitalism’s attempt to brand itself as green, focuses on localism and anti-government, market-driven programs. Do you think this phobia of the state among the US left is a result of previous failed political experiments? How much of this ideology is imposed from outside forces? Christian Parenti: Some state phobia comes from the American political mythology of rugged individualism; some comes from the fundamentally Southern, Jeffersonian tradition of states’ rights. Fear of the federal government by Southern elites goes back to the founding of the country. The Hamiltonian versus Jeffersonian positions on government are fundamental to understanding American politics. I wrote about this for Jacobin magazine in a piece called "Reading Hamilton from the Left." Lurking just beneath the surface of states’ rights is, of course, plantation rights. Those plantations, places like Monticello, were America’s equivalent of feudal manors where, in a de facto sense, economic, legal and military power were all bound up together and located in the private household of the planter. Those Virginian planters were the original localistas. Nor did that project end with the fall of slavery, or the end of de jure segregation in the 1960s. Southern elites didn’t want Yankees telling them what to do; how to treat their slaves, how to organize their towns, how to run their elections, how to treat the environment – none of that! The South is a resource colony and its regional elites, some of them now running multinational corporations and holding important posts in the US government, believe they have a right to do what they wish with the people and landscape. Historically, that’s a large part of what localism and local democracy meant in the South. It meant that White local elites were "free" – free to push Black people around, free to feed racist fantasies to the White working class. They didn’t want interference from the outside. So, some of that anti-statist ideology comes from that plantation tradition. Another part of it comes from the real failures and crimes of state socialism, though state socialism also had, and in Cuba still has, many successes. The social welfare record of what we used to call "actually existing socialism" was pretty impressive. But there were also the problems of repression, surveillance and bureaucratization, which were partly the result of capitalist encirclement, partly the result of the ideological hubris rooted in ideological overconfidence in the allegedly scientific power of Marxism, partly the result of simple corruption among socialism’s political class. These real problems were central themes in the Cold War West’s educational and ideological apparatus of (generally right-wing) messaging from the press and the political class. In this discourse, communism was the state, while freedom was the private sector. Thus, the United States and freedom became embodied in popular notions of the private sector and individualism. Of course, the great, unmentioned contradiction in this self-fantasy is the fact that American capitalism has always been heavily, heavily dependent on the state. Modern society, despite its fantasies about itself, is intensely cooperative and collective. Look at how complex its physical systems are; that cannot be achieved without massive levels of coordination and collective cooperation, much of it provided by the rules and regulations of government. The knee-jerk anti-statism, what the folks at Jacobin call "anarcho-liberalism," is also rooted in experience. The less social power you have, the more the state is experienced as an invasive, demeaning, oppressive and potentially, very violent bureaucracy. Neoliberalism would not have gotten this far if there wasn’t an element of truth to this critique of its bureaucracy and regulation. It has also used ideas that have old cultural tractions, like freedom.¶ Such are the contradictions of the modern democratic state in capitalist society. Government is rational, supportive, humane, [and offers] redistribution in the form of Social Security, high-quality public schools, environmental regulation, the Voting Rights Act and other federal civil rights laws that have helped break hegemonic power of local and regional bigots. But government is also militarized policing, the bloated prison system, spying on a vast scale; it is child protective services taking children from loving mothers on the basis of bureaucratic traps, corrupt corporate welfare at every level from town government to federal military contracting. The racist, sexist, plutocratic and techno-bureaucratic features of the state create fertile ground for people to turn their backs on the whole idea of government. What has been the impact of the right’s ability to effectively propagandize the White working class in the US? Rightist intellectuals, academics, journalists, media tycoons, university presidents and loudmouth politicians work diligently to capture and form the raw experience of everyday oppression into an ideological common sense. To be clear, I use that term in the Gramscian sense, in which common sense refers to ruling class ideology that is so hegemonic as to be absorbed and naturalized by the people. The constant libertarian assault on the radio, in newspapers, on the television, this drumbeat of anti-government discourse is an old story – but still very important for understanding the anarcho-liberal sensibility. Just tune in to AM radio late on a weekday evening and listen to the anti-government vitriol. It’s sort of wild. Someone could do an interesting study, Ph.D., in unpacking the cultural history of all this. It is tempting to speculate that deindustrialization, having disempowered and made anxious many huge sections of the working class, opens the way for fantasies of empowerment. The anti-statist, rugged individualist common sense is also always simultaneously a fantasy of empowerment. White men are particularly vulnerable to these fantasies. The classic guy who calls into the batshit crazy, late night, right-wing talk radio show is a middle-aged White man. Listen closely to the rage and you hear fantasies of independence. In this rhetoric, guns and gun rights become an obviously phallic symbol of individual empowerment, agency, self worth, responsibility etc. But most importantly, we have to think about how all of this anti-state ideology is being stirred up with investments from elites. The neoliberal project is to transform the state through anti-statist rhetoric and narratives. They sell the idea that people need to be liberated from the state. But then push policies that imprison people while liberating and pampering capital. It is hard for the left to see itself in this sketch – the angry, beaten-down, middle-aged White guy calling in from his basement or garage. But I think these much-documented corporate efforts to build neoliberal consent permeate the entire culture and infect us all, if even just a little bit. This is the intellectually toxic environment in which young activists are approaching the question of the climate emergency. Young activists should be approaching the climate crisis the way the left approached the economic crisis during the Great Depression. We need to drastically restructure the state. We need it mobilized and able to transform the economy. The New Deal was imperfect, of course. It left domestic workers and farm workers out of the Fair Labor Standards Act. It was inherently racist. It dammed rivers and was environmentally destructive. However, the New Deal was radical in its general empowerment of labor; its distributional outcomes were progressive and it achieved a modernizing transformation of American capitalism. Not to overstate the case, but the New Deal could be a reference point for thinking about the beginning of a green transformation that seeks to euthanize the fossil fuel industry. We have to precipitously reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build a new power sector. That much is very clear. However, let me be clear: Shutting down the fossil fuel industry – mitigating the climate crisis – is not a solution for the environmental crisis. Climate change is only one part of the multifaceted environmental crisis. Shutting down the fossil fuel industry would not automatically end overfishing, deforestation, soil erosion, habitat loss, toxification of the environment etc. But carbon mitigation is the most immediately pressing issue we face. The science is very clear on this. Climate change is the portion of the overall crisis that must be solved immediately so as to buy time to deal with all the other aspects of the crisis. Because I take the political implications of climate science very seriously, I am something of a carbon fundamentalist.

#### Capitalism is not wedded to extraction---dematerialization and decarbonization

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Dematerialization may be the most important, yet unsung, example of environmental progress in the 21st century. It is commonplace to observe that the relentless drive to do more with less has led to more efficient resource use, so that a soda can today is made with a fraction of the metal required 50 years ago. But dematerialization is not merely a story about increased efficiency or per‐​capita reductions. What is now being observed represents a fundamental decoupling of resource consumption from economic growth, such that as mature economies grow, they not only use fewer resources per unit of output, but they also consume fewer resources overall. In short, economic growth in the most developed nations increasingly coincides with a net reduction in resource consumption. The United States in particular is “post‐​peak in its exploitation of the earth,” according to Andrew McAfee in More from Less: The Surprising Story of How We Learned to Prosper Using Fewer Resources — and What Happens Next. McAfee, a principal research scientist at MIT, explains, “We’re now generally using less of most resources year after year, even as our economy and population grow.” The United States uses less gold, steel, aluminum, copper, stone, cement, and even paper than it did at the start of this century, despite the continued increase in gross domestic product. Annual consumption of all but six of the 72 resources tracked by the U.S. Geological Service are “post peak.” We also use less fertilizer and water while growing more crops. Plastic consumption is up, as is energy use, but these two appear to have been decoupled from population and economic growth as well. How does this dematerialization occur? Some examples may be useful. The dematerialization of soda cans is relatively easy to grasp, particularly for those of us who can remember the heavier cans of the 20th century. Aluminum cans weighed 85 grams when introduced in the 1950s. By 2011, the average can was under 13 grams. Cans today are not only thinner and lighter, they are produced more efficiently, with fewer separate sheets of metal. Substitution can be an even more powerful source of dematerialization. Consider telecommunications. A single fiber optic cable made from less than 150 pounds of silica can carry the same volume of information as multiple 1‑ton copper cables. And were that not enough, satellite and wireless technologies enable us to bypass the use of physical cables altogether. We can communicate more and yet use vastly less material to do so. This not only saves copper, but other resources too. Think of all the paper saved by e‑mail, e‑banking, and e‑readers. Markets or Malthus? It was not expected to work out this way. Throughout the modern era, doomsayers have predicted the imminent depletion of one resource or another. Human impact on the natural environment was to increase inexorably with the rise of wealth, technology, and population, inevitably colliding with the earth’s natural carrying capacity. It seemed “logical and inevitable” that “the planet’s finite stock of these resources would someday be exhausted.” Yet, this is not what happened. Instead, “capitalism and tech progress are now allowing us to tread more lightly on the earth instead of stripping it bare.” The Malthusian “limits to growth” have not merely been delayed or forestalled; they have been transcended. This was neither planned, nor anticipated, nor is it the product of the ecological agenda advanced by the modern environmental movement. Since the first Earth Day in 1970, environmental advocates have called for constraints on consumption, limits on technology, and greater recycling. None of those impulses, in McAfee’s view, did much to encourage dematerialization. Indeed, he suggests, pushing for recycling may have cut the other way, insofar as recycling dulled the price signals that incentivized producers to do more with less. The environmental policies born of the 1970s may have “worked amazingly well” to reduce pollution and related environmental harms, but they played just a bit part in the story of dematerialization. We do more with less not because of government regulation or administrative direction, but because of capitalism and technology. These are the dominant forces driving dematerialization in the most developed countries and they could unleash similar gains in the rest of the world. We “want more all the time, but not more resources,” McAfee notes. We want more of what resources can provide, and one way to get more is to do more with less. Market capitalism both facilitates and enhances the underlying incentives that drive efficiency gains and technological advance. This not only leads to dematerialization but also promotes “critical aspects of well‐​being,” including health and prosperity. What’s left to be done While celebrating dematerialization and dramatic improvements in many measures of human well‐​being, McAfee acknowledges there is more to be done. He devotes the latter part of the book to considering the challenges that remain. Dematerialization has occurred in the wealthiest nations, but it has yet to reach much of the world. Some types of pollution are declining, but others — including plastic waste and greenhouse gases — are not. He also worries about the potential effects of economic concentration and “disconnection among people and declines in social capital.” Not everything wrought by capitalism and technological advance has been positive, even if the net result is a good one. McAfee is an optimist, but he sees serious storm clouds on the horizon. He is particularly concerned about the atmospheric increase in greenhouse gases and writes that reducing “the carbon intensity of our economic activities” is “the most important task for responsive governments.” He is right to be concerned about climate change, but his discussion of the policy options is somewhat thin and disconnected from the central thrust of his book. Market‐​driven capitalism and accompanying technological advances drove dematerialization and could drive decarbonization as well, particularly if carbon emissions are priced. The proper suite of policies could facilitate a decarbonization in energy to rival the dematerialization we observed in telecommunications. Yet, the nature of any government interventions matters. Ill‐​conceived policies could blunt the market incentives that drive more efficient resource use. McAfee gives such questions relatively little attention, however. He also is too quick to credit regulatory interventions for prior environmental gains, such as the reductions in air and water pollution over the past half‐​century. Those trends often began before the regulatory measures he celebrates, and some regulatory measures may well have caused more harm than good. McAfee did not set out to write a wonky treatise on environmental policy, and More from Less is not one. The book tells the story of capitalism’s triumph over material scarcity with clarity and insight. He ably explains how modern society has achieved material ecological sustainability, and market capitalism was the cause. At a time when capitalism is viewed with suspicion, More from Less rises to its defense. Global challenges remain, but More from Less suggests solving such challenges will require more capitalism, not less.

#### Reformed capitalism overcomes links

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A friend asked me recently if we would ever “get back to normal.” It’s a question we’re all asking ourselves. Suddenly things we once took completely for granted — having dinner in a busy restaurant, being able to give a friend a hug — seem like distant luxuries. I, for one, hope I’ll be able to do both of these things soon. But otherwise, I hope we never, ever go back. Six months ago, it was “normal” for the richest 1% to own more than 40% of U.S. wealth — and for the richest 5% to take home nearly a third of all the income, while 40% of Americans would need to borrow, sell something, or not be able pay a $400 expense. Six months ago it was “normal” for nearly a quarter of the U.S. civilian workforce to be unable to take a day of paid sick leave and for us to feel comfortable tolerating the systemic oppression and exclusion of Black Americans. Six months ago, the fact that we were moving far too slowly to decarbonize the world’s economy, opening ourselves up to potentially catastrophic climate change, was more or less okay. I don’t want to go back to a world where the political system is flooded with money, where 70% percent of the population believes that the system only works for insiders, and where interest groups control the policy agenda. Instead, I want to reimagine capitalism, or at least our current version — the one that is obsessed with the short term and that doesn’t believe that business needs to care about the health of our society or our institutions. Doing so is the best way to ensure both businesses and our society prosper in the decades ahead. The Pandemic’s Challenges — and Opportunities Capitalism is one of the great inventions of the human race — an unparalleled source of prosperity, opportunity and innovation. We won’t solve the problems that we face without it. To solve inequality, we need good jobs — and lots of them. To solve climate change, we need (among other things) to transform the world’s energy, transportation, and agricultural systems. Only the relentless pressure of the free market can drive this kind of transformative innovation at scale. In this context, the pandemic is both a massive challenge and an opportunity. A challenge because more than a half a million people have died, the global economy has been massively disrupted, and tens of millions of people have lost their jobs. A challenge because the combination of deep economic disadvantage — at the beginning of May nearly 61% percent of Hispanic and 44% of Black households had experienced a job or wage loss due to the corona virus, for example, compared with 38% percent of whites — and the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breona Taylor and countless others have brought anger and calls for justice to our streets. The world will almost certainly be poorer, more divided, and more fearful in 2021 than it was in 2019. It’s an opportunity because it has also shown us so vividly what is wrong. Inequality is no longer simply an abstract idea. It’s a reality that many “essential” workers must show up even when they’re sick because they have no savings and no paid leave. That racism is not something that was solved by the civil rights movement. As the skies clear and early research suggests that the reduction in fossil fuel pollution is saving lives, the costs of continuing to rely on dirty energy have become much more tangible. Watching states bid against each other for vital medical equipment while the federal government fumbles its response to the virus has made the reality of our broken politics very clear. The pandemic has reminded us that we stand and fall as a society and that the welfare of the poorest among us is integral to everyone’s welfare. It has shown us that planning for the future is essential and that, when the chips are down, a capable, responsive government is a necessity, not a dirty word. We’ve learned that when we must do something, we can: Fundamental change no longer seems impossibly out of the reach. We can do better. We already have the resources and the knowledge we need to build a more equitable, sustainable capitalism. But to get there, business will have to change how it understands its role in the world (and in the U.S. in particular) — and how it thinks about government. A New Path Forward While free markets are an unparalleled source of prosperity and freedom, the free market can only take us where we need to go if externalities such as carbon pollution are properly priced, if there is genuine freedom of opportunity, and if the rules of the game are such that competition is free and fair. Markets do not police themselves; they must be balanced by transparent, capable, democratically accountable governments. Today — in large part due to the rise of shareholder primacy, the increasing role of money in politics, and the systematic attack on government as a necessary or effective institution — that balance is largely absent. As a result, one of the fastest routes to profitability is often to persuade politicians to write the rules in your favor. Firms feel free to dump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, for example, while spending hundreds of millions of dollars to lobby against carbon regulation. We’re even seeing this dynamic in the U.S. government’s response to the pandemic: It’s increasingly clear that an uncomfortably large share of the benefits from the recent stimulus has gone to very large firms and to very wealthy individuals. I’m not suggesting that firms neglect their duty to their shareholders. Focusing on profitability is essential if a company is to thrive in today’s brutally competitive market. But profit maximization has always been a means to an end, justified by the idea that when markets are genuinely free and fair, there’s good reason to believe they lead to both prosperity and freedom. But when markets are no longer held in check by governments that can police the rules of the game, appropriately control externalities, or provide the public goods necessary to support real opportunity, they become too powerful for their own good. The chaotic and uneven pandemic response we are experiencing today flows directly from 30 years of treating government as something that should be “drowned in the bathtub.” Now more than ever, I believe firms have not just a moral duty to contribute to the health of the institutions that keep our society strong and our capitalism genuinely free and genuinely fair, but also an economic interest in doing so. We need to rebuild our democracy, strengthen our public conversation so that it’s firmly based on facts and mutual respect, commit with everything we have to building an inclusive society for everyone, and yes, find ways to rediscover the importance of democratically accountable, capable, responsive government. Why? We cannot decarbonize the world’s energy supply without government regulating fossil fuel emissions and providing positive incentives to embrace low carbon solutions. Yes, individual firms can provide better jobs — paying employees a decent wage and providing ongoing training, among other necessary steps — but we’ll only successfully address inequality and racism at scale through structural reform, if we can do things like: provide quality education and health care to everyone, no matter their parents’ income; raise the minimum wage; and find ways to give employees more power as they negotiate with increasingly powerful firms. Most fundamentally, we’ll only rebuild trust in the political system, and with it a government that is genuinely responsive to ordinary people, if we can get money out of politics and stop tolerating business’s attacks on government. These attacks are often framed in terms of defending the free market, but too often are simply attempts to block the action we need to build a more equitable society. Collective action — a sustained effort by coalitions of firms — could make a huge difference in helping to drive this kind of institutional change. Firms are already working together to solve some of the world’s toughest problems. A third of the world’s invested capital is already committed to insisting that the firms in their portfolios plan for the challenge of climate change. Businesses across the world are increasingly coming to realize that democratically accountable, freely elected, capable governments are critical to long term economic health — and are willing to say so in public. But they need to do more. A “Kodak Moment” for the World I can feel your skepticism as I write. Can business really change — and help government change along with it? Can it embrace a version of capitalism that focuses on the longer term and the common good? Can it help to rebuild the power of the very institutions that are needed to keep it in check? I believe it can. We already know that it is possible to make money by addressing the world’s social and environmental problems. Walmart saved a billion dollars in fuel costs by increasing the efficiency of their trucking fleet. Elon Musk has revolutionized the automotive business and built a company worth more than GM and Ford combined in the process. The most successful $200M+ IPO of the last 20 years was a company that promised to replace beef with a burger made largely from soy. At Unilever, so called “purpose-driven” brands are growing 69% faster than the rest of the portfolio as consumers increasingly vote with their wallets. Change on a broader scale will be much harder. But not impossible. Think of this as a “Kodak moment” for the world. I spent the first 20 years of my career at MIT as a professor of innovation and strategy. For much of it I was quite literally the Eastman Kodak professor of management. My title was a coincidence — but a deeply ironic one, since I spent most of my time trying to understand why large, successful firms like Kodak had so much trouble responding effectively when the world around them changed. By now the company’s story is well-known: Kodak was once one of the world’s most successful firms. The firm invented classic film-based commercial photography and used it to build one of the world’s most iconic brands. As one senior vice president and director of Kodak research noted in a 1985 Wall Street Journal article, “We’re moving into an information-based company…[but] it’s very hard to find anything [with profit margins] like color photography that is legal.” But Kodak went bankrupt in 2012, having failed to master the transition to digital photography. The business community now faces a similar transition. As the Business Roundtable’s historic decision last year to “lead their companies for the benefits of all stakeholders” suggested, the vast majority of the world’s leading firms know that we must tackle the challenge of climate change, that we must find a way to ensure that everyone has a chance to share in the world’s wealth, and that it’s vital that we not let democracy lose out to either oligarchy or tyranny. We know that we need to change. But too often it’s tempting to emulate Kodak, claiming that change will come — but not now. Insisting that it’s more profitable to stick with the old ways, that if it’s really important we’ll get around to doing something new — later. Change is hard. It’s not surprising that we’re struggling to adopt new ways of thinking about the world and business’s role in it. But I am hopeful. Not optimistic, in the sense that I’m sure everything will work out just fine — I’m not sure of that at all. But hopeful. As a species, we have a gift for problem solving. Kodak failed to manage the digital transition, but Nikon, Canon and Fujifilm continue to be billion-dollar companies. Thousands of firms and millions of people are even now exploring ways to solve our common problems — for example, firms are partnering with each other and with governments to search for vaccines and to bring people back to work safely. This kind of cooperation must continue beyond the pandemic. As recent data shows, trust in business has fallen during the pandemic, but trust in government has risen dramatically. There is no better time for business to see government as a partner, not an adversary, in helping to make society work everyone — not just the lucky few. We can learn from the horrors of the pandemic. We must. We don’t need to go back to “normal” — we need to reimagine capitalism instead. We need to find a way to balance the energy of the free market with the power of competent, responsive government. Together, they can help us build a more just and sustainable world.

#### Abolition is consistent with non-reformist reforms like the aff and rejection of the aff makes the alternative worse at abolition

Berger, Kaba, and Stein 17 (Dan Berger is associate professor of comparative ethnic studies at the University of Washington at Bothell. Mariame Kaba is the founding director of Project NIA, a grassroots organization with a vision to end youth incarceration. David Stein is a lecturer in African-American studies and history at UCLA. “What Abolitionists Do” The Jacobin, 8/24/2017 https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/08/prison-abolition-reform-mass-incarceration)

To us, people with a combined several decades of experience in the prison abolition movement, abolition is both a lodestar and a practical necessity. Central to abolitionist work are the many fights for non-reformist reforms — those measures that reduce the power of an oppressive system while illuminating the system’s inability to solve the crises it creates. The late Rose Braz, a longtime staffer and member of Critical Resistance emphasized this point in a 2008 interview. “A prerequisite to seeking any social change is the naming of it,” she said. “In other words, even though the goal we seek may be far away, unless we name it and fight for it today, it will never come.” This is the starting point of abolition, connecting a radical critique of prisons and other forms of state violence with a broader transformative vision. These strategies and tactics harmonize with, inspire, and are inspired by many other left traditions. Socialists do not fight for trade unions in order to institutionalize capitalist social relations or build an aristocracy of labor. They do so in order to create durable structures that undermine the power of employers to exploit workers. And they do so with a radical humanist tradition in mind as well — to make actual people’s lives better, to overcome sexual harassment, to reduce workplace injuries, to build solidarity among workers, and, ideally, “to create the new world in the shell of the old.” Such an analysis is also reflected in abolitionist organizing. As Braz emphasized in another 2008 interview, “prisons and horrible conditions go hand in hand. Prisons . . . are about punishment, warehousing and control. The prison industrial complex (PIC) systematically undermines the very values and things we need to be healthy.” Rather than juxtapose the fight for better conditions against the demand for eradicating institutions of state violence, abolitionists navigate this divide. For the better part of fifty years, abolitionists have led and participated in campaigns that have fought to reduce state violence and maximize people’s collective wellbeing. Abolitionists have worked to end solitary confinement and the death penalty, stop the construction of new prisons, eradicate cash bail, organized to free people from prison, opposed the expansion of punishment through hate crime laws and surveillance, pushed for universal health care, and developed alternative modes of conflict resolution that do not rely on the criminal punishment system. Abolitionists refuse to abide the paradigm where “prisons [serve] as catchall solutions to social problems,” as Ruth Wilson Gilmore has put it. As a result, abolitionists have been among the most consistent advocates for creating conditions that improve people’s health, safety, and security.

#### Bray cites Bifo and is wrong about pretty much everything

Lack 19, Professor of Humanities @ Alamo College (Tony, Review of “The Second Coming,” <https://marxandphilosophy.org.uk/reviews/17192_the-second-coming-by-franco-bifo-berardi-reviewed-by-tony-lack/>)

Turning to a few criticisms, Berardi’s text is a loosely-woven collection of insights, many of which have appeared in previous publications. As such, it suffers from a coherent method and structure. Although his rhizomatic approach is suggestive and useful, he often falls back on conventional and unconvincing methods of analysis. He is especially fond of positing inverse relationships similar to those employed by Marx in The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, ‘The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces . . .the worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things.’

Berardi employs the same logic throughout the text, like an hourglass, one part of life fills up in proportion to the other part emptying out. ‘Technological potency has steadily expanded while social consciousness has decreased proportionately’ (12).

Berardi also tends to use anecdotes instead of evidence when it suits his purpose. For example, he claims that two factors responsible for our inability to interpret our way out of the labyrinthine system are sensory overload and a decline in the quality of education. ‘The expansion of the infosphere has forced the acceleration of the mental reaction to info-nervous stimulation. But the critical mind is unable to function in conditions of info-nervous saturation, while the rate of education and the quality of education have fallen and deteriorated’ (19).

Both of these assertions are problematic. Regarding sensory overload, which Berardi refers to as the inability of the ‘psychosphere’ to keep up with the ‘infosphere,’ humans have always been challenged by information rich environments. We adapt quite rapidly to large quantities of stimuli that remain constant in our environment and we learn quickly how to focus our attention on the essential aspects of a complex situation. However, as the demand for screening out information increases we do probably become less empathetic and sensitive, which is one of Berardi’s important points.

Rather than brute information overload, it seems more likely that part of the problem is total absorption. We are like fish who don’t recognize the water, and the water is the ubiquitous complexity of prepackaged social relations expanding in open-ended structures, paths, and networks. The system works so well because the overall feel is not constriction and limitation, but expansive freedom and endless novelty.

The other problem is that it is not clear that we are becoming dumber. This is a form of Golden-Age thinking. Berardi claims that, ‘Idiocy is spreading worldwide as a revolt against the mathematical rationality of financial plundering: a blackout of reason, as revenge does not listen to reason’ (5). Yet the data suggests otherwise. The global literacy rate has increased by 4% every 5 years for the past 65 years, increasing from 42% worldwide in 1960 to 86% in 2015.

On the other hand, if Berardi’s concern about the spread of ‘idiocy’ refers to racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of retrograde thinking, it is unlikely that this is a reaction to the unassailable machinations of the international financial system, as he claims. It seems more likely that our awareness of social injustices, as well as our capacity for empathy has increased, while the phenomena themselves have not become more widespread or barbaric.

Finally, Berardi’s fleeting comments about Taoism and Wu Wei, effortless action, are intriguing, given his description of a system that has no edges and no exterior. However, it is hard to tell what Berardi means because he often falls back on gnostic proclamations such as this when a clearer exposition is in order: ‘The secret is a content hidden from public view. You need the key that enables you to open the safe and you will know the hidden truth’ (100).

The Second Coming obviously refers to Yeats’ poem of the same title. Berardi’s apocalyptic tone and his refusal to offer so much as a glimpse of a better future might make us wonder what rough beast slouches toward us to be born, but that’s about it.

#### They link to all their Ks of rational communication—theorizing and asking for a ballot rely on the same underlying ideas and subjectivities

Friedrich 11—Department of Classics, Dalhousie University (Rainer, The Enlightenment Gone Mad (I) The Dismal Discourse of Postmodernism’s Grand Narratives, http://www.bu.edu/arion/the-enlightenment-gone-mad-i-the-dismal-discourse-of-postmodernisms-grand-narratives/)

Yet the sweeping proclamation of the death of all metanarratives is itself a totalizing metanarrative. It connotes all the postmodern death certificates, each of which is a grand récit in its own right. In their ensemble, they amount to postmodernism’s overarching metanarrative totally contesting Western civilization. In current philosophical parlance, this is known by the somewhat unwieldy term, performative self-refutation. Its ancestry reaches back to the notorious Cretan’s proposition that all Cretans are liars. Performative self-refutation occurs when an argument undercuts itself in the very act of its enunciation, by the form and means through which it is performed. In the attempt to abolish it, Lyotard’s postmodernism is itself practicing the discourse of the grand narrative.¶ Yet the grand narrative of the end of the metanarrative is not the only one of Lyotard’s grands récits. Libidinal Economy, the most Sadean of Lyotard’s books, offers the grand narrative of libidinous intensity as an ubiquitous universal force. Here the dismal science and the dismal discourse converge: “every political economy is libidinal.” Its totalizing Sadean mechanism is patent when dealing with the early industrial proletariat’s conditions of extreme misery, once described in all their horror in Friedrich Engels’ classic, The Condition of the Working Class in England. It translates this misery into erotic jouissance: the proletariat is alleged to have wished, willed, and desired the ruin of its health in the hell of mines, foundries, and factories, along with the disintegration of personal identity in anonymous slums, because it experienced all this as the gratification of masochistic desire. It was only when its libidinous intensity grew too strong and thus became unbearable, that the proletariat turned to revolt.22 Libidinal Economy amounts to a bizarre metaphysics of libido, a totalizing metanarrative involving emancipation: the liberation of Desire as the marginalized and suppressed Other.23¶ Yet this is not all. Confronted, after his verdict on grand narratives, with a triumphalist capitalism acting out its grand narrative of market-fundamentalism, Lyotard changed register. Capitalism’s triumph became part of a narrative he dubbed a “postmodern fable” (moralité).24 This tells the story of energy from the beginning of life on earth to the ineluctable disappearance of the solar system, and beyond. Spanning nine billion years of development, of which capitalism’s rise to an unrivaled global system is but a tiny subdivision, it grows into the grand narrative of entropy and negentropy. Negentropy denotes the force counteracting entropy through the organization of energy into ever more complex systems, ultimately enabling mankind, according to Lyotard, to “elude the catastrophe by abandoning its cosmic site, the solar system.” The catastrophe is entropy—“a tragedy about energy. Like Oedipus Rex, it ends badly. Like Oedipus at Colonus, it admits a final remission.”¶ Lyotard does his level best in trying to present his postmodern fable as a non-metanarrative. He insists that it is not a narrative of emancipation, for there is no human subject to be emancipated: “humans are an invention of development. The hero of the fable is not the human species, but energy.” The human species, in his fable, “is taken for a complex material system; consciousness, for an effect of language; and language, for a highly complex material system.” Humankind is presented as the effect of the development of energy: it will, if all goes well, develop into “the negentropic system” that will make possible “the final exodus . . . far from the Earth.” One discerns the usual suspects: postmodern anti-subjectivism asserting a process without a subject; postmodern anti-humanism reducing humanity to an effect of such a process, the outcome of which is not the rescue of an emancipated humankind, but “the rescue of a very differentiated system, a kind of super-brain”; and post-modernity’s linguistic-textualist ontology that turnsall andeverything into the effects of language. The fable’s lack of finality, the absence of a promise of,or the hope for, a “final perfection,”Lyotard claims, are proof that his postmodern fable is not a totalizing metanarrative.25 It ends with a Nietzschean flourish, echoing the amorality of Libidinous Economy: “the fable is unaware of good and evil.”¶ It’s a nice try, and a very elegant one at that, a far cry from the feverish rhetoric of Libidinal Economy. But Lyotard is protesting too much. Calling it a fable—that is, a petit récit—cannot conceal that its content is that of a grand récit, and one of emancipation to boot.26 For all the post-structuralist spin that Lyotard puts on his moralité of entropy and negentropy, the fact remains that it is the human brain—unmaking and remaking itself to strive for ever-increasing complexity—that becomes the motor and the agency of the process. In Lyotard’s grand narrative, the human brain may have originally been the effect of development; but once it has attained the capability of self-consciousness, self-reference, and self-critique, it takes charge of the process as its chief agent. In short, the Lyotardian fable of mankind’s escape from the doom of entropy surpasses in scope all known metanarratives as the grand narrative of human self-emancipation from its ties to a doomed earth. So much for his incredulity towards metanarratives!¶ As for performative self-refutation: at the height of his insouciance, Lyotard offers, as another definition of post-modernity, its ready acceptance of paradox coupled with disdain for coherence. “Post-modern science,” he says, “is theorizing its own evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, non-rectifiable and paradoxical”—with the consequence, it would seem, that one does not abjure reason and its principles with impunity, and that goofing and screw-ups are the price one pays. Thus postmodern discourses, when critically analyzed, emerge as pitted against themselves and become the opposite of what they claim to be.¶ The mother of all postmodern performative self-refutations, their archetype as it were, is found in deconstruction’s totalizing critique of logocentric reason. Jacques Derrida himself gives it its most pronounced expression:¶ The unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur of the order of reason . . . is that one cannot speak out against it except by being for it, that one can protest it only from within it; and within its domain, Reason leaves us only the recourse to stratagems and strategies. The revolution against reason . . . can be made only within it.27¶¶ In order to dismantle logocentric reason, deconstruction is bound to have recourse to—logocentric reason! It has to reason against reason. Thus Deconstruction remains inescapably trapped in the “unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur” of reason’s order; and it is to Derrida’s credit that he, unlike his fellow post-structuralists, is fully aware of it. To try to escape it, Derrida would have to resort, as he does elsewhere with other terms, to the procedure of putting “under erasure” (sous rature), i.e., of crossing through in the cited passage that which he is forced to use and practice, but aims to deconstruct: Reason. Crossing through, not crossing out: it could not be crossed out because reason, while being deconstructed, is nevertheless operative as the indispensable framework and vehicle of its deconstruction. But to no avail. This elegant sophistic trick of having it both ways, inherited from Heidegger,28 would simply highlight deconstruction’s fatal flaw: that it has to feed on, and is thus parasitically dependent on, what it endeavors to dismantle. Invisible erasures perforce accompany all operations of deconstruction, using the panoply of LOGOS (reason) to dislodge and dismantle logos and truth, and implicitly making truth-claims for deconstructive tenets. Thus, far from being able to demolish the logos, it confirms its ineluctability. Through its parasitic dependency on the very logos that it tries to deconstruct, Deconstruction deconstructs itself by revealing itself as a latent logocentrism.¶The same parasitic dependence on the object of their attempted destruction obtains in the Nietzschean and Heideggerian project of the “destruction of metaphysics” and its modern derivation, enlightenment reason. Here is Derridaon the Nietzschean and Heideggerian anti-metaphysical discourses:¶

[Derrida Quote Begins]

But all these discourses and all their analogues are trapped in a kind of circle. This circle is unique. It describes the form of the relation between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics. There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon—which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest.29¶

[Derrida Quote Ends]

Postmodernism’s wholesale critique of enlightenment reason, arising from these roots, faces a similar dilemma. It implicates itself in the most virulent performative self-refutation, as Habermas has demonstrated.30 In fact, the whole development from Nietzschevia decisionism to post-structuralism appears to be one colossal performative self-refutation. The postmodern enterprise of enlightenment-bashing from Nietzsche to Foucault and Derrida is predicated on the enlightenment (“the implicit postulation of precisely what it seeks to contest”). Or rather, the postmodern enterprise is itself enlightenment: what has started in Nietzsche’s critical thinking, and continues in the postmodern discourses, is the attempt to enlighten the enlightenment about itself and its perceived evils. The Nietzschean and postmodern critique of enlightenment reason is essentially the application of enlightenment reason’s own principle, critical reflection, to itself. Kant had done this, aiming at circumscribing the legitimate realm of pure reason; his critique was, in fact, reason’s self-critique, the only possible form of Vernunftkritik. But the totalizing nature of the Nietzschean and postmodern critique of enlightenment reason—critique of reason tout court—aiming, as it does (unlike the Kantian) not at its delimitation, but at its destruction, gives rise to nothing less than reason’s self-cannibalization—just like that of Appetite in Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida: “And Appetite, an universal wolf / (so doubly seconded by will and power) / must make perforce an universal prey / and last eat up himself.”31 This can only result in a dreadful irrationalism. It is this, in Stanley Rosen’s striking aphorism, that renders postmodernism “the enlightenment gone mad.”

#### Debate is politicizing ⁠— the attempt to engage overcomes alienation regardless of its success; the aff doesn’t deny flux

Lederman 14, PhD from the University of Haifa, Israel, teaches at The Open University of Israel (Shmuel Lederman, 2014, “Agonism and Deliberation in Arendt,” Constellations, Vol. 21, Issue 3, September 2014, pages. 327-337)

It is fairly obvious why Villa does not “recognize” this utopia. His “agonist” interpretation of Arendt excludes attributing special importance to citizens’ participation in government. Indeed, to his mind believing that Arendt offers us a possible recovery of action in fact involves a failure to take seriously Arendt's analysis of the modern world and the almost non-existent (according to Villa) prospects for action within it.92 This seems to be also the case for Sandra and Lewis Hinchman, who argue that Arendt's political ideal finally became the philosopher as a public figure, and not the citizen who speaks to his fellow citizens.93 For Arendt, however, participation in government, with its obvious “deliberative” elements (exchanging opinions, agreeing and acting with others), is essential to the experience of freedom itself. As I explained above, politics in its Arendtian sense grows out of the desire of individuals to appear in the public sphere, to claim their place in the common world. The space of appearance into which we enter when we take part in the public realm provides us with an opportunity for actualizing ourselves, our unique identity, which receives concreteness and intensiveness when it is disclosed to others. It also provides us with an actualization of the world itself: “For without a space of appearance and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality of one's self, of one's own identity, nor the reality of the surrounding world can be established beyond doubt […] this actualization resides and comes to pass in those activities that exist only in sheer actuality.”94 The same actualization of the self and the world, I would like to stress, is achieved by common speech, namely the exchange of opinions in light of the necessity to agree on joint decisions and actions. As was already pointed out, opinions reflect the place from which people see the world, their standpoint.95 When one exchanges one's opinions with fellow citizens, one makes explicit the way the world is seen from his or her particular standpoint in it,96 while discovering how the world is seen through the eyes of those others. This ability to see the world through the eyes of others is for Arendt the political insight par excellence.97 Through the exchange of opinions we achieve a[n] more complete understanding of the world, and what Curtis called “our sense of the real”98 becomes stronger and deeper, thereby reducing our alienation from the world. Seen from this perspective, to discuss things with others and to cooperate with them is essentially not at all different from appearing and trying to excel before them. These are aspects of the same activity, whose meaning is the overcoming of alienation, and the restoration—at least partially—of the sense of being “at home in the world.” In this sense, Arendt continues the fundamental realization common to both Heidegger and Jaspers, despite the differences between their philosophical projects: “‘man is, in Dasein, possible existence’ […] [he] achieves reality only to the extent that he acts out of his own freedom rooted in spontaneity.”99 Politics, Arendt suggests, is a central human sphere in which these human possibilities can be realized. The individuals acting and speaking in politics ultimately achieve neither interest, nor virtue nor some common good, but a new existential meaning. This does not mean that those individuals intentionally aim for this meaning when they act in the public sphere. Meanings for Arendt are the kinds of things that cannot be aimed at: instead we discover them while performing activities that are aimed at certain concrete goals. This is why when Entreves, for example, warns us against seeing Arendt's politics as an existential need, since such a need is concentrated on the self and not on the world,100 he misses, in my opinion, Arendt's intention. In all her descriptions of political action, the acting individuals seek to achieve specific goals, being concerned with whatever is taking place in their public sphere. But while acting for the world they discover that “acting is fun.”101 Arendt explains what she means by that when she relates to the student movement of the 1960s: “This generation discovered what the eighteen century called ‘public happiness’, which means that when man takes part in public life he opens up for himself a dimension of human experience that otherwise remains closed to him and that in some way constitute a part of complete ‘happiness.’”102 This dimension of human experience that opens up in action and speech is the existential meaning citizens can experience only in the public realm, that is, only when they participate in government.

#### State engagement is crucial for disability reform

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This is an emergency plea to those upset about a pending Trump presidency. I’d like to especially address intersectional feminists, radicals, anarchists, socialists and others in the USA who are able-bodied and drawn towards systems-level analysis and organizing for radical change. People with disabilities and chronic illnesses will die under a Trump presidency. Full stop. We will die because of him. This is an emergency situation and we need emergency solidarity, immediately, from every single one of you. Right now, many of us feel like you do not understand the horror of this situation. Social justice activists, why is ableism so often relegated to the periphery of your analysis? Many disabled people feel right now that they desperately need you and can’t find you. Maybe it’s the cultural lineage of eugenics and Social Darwinism which has created an ableist norm, a veil of neutrality over what is actually a system of domination. Maybe it has to do with an association between disability awareness campaigns and a vague sense of apolitical softness or even conservatism, as if caring about disability is not the job of radicals, but the job of celebrity doctors, colored ribbon campaigns, and concerned suburban moms. Or maybe it has something to do with a sense of not being personally affected by disability. You shouldn’t have to be personally affected by something to care about it, but if helps, here’s a reminder: Every single one of you could become disabled or chronically ill at the drop of a hat, and you’re going to be living under Trump, too. Donald Trump, in addition to being one of the most racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, classist, capitalist, all-around hateful and terrifying U.S. presidents in history, is also on track to be the most ableist president. His oft-stated goal of virtually dismantling Medicaid and Obamacare is perhaps the most brazen way in which he will boot-stomp and kill disabled and sick folks. (And this is not to mention other health care-related questions: What is going to happen to reproductive rights? What is going to happen to transfolk who use hormones?) But Trump’s nasty ableist ideology doesn’t end at health care. Trump has contributed to an ableist cultural psychology by openly mocking disabled people and he has been charged with consistent ADA violations in his business ventures. This includes cases so egregious that the Department of Justice had to get involved . Trump believes capitalists are “oppressed” by the imposition of the Americans with Disabilities Act and has repeatedly spoken of supporting legislation that would seriously limit the seminal act’s powers. Immediately addressing this emergency also requires immediately addressing ableism’s intersection with other oppressive systems. For example, black folks are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than whites and a full half of people killed by police are disabled. This means that Trump’s potential Department of Justice policies, which will leave police even more unaccountable and militarized than already are, will have drastic effects on disabled people in general, and disabled people of color in particular. Indeed, the disabled people who are most at risk for harm and death will be those already suffering other injustices. Many will be people of color and women who are already discriminated against in emergency rooms. Many will be immigrants and migrant workers. Many will be single mothers. Many will be LGBTQ folks. Many will be people who do not speak English, the US’s dominant language. Many will be Native Americans. Many will be severely disabled people needing total care and living in group homes, which are at risk of losing funding. Many will be disabled children in underfunded schools who risk losing their already minimal accommodations. Many will be people who are isolated, without friends or family. Almost all will be working class and poor. I care about the difference between radical and liberal U.S. politics, between politics as usual and actual systemic change. I care about the similarities between Republicans and Democrats and how capitalism, imperialism, sexism, racism, police states, and war have been fostered by both parties. I was even stubborn about supporting Bernie, a lesser of three evils candidate whose seriously problematic pro-war voting record left me deeply conflicted. But there is nothing more privileged than being able to comfortably intellectualize and debate about a Utopian future without having to worry about your physical or emotional survival in the present. Without having to wade through the resultant muck after systems of oppression pit your survival against your ethical purity. This is the first time in my life I have not voted third party. Significantly reduced risk to disabled people in the United States is but one way in which a Clinton presidency would have had immediate, physical, survival-level differences from a Trump one. And always, always, always the complications of ableism get exacerbated by elements like gender, race, class, immigration status, being a member of a persecuted religion, age, veteran status, and being LGBTQ. With Clinton and all of her profound flaws, we could have at least maintained a status quo and kept fighting from there. We could have at least minimized deaths of, and harm against, disabled people. Now we’re moving backwards and many disabled people are going to die. Full stop. So here we are. We have elected a textbook authoritarian. We are in uncharted waters, even for the USA. And right now, more than ever, if you are an ally, then you need to say the word “ableism.” Look at the reality of what Trump might do and say “that is ableist and horrifying.” Say “ableism” in the lists of oppressive “isms” you’ve been making lately in your articles, Tweets, posts, lesson plans, protest signs, and conversations. Look at the terrifying history of what other authoritarians have done to disabled people, then say “ableism” loudly, forcefully, whenever necessary, and mean it with all of your heart and mind. If you want to be an ally, if you want to stand in solidarity in any manner that could be considered feminist, intersectional, radical, or otherwise enlightened, it is required that you develop a sense of passionate injustice about ableism. Able-bodied people, I don’t know how to say it more clearly. This is a literal emergency, as in: Actual emergency rooms will be overflowing. As in: Death and levels of physical and psychological suffering you cannot comprehend. As in: Disabled people don’t historically fare well under authoritarian governments. You need to use whatever platforms you can access to raise awareness, organize, and make constant connections between ableism and its intersections with other injustices and political cruelties. If you have money, you need to donate to disability rights organizations, as well as organizations like the ACLU and Planned Parenthood. You need to write these articles so disabled and sick people don’t have to. You need to learn about issues like rampant physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse of disabled people. None of us can be free until all of us are free. So say “ableism” and mean it. We really, really need you. You need to learn about things like invisible disabilities, the obstacles that keep disabled folks from voting, the internalized ableism that makes disabled people hate themselves, and disabled people’s remarkable resistance movements. You need to teach yourself and others about the horrifying history, both in the U.S. and abroad, of human societies’ various attempts to kill and stomp disabled people into the ground. You need to do all kinds of things I can’t think of right now because I have Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome and PTSD and the stress of this election is making me physically ill. The bottom line: You need to act and be sneaky and crafty and smart and do the work. None of us can be free until all of us are free. So say “ableism” and mean it. We really, really need you.

#### A plethora of indicators demonstrate that catastrophic climate change can be averted. The momentum exists, but capitalizing on it is key.

Wallace-Wells 21, \*David Wallace-Wells is deputy editor of New York magazine, where he also writes frequently about climate change and the near future of science and technology; (January 18th, 2021, “After Alarmism”, https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/climate-change-after-pandemic.html)

The change is much bigger than the turnover of American leadership. By the time the Biden presidency finds its footing in a vaccinated world, the bounds of climate possibility will have been remade. Just a half-decade ago, it was widely believed that a “business as usual” emissions path would bring the planet four or five degrees of warming — enough to make large parts of Earth effectively uninhabitable. Now, thanks to the rapid death of coal, the revolution in the price of renewable energy, and a global climate politics forged by a generational awakening, the [expectation](https://climateactiontracker.org/global/temperatures/) is for about three degrees. Recent pledges [could bring us closer to two](https://climateactiontracker.org/publications/global-update-paris-agreement-turning-point/). All of these projections sketch a hazardous and unequal future, and all are clouded with uncertainties — about the climate system, about technology, about the dexterity and intensity of human response, about how inequitably the most punishing impacts will be distributed. Yet if each half-degree of warming marks an entirely different level of suffering, we appear to have shaved a few of them off our likeliest end stage in not much time at all.

The next half-degrees will be harder to shave off, and the most crucial increment — getting from two degrees to 1.5 — perhaps impossible, dashing the dream of avoiding what was long described as “catastrophic” change. But for a climate alarmist like me, seeing clearly the state of the planet’s future now requires a conspicuous kind of double vision, in which a guarded optimism seems perhaps as reasonable as panic. Given how long we’ve waited to move, what counts now as a best-case outcome remains grim. It also appears, miraculously, within reach.

In December, a month after Biden was elected promising to return the U.S. to the Paris agreement, the U.N. celebrated five years since the signing of those accords. They were five of the six hottest on record. (The sixth was 2015, the year the agreement was signed.) They were also the years with the highest levels of carbon output in the history of humanity — with emissions equivalent to what was produced by all human and industrial activity from the speciation of Homo sapiens to the start of World War II.

They have also been the five years in which the nations of the world — and cities and regions, individuals and institutions, corporations and central banks — have made the most ambitious pledges of future climate action. Most of them were made in the past 12 months, in the face of the pandemic. Or, perhaps, to some degree, because of it — because the pandemic demanded a full-body jolt to the global political economy, provoking much more aggressive government spending, a much more accommodating perspective on debt, and a much greater openness to large-scale actions and investments of the kind that might plausibly reshape the world. And because decarbonization has come to seem, even to those economists and policy-makers blinded for decades to the moral and humanitarian cases for reform, a rational investment. “When I think about climate change,” Biden is fond of saying, “the word I think of is jobs.”

There are two ways of looking at these seemingly contradictory sets of facts. The first is that the distance between what is being done and what needs to be done is only growing. This is the finding of, among others, the U.N.’s comprehensive [“Emissions Gap” report](https://www.unenvironment.org/emissions-gap-report-2020), issued in December, which found that staying below two degrees of warming would require a tripling of stated ambitions. To bring the planet in reach of the 1.5-degree target — favored by activists, most scientists, and really anyone reading their work with open eyes — would require a quintupling. It is also the perspective of Greta Thunberg, who has spent the pandemic year castigating global leaders for paying mere lip service to far-off decarbonization targets and who called the E.U.’s new net-zero emissions law “surrender.”

The second is that all of the relevant curves are bending — too slowly but nevertheless in the right direction. The International Energy Agency, a notoriously conservative forecaster, recently [called](https://www.carbonbrief.org/solar-is-now-cheapest-electricity-in-history-confirms-iea#:~:text=Source%3A%20IEA%20World%20Energy%20Outlook%202020.&text=Together%2C%20low%2Dcarbon%20sources%20would,up%20from%2019%25%20in%202019.) solar power “the cheapest electricity in history” and projected that India will build 86 percent less new coal power capacity than it thought just one year ago. Today, business as usual no longer means a fivefold increase of coal use this century, as was once expected. It means pretty rapid decarbonization, at least by the standards of history, in which hardly any has ever taken place before.

Both of these perspectives are true. The gap is real, and the world risks tumbling into it, subjecting much of the global South to unconscionable punishments all the way down. But in the months since the pandemic wiped climate strikers off the streets, their concerns have seeped into not just public-opinion surveys but parliaments and presidencies, trade deals and the advertising business, finance and insurance — in short, all the citadels presiding over the ancien régime of fossil capital.

This is not exactly a climate revolution; the strikers and their allies didn’t win in the way they wanted to, at least not yet. But they did win something. Environmental anxieties haven’t toppled neoliberalism. Instead, to an unprecedented degree, they infiltrated it. (Or perhaps they were appropriated by it. It’s an open question.) Climate change isn’t an issue just for die-hards anymore — it’s for normies, sellouts, and anyone with their finger in the wind. It will take time, of course, for voters to see empty rhetoric for what it is, and for consumers to learn to distinguish, say, between the claims of guiltless airline tickets, or between carbon-free foods in the supermarket aisle. Harder still will be sorting through the differences between real corporate commitments like Microsoft’s and more evasive ones, like BP’s. Already, there is considerable consternation among climate activists that the public doesn’t understand the tricky math of “net-zero” on which so many of these commitments have been made—it is not a promise of ending emissions, but of offsetting some amount of them, in the future, with “negative emissions,” sometimes called “carbon dioxide removal,” though no approach of that kind is ready to go at anything like the necessary scale. And while some amount of skepticism about those commitments is surely warranted, it is also the case that, according to [a recent Bloomberg review](https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-company-emissions-pledges/), of 187 corporate climate pledges made for 2020 in 2015, 138 will be met. (Many of those promises were quite modest, but it is a much better performance than has been managed by the 189 parties to the Paris agreement, of which only two — Morocco and Gambia — are today [judged](https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/) fully “compatible” with the 1.5-degree goal, and only six more with the 2-degree target).

In the political sphere, the uneasy alliance between activists and those in power will be tested, producing new conflicts, or new equilibria, or both. Consider, though, that Varshini Prakash, whose [Sunrise Movement](https://www.sunrisemovement.org/) gave Biden’s primary candidacy an F, later helped write his climate plan along with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Climate expertise has been distributed throughout the incoming administration, as was promised during a campaign that closed, remarkably, with a climate-focused advertising blitz. During the transition, Biden’s pick for director of the National Economic Council, Brian Deese, was targeted by the environmental left for his time with BlackRock, but even this purported stooge had been married by Bill McKibben, one of the godfathers of modern climate activism.

Elsewhere in the world, where 85 percent of global emissions are produced, the great infiltration of climate concerns represents what the British environmental [writer](https://www.businessgreen.com/blog-post/4025199/2020-crisis-crossroads-alternative-histories) James Murray has called “an alternative history to 2020” and what the scientist turned journalist Akshat Rathi [has declared](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-05/climate-action-is-embedding-into-how-the-world-works) “a strong sign that climate action is starting to be ‘institutionalized’ — that is, getting deeply embedded into how the world works.” This is not about coronavirus lockdowns producing emissions drops or “nature healing.” It is instead about long-standing trajectories passing obvious tipping points in coal use and political salience; promises and posturing by powerful if compromised institutions; and policy progress almost smuggled into place, all over the world, under cover of pandemic night. In the U.S., in the second coronavirus stimulus, [$35 billion in clean-energy spending](https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/12/what-is-in-covid-stimulus-omnibus-climate-pell-grants-medical-billing.html) passed in the Senate 92-6 — an effective down payment, energy researcher Varun Sivaram has estimated, on the innovation spending needed for a full electrification of the country. Did you even notice?

Biden’s climate plan now faces the challenge of a filibuster, a skeptical Supreme Court, and the mood of Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, which means American climate action over the next four years is probably more likely to be delivered piecemeal — through appropriations and stimulus, executive action, and regulation — than through a landmark Green New Deal–style piece of legislation. That does limit what can be achieved, but it also means avoiding a protracted battle over climate as a referendum on the identity of the nation. And at least nominally, having been pressured by activists to do so, Biden is promising to multiply the green spending in that recent stimulus by a factor of 60.

The numbers are numbingly large — reminders that in the midst of pandemic turmoil, the rules of state spending have been dramatically revised and perhaps even suspended. Is this global free-spending binge the beginning of a new era or merely a crisis interregnum to be followed by a new new austerity? “We don’t know what the recovery packages of COVID are going to be,” Christiana Figueres, one of the central architects of the Paris accords, told me this summer. “And honestly, the depth of decarbonization is going to largely depend on the characteristics of those recovery packages more than on anything else, because of their scale. We’re already at $12 trillion; we could go up to $20 trillion over the next 18 months. We have never seen — the world has never seen — $20 trillion go into the economy over such a short period of time. That is going to determine the logic, the structures, and certainly the carbon intensity of the global economy at least for a decade, if not more.”

For those dreaming of a climate recovery, the first round of spending was not so encouraging. The E.U. was the gold standard, promising that 30 percent of its stimulus would be earmarked for climate. The U.S. and China each pledged only a fraction of that (and in each case, there was fossil stimulus, too). But in October, a team of researchers including Joeri Rogelj of the Imperial College of London [calculated](https://www.reuters.com/article/climate-change-stimulus/tenth-of-pandemic-stimulus-spend-could-help-world-reach-climate-goals-study-idUSKBN271098) that just one-tenth of the COVID-19 stimulus spending already committed around the world, directed toward decarbonization during each of the next five years, would be sufficient to deliver the goals of the Paris agreement and stop global warming well below two degrees. That analysis may be a touch optimistic, but the level of spending seems, now, doable.

When Donald Trump was elected, trashing Paris, climate hawks were left hoping that the world would hang on for the length of his administration — insisting that, in the long term, the crisis couldn’t be solved without America at the helm. But the past four years of missing leadership have produced astonishing gains.

The price of solar energy has fallen ninefold over the past decade, as has the price of lithium batteries, critical to the growth of electric cars. The costs of utility-scale batteries, which could solve the “intermittency” (i.e., cloudy day) problem of renewables and help power whole cities in relatively short order, have fallen 70 percent since just 2015. Wind power is 40 percent cheaper than it was a decade ago, with offshore wind experiencing an even steeper decline. Overall, renewable energy is less expensive than dirty energy almost everywhere on the planet, and in many places it is simply cheaper to build new renewable capacity than to continue running the old fossil-fuel infrastructure. Oil demand and carbon emissions may both have peaked this year. Eighty percent of coal plants planned in Asia’s developing countries have been shelved.

This summer, I heard the Australian scientist and entrepreneur Saul Griffith talk about what it would take to get the U.S. within range of a 1.5 degree world. He said it would mean that beginning in 2021, this year, every single person buying a new car would have to be buying an electric one. That seems unrealistic, I thought, making a note of it as a useful benchmark illustrating just how far we have to go.

Then, in the fall, the U.K. pledged to ban nonelectrics by 2030—a once-unthinkable law coming both too slow and much more quickly than seemed possible not very long ago. Similar plans are now in place in 16 other countries, plus Massachusetts and California. Canada recently raised its tax on carbon sixfold. Italy cut its power-sector emissions 65 percent between 2012 and 2019, and Denmark is now aiming to reduce its overall emissions 70 percent by 2030. “We set ourselves challenges that on paper looked almost impossible,” the country’s minister for the environment, Dan Jørgensen, told me recently. “And I think experts in many countries said, when looking at Denmark, ‘This is going to be too expensive, this is going to lower their living standards, this is going to hurt their ability to compete.’ But actually I’m proud to say that the opposite has happened. Now, of course, we have set even higher standards.”

In the midst of the pandemic, new net-zero pledges, far more ambitious than those offered at Paris, were independently made by Japan, South Korea, the E.U., and, most significant, China, the world’s biggest emitter, which promised to reach an emissions peak by 2030 and get all the way to zero by 2060. China’s promise is so ambitious it has inspired one wave of debate among experts about whether it is even feasible — given that it would require, for instance, roughly twice as much renewable power to be installed every year for the next decade as Germany has operating nationwide today — and another debate about whether it has revived the possibility of that 1.5-degree target, with economic historian Adam Tooze writing, just after Xi Jinping’s surprise announcement in September, that it single-handedly “redefined the future prospects for humanity.” Together, the new net-zero pledges may have subtracted a full half-degree from ultimate warming. Add Biden’s campaign pledge of net zero by 2050, and you’ve got about two-thirds of global emissions at least nominally committed to firm, aggressive timelines to zero.

These are all just paper promises, of course, and the history of climate action is littered with the receipts of similar ones uncashed. Plot the growth of carbon concentration in the atmosphere against the sequence of climate-action conferences and a distressing pattern emerges: the World Meteorological Conference of 1979, the U.N. framework of 1992, the Kyoto protocol of 1997, the Copenhagen accord of 2009, and the 2015 Paris accords, all tracking an uninterrupted trajectory upward for carbon from a “safe” level under 350 parts per million, past 400, to 414 today, and pointing upward from there. Before the industrial revolution, humans had never known an atmosphere with even 300 parts per million. Inevitably now, within a few years, the concentration will reach levels not seen since 3.3 million years ago, when sea levels were 60 feet higher. For all their momentum, renewables still only make up 10 percent of global electricity production.

But alarmists have to take the good news where they find it. And while mood affiliation is not always the best guide to the state of the world, in 2020, for me, there were three main sources of hope.

The first is the fact that the age of climate denial is over thanks to extreme weather and the march of science and the historic labor of activists — climate strikers, Sunrise, Extinction Rebellion — whose success in raising alarm may have been so sudden that they brought an end to the age of climate Jeremiahs as well. Their voices now echo in some unlikely places. Exxon was booted from the S&P 500 within months of Tesla making Elon Musk the world’s richest man. The cultural cachet of oil companies is quickly approaching that of tobacco companies. Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil aside, practically every leader of every country and every major figure in every corporate and industrial sector now feels obligated — because of protest and social pressure, economic realities, and cultural expectation — to at least make a show of support for climate action. It would be nice not to have to count that as progress, but it is. The questions are: How much does it matter? And what will follow? Disinformation and human disregard are not the only instruments of delay, and the age of climate denial is likely to yield first not to an age of straightforward climate deliverance but to one characterized by climate hypocrisy, greenwashing, and gaslighting. But those things, ugly and maddening and even criminal as they are, have always been with us. It is the other thing that is new.

The second source of good news is the arrival on the global stage of climate self-interest. By this I don’t mean the profiteering logic of BlackRock, which opportunistically announced some half-hearted climate commitments last year, but rather the growing consensus in almost every part of the globe, and at almost every level of society and governance, that the world will be made better through decarbonization. A decade ago, many of the more ruthless capitalists to analyze that project deemed it too expensive to undertake. Today, it suddenly appears almost too good a deal to pass up. (A recent McKinsey [report](https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/sustainability/our-insights/how-the-european-union-could-achieve-net-zero-emissions-at-net-zero-cost): “Net-Zero Emissions at Net-Zero Cost.”)

The logic may be clearest in considering the effects of air pollution, which kills an estimated 9 million people per year. In India, where more than 8 percent of GDP is lost to pollution, poor air quality is also responsible for 350,000 miscarriages and stillbirths every year. Globally, coal kills one person for every thousand people it provides power to, and even in the U.S., with its enviably clean air, total decarbonization would be entirely paid for, Duke’s Drew Shindell [recently testified](https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2020/8/12/21361498/climate-change-air-pollution-us-india-china-deaths) before Congress, just through the public-health benefits of cutting out fossil fuels. You don’t even have to calculate any of the other returns — more jobs, cheaper energy, new infrastructure. Of course, countries all around the world are incorporating those considerations too, turning the page on a generation of economic analysis that said decarbonization was too costly and its benefits too small to sell to the public as upside.

A decade ago, capitalists deemed decarbonization too expensive. Suddenly, it appears too good a deal to pass up.

What is perhaps most striking about all the new climate pledges is not just that they were made in the absence of American leadership but that they were made outside the boundaries of the Paris framework. They are not the result of geopolitical strong-arming or “Kumbaya” consensus. They are, instead, plans arrived at internally, in some cases secretly. This has been eye-opening for the many skeptics who worried for decades about climate’s collective-action problem — who warned that because the benefits of decarbonization were distributed globally while the costs were concentrated locally, nations would move only if all of their peers did too. But a [recent paper](https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/full/10.1162/glep_a_00578) by Matto Mildenberger and Michaël Alkin suggests this shouldn’t be a surprise. In their retrospective analysis, they found that, despite much consternation about designing climate policy to prevent countries from “cheating,” there was basically no evidence of any country ever pulling back from mitigation efforts to take a free ride on the good-faith efforts of others. There was, in other words, no collective-action problem on climate after all. For a generation, the argument for climate action was made on a moral basis. That case has only grown stronger. And now there are other powerful, more mercenary arguments to offer.

The third cause for optimism is that, while the timelines to tolerably disruptive climate outcomes have already evaporated, the timelines to the next set of benchmarks is much more forgiving. This is why Glen Peters, the research director at the Cicero Center for International Climate Research, often jokes that while keeping warming below two degrees is very hard, perhaps even impossible, keeping it below 2.5 degrees now looks like a walk in the park.

This isn’t to say we’re on a glide path to safety. At current emissions levels, the planet will entirely exhaust the carbon budget for 1.5 degrees in just seven years — stay merely level, in other words, and we’ll burn through the possibility of a relatively comfortable endgame within the decade. We could buy ourselves a little more time by starting to move quickly, but not that much more. To decarbonize fast enough to give the planet a decent chance of hitting that 1.5-degree target without any negative emissions would require getting all the way to net-zero emissions by around 2035. Simply running the cars and furnaces and fossil-fuel infrastructure that already exists to its expected retirement date would push the world past 1.5 degrees—without a single new gasoline SUV hitting the road, or a single new oil-heated home being built, or a single new coal plant opened.

A two-degree target, by contrast, yields a much longer timeline, requiring the world to achieve net-zero by 2070 or 2080 — without even the help of negative emissions. We’d have to cut carbon production in half in about three decades, rather than one. That pathway will almost certainly prove harder than it looks. The good news is that we seem to be beginning, at least, to try.

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#### Fore-fronting the experience/successful of a marginalized population fails ⁠— use debate to build political opinions

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Imperial America, murderous America, the America that abused and robbed countries like Bolivia —that America was me. I too was a settler; my Black feet were stained red with blood as I stood on stolen indigenous land. I too benefitted from colonialism, capitalism, and the other facets of White supremacy. I could no longer simply point the finger at White people. My marginalized identity didn’t absolve me. I began to think systemically. I had to actually develop a **multidimensional worldview** and **take political stances that drew on more than my lived experiences**. When I returned to the United States and became involved in leftist politics, I soon realized that the political scene was, unfortunately, still stuck on personal identity.

WHAT IS IDENTITY POLITICS?

In this age of (misinterpreted) intersectionality, our politics tend to rely on the body. When we deal with race, White people embody White supremacy and privilege, while non-Whites are the corporal manifestation of resistance. We obsess over White privilege and how we can get more people of color involved in our spaces and projects, but does White supremacy really disappear when there are no White people in the room? Some people look at these flaws and call for an end to “identity politics”, but I think that’s a mistake. At its most basic level, identity politics merely means political activity that caters to the interests of a particular social group. In a certain sense, all politics are identity politics. However, it’s one thing to intentionally form a group around articulated interests; it’s another matter entirely when group membership is socially imposed. Personal identities are socially defined through a combination of systemic rewards/marginalization plus actual and/or potential violence. We can’t build politics from that foundation because these socially imposed identities don’t necessarily tell us anything about someone’s political interests. Successful identity politics requires shared interests, not shared personal identities. I’m not here to tell you that personal identity doesn’t matter; we rightfully point out that systemic power shapes people’s lives. Simply put, my message is that personal identity is not the only thing that matters. **We spend so much energy labeling people**—privileged/marginalized, oppressor/oppressed—that we often neglect to build spaces that **antagonize the systems that cause our collective trauma**.

All You Blacks Want All the Same Things

We assume that if a person is systemically marginalized, then they must have a vested interest in dismantling that system. Yet, that’s not always the case. Take Orville Lloyd Douglas, who last summer wrote an article in the Guardian in which he admitted that he hates being Black. I can honestly say I hate being a black male… I just don’t fit into a neat category of the stereotypical views people have of black men. I hate rap music, I hate most sports, and I like listening to rock music… I have nothing in common with the archetypes about the black male… I resent being compared to young black males (or young people of any race) who are lazy, not disciplined, or delinquent. Orville Lloyd Douglas, Why I Hate Being a Black Man As we can see from Douglas’ cry for help, membership in a marginalized group is no guarantee that a person can understand and effectively combat systemic oppression. Yet, we seem to treat all marginalized voices as equal, as if they are all insightful, as if there is no diversity of thought, as if—in the case of race– “All you Blacks want all the same things”. Shared identity does not equal shared interests. John Ridley, the Oscar-winning screenplay writer of 12 Years a Slave, is a good example. He’s written screenplays based on Jimi Hendrix, the L.A. riots, and other poignant moments and icons within Black history. He wants to see more Black people in Hollywood and he has a long history of successfully incorporating Black and Brown characters into comic book stories and franchises. However, in 2006, Ridley made waves with an essay in which he castigated Black people who did not live up to his standards; saying, “It’s time for ascended blacks to wish niggers good luck.” So I say this: It’s time for ascended blacks to wish niggers good luck. Just as whites may be concerned with the good of all citizens but don’t travel their days worrying specifically about the well-being of hillbillies from Appalachia, we need to send niggers on their way. We need to start extolling the most virtuous of ourselves. It is time to celebrate the New Black Americans—those who have sealed the Deal, who aren’t beholden to liberal indulgence any more than they are to the disdain of the hard Right. It is time to praise blacks who are merely undeniable in their individuality and exemplary in their levels of achievement. The Manifesto of Ascendancy for the Modern American Nigger While Ridley and I share cultural affinity, and we both want to see Black people doing well, shared cultural affinity and common identity are not enough– which recent history makes abundantly clear. Barack Obama continues to deport record numbers of Brown immigrants here at home, while mercilessly bombing Brown folks abroad. Don Lemon, speaking in support of Bill O’Reilly, said that racism would be lessened if Black people pulled up their pants and stopped littering. Last fall, 40% of Black U.S. Americans supported airstrikes against Syria. My skinfolk ain’t all kinfolk, and the Left needs to catch up.

NO MORE ALLIES

John Ridley, Barack Obama, myself, and Don Lemon are all Black males. We also have conflicting political positions and interests, but how can we decide which paths are valid if we only pay attention to personal identity? Instead of learning to recognize how the overarching systems maintain their power and then attacking those tools, we spend our energy finding an “other” to embody the systemic marginalization and legitimize our spaces and ideals. In some interracial spaces I feel like nothing more than an interchangeable token whose only purpose is to legitimize the politics of my White peers. If not me, then some other Black person would fill the slot. We use these “others” as authorities on various issues, and we use concepts like “privilege” to ensure that people stay in their lanes. People of color are the authorities on race, while LGBTQ people are the authorities on gender and sexuality, and so forth and so on. Yet, **experience is not** the same as **expertise, and privilege doesn’t automatically make you clueless**. As I’ve discussed, these groups are not oriented around a singular set of political ideals and practices. Furthermore, as we see in Andrea Smith’s work, **there are often competing interests within these groups**. We mistake essentialism for intersectionality as we look for the ideal subjects to embody the various forms of oppression; true intersectionality is a description of systemic power, not a call for diversity. **If we don’t develop any substantive analysis of systemic power, then it’s impossible to know what our interests are, and aligning** with one another according to shared interests **is out of the question**. In this climate all that remains is the ally, which requires no real knowledge or political effort, only the willingness to appear supportive of an “other”. We can’t build power that way. After having gathered to oppose organized White supremacy at the University of North Carolina, a group of organizers in Durham, North Carolina found that the Left’s emphasis on personal identity and allyship was a major reason why their efforts collapsed. They proposed that we adopt the practice of forming alliances rather than identifying allies. (h/t NinjaBikeSlut) Much of the discourse around being an ally seems to presume a relationship of one-sided support, with one person or group following another’s leadership. While there are certainly times where this makes sense, it is misleading to use the term ally to describe this relationship. In an alliance, the two parties support each other while maintaining their own self-determination and autonomy, and are bound together not by the relationship of leader and follower but by a shared goal. In other words, one cannot actually be the ally of a group or individual with whom one has no political affinity – and this means that one cannot be an ally to an entire demographic group, like people of color, who do not share a singular cohesive political or personal desire. The Divorce of Thought From Deed While it’s vital for me to learn the politics and history of marginalized experiences that differ from my own, listen to their voices, and respect their spaces and contributions — it’s also important for me to understand the ways in which these same systems have shaped my own identity/history as well. Since we know that oppression is **systemic** and **multidimensional**, then I’m going to have to step outside of personal experience and begin to develop political ideals and practices that **actually antagonize those systems**. I have to understand and articulate my interests, which will allow me to operate from a position of strength and form political alliances that advance those interests– interests which speak to issues beyond just my own immediate experience. Ultimately, I want to attack power, not people. In order to get there, the Left needs more identity politics, not less.