# 2AR

The 2NR was ethosy but did not do any technical work.

FW

#### [2] Ethical frameworks must be theoretically legitimate. All frameworks are functionally topicality interpretations of the word ought so they must theoretically justified. Prefer – ground – both debaters are guaranteed access to ground – Aff gets plans and advantages, while Neg gets disads and counterplans. News is also published in the lens of well being. Additionally, anything can function as an impact as long as an external benefit is articulated, so all your offense applies.

Extend Pummer that extinction outweighs every other impact. Pummer is makes a a very distinct modesty claim that extinction is a unique moral phenomenon that had to be prevented because it kills everyone and is irreversible, foreclosing the ability for future life. Any risk that extinction and well-being might matter is a reason you auto vote neg on the da because of moral uncertainty – we are unsure if the aff is the most moral thing and morality is continually changing and we are debating about it which means need to preserve life to continue discoursing it. That o/w everything else in this round, even if they win every single justification for why there is framework is true and every other one mine is wrong, our intuitions alone that dying is probably bad, and the fact that we are still debating what is moral is sufficient warranting that extinction comes first under any framing as a sort of impact filter.

AFF

**2 main framing issues on the NC – the Watts evidence and sonnemaker evidence. Sonnemaker is super important because it contextualizes how objectivity is defined by empirical verified truths that we then act on with policy. The Watts evidence is crucial on the method of the aff as one that is based on a 4-tier approach including data collection, mass collaboration, and polucy analysis specificically to pass policies.**

**o/w on rez applicability – The ev is literally from quote -** Objectivity and the Role of Journalism in Democratic Societies- which means its core def on the rez

2. they’re made in the context of policy which means in the context of passing climate and vaccine policy they o/w agains.

CASE XT

Objectivity in the squo causes polarization bc of media subjective media biaswhich tanks democracy and undermines elections - that’s the sands and kaplan analysis-this means intl modelling cant work in establishing democratic norms.

Climate Scenario 1 XT

#### We’re going fo them first climate scenario – democcracy is the largest holdback for cliamte wich uniquely functions on elections and suprioer tactics that they tank casas zamora is super good on this. Indepdently griffin and hewitt were conceded it means climate makes echo chambers that create climate misinfomation heres the impact analysis 1- results in massive policy failure as a pre-req for climate action on the link level and 2 – is the largest and most clear impact into extinction on magnitude – that’s the Kareiva ev.

Contention 1

1] Objectivity forces journalists to include a diverse array of sources, including perspectives from minorities

2] Uniqueness overwhelms the link - whether or not they are objective journalists are still racist which means negating does nothing

3] Objectivity doesn’t force journalists to deny minority perspectives - it just forces them to consider opposing perspectives

4] America is growing more and more diverse - journalists can’t ignore minority perspectives else they lose business

Contention 2

## Inherency

#### Objectivity is getting worse and that causes *polarization*, but it’s reversible

Sands 20 [Sands, John. "Americans Are Losing Faith In An Objective Media. A New Gallup/Knight Study Explores Why.". Knight Foundation, 2022, https://knightfoundation.org/articles/americans-are-losing-faith-in-an-objective-media-a-new-gallup-knight-study-explores-why/. Accessed 2 Mar 2022.] //chsKK/MM

1) Americans see increasing bias in the news media: One of the primary reasons Americans don’t think the media works for them is because of the bias they perceive in coverage. Many feel the media’s traditional roles, such as holding leaders accountable, is compromised by bias, with nearly 7 in 10 Americans (68%) who say they see too much bias in the reporting of news that is supposed to be objective as “a major problem,” up from 65% in the 2017 Knight/Gallup study. They see it in their own news sources (57%), and more than 6 in 10 are concerned about bias in the news other people are getting, the survey finds. Some 7 in 10 Americans worry that owners of media companies are influencing coverage. 2) Americans think the media is pushing an agenda. Eight in 10 Americans say that when they suspect an inaccuracy in a story, they worry it was intentional —because the reporter was misrepresenting the facts (52%) or making them up (28%). Only 18% say they think the inaccuracies were innocent mistakes. And when it comes to news sources they distrust, nearly three-quarters of Americans (or 74%) say those outlets are trying to persuade people to adopt a certain opinion. 3) Distrust in the media cuts along partisan lines: Views on the media vary widely by party, though overall, Americans view the media more negatively than positively. The breakdown: Nearly 7 in 10 Republicans (67%) have a very or somewhat unfavorable opinion of the news media, versus 1 in 5 Democrats (20%) and about half of independents (48%). 4) A majority of Americans say the media are under political attack – but are divided by party on whether it’s warranted: While people from all political persuasions agree that the media is being politically attacked, 66% of Democrats say those attacks are not justified, while 58% of Republicans say they are. 5) Opinions on the media also vary widely by age. Young Americans, for example, tend to have more negative views on the media. One in 5 American adults under 30 (20%) say they have a “very” or “somewhat” favorable opinion of the news media, versus almost half of those aged 65 and older (43%). 6) Americans blame the media for political divisions, but they also see the potential for the media to heal these divides. Forty-seven percent of Americans say the media bears “a great deal” of blame for political division in this country, and 36% say they bear “a moderate amount.” At the same time, 8 in 10 Americans believe the media can bring people together and heal the nation’s political divides.

## Adv: Modeling

#### Non-objective media quantitatively sways and undermines free elections

Kaplan et al 07 (DellaVigna, S., and E. Kaplan. “The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting.” The Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 122, no. 3, 2007, pp. 1187–1234., <https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.122.3.1187>. //chskk)

-this card lowk sucks find a better link card

Next, we come to the main analysis. We consider the impact of the entry of the Fox News Channel on the change in the Republican vote share between 1996 and 2000 at the town level, conditional on the control variables described. This strategy exploits the timing of the entry. By the November 1996 elections, the Fox News Channel had been launched in only a few markets; even in those markets, the launch was only one month before the elections. By the November 2000 elections, the channel had an audience that was smaller than, but nonetheless comparable to, that of CNN. We compare the change in Republican vote share between 1996 and 2000 for towns with the Fox News Channel in 2000 and towns without the channel in 2000, weighting for number of voters. This uses a standard differences-in-differences methodology in that it compares the change over time (fi rst difference) for the towns with the Fox News Channel versus 90 Stefano DellaVigna and Ethan Kaplan the towns without (second difference). This tests whether or not exposure to the channell, and more in general to politically biased media, leads to persuasion. The results are reported in Table 6.2, column one. Formally, we estimate the specifi cation as follows: vv d k R k R F k FOX ,2000 es ,1996 ,Pr ,Pres , − =+ + α β 2000 ΓXkgk + + η ε (4.1) where v v k R k R ,2000 es ,1996 ,Pr ,Pres − denotes the change in the two-party Republican vote sharebetween the year 1996 and the year 2000. The set of controls Xk includes town-level demographic variables from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census, as well as controls for features of the cable system in the town (number of channels provided and in the number of potential subscribers). In addition, the specifi cation includes a set of geographical fi xed effects hg, at the U.S. congressional district level in panel A and at the county level in panel B. The fi xed effects and the control help to ensure the comparability of towns with and without the Fox News Channel. In the specification with district fixed effects, we compare towns in the same congressional district, served by cable companies with similar features, and with similar demographics. In the specification with county fixed effects we make the same comparison for towns within a county. Geographic neighbors are more likely to be comparable, in particular, if they share similar demographics and cable system features. Our main finding is that the Fox News Channel had a significant impact on the 2000 elections. The entry increased the Republican vote share in presidential elections by 0.4 percentage points with district fi ed effects (panel A) or 0.7 percentage points with county fixed effects (panel B). The difference between the specifications with congressional district (panel A) and county fi xed effects (panel B) refl ect different geographic comparisons. In both specifi cations, the result is statistically signifi cant and robust to a variety of alternative specifi cations, alternative samples, and placebo specifi cations, documented in DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007). Column two in table 6.2 presents one such robustness check: We obtain very similar results if we control for the vote share in 1996, v k R ,1996 ,Pres , instead of taking the fi rst difference as in (4.1). Altogether, these results imply that exposure to the media shifted people’s voting in the direction of the media content. How large is this effect of the media? Since the Fox News Channel was available in 2000 in about 35 percent of households, the impact is estimated to be 0.15 to 0.2 percentage points, or approximately 200,000 votes nationwide. While this vote shift is small compared to the nationwide shift toward the Republicans of 3.5 percentage points between 1996 and 2000, it is still likely to have been decisive in the close 2000 presidential elections. Moreover, this impact may become larger over time as the channel’s audience and diffusion grow.

#### Flawed elections undermine international modeling and larger democratic norms

Annan et al. 12 Mr Kofi A. Annan (Former Secretary-General of the UN, and President of the Kofi Annan Foundation), H.E. Dr Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (Former President of Mexico, Frederick Iseman ‘74 Director, the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization), H.E. Mr Martti Ahtisaari (Former President of the Republic of Finland), Dr Madeleine K. Albright (Former US Secretary of State and Chairman of the National Democratic Institute (NDI)), Ms Louise Arbour (President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Crisis Group), Mr Vidar Helgesen (Secretary-General of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)), Dr Rima Khalaf Hunaidi (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA)), H.E. Dr Festus Mogae (Former President of Botswana), Professor Amartya Sen (Professor of Economics, Harvard University), Dr Javier Solana (Former Secretary General of the Council of the European Union), H.E. Prof Dr Vaira (Former President of the Republic of Latvia), H.E. Dr N. Hassan Wirajuda (Former Foreign Minister, and Member of the Council of Presidential Advisors of the Republic of Indonesia), September 2012, “ Deepening Democracy: A Strategy for Improving the Integrity of Elections Worldwide,” Global Comission on Elections, Democracy, & Security, <http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/7358~v~The_Report_Of_The_Global_Commission_on_Elections_Democracy___Security__septembre_2012_.pd>, SJBE

124. Democracy is a universal aspiration and a transnational norm. International support for elections with integrity— from citizens, civil society organizations, democratic governments, and regional and intergovernmental organizations—should be encouraged and welcomed. At the same time, international support for elections with integrity incurs responsibilities, including honouring the principle of local ownership, committing to build the local capacity and institutions necessary for democracy to be self-sustaining, and being transparent and accountable. Like international efforts at development and humanitarian action, supporters of democracy should strive to ‘Do No Harm’. For democratic governments to be effective in promoting the integrity of elections in other countries, they should ensure that their own elections are conducted with integrity. 125. Different types of international actors promote and protect electoral integrity globally. A non-exhaustive list includes transnational civil society organizations that help citizens mobilize for clean elections, help political parties to be effective and constructive political competitors, assist parliaments to be more effective in representing constituents, and empower women to have a greater voice and participation in electoral politics; international organizations that help organize and manage elections and attempt to build local capacity for elections with integrity; civil society organizations and intergovernmental organizations that observe elections; international and regional organizations that mediate electoral conflicts; and democratic governments that fund governments and civil society organizations to support democracy, and which occasionally engage diplomatically to promote and protect the integrity of elections. 126. The most controversial of these international actors are democratic governments. They are controversial because their support for genuine elections too frequently tends to be haphazard and compromised by competing national interests. While their rhetorical support for elections with integrity may be constant, their record of responding to flawed elections is not. In some cases, their interest lies in bolstering a preferred candidate, not in an election with integrity per se. Too often, democratic governments have turned a blind eye to electoral malpractice by regimes and incumbents with whom they have friendly relations. Extending back to the Cold War era, the historical record includes support for coups and interventions that undermined popularly elected governments. 127. We still live in a world in which states act on their strategic interests. The key lies in reminding democratic governments that their strategic interest is best served by supporting elections with integrity. Not only do democratic governments share an interest in the spread of democracy as a bulwark for international peace, but they must also learn that their bilateral relations are strengthened when their partners have democratic legitimacy earned through genuine elections. International Support for Democracy: Best Practice Begins at Home 128. One of the most important roles that democracies can play in helping to support elections with integrity elsewhere is to model best practice through their own electoral behaviour. Democracies that honour the integrity of elections provide compelling examples for others. When they are older democracies, which traditionally have been donors of international assistance, it provides evidence of sincerity and commitment: they walk the walk and don’t just talk the talk of elections with integrity. When they are younger, poorer democracies, they give lie to the myth that elections are a luxury that the poor cannot afford. 129. We are concerned when older democracies send harmful signals to the rest of the world regarding the integrity of elections. For example, in the USA, hundreds of millions of dollars spent on non-stop attack ads with little disclosure of who is responsible for funding is doing palpable damage to the USA’s democratic reputation. Such behaviour sends the message that anything goes with regard to political finance, and that moneyed interests are more important than elections with integrity. 130. In Europe, economic recession and the pressure of bad debt are putting democracy under great strain. The politics of spending cuts and budget austerity, whatever their merit, are difficult for all modes of governance, democracy included, but it is striking how quickly European leaders have fallen into a technocratic trap, believing that public legitimacy is not needed to make and implement difficult economic decisions. When the European Union (EU) tells elected politicians that they have no choice but to implement radical austerity measures, it tells the people of those countries that they can ‘choose governments but not policies’.64 When leaders in older democracies appear to fear their own voters, it sends a chilling message to the rest of the world about basic confidence in democratic practice. International Engagement with Flawed Elections 131. Egregiously flawed elections undermine all of the goals to which democracies and international organizations aspire. Electoral violence undermines basic security and human rights. Political instability undermines economic confidence and contributes to capital flight. When elections lack domestic legitimacy, the likelihood of political violence increases. Political violence is often perpetrated by those seeking to hold on to power by suppressing opposition support in the lead-up to polls, though it can break out on a large scale when election results themselves are not accepted as credible, and when the aggrieved sides seek to overturn the official outcome.

#### Subjective journalism creates echo chambers which spread climate misinformation across the electorate

Hewitt 21 ("Media Coverage Of Climate Change Is Improving. But That Alone Won't Stamp Out Disinformation". Wbur.Org, 2022, https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2021/07/02/heat-political-bias-in-climate-coverage-frederick-hewett. Accessed 3 Mar 2022. //chskk)

But delving deeper into YPCCC’s data reveals that acceptance of climate change is not growing equally across the political spectrum. Republicans are actually a bit less likely to believe human activities cause climate change today than in 2008, while the fraction of Democrats accepting human causation has increased substantially over the same period. That divide along party lines calls into question the ability of media coverage to influence opinion about climate change. Tucker Carlson’s program on Fox News, the most-watched “news” program on cable, recently featured a guest who professed that climate change is just a fabrication of the liberal media. Overt climate change denial is also pervasive in the comment threads of Fox’s weather-related stories. Meanwhile, left-leaning networks like MSNBC regularly run segments on the seriousness of the climate crisis. But do the media drive beliefs about climate change, or do they merely align their content with the prevailing political views of their audience? The cause and effect relationship between media coverage of climate change and what people believe about it has been the subject of academic study. One paper published in the journal Climatic Change in 2014 concluded that “partisan media tends to reinforce and solidify the pre-existing worldviews of audience members who share the partisan slant of the media outlet.” What that research is describing is more commonly known as an echo chamber. Rather than thinking about a causal relationship between media coverage of extreme weather and public views on climate change, it’s more helpful to think in terms of positive feedback loops that tend to amplify political polarization. Social media platforms throw gasoline on that fire by ensuring that readers only see content that conforms to their beliefs. Another study by the same authors determined that political biases once again neutralize the information content of news items about new findings in climate science. Conservative media outlets have conditioned their audiences to distrust climate scientists who present evidence supporting the widely-shared consensus on global warming. Unfortunately, this manufactured prejudice works against the recently maturing ability of scientists to quantitatively assess the degree to which climate disruption increases the probability and severity of particular extreme weather events.

#### A misinformed electorate results in policy failure- objectivity is a prerequisite to climate solutions.

Griffin 05 Griffin, John (Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder) and Brian Newman. "Are voters better represented?" The Journal of Politics 67.4 (2005): 1206-1227.

These results provide empirical support for the common claim that government represents voters more than nonvoters. To recapitulate, we found substantial evidence that even though Senators may not know with certainty who votes and what their preferences are, their patterns of roll-call voting respond to voters’ opinions, but not to nonvoters’ opinions. We also showed that Senators’ better representation of voters is not simply a reflection of voters’ greater attention to Senators’ decisions or their identification with their Senator’s political party. Finally, we uncovered suggestive evidence that this link between voters and Senators results from voters’ selection of relatively like-minded representatives, their greater rates of communicating preferences via other forms of participation, and Senators’ desire for reelection. Thus, Senators may be more responsive to voters’ preferences both because they purposely focus on voters and due to indirect influences operating even when Senators do not know who voters are and what they want. However, we do not claim we have entirely explained this phenomenon. More research is required to specify the precise mechanisms by which voters’ preferences become advantaged in governmental decision making.21 Although our analyses cannot fully explain the processes by which voters are better represented, they point strongly toward the conclusion that Senators do in fact respond more to voters’ preferences than nonvoters’. This finding has important implications for our understanding of American politics and raises significant normative issues. On the explanatory side, our study points to three underappreciated features of the participation-representation link in American politics. First, these analyses advance existing evidence that government rewards those who vote (e.g., Bullock 1981; Hill and Leighley 1992; Keech 1968; Martin 2003). As many have assumed, those segments of the public that do not vote appear, as a group, to have little influence on legislators’ roll-call voting, opening the path to biases in legislator behavior and ultimately public policy. Where previous studies generally analyze policy outcomes, our focus on roll-call voting explores another aspect of representation, looking at an important feature of the policymaking process. Our examination of legislators’ behavior and three possible links between participation and representation moves us a step closer to comprehending the paths from political participation to government action. Understanding those paths ultimately may point to ways of encouraging more equal representation. Next, we found that representational biases cut in a conservative direction. Voters are more conservative than nonvoters, and voters are better represented by elected officials. Contrary to the conclusions of national-level analyses (e.g., Bennett and Resnick 1990; Highton and Wolfinger 2001), our results based on state-level differences between voters and nonvoters suggest that increases in turnout may lead to greater policy liberalism.

DATA/METHOD FOR ABOVE

Griffin, John (Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder) and Brian Newman. "Are voters better represented?" The Journal of Politics 67.4 (2005): 1206-1227.

Data and Method We model Senators’ roll-call behavior as a function of voter opinion, nonvoter opinion, and Senator partisanship. We use state-level opinions as measured in the General Social Survey (GSS) from 1974 to 2002 to model Senators’ roll-call behavior over the same period (93rd to 107th Congresses). If Senators respond more to voter opinion, coefficients for voter opinion should exceed those for nonvoter opinion. We also control for Senators’ partisanship, which gives us a sense of how responsive Senators are to voters over and above the partisan electoral consequences of participatory inequalities. Beyond electing Republicans or Democrats, do voters’ preferences have a greater effect on Senator roll-call decisions? Dependent Variable We measure the aggregate voting behavior of Senators using DW-NOMINATE coordinates, which range continuously from -1 to 1 (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 1997).3 Studies of congressional roll-call voting have frequently employed these and alternative versions of NOMINATE scores as dependent variables (e.g., Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Jenkins 1999). As a practical matter, NOMINATE coordinates are highly correlated with alternative, summary measures of legislator roll-call behavior such as interest group ratings and HeckmanSnyder scores (Burden, Caldeira, and Groseclose 2000). Explanatory Variables and Controls We model these scores as a function of voters’ and nonvoters’ general political ideologies and Senators’ party affiliations, using an indicator for Republican affiliation. Finding measures of constituency opinion is a difficult task for studies of representation (see e.g., Achen 1978; Erikson 1978). These studies require reliable and valid measures of district- or state-level opinion, and such measures are hard to come by for two reasons now familiar to representation scholars. First, most national surveys sample far too few respondents in most states to render reliable measures of state opinion. Second, most national surveys are designed to draw samples representative of the nation, rather than states. As a result, estimates of state-level preferences drawn from national surveys are plagued with measurement error, attenuating estimated relationships between constituency opinion and legislator behavior (Achen 1978; Erikson 1978). The National Election Studies’ 1988–92 Senate Election Study (SES) was designed to overcome these difficulties by providing relatively large samples drawn to be representative of states (the three waves provide average state samples of 185 respondents). Although these studies have proven a rich source for representation studies (e.g., Erikson 1990), the state samples fall short of the extra demands of our study. Reliability coefficients (Jones and Norrander 1996) suggest that these samples provide reasonably reliable estimates of state-level ideology for voters (r = .74), but not for nonvoters (r < .50).4 Although analyses with the SES data generated results similar to those we report below, we searched for more reliable measures. In the absence of single surveys that draw reliable state-level samples, one strategy is to pool samples over time. Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993, hereafter EWM) adopted this approach, pooling New York Times/CBS surveys from 1976 to 1988 for measures of state ideology and partisanship These pooled samples provide reliable, stable, and valid measures of state ideology. Unfortunately, most of the surveys they used did not ask whether respondents voted, so we cannot use their data to test whether voters are better represented. We adopted their approach, however, and pooled the GSS over time. The GSS provides estimates of state voter and nonvoter opinion in 44 states.5 Pooling over time generates state-level samples averaging 829 respondents.6 To measure Voter Ideology and Nonvoter Ideology, we took the mean ideological self-placement of a state’s voters (those who reported having turned out in the most recent presidential election) and nonvoters (see the appendix for question wording). Although this approach dilutes the sample size in each state to an average of 539 voters and 290 nonvoters, the samples remain much larger than those used in previous studies of representation.7 The GSS measures prove reasonably reliable, stable, and valid. Although the GSS does not draw state-level samples, Brace et al. (2002) found that its state samples correspond with state population characteristics and produce highly reliable measures of state opinion. In fact, reliability coefficients for voter ideology and nonvoter ideology are .88 and .63, respectively. Since the estimated relationship between unreliable measures and the dependent variable will be attenuated and the measure of nonvoter ideology is less reliable, evidence that Senators respond more to voters may be the result of measurement error. To be sure measurement error is not driving our results, we give nonvoter ideology an advantage, explicitly accounting for its error wherever possible in our models, but assuming that voter ideology is perfectly measured.8 If voter ideology continues to be more closely related to Senators’ voting behavior, we can be reasonably sure that Senators really are more responsive to voters.

#### Democracy *solves* climate change but we need an *increase* in pace of action

Casas-Zamora 21 [Dr. Kevin Casas-Zamora is the Secretary-General of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), with over 25 years of experience in democratic governance as a researcher, analyst, educator, consultant and public official. Here he discusses the role that democracy plays in mitigating climate change. 06/29/2021 Why democracy is the key ingredient to battling climate change” <https://www.euronews.com/green/2021/06/29/why-democracy-is-the-key-ingredient-to-battling-climate-change> ] //aaditg

The recent court rulings tell us a lot, not just about the powerful assets that democracy can deploy in the struggle against climate change, but also the long-term robustness of the case for democracy as a political system. Democracies are under pressure from populism, disinformation, inequality and voter frustration, according to the Global State of Democracy report from the intergovernmental organisation International (IDEA). They are also afflicted by a crisis of self-confidence. Fairly or not, the current pandemic has helped cement a narrative portraying liberal democracies as lumbering and too divided to cope with big challenges, while extolling the presumed ability of authoritarian systems to act decisively. Andre Penner/AP2011 Deforestation in the Brazilian AmazonAndre Penner/AP2011 ‘Extremists and populists on the rise’: Why the EU needs a green prosecutor What are the vices to democracy? This narrative is not concocted out of thin air. Democracies do suffer from vices when it comes to slow-burning crises like global warming. Voters and politicians have short attention spans. Balances of power mean reforms can be held hostage to obstinate US Senators or oil lobbyists. Science can play second fiddle to voters if it entails higher taxes - France’s yellow vest protests, sparked by fuel price rises, are a case in point. And yet, despite all this, the facts are clear - 9 out of the 10 top performers in the 2021 Climate Change Performance Index are democracies. Sweden tops the list of 57 countries. China is 30th. The reasons for this are not hard to fathom. Democracies allow for the free flow of information that enables policy makers to debate and find solutions, and for civil society to mobilise. It is no coincidence that youth campaigner Greta Thunberg helped spark a global movement from a lone street demonstration in Sweden, one of the world’s top performing democracies. It is no coincidence that youth campaigner Greta Thunberg helped spark a global movement from a lone street demonstration in Sweden, one of the world’s top performing democracies. Democracies are more effective against climate change for the same reasons that they don’t experience famines, as Nobel Laureate Indian economist Amartya Sen suggested long ago - because in allowing freedom of expression, a vibrant civil society, regular elections and the workings of checks and balances, they increase the likelihood that crises will be met and destructive policies corrected. Democracy is not simply elections - it is the often chaotic workings of myriad institutions and groups as well as a culture of open debate, where climate reform is nudged along by courts, free media, parliaments, and public protests. Democracy’s most powerful weapon against the challenges of this century is its ability to self-correct. And then there is the capacity of democratic systems to forge the social consensus required for long-term transformations to be sustainable. We know this story - participatory decision-making may be slower than executive decrees, but almost always yields outcomes that are more legitimate and accepted by society, and hence more durable. Canva Democracy is a key ingredient to fighting climate changeCanva This is vital for climate change. Decarbonisation is not something governments do by fiat, though act they must - it is something societies as a whole must do by conviction. Consumer habits will need to change, from reducing air travel to adjusting diets. Trillions of dollars will have to be invested in transforming the sources of energy that fuel economies. New social contracts will have to be devised so that the burden of these fiscal bills can be equitably shared. There is no guarantee that democracies will succeed in building the consensus needed to save our species, but their odds are better than those of any other political arrangement. Could decarbonising our cities be the answer to climate change? Kids are disappointed in grownups’ ‘un-green’ ways: Here are their plans for a cleaner future Democratic governance could slow down climate change This is, however, the key question – while it is clear that the attributes of democracy are potentially superior to deal with climate change, it is much less clear that they will be actually deployed with the celerity required. This is, precisely, what courts are doing in Germany and elsewhere - they are moving forward the deadlines that political systems and societies must meet if our species is to avoid disaster. Those deadlines are tight – a few decades, at most. But courts alone won’t do the trick. Democratic governments, parliaments, and political leaders must also dramatically increase the pace of their actions.

This is why it is so vital to connect the discussion of climate change with debates on the quality of democratic governance. We must distill, disseminate, and design the institutions and practices that are more likely to allow democracies to build consensus, distribute burdens and make decisions effectively to meet the climate crisis. Experimenting with new forms of political deliberation, like citizens’ assemblies, enlarging the representation of young people by lowering the voting age and adopting some of the bargaining practices between industries, workers and governments that have been so instrumental in building consensus in Northern Europe - this is the stuff democratic governance agendas should be made of in the climate crisis era.

#### Warming causes extinction

Peter Kareiva 18 (Ph.D. in ecology and applied mathematics from Cornell University, director of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA, Pritzker Distinguished Professor in Environment & Sustainability at UCLA, et al., September 2018, “Existential risk due to ecosystem collapse: Nature strikes back,” Futures, Vol. 102, p. 39-50//recut chskk)

In summary, six of the nine proposed planetary boundaries (phosphorous, nitrogen, biodiversity, land use, atmospheric aerosol loading, and chemical pollution) are unlikely to be associated with existential risks. They all correspond to a degraded environment, but in our assessment do not represent existential risks. However, the three remaining boundaries (climate change, global freshwater cycle, and ocean acidification) do pose existential risks. This is because of intrinsic positive feedback loops, substantial lag times between system change and experiencing the consequences of that change, and the fact these different boundaries interact with one another in ways that yield surprises. In addition, climate, freshwater, and ocean acidification are all directly connected to the provision of food and water, and shortages of food and water can create conflict and social unrest. Climate change has a long history of disrupting civilizations and sometimes precipitating the collapse of cultures or mass emigrations (McMichael, 2017). For example, the 12th century drought in the North American Southwest is held responsible for the collapse of the Anasazi pueblo culture. More recently, the infamous potato famine of 1846–1849 and the large migration of Irish to the U.S. can be traced to a combination of factors, one of which was climate. Specifically, 1846 was an unusually warm and moist year in Ireland, providing the climatic conditions favorable to the fungus that caused the potato blight. As is so often the case, poor government had a role as well—as the British government forbade the import of grains from outside Britain (imports that could have helped to redress the ravaged potato yields). Climate change intersects with freshwater resources because it is expected to exacerbate drought and water scarcity, as well as flooding. Climate change can even impair water quality because it is associated with heavy rains that overwhelm sewage treatment facilities, or because it results in higher concentrations of pollutants in groundwater as a result of enhanced evaporation and reduced groundwater recharge. Ample clean water is not a luxury—it is essential for human survival. Consequently, cities, regions and nations that lack clean freshwater are vulnerable to social disruption and disease. Finally, ocean acidification is linked to climate change because it is driven by CO2 emissions just as global warming is. With close to 20% of the world’s protein coming from oceans (FAO, 2016), the potential for severe impacts due to acidification is obvious. Less obvious, but perhaps more insidious, is the interaction between climate change and the loss of oyster and coral reefs due to acidification. Acidification is known to interfere with oyster reef building and coral reefs. Climate change also increases storm frequency and severity. Coral reefs and oyster reefs provide protection from storm surge because they reduce wave energy (Spalding et al., 2014). If these reefs are lost due to acidification at the same time as storms become more severe and sea level rises, coastal communities will be exposed to unprecedented storm surge—and may be ravaged by recurrent storms. A key feature of the risk associated with climate change is that mean annual temperature and mean annual rainfall are not the variables of interest. Rather it is extreme episodic events that place nations and entire regions of the world at risk. These extreme events are by definition “rare” (once every hundred years), and changes in their likelihood are challenging to detect because of their rarity, but are exactly the manifestations of climate change that we must get better at anticipating (Diffenbaugh et al., 2017). Society will have a hard time responding to shorter intervals between rare extreme events because in the lifespan of an individual human, a person might experience as few as two or three extreme events. How likely is it that you would notice a change in the interval between events that are separated by decades, especially given that the interval is not regular but varies stochastically? A concrete example of this dilemma can be found in the past and expected future changes in storm-related flooding of New York City. The highly disruptive flooding of New York City associated with Hurricane Sandy represented a flood height that occurred once every 500 years in the 18th century, and that occurs now once every 25 years, but is expected to occur once every 5 years by 2050 (Garner et al., 2017). This change in frequency of extreme floods has profound implications for the measures New York City should take to protect its infrastructure and its population, yet because of the stochastic nature of such events, this shift in flood frequency is an elevated risk that will go unnoticed by most people. 4. The combination of positive feedback loops and societal inertia is fertile ground for global environmental catastrophes Humans are remarkably ingenious, and have adapted to crises throughout their history. Our doom has been repeatedly predicted, only to be averted by innovation (Ridley, 2011). However, the many stories of human ingenuity successfully addressing existential risks such as global famine or extreme air pollution represent environmental challenges that are largely linear, have immediate consequences, and operate without positive feedbacks. For example, the fact that food is in short supply does not increase the rate at which humans consume food—thereby increasing the shortage. Similarly, massive air pollution episodes such as the London fog of 1952 that killed 12,000 people did not make future air pollution events more likely. In fact it was just the opposite—the London fog sent such a clear message that Britain quickly enacted pollution control measures (Stradling, 2016). Food shortages, air pollution, water pollution, etc. send immediate signals to society of harm, which then trigger a negative feedback of society seeking to reduce the harm. In contrast, today’s great environmental crisis of climate change may cause some harm but there are generally long time delays between rising CO2 concentrations and damage to humans. The consequence of these delays are an absence of urgency; thus although 70% of Americans believe global warming is happening, only 40% think it will harm them (http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2016/). Secondly, unlike past environmental challenges, the Earth’s climate system is rife with positive feedback loops. In particular, as CO2 increases and the climate warms, that very warming can cause more CO2 release which further increases global warming, and then more CO2, and so on. Table 2 summarizes the best documented positive feedback loops for the Earth’s climate system. These feedbacks can be neatly categorized into carbon cycle, biogeochemical, biogeophysical, cloud, ice-albedo, and water vapor feedbacks. As important as it is to understand these feedbacks individually, it is even more essential to study the interactive nature of these feedbacks. Modeling studies show that when interactions among feedback loops are included, uncertainty increases dramatically and there is a heightened potential for perturbations to be magnified (e.g., Cox, Betts, Jones, Spall, & Totterdell, 2000; Hajima, Tachiiri, Ito, & Kawamiya, 2014; Knutti & Rugenstein, 2015; Rosenfeld, Sherwood, Wood, & Donner, 2014). This produces a wide range of future scenarios. Positive feedbacks in the carbon cycle involves the enhancement of future carbon contributions to the atmosphere due to some initial increase in atmospheric CO2. This happens because as CO2 accumulates, it reduces the efficiency in which oceans and terrestrial ecosystems sequester carbon, which in return feeds back to exacerbate climate change (Friedlingstein et al., 2001). Warming can also increase the rate at which organic matter decays and carbon is released into the atmosphere, thereby causing more warming (Melillo et al., 2017). Increases in food shortages and lack of water is also of major concern when biogeophysical feedback mechanisms perpetuate drought conditions. The underlying mechanism here is that losses in vegetation increases the surface albedo, which suppresses rainfall, and thus enhances future vegetation loss and more suppression of rainfall—thereby initiating or prolonging a drought (Chamey, Stone, & Quirk, 1975). To top it off, overgrazing depletes the soil, leading to augmented vegetation loss (Anderies, Janssen, & Walker, 2002). Climate change often also increases the risk of forest fires, as a result of higher temperatures and persistent drought conditions. The expectation is that forest fires will become more frequent and severe with climate warming and drought (Scholze, Knorr, Arnell, & Prentice, 2006), a trend for which we have already seen evidence (Allen et al., 2010). Tragically, the increased severity and risk of Southern California wildfires recently predicted by climate scientists (Jin et al., 2015), was realized in December 2017, with the largest fire in the history of California (the “Thomas fire” that burned 282,000 acres, https://www.vox.com/2017/12/27/16822180/thomas-fire-california-largest-wildfire). This catastrophic fire embodies the sorts of positive feedbacks and interacting factors that could catch humanity off-guard and produce a true apocalyptic event. Record-breaking rains produced an extraordinary flush of new vegetation, that then dried out as record heat waves and dry conditions took hold, coupled with stronger than normal winds, and ignition. Of course the record-fire released CO2 into the atmosphere, thereby contributing to future warming. Out of all types of feedbacks, water vapor and the ice-albedo feedbacks are the most clearly understood mechanisms. Losses in reflective snow and ice cover drive up surface temperatures, leading to even more melting of snow and ice cover—this is known as the ice-albedo feedback (Curry, Schramm, & Ebert, 1995). As snow and ice continue to melt at a more rapid pace, millions of people may be displaced by flooding risks as a consequence of sea level rise near coastal communities (Biermann & Boas, 2010; Myers, 2002; Nicholls et al., 2011). The water vapor feedback operates when warmer atmospheric conditions strengthen the saturation vapor pressure, which creates a warming effect given water vapor’s strong greenhouse gas properties (Manabe & Wetherald, 1967). Global warming tends to increase cloud formation because warmer temperatures lead to more evaporation of water into the atmosphere, and warmer temperature also allows the atmosphere to hold more water. The key question is whether this increase in clouds associated with global warming will result in a positive feedback loop (more warming) or a negative feedback loop (less warming). For decades, scientists have sought to answer this question and understand the net role clouds play in future climate projections (Schneider et al., 2017). Clouds are complex because they both have a cooling (reflecting incoming solar radiation) and warming (absorbing incoming solar radiation) effect (Lashof, DeAngelo, Saleska, & Harte, 1997). The type of cloud, altitude, and optical properties combine to determine how these countervailing effects balance out. Although still under debate, it appears that in most circumstances the cloud feedback is likely positive (Boucher et al., 2013). For example, models and observations show that increasing greenhouse gas concentrations reduces the low-level cloud fraction in the Northeast Pacific at decadal time scales. This then has a positive feedback effect and enhances climate warming since less solar radiation is reflected by the atmosphere (Clement, Burgman, & Norris, 2009). The key lesson from the long list of potentially positive feedbacks and their interactions is that runaway climate change, and runaway perturbations have to be taken as a serious possibility. Table 2 is just a snapshot of the type of feedbacks that have been identified (see Supplementary material for a more thorough explanation of positive feedback loops). However, this list is not exhaustive and the possibility of undiscovered positive feedbacks portends even greater existential risks. The many environmental crises humankind has previously averted (famine, ozone depletion, London fog, water pollution, etc.) were averted because of political will based on solid scientific understanding. We cannot count on complete scientific understanding when it comes to positive feedback loops and climate change.

#### Direct Causal link between mainstream media misinformation that stems from controversial, subjective media coverage and vaccine refusal- DTP and MMR

Dees 13 (Dees P., Berman D.M. (2013) The Media’s Role in Vaccine Misinformation. In: Chatterjee A. (eds) Vaccinophobia and Vaccine Controversies of the 21st Century. Springer, New York, NY. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-7438-8_21> //chskk)

-at: recency- misinformation covid 19 this ev just implies a casual link

DTP In 1974, Kulenkampff et al. [ 32 ] published a report claiming an association between the DTP vaccine and serious neurologic complications. Despite the fact that numerous independent studies had shown no causal link between the immunization and permanent brain damage, the media continued to cover the Kulenkampff study. Rates of immunization dropped from 81 to 31 % and more than 100,000 cases and 36 deaths from pertussis followed [ 27 ]. Despite the report being published in England, the press coverage extended internationally and vaccination rates decreased while increased mortality due to pertussis were reported in Japan, Sweden, and Wales [ 27 ]. The media once again failed to report the increased rates of morbidity and mortality, and preferred to focus on the controversy created by the Kulenkampff report. In 1982, a teledocumentary produced by a Washington, D.C. news station, WRC-TV, called DPT : Vaccine Roulette included commentary from a former US FDA employee and neurologists who supported accounts that the DTP vaccine caused serious and permanent brain damage. Although the program was speedily debunked by medical experts, it is hailed as the catalyst for the modern vaccine controversy and ultimately garnered an Emmy award [ 5 ]. MMR Much like the Vaccine Roulette fi lm did for the DTP controversy, Wakefi eld’s report linking the MMR immunization to autism was dramatized to the masses by the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) program Panorama in 2002. They televised a segment called How safe is MMR ? and brought the vaccine controversy to the front of the press’ news agenda and therefore into the public eye [ 10 ]. As previously discussed, the media has been criticized for inaccurately balancing claims of a causal link between the MMR vaccine and autism, despite powerful evidence to the contrary. The press was also faulted for not providing information that parents could turn to in order to address vaccine-related questions [ 28 ]. In addition, several studies found that, astonishingly, more resources and mobilizing information were actually offered to proponents of the vaccine-autism link than to the contrary [ 10 , 28 ]. The fact that Wakefi eld’s co-author’s never supported his claim to use single immunizations over the triple MMR vaccine also went largely unreported [ 10 ]. Speers and Lewis [ 14 ] published that rates of MMR uptake tangibly decreased as media coverage of the vaccine controversy increased, and vice versa. They attributed this directly to the public’s perception that the vaccine was unsafe following signifi cant periods of focus in the press, and noted that once media interest fell away, immunization rates subsequently increased. These fi ndings were replicated on a local scale when Mason and Donnelly [ 29 ] examined the impact of the South Wales Evening Post’s campaign against the MMR vaccine in Wales. Before the promotional push began, immunization rates were signifi cantly higher in the distribution area when compared to their control population. However, after the MMR : Parents Fight for Facts campaign ran, vaccination rates fell by 13.6 % in the target community, compared to only a 2.4 % drop in areas outside of the paper’s circulation. HPV Despite the lessons from the DTP and MMR media scares, stories of more recently developed vaccines, such as the HPV immunization, continue to highlight inaccuracies. Although the HPV vaccine received a signifi cant amount of press when it was approved by the FDA, many news stories left out critical pieces of information [ 15 ]. One of the main themes in the media’s coverage of this vaccine is that recipients will increasingly engage in risky sexual behavior, which has negatively infl uenced parent’s perceptions on the vaccine [ 30 ]. Future Considerations Undoubtedly, the media has the power to infl uence the public’s perception. They are enlisted to both educate and warn people on matters of public health. By reviewing the press’ role in modern vaccine controversy, it is clear that we cannot devise methods of disseminating trustworthy health information to the public without considering the role of the media. Lewis [ 10 ] summarized this best by stating, “The battle for public trust, in other words, can no longer be won by straightforward appeals to authority: it needs to be based on an understanding of the nature of public concern and an awareness of media frameworks.” By revisiting the press’ obligations to the 21 The Media’s Role in Vaccine Misinformation

#### Vaccines save hundreds of millions of lives on the low end because of direct prevention and herd immunity means this number is orders of magnitude higher

Vanderslott et al 19 (Samantha Vanderslott, Bernadeta Dadonaite and Max Roser (2013) - "Vaccination". Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: 'https://ourworldindata.org/vaccination' [Online Resource]//chskk)

We know that vaccines save lives. But how many lives vaccines have they saved? The World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests that vaccination prevents 2-3 million deaths each year.2 However, while we are certain that vaccines have saved millions of lives, calculating a precise number is impossible. Also the quoted number from the WHO is in important ways a very low estimate. The counterfactual world, in which vaccines would have never been developed, would be so different that an estimate of the impact of vaccines is impossible. One example that makes this clear is to consider the impact of the smallpox vaccine: Smallpox was once an extremely common and deadly infectious disease, but it has been eradicated globally back in 1977 thanks to the vaccination against the disease. It is impossible to know exactly how many people would die of smallpox today if scientists had not developed the vaccine. Reasonable estimates are in the range of around 5 million lives per year, which implies that between 1980 and 2018 around 150 to 200 million lives have been saved.3 This makes clear why it is so difficult to estimate the number of lives saved every year and why the WHO estimate is rather low. How vaccines work & herd immunity The basic mechanism by which vaccines work is simple: Vaccines create immunity in an individual by introducing a weakened or killed form of the pathogen that make us ill – such as bacteria or viruses – or its toxins or one of its surface proteins. The vaccine induces acquired immunity so that when your body encounters the real disease-causing agent it is ready to mount a defense. There is a collective social benefit in a high vaccination coverage. For most diseases, the greater the proportion of people who are immunized, the better protected is everyone in the population as the disease transmission can be reduced or stopped. Herd immunity is a community protection that is created when a high percentage of the population is vaccinated, such that it less likely that the infectious disease spreads.4 Herd immunity provides a protective barrier, especially also for those who cannot be vaccinated. These include vulnerable groups such as babies too young to be vaccinated or immune-compromised children who are the first potential victims of low vaccination rates. When a person is immune to a disease they can act as a barrier to slow down or prevent the transmission of disease to other people. When the number of people in a population that are immune against a disease is reached, such that a disease no longer persists in the population, this is called the herd immunity threshold (HIT). The table shows the HIT for several diseases. Measles and pertussis are highly contagious airborne diseases and a larger share of people need to be vaccinated to stop the transmission. Because of this these diseases have the highest HIT rates that need to be reached. For example, two doses of measles vaccination offers 99% protection, while in the absence of immunization, the lifetime risk of infection is nearly 100%.5

#### Disease causes extinction\*\*

Millett 17 [Piers Consultant for the World Health Organization, PhD in International Relations and Affairs, University of Bradford, Andrew Snyder-Beattie. “Existential Risk and Cost-Effective Biosecurity.” <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1089/hs.2017.0028>]

Historically, disease events have been responsible for the greatest death tolls on humanity. The 1918 flu was responsible for more than 50 million deaths,1 while smallpox killed perhaps 10 times that many in the 20th century alone.2 The Black Death was responsible for killing over 25% of the European population,3 while other pandemics, such as the plague of Justinian, are thought to have killed 25 million in the 6th century—constituting over 10% of the world’s population at the time.4 It is an open question whether a future pandemic could result in outright human extinction or the irreversible collapse of civilization. A skeptic would have many good reasons to think that existential risk from disease is unlikely. Such a disease would need to spread worldwide to remote populations, overcome rare genetic resistances, and evade detection, cures, and countermeasures. Even evolution itself may work in humanity’s favor: Virulence and transmission is often a trade-off, and so evolutionary pressures could push against maximally lethal wild-type pathogens.5,6 While these arguments point to a very small risk of human extinction, they do not rule the possibility out entirely. Although rare, there are recorded instances of species going extinct due to disease—primarily in amphibians, but also in 1 mammalian species of rat on Christmas Island.7,8 There are also historical examples of large human populations being almost entirely wiped out by disease, especially when multiple diseases were simultaneously introduced into a population without immunity. The most striking examples of total population collapse include native American tribes exposed to European diseases, such as the Massachusett (86% loss of population), Quiripi-Unquachog (95% loss of population), and theWestern Abenaki (which suffered a staggering 98% loss of population).9 Piers Millett, PhD, is a Senior Research Fellow, and Andrew Snyder-Beattie, MS, is Director of Research; both at the University of Oxford, Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford, England. ª Piers Millett and Andrew Snyder-Beattie, 2017; Published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc. This Open Access article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly credited. Health Security Volume 15, Number 4, 2017 Mary Ann Liebert, Inc. DOI: 10.1089/hs.2017.0028 373 In the modern context, no single disease currently exists that combines the worst-case levels of transmissibility, lethality, resistance to countermeasures, and global reach. But many diseases are proof of principle that each worst-case attribute can be realized independently. For example, some diseases exhibit nearly a 100% case fatality ratio in the absence of treatment, such as rabies or septicemic plague. Other diseases have a track record of spreading to virtually every human community worldwide, such as the 1918 flu,10 and seroprevalence studies indicate that other pathogens, such as chickenpox and HSV-1, can successfully reach over 95% of a population.11,12 Under optimal virulence theory, natural evolution would be an unlikely source for pathogens with the highest possible levels of transmissibility, virulence, and global reach. But advances in biotechnology might allow the creation of diseases that combine such traits. Recent controversy has already emerged over a number of scientific experiments that resulted in viruses with enhanced transmissibility, lethality, and/or the ability to overcome therapeutics.13-17 Other experiments demonstrated that mousepox could be modified to have a 100% case fatality rate and render a vaccine ineffective.18 In addition to transmissibility and lethality, studies have shown that other disease traits, such as incubation time, environmental survival, and available vectors, could be modified as well.19-21 Although these experiments had scientific merit and were not conducted with malicious intent, their implications are still worrying. This is especially true given that there is also a long historical track record of state-run bioweapon research applying cutting-edge science and technology to design agents not previously seen in nature. The Soviet bioweapons program developed agents with traits such as enhanced virulence, resistance to therapies, greater environmental resilience, increased difficulty to diagnose or treat, and which caused unexpected disease presentations and outcomes.22 Delivery capabilities have also been subject to the cutting edge of technical development, with Canadian, US, and UK bioweapon efforts playing a critical role in developing the discipline of aerobiology.23,24 While there is no evidence of staterun bioweapons programs directly attempting to develop or deploy bioweapons that would pose an existential risk, the logic of deterrence and mutually assured destruction could create such incentives in more unstable political environments or following a breakdown of the Biological Weapons Convention.25The possibility of a war between great powers could also increase the pressure to use such weapons—during the World Wars, bioweapons were used across multiple continents, with Germany targeting animals in WWI,26 and Japan using plague to cause an epidemic in China during WWII.27

## Advocacy

#### Thus, I affirm that in a democracy a free press ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy. Negative positions that do not defend advocacy over objectivity affirm.

#### An objective press is achieved by a four-tier process- it best solves

Watts 21 (Watts, Duncan J., et al. “Measuring the News and Its Impact on Democracy.” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, vol. 118, no. 15, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1912443118>. //chskk)

The objective of a comprehensive research agenda to study the origins, nature, and consequences of misinformation on democracy in turn entails assembling four subsidiary components: 1) A large-scale data infrastructure for studying the production, distribution, consumption, and absorption of news over time and across the entire information ecosystem (including the web, television, radio, and other modes of production). 2) A “mass collaboration” model that leverages the shared infrastructure to advance replicable, cumulative, and ultimately useful science. 3) A program for communicating the insights generated by the research to stakeholders outside of the research community (e.g., journalists, policymakers, industry leaders, the public). 4) A network of academic–industry partnerships around data and solutions. Objective 1: Building a Large-Scale Data Infrastructure for Studying News Production, Distribution, Consumption, and Absorption. A primary requirement for comprehensive research agenda around misinformation is a shared, open infrastructure for collecting data and running experiments at scale for diverse populations over long timescales. Such an infrastructure would facilitate results that generalize better than prior work and can be more easily implemented in practice. Moreover, the infrastructure would be open, meaning that it would be made available to the research community while also addressing issues of data security, individual privacy, and intellectual property. To illustrate the scale and scope of the proposed infrastructure, Fig. 1 shows a schematic of the information ecosystem, which is represented in four “layers”: 1) production, 2) consumption and distribution, 3) absorption and understanding, and 4) action and engagement. Each layer corresponds to a different stage of the process by which information about events and issues affecting a democracy ultimately impacts public opinion, understanding, and civic engagement. Each layer also corresponds to different types of data that derive from distinct sources, typically in different formats and sampled in different ways. Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the information ecosystem. Production (web, TV, radio). What information is produced, either by online publishers or by TV or radio broadcasters, that could potentially inform and/or influence public opinion? The web alone comprises many thousands of news sources, ranging from large and comprehensive (e.g., The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal) to small and niche, from neutral to partisan, and including original news publishers as well as aggregators and distributors. As noted earlier, publishers can bias the news they produce in several ways, including selection (what they choose to cover vs. ignore), emphasis (how prominently a given story is featured and for how long), slant (how headlines are written, the tone of the article, the relative emphasis of different facts), and finally outright deception (fake news, propaganda, etc.). To obtain a comprehensive, longitudinal view of information production, the research community requires a continuously updated catalog of information sources relevant to contemporary issues and political discourse. Several media databases already exist (e.g., Media Cloud, Event Registry, GDELT, Internet Archive’s TV news archive, Newsbank). However, they are not designed to directly support the range of queries that are the focus of many research questions; thus, results typically require substantial investment in postprocessing. In addition, they do not exhibit the kind of methodological transparency that is required for academic research (41) and/or they do not have the comprehensiveness across the necessary range of site and modes. To illustrate the problem, simple keyword searches (e.g., “Hillary Clinton emails”) on unpreprocessed corpora of articles will return many irrelevant articles (i.e., those that contain the keywords but are not about the topic) and will also miss many relevant articles (i.e., those that are on the topic but do not use the exact keywords). Moreover, the results contain no information about features such as partisanship or sentiment that must then be appended by the researcher. Keyword-based search results, in other words, are largely uninformative without a large amount of supplemental data cleaning and analysis. Because this work is typically done in a one-off, nonreplicable manner, simply collecting and storing vast amounts of news data does not on its own do much to accelerate the research process. A central objective for any collective research effort, therefore, is to build data processing pipelines and systems on top of the raw data that make them easily queryable by researchers and journalists alike. Included in this objective is also the capability for independent researchers to develop and contribute new modes of querying (e.g., abstracting away from specific stories to broader themes or narratives) as well as new methods for generating relevant metadata (e.g., stance, sentiment, partisan bias, etc.). Consumption and distribution (desktop and mobile panels). Much of the information that is produced receives little attention, while some stories resonate with millions. Even comprehensive and well-annotated data on news production, therefore, do not on their own tell us how that information is or is not reaching consumers, let alone how different types of information reaches different types of consumers. Are there groups of people who watch MSNBC in the morning, surf mainstream news during the day, and watch Fox News at night? Do Breitbart and Daily Kos readers also get mainstream news on TV or the web? One potential direction for research on media consumption is to leverage commercial panel providers such as Nielsen, ComScore, Pew Research, and YouGov. Although valuable (see, e.g., next section), these “off-the-shelf” solutions also exhibit some important limitations. In particular, desktop-only panels increasingly suffer from coverage gaps in part because they do not capture mobile activity, and in part because an increasing amount of web traffic is contained in “walled gardens” such as Facebook within which user activity is visible only to the platform. Ultimately, therefore, it will be necessary to develop new data sources. For example, a dedicated mobile panel would greatly facilitate the measurement of information consumption across social and conventional media, as well as enable linkage to other behaviors of potential interest. In addition, certain modes of consumption—in particular social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Reddit), but also email, messaging services (e.g., WhatsApp)—are also mechanisms for distribution. A proper understanding of consumption, therefore, will also require data on information distribution. Absorption and understanding (polls, virtual labs). Just as the publication of a particular piece of information does not guarantee that anyone will see it, so is exposure to information no guarantee of awareness, understanding, or agreement about its meaning (4, 42). Exposure to disconfirming information may reduce polarization, increase it, or have no effect depending on other factors (43, 44). Understanding how consumption translates into knowledge and/or beliefs is therefore critical to designing and evaluating possible interventions. Building off of recent advances in nonprobability polling techniques (45, 46), one could conduct regular panel surveys to probe public knowledge and explore the baselines and shifts in knowledge and attitudes. Polling of this sort could yield indices of facts and sentiment from the general population that could be correlated with media consumption on various issues and, ultimately, civic participation. Understanding of opinion change, influence, and deliberation would also be accelerated via experiments conducted in online “virtual labs” (47). Action and engagement (admin data, ethnography). In addition to being an end in itself, knowledge is also important to democracy inasmuch as it translates into political action: voting, community organizing, engagement with legislators, political speech, and protest. An important goal for any comprehensive research agenda is therefore to understand the link between the production, consumption, and absorption of information on the one hand, and action on the other hand. Because “political action” is a multidimensional concept, however, quantifying action is challenging, at a minimum requiring diverse administrative datasets (e.g., voter records, campaign contributions, volunteering, protesting, search, activity on social media, etc.), but also survey and ethnographic data to elucidate levels of engagement in the political process, broadly construed (48). Alternatively, or in order to get repeated actions or more coverage, researchers could leverage proxies for engagement such as search queries as a proxy for intent (49) or lightweight user actions (following, retweeting, liking, commenting, etc.) as a proxy for interest (50). Objective 2: Build a “Mass Collaboration” Model to Advance Replicable, Cumulative, and Useful Knowledge. Maximizing the value of the data infrastructure just described will also require a “mass collaboration” model in which many researchers leverage the same data assets (51). Mass collaboration models based on shared infrastructure have an established track record in the physical sciences (e.g., the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, the Large Hadron Collider, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory) and also in biology (e.g., the Human Genome Project), but are unfamiliar to many social scientists (the closest model would be surveys such as the General Social Survey, the American National Election Studies, and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics). The ultimate success of any such model is therefore subject to its acceptance by the relevant research community, which cannot be guaranteed ex ante. Nonetheless, the model has some advantages over the traditional single investigator model that we believe increase its chances of successful adoption. 1) It will enable the research community to better leverage the data assets to produce many times the research output that would be possible with a traditional laboratory model in which both data collection/curation and research are conducted in-house. 2) It lends itself to more comparable research, as researchers can more easily replicate the questions, data, and analytics of previous work, when conducting new inquiries. Often replication efforts are complicated by potentially subtle differences in framing, data, and methods between exploratory and confirmatory studies. 3) It allows researchers to contribute in a variety of ways including a) additional data sources (e.g., text of radio transcripts, social media data); b) improved methods for processing and/or analyzing existing data (e.g., better named entity extraction or topic identification); c) appending useful metadata derived from their own research (e.g., content categories, partisanship labels); d) direct financial support from research grants to support overhead. By accommodating different types of contributions, a shared infrastructure approach should appeal to a wider range of potential collaborators, thereby also increasing its value to subsequent researchers. Objective 3: Communicate Insights to Nonacademic Stakeholders. An important facilitator of success in the proposed research enterprise is that it be perceived as both legitimate (i.e., rigorous, transparent, and nonpartisan) and also useful. In addition to gathering and organizing data and coordinating research across many research groups, an important goal is therefore to translate the output of the work for nonacademic audiences. More broadly, it is important to advocate for the importance of the social sciences in addressing critical needs, like information ecosystem design in democracies. Although there are many ways to engage stakeholders outside of academia (e.g., blog posts, white papers), one interesting approach that naturally leverages the existence of a centralized data infrastructure is to expose the data itself via web-based interactive visualizations (aka “dashboards”) that allow journalists, activists, policymakers, researchers, and members of the public to explore the evidence directly. Another benefit of data dashboards is that, in contrast with published research findings, they are dynamic entities that maintain their relevance even in a fast-moving environment. Rather than reading a statistic about the prevalence of fake news or the diversity of news consumption as it was when the researchers did their work months or even years ago, for example, a dashboard populated with (nearly) live data could show its prevalence as of yesterday, as well as how it has changed in the past week, month, or year. Visualizing data in a way that is psychologically effective and also scientifically valid is a nontrivial undertaking that requires expertise in statistics, user experience design, and software development as well as the substantive domain in question (52, 53). Without downplaying the challenges inherent in designing and implementing useful interactive dashboards, we hope that they will help to ground the public debate around misinformation and democracy on rigorous, nonpartisan evidence. Objective 4: Develop Academic-Industry Partnerships around Data and Solutions. Modifying the information ecosystem to better support democracy is an example of what has been called solution-oriented social science (40, 54, 55), meaning that it advances fundamental understanding of the social sciences in the course of solving concrete problems of practical interest (56). Rather than pursuing a research agenda based purely on theoretical interest, that is, research should address the concrete challenges confronting the participants (e.g., technology and media companies, fact-checking organizations, scientific societies, etc.) in the information ecosystem. To this end, it is critical to foster academic–industry partnerships with the goal of not only understanding but also improving the information ecosystem. Partnerships could advance solution-oriented research in a variety of ways, including helping to define the research agenda and specific questions, contributing data, providing analytical tools, translating research findings into design principles, and implementing and testing potential solutions. Journalists and media organizations are perfectly situated to ask questions and provide a platform for disseminating results, while technology firms have data that researchers could use, as well as access to analytical tools. For example, voter files offer ground truth voting behavior (57), search queries correlate with certain offline behaviors (58, 59), and lightweight user actions (e.g., replying, liking, sharing, and commenting) are a useful proxy for engagement. Finally, beyond harvesting existing telemetry data, the capability to design, implement, and test interventions (e.g., reducing uncivil discourse, increasing relative consumption of high-quality information, etc.) requires direct access to proprietary platforms. The topic of academic–industry partnerships around data has been of increasing interest to academic researchers (see, e.g., ref. 60), but only limited progress has been made in securing the cooperation of industry partners. Perhaps the most prominent recent example is Social Science One (https://socialscience.one/), a commission of senior academics who work with companies (thus far restricted to Facebook) to make preapproved datasets available to researchers while also waiving their right to suppress publication of unfavorable results (39). Although Social Science One is promising, our proposed approach differs from it by starting first with an independent, researcher-designed, and managed data infrastructure. As both these models, along with other models that are being developed in the domain of government administrative data (see, e.g., https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/) and health informatics (see, e.g., https://saildatabank.com/), have their respective strengths and weaknesses, we see them as complements rather than substitutes. Research Questions In this section, we briefly summarize a selection of completed, in-progress, or planned research projects that utilize data of the sort described above. These examples are intended only to illustrate some possibilities and not to limit the scope of the overall research agenda, which we hope will be determined by the collective creativity of a whole research community. Putting Fake News in Context. As described above, in recent work (18), we have quantified fake news consumption across multiple platforms including television, desktop, and mobile web, finding that it constitutes less than 1/10th of 1% of total daily media consumption, and less than 1% of overall news consumption. Surprisingly, we also find that news consumption in general constitutes a small fraction of overall media consumption (roughly 14%) and is heavily biased toward television across all age categories. Selection vs. Framing. Which is more important to the underlying and perceived partisanship of publications: selection (which topics they choose to cover) or framing (what slant they give those topics they select to cover)? In future work, we plan to track and map both activities historically and in real time for daily news events spanning television and online content. Content Overlap in Online News. In response to declining revenue, news publishers have reduced costs by replacing original content with copied or slightly edited versions of generic stories provided via wire services (i.e., AP, Reuters). In ongoing work, we are attempting to quantify the proportion of news reporting that is either copied or unique, as well as the patterns of content overlap that exist within and between news articles. In future work, we will construct networks of publishers characterized by their cocopying patterns, identifying clusters of redundant coverage. Snippet-Based Content Classification. Prior work on news consumption has relied on classifications of content at the domain (e.g., http://nytimes.com or http://infowars.com) or program (e.g., Today Show, CBS Evening News) level. This approach, while easy to implement, misclassifies content that is not representative of the domain/program of which it is a part (e.g., news content on late-night comedy shows) or is simply not a part of any domain/program (e.g., user-generated content). In ongoing work, we are developing methods using human labelers to classify content at the “snippet” level, where a snippet is defined as a short piece of text or video, thereby allowing us to compare the proportion of news and misinformation across platforms. Ideologically Segregated Consumption. Partisan echo chambers, and selective exposure to partisan news more generally, are of key concern to communication scholars and the public (61, 62). In ongoing work, we seek to replicate previous findings (63–65) regarding the ideological segregation of online news exposure over the 2016–2018 interval as well as to compare it with television news consumption. Comparing Survey with Behavioral Data. Surveys are a vital tool in understanding public opinion and knowledge, but have been shown to overestimate news consumption (66, 67). In forthcoming work (68), we show that the bias extends to online and social media-based news consumption and also fails to accurately capture trends. We highlight how behavioral data are more easily adaptable to the wide range of possible results that a researcher may need to answer with different, but related, sets of questions about news consumption. Measuring Awareness and Understanding of News Events. In ongoing work, we are pulling the top facts from online articles each day and running regular polls that ask 1) whether respondents are aware of a given event, and 2) if so, whether or not they know the facts in question. In addition to measuring the relationship between news coverage and public awareness, this dataset will initiate a larger program of tracking which types of information are absorbed by the news consuming public, and via which channels. Conclusion The debate around misinformation and its potentially damaging effects on public opinion, understanding, and democratic decision making is complex and multifaceted. There is not, to our knowledge, any general consensus on what “the problem” is, and even less agreement on what the solution or solutions ought to be (2, 4, 5, 13, 16, 17, 24, 29). We do not pretend that our approach will resolve these disagreements over what matters and what to do about it. To the extent that such disagreements arise and persist because of the absence of systematic empirical evidence, however, we hope that it will help, in two ways. First, the creation of a shared, open data infrastructure to support research on misinformation and its effect on democracy will reduce existing barriers to producing rigorous, replicable, and ultimately useful science. Second, exposing the data and research insights to external stakeholders via continuously updating interactive visualizations will force interlocutors to confront the world as it is (or at least as it has been measured) rather than how they imagine it to be. Of course, we acknowledge that measurement itself is also imperfect in important ways; however, we do not see these shortcomings as a reason not to rely on data, but rather as a motivation to design better instruments and to collect better data. That data will also be imperfect, and the process of discovering that will in turn motivate better instruments, and so on. Just as no one experiment can settle any complex social scientific question, no one dataset can ever satisfactorily capture everything that we might care about. The process of informing our understanding of the world with evidence will therefore be an ongoing one. Our proposal is simply that we cannot afford not to begin this process.

#### Put away your circumvention cards- empirically verifiable facts guarantee a basis for objective truth and the method by which we defend objective practices ensure the best outcome

Sonnemaker 15 (Sonnemaker, Tyler, "Objectivity and the Role of Journalism in Democratic Societies" (2015). CMC Senior Theses. Paper 1057. <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/1057> //chskk)

In thinking of this objectivity-subjectivity spectrum, we must remember that it does not span endlessly in either direction. On one end, we can reject entirely any claims of truth that directly contradict objective, empirically verifiable facts about the external world. For example, “a water molecule is composed of two hydrogen atoms and one helium atom,” is untenable. Water is actually composed of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, and we have myriad scientific methods by which to confirm that this is how hydrogen is composed in reality. Thus, the former statement has no claim on truthfulness at all. On the other end, human fallibility and our limited knowledge prevents us from saying something like “the law of gravity is, has, and will always be a constant force in the universe.” But within this range is a multitude of facts, theories, opinions, and even values that we place on the spectrum according to the degree with which we can objectively verify their truth. As I will show to some extent in the remainder of this chapter, and more extensively in Chapters 3 and 4, there are certain criteria that journalists ought to rely on in order to accomplish this. The crucial point here is that, while no one denies the importance of ontological accuracy (how well does a fact actually correspond with reality), the emphasis is on identifying objective methods by which to verify their reliability. Determining a statement’s objective truth is a process of inquiry — by ensuring the integrity of this process, we ensure that the outcome of our inquiry (our various ontological claims about the world), are as reliable as possible.34 But before we can determine the methods and criteria that should guide this process, we need an understanding of how our cognition exposes us to the world

#### The standard is maximizing expected well-being. Prefer it:

#### [1] Actor specificity: util is the best for governments, which is the actor in the rez. Governments must aggregate since every policy benefits some and harms others, which also means side constraints freeze action.

#### [2] Ethical frameworks must be theoretically legitimate. All frameworks are functionally topicality interpretations of the word ought so they must theoretically justified. Prefer – ground – both debaters are guaranteed access to ground – Aff gets plans and advantages, while Neg gets disads and counterplans. News is also published in the lens of well being. Additionally, anything can function as an impact as long as an external benefit is articulated, so all your offense applies.

#### [3] Pleasure and pain are the starting point for moral reasoning—they’re our most baseline desires and the only things that explain the intrinsic value of objects or actions

Moen 16, Ole Martin (PhD, Research Fellow in Philosophy at University of Oslo). "An Argument for Hedonism." Journal of Value Inquiry 50.2 (2016): 267.

Let us start by observing, empirically, that a widely shared judgment about intrinsic value and disvalue is that pleasure is intrinsically valuable and pain is intrinsically disvaluable. On virtually any proposed list of intrinsic values and disvalues (we will look at some of them below), pleasure is included among the intrinsic values and pain among the intrinsic disvalues. This inclusion makes intuitive sense, moreover, for there is something undeniably good about the way pleasure feels and something undeniably bad about the way pain feels, and neither the goodness of pleasure nor the badness of pain seems to be exhausted by the further effects that these experiences might have. “Pleasure” and “pain” are here understood inclusively, as encompassing anything hedonically positive and anything hedonically negative. 2 The special value statuses of pleasure and pain are manifested in how we treat these experiences in our everyday reasoning about values. If you tell me that you are heading for the convenience store**,** I might ask: “What for?” This is a reasonable question, for when you go to the convenience store you usually do so, not merely for the sake of going to the convenience store, but for the sake of achieving something further that you deem to be valuable. You might answer, for example: “To buy soda.” This answer makes sense, for soda is a nice thing and you can get it at the convenience store. I might further inquire, however: “What is buying the soda good for?” This further question can also be a reasonable one, for it need not be obvious why you want the soda. You might answer: “Well, I want it for the pleasure of drinking it.” If I then proceed by asking “But what is the pleasure of drinking the soda good for?” the discussion is likely to reach an awkward end. The reason is that the pleasure is not good for anything further; it is simply that for which going to the convenience store and buying the soda is good. 3 As Aristotle observes: “We never ask [a man] what his end is in being pleased, because we assume that pleasure is choice worthy in itself.”4 Presumably, a similar story can be told in the case of pains, for if someone says “This is painful!” we never respond by asking: “And why is that a problem?” We take for granted that if something is painful, we have a sufficient explanation of why it is bad. If we are onto something in our everyday reasoning about values, it seems that pleasure and pain are both places where we reach the end of the line in matters of value. Although pleasure and pain thus seem to be good candidates for intrinsic value and disvalue, several objections have been raised against this suggestion: (1) that pleasure and pain have instrumental but not intrinsic value/disvalue; (2) that pleasure and pain gain their value/disvalue derivatively, in virtue of satisfying/frustrating our desires; (3) that there is a subset of pleasures that are not intrinsically valuable (so-called “evil pleasures”) and a subset of pains that are not intrinsically disvaluable (so-called “noble pains”), and (4) that pain asymbolia, masochism, and practices such as wiggling a loose tooth render it implausible that pain is intrinsically disvaluable. I shall argue that these objections fail. Though it is, of course, an open question whether other objections to P1 might be more successful, I shall assume that if (1)–(4) fail, we are justified in believing that P1 is true itself a paragon of freedom—there will always be some agents able to interfere substantially with one’s choices. The effective level of protection one enjoys, and hence one’s actual degree of freedom, will vary according to multiple factors: how powerful one is, how powerful individuals in one’s vicinity are, how frequent police patrols are, and so on. Now, we saw above that what makes a slave unfree on Pettit’s view is the fact that his master has the power to interfere arbitrarily with his choices; in other words, what makes the slave unfree is the power relation that obtains between his master and him. The difﬁculty is that, in light of the facts I just mentioned, there is no reason to think that this power relation will be unique. A similar relation could obtain between the master and someone other than the slave: absent perfect state control, the master may very well have enough power to interfere in the lives of countless individuals. Yet it would be wrong to infer that these individuals lack freedom in the way the slave does; if they lack anything, it seems to be security. A problematic power relation can also obtain between the slave and someone other than the master, since there may be citizens who are more powerful than the master and who can therefore interfere with the slave’s choices at their discretion. Once again, it would be wrong to infer that these individuals make the slave unfree in the same way that the master does. Something appears to be missing from Pettit’s view. If I live in a particularly nasty part of town, then it may turn out that, when all the relevant factors are taken into account, I am just as vulnerable to outside interference as are the slaves in the royal palace, yet it does not follow that our conditions are equivalent from the point of view of freedom. As a matter of fact, we may be equally vulnerable to outside interference, but as a matter of right, our standings could not be more different. I have legal recourse against anyone who interferes with my freedom; the recourse may not be very effective—presumably it is not, if my overall vulnerability to outside interference is comparable to that of a slave— but I still have full legal standing.68 By contrast, the slave lacks legal recourse against the interventions of one speciﬁc individual: his master. It is that fact, on a Kantian view—a fact about the legal relation in which a slave stands to his master—that sets slaves apart from freemen. The point may appear trivial, but it does get something right: whereas one cannot identify a power relation that obtains uniquely between a slave and his master, the legal relation between them is undeniably unique. A master’s right to interfere with respect to his slave does not extend to freemen, regardless of how vulnerable they might be as a matter of fact, and citizens other than the master do not have the right to order the slave around, regardless of how powerful they might be. This suggests that Kant is correct in thinking that the ideal of freedom is essentially linked to a person’s having full legal standing. More speciﬁcally, he is correct in holding that the importance of rights is not exhausted by their contribution to the level of protection that an individual enjoys, as it must be on an instrumental view like Pettit’s. Although it does matter that rights be enforced with reasonable effectiveness, the sheer fact that one has adequate legal rights is essential to one’s standing as a free citizen. In this respect, Kant stays faithful to the idea that freedom is primarily a matter of standing—a standing that the freeman has and that the slave lacks. Pettit himself frequently insists on the idea, but he fails to do it justice when he claims that freedom is simply a matter of being adequately (and reliably) shielded against the strength of others. As Kant recognizes, the standing of a free citizen is a more complex matter than that. One could perhaps worry that the idea of legal standing is something of a red herring here—that it must ultimately be reducible to a complex network of power relations and, hence, that the position I attribute to Kant differs only nominally from Pettit’s. That seems to me doubtful. Viewing legal standing as essential to freedom makes sense only if our conception of the former includes conceptions of what constitutes a fully adequate scheme of legal rights, appropriate legal recourse, justiﬁed punishment, and so on. Only if one believes that these notions all boil down to power relations will Kant’s position appear similar to Pettit’s. On any other view—and certainly that includes most views recently defended by philosophers—the notion of legal standing will outstrip the power relations that ground Pettit’s theory.

#### [4] Extinction outweighs

Pummer 15 [Theron, Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford. “Moral Agreement on Saving the World” Practical Ethics, University of Oxford. May 18, 2015] AT

There appears to be lot of disagreement in moral philosophy. Whether these many apparent disagreements are deep and irresolvable, I believe there is at least one thing it is reasonable to agree on right now, whatever general moral view we adopt: that it is very important to reduce the risk that all intelligent beings on this planet are eliminated by an enormous catastrophe, such as a nuclear war. How we might in fact try to reduce such existential risks is discussed elsewhere. My claim here is only that we – whether we’re consequentialists, deontologists, or virtue ethicists – should all agree that we should try to save the world. According to consequentialism, we should maximize the good, where this is taken to be the goodness, from an impartial perspective, of outcomes. Clearly one thing that makes an outcome good is that the people in it are doing well. There is little disagreement here. If the happiness or well-being of possible future people is just as important as that of people who already exist, and if they would have good lives, it is not hard to see how reducing existential risk is easily the most important thing in the whole world. This is for the familiar reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. There are so many possible future people that reducing existential risk is arguably the most important thing in the world, even if the well-being of these possible people were given only 0.001% as much weight as that of existing people. Even on a wholly person-affecting view – according to which there’s nothing (apart from effects on existing people) to be said in favor of creating happy people – the case for reducing existential risk is very strong. As noted in this seminal paper, this case is strengthened by the fact that there’s a good chance that many existing people will, with the aid of life-extension technology, live very long and very high quality lives. You might think what I have just argued applies to consequentialists only. There is a tendency to assume that, if an argument appeals to consequentialist considerations (the goodness of outcomes), it is irrelevant to non-consequentialists. But that is a huge mistake. Non-consequentialism is the view that there’s more that determines rightness than the goodness of consequences or outcomes; it is not the view that the latter don’t matter. Even John Rawls wrote, “All ethical doctrines worth our attention take consequences into account in judging rightness. One which did not would simply be irrational, crazy.” Minimally plausible versions of deontology and virtue ethics must be concerned in part with promoting the good, from an impartial point of view. They’d thus imply very strong reasons to reduce existential risk, at least when this doesn’t significantly involve doing harm to others or damaging one’s character. What’s even more surprising, perhaps, is that even if our own good (or that of those near and dear to us) has much greater weight than goodness from the impartial “point of view of the universe,” indeed even if the latter is entirely morally irrelevant, we may nonetheless have very strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Even egoism, the view that each agent should maximize her own good, might imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. It will depend, among other things, on what one’s own good consists in. If well-being consisted in pleasure only, it is somewhat harder to argue that egoism would imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk – perhaps we could argue that one would maximize her expected hedonic well-being by funding life extension technology or by having herself cryogenically frozen at the time of her bodily death as well as giving money to reduce existential risk (so that there is a world for her to live in!). I am not sure, however, how strong the reasons to do this would be. But views which imply that, if I don’t care about other people, I have no or very little reason to help them are not even minimally plausible views (in addition to hedonistic egoism, I here have in mind views that imply that one has no reason to perform an act unless one actually desires to do that act). To be minimally plausible, egoism will need to be paired with a more sophisticated account of well-being. To see this, it is enough to consider, as Plato did, the possibility of a ring of invisibility – suppose that, while wearing it, Ayn could derive some pleasure by helping the poor, but instead could derive just a bit more by severely harming them. Hedonistic egoism would absurdly imply she should do the latter. To avoid this implication, egoists would need to build something like the meaningfulness of a life into well-being, in some robust way, where this would to a significant extent be a function of other-regarding concerns (see chapter 12 of this classic intro to ethics). But once these elements are included, we can (roughly, as above) argue that this sort of egoism will imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Add to all of this Samuel Scheffler’s recent intriguing arguments (quick podcast version available here) that most of what makes our lives go well would be undermined if there were no future generations of intelligent persons. On his view, my life would contain vastly less well-being if (say) a year after my death the world came to an end. So obviously if Scheffler were right I’d have very strong reason to reduce existential risk. We should also take into account moral uncertainty. What is it reasonable for one to do, when one is uncertain not (only) about the empirical facts, but also about the moral facts? I’ve just argued that there’s agreement among minimally plausible ethical views that we have strong reason to reduce existential risk – not only consequentialists, but also deontologists, virtue ethicists, and sophisticated egoists should agree. But even those (hedonistic egoists) who disagree should have a significant level of confidence that they are mistaken, and that one of the above views is correct. Even if they were 90% sure that their view is the correct one (and 10% sure that one of these other ones is correct), they would have pretty strong reason, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, to reduce existential risk. Perhaps most disturbingly still, even if we are only 1% sure that the well-being of possible future people matters, it is at least arguable that, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, reducing existential risk is the most important thing in the world. Again, this is largely for the reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. (For more on this and other related issues, see this excellent dissertation). Of course, it is uncertain whether these untold trillions would, in general, have good lives. It’s possible they’ll be miserable. It is enough for my claim that there is moral agreement in the relevant sense if, at least given certain empirical claims about what future lives would most likely be like, all minimally plausible moral views would converge on the conclusion that we should try to save the world. While there are some non-crazy views that place significantly greater moral weight on avoiding suffering than on promoting happiness, for reasons others have offered (and for independent reasons I won’t get into here unless requested to), they nonetheless seem to be fairly implausible views. And even if things did not go well for our ancestors, I am optimistic that they will overall go fantastically well for our descendants, if we allow them to. I suspect that most of us alive today – at least those of us not suffering from extreme illness or poverty – have lives that are well worth living, and that things will continue to improve. Derek Parfit, whose work has emphasized future generations as well as agreement in ethics, described our situation clearly and accurately: “We live during the hinge of history. Given the scientific and technological discoveries of the last two centuries, the world has never changed as fast. We shall soon have even greater powers to transform, not only our surroundings, but ourselves and our successors. If we act wisely in the next few centuries, humanity will survive its most dangerous and decisive period. Our descendants could, if necessary, go elsewhere, spreading through this galaxy…. Our descendants might, I believe, make the further future very good. But that good future may also depend in part on us. If our selfish recklessness ends human history, we would be acting very wrongly.” (From chapter 36 of On What Matters)