## 1NC Round 5

### 1

#### The affirmative is invested in a will to transparency and global modus venvindi which seeks the maximization of norms and satellization of the planet through the installation of a universal security apparatus. Their cooperation over the peaceful use of space succumbs to an understanding of war as reality that expands the operational function of liquidation beyond the atmosphere. Be skeptical of their attachment to transparency, empirical reality, and necessity of security as the search for mastery normalizes an impulse to conquer alterity and produces the very conditions for its collapse.

Baudrillard 83 (Jean Baudrillard, who is he really. *Simulations* translated by Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman 1983)DR 19

The "space race" played exactly the same role as the nuclear race. This is why it was so easily able to take over from it in the '60's (Kennedy Khrushchev), or to develop concurrently in a mode of "peaceful coexistence." For what is the ultimate function of the space race, of lunar conquest, of satellite launchings, if not the institution of a model of universal gravitation, of satellisation, whose perfect embryo is the lunar module: a programmed microcosm, where nothing can be left to chance? Trajectory, energy, computation, physiology, psychology, the environment - nothing can be left to contingency, this is the total universe of the norm - the Law no longer exists, it is the operational immanence of every detail which is law. A universe purged of every threat to the senses, in a state of asepsis and weightlessness - it is this very perfection which is fascinating. For the exaltation of the masses was not in response to the lunar landing or the voyage of man in space (this is rather the fulfillment of an earlier dream) - no, **we are dumbfounded by the perfection of their plannin**g and **technical manipulation**, by the immanent wonder of programmed development. Fascinated by the maximisation of norms and by the mastery of probability. Unbalanced by the model, as we are by death, but without fear or impulse. For if the law, with its aura of transgression, if order, with its aura of violence, still taps a perverse imaginary, then the norm fixes, hypnotises, dumbfounds, causing every imaginary to involve. We no longer fantasise about every minutia of a program. Its observance alone unbalances. The vertigo of a flawless world. The same model of planned infallibility, of maximal security and deterrence, now governs the spread of the social. That is the true nuclear fallout: the meticulous operation of technology serves as a model for the meticulous operation of the social. Here, too, **nothing will be left to chance**; moreover, this is the essence of socialisation, which has been going on for some centuries but which has now entered into its accelerated phase, towards a limit people imagined would be explosive (revolution), but which currently results in an inverse, irreversible, implosive process: a generalised deterrence of every chance, of every accident, of every transversality, of every finality, of every contradiction, rupture or complexity **in a sociality illuminated by the norm** and **doomed to the transparency of detail radiated by datacollecting mechanisms**. In fact, the spatial and nuclear models do not even have their own ends: **neither has lunar exploration**, nor **military and strategic superiority**. Their truth lies in their being models of simulation, **vector models of a system of planetary control** (where even the super-powers of this scenario are not free-the whole world is satellised). 8 Reject the evidence: **with satellisation**, the one who is satellised is not whom you might think. By the orbital inscription of a space object, the **planet earth becomes a satellite**, the terrestrial principle of reality becomes excentric, hyperreal and insignificant. By the orbital establishment of **a system of control like peaceful coexistence**, all terrestrial microsystems are satellised and lose their autonomy. All energy, all events are absorbed by this excentric gravitation, **everything condenses and implodes on the micro-model of control** alone **(the orbital satellite),** as conversely, in the other, biological dimension everything converges and implodes on the molecular micromodel of the genetic code. Between the two, caught between the nuclear and the genetic, in the simultaneous assumption of the two fundamental codes of deterrence, every principle of meaning is absorbed, every deployment of the real is impossible. The simultaneity of two events in July 1975 illustrates this in a striking way: **the linkup in space** of the two American and Soviet super-satellites, apotheosis of peaceful existence - and the suppression by the Chinese of character writing and conversion to the Roman alphabet. This latter signifies the "orbital" establishment of an abstract and model system of signs, into whose orbit will be reabsorbed all those once remarkable and singular forms of style and writing. The satellisation of their tongue: this is the way the Chinese enter the system of peaceful coexistence, which is inscribed in their sky at the very same time by the docking of the two satellites. The orbital flight of the Big Two, the neutralisation and homogenisation of everybody else on earth. **Yet, despite this deterrence by the orbital authority** - the nuclear code or molecular-events continue at ground level, mishaps are increasingly more numerous, despite the global process of contiguity and simultaneity of data. **But, subtly,** these events no longer make any sense; they are nothing more than a duplex effect of simulation at the summit. The best example must be the Vietnam war, since it was at the crossroads of a maximal historical or "revolutionary" stake and the installation of this deterrent authority. **What sense did that war make**, if not that its unfolding sealed the end of history in the culminating and decisive event of our age? **Why did such a difficult, long and arduous war vanish overnight as if by magic?** Why didn't the American defeat (the greatest reversal in its history) have any internal repercussions? If it had truly signified a setback in the planetary strategy of the USA, it should have necessarily disturbed the internal balance of the American political system. But no such thing happened. Hence **something else took place**. Ultimately this war was only a crucial episode in a peaceful coexistence. It marked the advent of China to peaceful coexistence. **The long sought-after securing and concretising of China's non-intervention**, China's apprenticeship in a global modus vivendi, the passing from a strategy of world revolution to one of a sharing of forces and empires, the transition from a radical alternative to political alternation in a now almost settled system (normalisation of PekingWashington relations): all this was the stake of the Vietnam war, and in that sense, the USA pulled out of Vietnam but they won the war. And the war "spontaneously" came to an end when the objective had been attained. This is why it was de-escalated, demobilised so easily. The effects of this same remolding are legible in the field. The war lasted as long as there remained unliquidated elements irreducible to a healthy politics and a discipline of power, even a communist one. When finally the war passed from the resistance to the hands of regular Northern troops, it could stop: it had attained its objective. Thus the stake was a political relay. When the Vietnamese proved they were no longer bearers of an unpredictable subversion, it could be handed over to them. That this was communist order wasn't fundamentally serious: it had proved itself, it could be trusted. They are even more effective than capitalists in liquidating "primitive" precapitalist and antiquated structures. Same scenario as in the Algerian war. The other aspect of this war and of all wars since: behind the armed violence, the murderous antagonism between adversaries - which seems a matter of life and death, and which is played as such (otherwise you could never send out people to get smashed up in this kind of trouble), behind this simulacrum of a struggle to death and of ruthless global stakes, the two adversaries are fundamentally as one against that other, unnamed, never mentioned thing, whose objective outcome in war, with equal complicity between the two adversaries, is total liquidation. It is tribal, communal, pre-capitalist structures, every form of exchange, language and symbolic organisation which must be abolished. Their murder is the object of war - and in its immense spectacular contrivance of death, war is only the medium of this process of terrorist rationalisation by the social - the murder through which sociality can be founded, **no matter what allegiance**, communist or capitalist. The total complicity or division of labour between two adversaries (who can even make huge sacrifices to reach that) for the very purpose of remolding and domesticating social relations. "The North Vietnamese were advised to countenance a scenario of the liquidation of the American presence through which, of course, honour must be preserved." The scenario: the extremely heavy bombardment of Hanoi. The intolerable nature of this bombing should not conceal the fact that it was only a simulacrum to allow the Vietnamese to seem to countenance a compromise and Nixon to make the Americans swallow the retreat of their forces. The game was already won, nothing was objectively at stake but the credibility of the final montage. **Moralists about war**, champions of war's exalted values should not be greatly upset: a war is not any the less heinous for being a mere simulacrum - the flesh suffers just the same, and the dead ex-combatants count as much there as in other wars. That objective is always amply accomplished, like that of the partitioning of territories and of disciplinary sociality. What no longer exists is the adversity of adversaries, **the reality of** antagonistic causes, the ideological seriousness of war - also the reality of defeat or victory, war being a process whose triumph lies quite beyond these appearances. In any case, the pacification (or deterrence) dominating us today is beyond war and peace, **the simultaneous equivalence of peace and war.** "War is peace," said Orwell. Here, also, the two differential poles implode into each other, or recycle one another - a simultaneity of contradictions that is both the parody and the end of all dialectic. Thus it is possible to miss the truth of a war: namely, that it was well over before reaching a conclusion, that at its very core, war was brought to an end, and that perhaps it never ever began. Many other such events (the oil crisis, etc,) never began, never existed, except that artificial mishaps - abstracts, ersatzes of troubles, catastrophes and crises intended to maintain a historical and psychological investment under hypnosis. All media and the official news service only exist to maintain the illusion of actuality - of the reality of the stakes, of the objectivity of the facts. All events are to be read in reverse, where one perceives (as with the communists "in power" in Italy, the posthumous, "nostalgic" rediscovery of gulags and Soviet dissidents like the almost contemporary rediscovery, by a moribund ethnology, of the lost "difference" of Savages) that all these things arrive too late, with an overdue history, a lagging spiral, that they have exhausted their meaning long in advance and only survive on an artificial effervescence of signs, that all these events follow on illogically from one another, with a total equanimity towards the greatest inconsistencies, with a profound indifference to their consequences (but this is because there are none any more: they burn out in their spectacular promotion) - thus the whole newsreel of "the present" gives the sinister impression of kitsch, retro and porno all at the same timedoubtless everyone knows this, and nobody really accepts it. The reality of simulation is unendurable - more cruel than Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, which was still an attempt at a dramaturgy of life, the last flickering of an ideal of the body, blood and violence in a system already sweeping towards a reabsorption of all the stakes without a trace of blood. For us the trick has been played. All dramaturgy, and even all real writing of cruelty has disappeared. Simulation is master, and nostalgia, the phantasmal parodic rehabilitation of all lost referentials, alone remain. Everything still unfolds before us, in the cold light of deterrence (including Artaud, who is entitled like all the rest to his revival, to a second existence as the referential of cruelty).

#### The role of the ballot is to determine the productivity of the 1AC within debate ie they need to prove that there is a connection between their scholarship and the ballot – if not you vote negative on production

#### Their role of the ballot has no role of the negative – there is nothing to disprove or no arguments to be had negating, in their world the negative offers a counterplan and hopes that it reveals militarism better – there is also no metric of what revealing militarism looks like or how a judge can possibly determine what the “better” or “worse” revealing and breaking down of militarism looks like – it also links to the armchair activism Disad because debate becomes a question of analyzing rather than attempting change which only locks in all of their impacts

#### The internal net benefit is the armchair activism Disad – debate is a mausoleum of theories of power and resistance—ideas that were once alive are now filtered, managed, and expected by the machinations of academia. The proliferation of critical discourse within the debate space gets co-opted by the sign economy and merely circulates within the self-contained deliberation of the debate round. Terminal solvency defense and turn—their resistance is forever buried into the catacombs of empty school rooms. After this debate, we may go get lunch at a fast food joint that uses ingredients produced on the backs of disenfranchised workers in Latin America—they make us complacent by making us forget that we are only producing discourses about discourse in exchange for a ballot and we become complicit with the harms they speak to.

#### The colonization of space is a part of a technoscientific development where technology becomes the sedimentation of hyperreality – the status quos attempt for space development is a colonial romanticism, an image of a future of a terraformed Mars – these representations are philosophical and ideological simulacrum of space developments not for the survival of the human but for the survival of capital – NASA has invaded the social imaginaries of consciousness which has become another iteration of that libertarian imaginary

Genovese, T. R. (2017). [The new right stuff: Social imaginaries of outer space and the capitalist accumulation of the cosmos (Doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University) Accessed 10/3/2021] CSUF JmB

The discussion of human futures is a difficult topic with which to engage. Within the Western conception of linear time, the future is temporally forward and veiled within statically three-dimensional existence. Therefore, in this chapter, I will turn to some postmodern theorists and philosophers in order to engage with how to situate the role of science fiction, science, and NewSpace within human futures in outer space. This section is also a dreamscape of ideas that may not be fully fleshed out, but are here to generate discussion, hence the heavy reliance on phenomenology. The ideas of hyperreality were first generated by Jean Baudrillard ([1981] 1994) who defined the concept as “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (1). Hyperreality is a simulation; an intense blending of “reality” and representation so that there is no longer any clear line wherein one ends and the other begins—and in fact, if one accepts the theory of hyperreality, there is no reality anymore, only simulations of reality, which are unmeasurable because reality and hyperreality are indistinguishable—there’s nothing to measure against the two since reality no longer exists as a separate entity (Baudrillard [1981] 1994). Umberto Eco (1986) expands on Baudrillard’s ideas to suggest that hyperreality is created through a desire for a certain “reality,” and in order to realize that desire, one must fabricate a reality that can be consumed as real. Like Baudrillard before him, Eco (1986) uses Disneyland as an example of hyperreality that manufactures desires that can only be realized within the hyperreality it has created, leading one to wish for the hyperreal rather than nature/the “real.” Eco (1986) illustrates this by saying In this sense, Disneyland not only produces illusion, but—in confessing it— stimulates the desire for it: A real crocodile can be found in the zoo, and as a rule it is dozing or hiding, but Disneyland tells us that faked nature corresponds much more to our daydream demands. When, in the space of twenty-four hours, you go (as I did deliberately) from the fake . . . wild river of Adventureland to a trip on the Mississippi, where the captain of the paddle-wheel steamer says it is possible to see alligators on the banks of the river, and then you don’t see any, you risk feeling homesick for Disneyland, where the wild animals don’t have to be coaxed. Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can. (44) Baudrillard ([1981] 1994) further discusses what happens when science emerges out of science fiction and what happens when the difference between the two is indistinguishable—in other words, the real recedes and all that is left are simulations of the hyperreal and “science fiction in this sense is no longer anywhere, and it is everywhere” (126). In this age of accelerated technoscientific development—as I have argued in previous chapters—science and science fiction are melded into a Baudrillardian simulation where artificial intelligence, autonomous rocket boosters that land on autonomous drone ships, and a constant human presence in outer space is the sedimentation of hyperreality where, as Milburn (2003) has said, “the model becomes indistinguishable from the real, supplants the real, precedes the real, and finally is taken as more real than the real” (267). When the hyperreal meets the hyperobject of the cosmos, a term coined by Timothy Morton (2013) to describe a thing that is “massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (1), interesting (and confusing) discussions can arise. For the purpose of this thesis, I would like to argue that the nebulous entity of NewSpace— which is multifaceted in that it is philosophical, ideological, and physical in itself—has emerged as a simulacrum from the hyperreality of contemporary space developments. Baudrillard ([1981] 1994) describes a simulacrum as not exactly a copy or imitation of the real, but a thing that becomes a truth in itself—as it has emerged from hyperreality, which is its own truth. I believe Gilles Deleuze (1990) defined simulacra (plural of simulacrum) best when he said: “The copy is an image endowed with resemblance, the simulacrum is an image without resemblance” (257). The overarching colonial romanticism—of a rustic pioneer traveling to a distant land—that is utilized so often by NewSpace plays into similar romanticisms employed by NASA, but instead of the objectives remaining the same, the NewSpace agenda is only concerned with profits. This is why I argue that NewSpace is acting as Saturn devouring his son, simultaneously destroying and emerging as a simulacrum from the 32 hyperreality of cosmic imaginaries. In essence, NewSpace is a copy without an original —feeding off of imaginaries that are simulations and creations of their own devising. The public, in turn, is buying into this vision as if it is the only reality possible. To utilize Eco’s (1986) example above, NewSpace is Adventureland in Disneyland and NASA and other governmental agencies of “OldSpace” are the paddle-boat on the Mississippi. No one wants to wait ten years for a scientific mission when Elon Musk can bring them to Mars in half that time. However, this is not a defense of the “real.” I am a proponent of “utopic thinking,” which in itself is hinged on a dislocation from reality in order to imagine a better world. The tyranny of the so-called real—a term that is often defined by governments and corporations in order to sustain the status-quo (Collins 2008)—is precisely how NewSpace is able to invade the imaginaries of the future so easily. If one is able to dismiss a social justice minded futurologist or science fiction writer with a “Get real!” or “That could never work in reality” then it shuts down entire social theories that resist the established ideology. David Harvey (2000) discusses this in relation to alternatives to capitalism, which fits quite well when discussing the resistance to NewSpace: If the mess seems impossible to change then it is simply because there is indeed “no alternative.” It is the supreme rationality of the market versus the silly irrationality of anything else. And all those institutions that might have helped define some alternatives have other been suppressed or—with some notable exceptions, such as the church—brow-beaten into submission. (154) In the “rationality of the market” all that remains are “degenerate utopias” (Collins 2008; Marin 1993), places like the previously mentioned Disneyland, which presents itself as a utopic place, but is actually shrouding the commercial “reality”—“the Main Street façades are presented to us as toy houses and invite us to enter them, but their interior is always a disguised supermarket, where you buy obsessively, believing that you are still playing” (Eco 1986, 43). According to Eco (1986), Disneyland’s hyperreality begins when one submits to the complete “fakeness” of the simulation in order to bask in the desirous visions of the utopia that it presents. Thus it becomes completely real. I saw this attempt at creating a hyperreality at Spaceport America, with the science fiction inspired door frames and the tour guides dressed in flight suits. Elon Musk presents it to us when he utilizes a four-stage image of Mars, starting with the red planet and ending with a terraformed, Eden-like utopia of oceans and clouds and green forests; a new Earth that beckons to colonizers with new possibilities and untapped markets. This photo is a Debordian “spectacle” that establishes and mediates a social relationship with the public through images (Debord 1994). Photos like the one above are preambles to the spectacle of 1,000 ships departing to Mars every 26 months. Even if that does not become a reality, Musk and other NewSpacers have already begun to creep into the social imaginary of space and supplant their own ideologies as truth into the cosmic hyperreality, which may relate to why my survey results contained foundationally contradictory answers. These photos are part of a larger trend within the space science hyperreality. Messeri (2016) ethnographically uncovers how Martian mapmakers are creating incredibly detailed maps that are created without direct reference to the landscape, since we have never set foot there. Therefore, “the primary goal of today’s [Martian] maps is . . . to establish Mars as inviting to human explorers,” much like the images of a terraformed Mars advertised by SpaceX (Messeri 2016, 74). Like the Jorge Luis Borges short story Del rigor en la ciencia, the map precedes the territory, and the obsession of creating a perfect map makes that map the new reality (as a simulation), while the empire it’s supposed to represent—or in this case, the planet Mars—crumbles away, ceding to the hyperreality of its representation. NASA—in its neoliberal present—is enveloped within this hyperreality as well, perhaps as it recognizes the simulation that NewSpace exists within, and how powerful it can be in the sphere of public relations. However, their production of nostalgia inducing travel posters for places humans have never been are coded to invite—and exclude—certain types of futures (Messeri 2016). Namely, these futures are white, colonial, and evoke vintage 1950s–1960s travel advertisements, a period of U.S. history ripe with inequality and oppression. The political cannot be divorced from aesthetic, no matter how much opponents may try to argue against this point; I’m sorry but Foucault 33 was right. And these theoretical frameworks are the reason why I have argued for social science to take science fiction seriously, especially science fiction that does not espouse the tropes of Spencerian social theory. Science fiction writers who identify as people of color, Indigenous, women, and LGBTQI+—with enough critical mass—can create a simulation and hyperreality with their own work that forces change at the root. The power of words, of worldmaking, of placemaking that is so inherent in science fiction writing are the catalysts for social change, especially in Earth-bound space science. Furthermore, social scientists should not only embrace the political world that science fiction inhabits, but we should be working together as a collective to actively disseminate the social science that good science fiction writers are already conducting. CHAPTER 11: WHAT IS TO BE DONE? This chapter title should really be the title of the entire thesis since it is the question that I have been muttering since the beginning of this research project—except that the title has already been skillfully used by the likes of Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Vladimir Lenin. I do not think that my name has quite the prestige to fit in with the company of those gentlemen. So instead, I have decided to make it the name of my final chapter in which I try to discuss how we move forward from the rather bleak present I have divulged in these pages; but I will also throw in some radical tangents in order to keep with the titular theme. As I have argued extensively in this thesis, American imaginaries of the future are dominated by right-libertarianism. NewSpace venture capitalists like Elon Musk and Peter Thiel have latched on to futurist thinking and have the power and capital to begin enacting some of their visions. This is no surprise; engagements with the future emerged as a distinct field of social inquiry during the Cold War when neoliberal capitalism was battling state Communism for supremacy—and the political context has changed very little (Tolon 2012). However, NewSpacers depend on a climate of stress and conflict in order to justify their drastic socio-political-economic actions. For example, Peter Thiel—founder of PayPal, Facebook board member, and heavy investor in SpaceX—has said: “Because there are no truly free places left in our world, I suspect that the mode for escape must involve some sort of new and hitherto untried process that leads us to some undiscovered country; and for this reason I have focused my efforts on new technologies that may create a new space for freedom” (Gittlitz 2016, para. 8). To Thiel, and many of his right-libertarian venture capitalist revolutionary vanguard, these places are threefold: artificial island micro-nations, the Internet and cyber-communities, and outer space (Gittlitz 2016). Thiel has invested in all three of these areas and was recently placed on Trump’s transition team. Soon after Thiel’s appointment, Trump decided to divert NASA funds from climate change studies to deep space exploration. This has a lot to do with the fostering of another American frontier. As of the time of my writing this thesis, Trump has announced plans to build a wall along the United States / Mexico border. These Earthly enclosures are direct manifestations of the cosmic enclosures championed by NewSpace—and often these two proclamations are advocated by the same people in the same positions of power. Is the cosmic frontier doomed to represent the same tragedies and oppression as our Earth frontiers? Not necessarily. And here, I will begin to take a long needed—albeit brief—shift toward optimism. Today, our borderlands are places of violence, where states exert their influence in order to destroy or capitulate the Other—either figuratively or literally. However, this was not always the case. As Durrenberger (2016) has said: [In the past] the borderlands were less foreboding, places the regularizing reach of states had bypassed because they were not worth the effort. To them went those castoffs the states threw off in their great drives to define and unify: prophets, anthropologists, missionaries, and more recently revolutionaries and terrorists. Many who have lived in those areas return with stories of human potential, encouraged by what they have seen of the power of our species’ humanity. (para. 5–6) Could outer space provide a space to unleash the human potential for compassion? With the absolute vastness of the cosmos, it seems impossible—past a certain technoscientific level that I believe we are rapidly approaching—for dominant power systems like states or corporations to garner control over such enormous distances. A certain degree of anarchy—if not full fledged social anarchism or anarchistcommunism—seems to be, in my mind, an inevitability. As I have argued in previous publications, direct democracy within communities outside of the Earth’s influence seems to be the most equitable and efficient way to socially organize in a hostile environment (Genovese 2016d). Haqq-Misra (2015) proposes “liberated settlements” on Mars that reject Earthly authority and operate within their own self-determination. Philosophers, social scientists, and science fiction writers all seem to be contributing socio-political theory to this new “Space Age of Enlightenment.” With the continued generation of liberatory work, we may have a chance at chipping away at NewSpace’s hegemonic lineage of the frontier that I introduced in Chapter 6 and establish a lineage of liberation instead. In fact, I do not think that we have a choice any longer. As of this writing, as I sit behind the abrasive glow of my computer screen at 11:49pm on February 1, 2017, the United States and the world seem to be at a dangerous tipping point. The fascist creep has turned into a fascist sprint, and those that wish to claim neutrality or inaction are implicitly siding with the dominant powers that wish for nothing less than the destruction of the environment for capital gains, a stripping of what little civil protections are left, a mass defunding of all educational systems, a homogenizing of this country utilizing Nazi-era racial order schemes, a villainization of anyone who is not a right, white, Christian man, continued colonial expansion into sovereign Indigenous land while repeatedly breaking treaties, rampant hetero-patriarchy, and the list continues ad nauseam. It is our duty as anthropologists, as social scientists, as science fiction writers, as space enthusiasts, as educators, as human beings to make sure that while we are on Earth, we will fight for the weak, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised by any means necessary and with respect, ears open to the requests of those people who have suffered for years under the boots of oppression, and for whom we may have very little frame of reference in regard to their suffering under structural violence. And as we begin to journey and live away from the only place we have ever called home, we must leave into the cosmos for the right reasons—not for capital, for power, or for narcissistic perceptions of glory, but in the spirit of equity, mutual aid, love, diversity, as well as playful curiosity, and we must do it with soul, with heart, and with joy.

#### Climate adaptation is not a strategy of resistance to climate change it is a corporate strategy meant to continue to shift the image of them “going green” all while they continue to burn and extract fossil fuels – the 1AC is a corporate hegemony a desire to change the narrative of global reduction of emissions to localized adaptation – that obscures the structural causes of climate change

Nyberg, D., & Wright, C. (2019, July). Making climate change fit for capitalism: the corporate translation of climate adaptation. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2019, No. 1, p. 12618). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management. Accessed 10/6/21 CSUF JmB

For government and industry, the idea of climate adaptation and building resilience to climate impacts was immediately appealing as it promoted local, small-scale measures which demonstrated concern and tangible action in response to the negative media attention generated around coral bleaching. The discourse around ‘proactive’ and ‘practical’ responses to coral bleaching was embraced by corporate Australia which became increasingly involved in the public debate over the future of the Reef through philanthropic and advocacy activities. In particular, the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, a charity consisting of the executives of the country’s largest corporations, became the favoured choice for government funding for the Reef, with a grant of $440 million in mid-2018 directed to the organisation over traditional academic research and regulatory organizations (Rebgetz & Gartry, 2018). While critics noted the irony of an organisation run by executives from major fossil fuel companies seeking to limit the impact of climate change, the Foundation’s Chairman (a former Managing Director of oil giant Esso) argued their role was to improve the Reef’s ability to adapt and not to advocate for emissions reduction: ‘while the world works to tackle climate change on a global scale, there are many things we can and must do to build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef right now’ (Rebgetz & Gartry, 2018). Here, the coalition between levels of government and different industries became clear in its emphasis on local adaptation, rather than mitigation. The Foundation stressed its role in fund-raising within corporate Australia and encouraging public education about the Reef. This included hosting corporate retreats at luxury reef resorts (Ludlow, 2018), employee-engagement programs and a website promoting the organization’s conservation projects. As the Foundation’s strategy document outlined, donations could help partner companies ‘drive employee engagement, position them as an employer of choice, and contribute positively to reputation scoring or social licence to operate’ (Smee, 2018). One example of this was the national airline Qantas, which in a global alliance with entertainment giant Disney promoted its involvement in reef rehabilitation to its customers framed around the animated movie Finding Dory (Frame, 2016). These political activities reinforced the hegemonic coalition by promoting corporate friendly practices within the dominant market ideology. Adaptation plans emphasised corporate reputation and ‘social licence’, with business engagement with reef conservation justified upon an essentially economic logic. In a widely reported analysis in 2017 commissioned by the GBR Foundation, accountancy firm Deloitte estimated the ‘economic, social, icon and brand value’ of the Reef at $56 billion, generating $6.5 billion dollars in revenue per annum and providing up to 64,000 jobs in reef tourism, fishing and associated activities (Deloitte Access Economics, 2017). Justifying this economic exercise, the report authors noted that ‘At a time when the global natural environment is under threat from the pressures of humankind, particularly climate change, it has never been more important to understand the value of nature.’ The monetisation of the Reef in the language of the market thus provided the justification for further corporate involvement, albeit limited to small-scale local adaptation measures which neatly skirted around the fundamental issue of radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and the end of fossil fuel extraction and use. Thus, the reinforcement of the dominant coalition of business and government explicitly excluded mitigation efforts. Corporate strategies instead emphasised the monetary value of the reef and the jobs that the industries supported. The political direction then turned towards activities and practices within this clear hierarchy of values and the importance of business and corporations to ‘save’ the reef through their promotion of local adaptation practices. Corporate environmentalism and the politics of climate adaptation The focus on adaptation allowed business and government to return to the politics of what should be done within the dominant logic of a continued expansion of fossil fuel extraction and use. A powerful discourse within this discussion was the idea of building the Reef’s ‘resilience’ in the face of future climate threats. The concept of ‘resilience’ within ecology management emphasises the capacity of natural systems to both resist shocks and disasters and recover and rebound quickly from them (Nature Conservancy, 2018; Standish et al., 2014). For business-funded groups like the GBR Foundation and governments, the idea of building the Reef’s resilience to climate change impacts like coral bleaching was immediately appealing as it promoted a positive message that recovery was possible based around local action irrespective of broader climate change dynamics. This was contrasted with a focus on climate change and the mitigation of carbon emissions which was framed as ‘doom and gloom’. As a spokesperson for the peak reef tourism body outlined at a Senate inquiry into climate change impacts: ‘Bleaching is not new to the Great Barrier Reef. It's happened before, and it's bounced back. We've had cyclones before, and the reef's bounced back. The talk these days should not be about trying to save the reef, it should be more about assisting the reef to recover. That needs to be the message that gets out there. We've got to get rid of the doom and gloom and say we want to be proactive. We're going to help. We want to help the reef recover.’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, p. 26) Building the Reef’s resilience found practical expression in a broad range of local initiatives that attracted government and corporate funding and support. These included projects aimed at improving coastal water quality and limiting sediment run-off and agricultural pollution from nearby rivers, new techniques to control the coral-denuding Crown-of-Thorns starfish, and reef restoration projects including reconstruction of cyclone-damaged reef complexes and coral farming (Great Barrier Reef Foundation, 2017). As a senior airline executive argued of his firm’s involvement in one such a program: ‘So the idea of being able to sort of click your fingers and fix climate change is not available to us. But here you have a major threat to the health and resilience of the Reef [sediment control] that you can take off the table. So that was attractive. So we put our energies into that partnership.’ (Interview #21) In the aftermath of the second bleaching event, reef tourism operators even floated the idea of an engineering response to lessen future coral bleaching by pumping cooler ocean water onto selected tourist reefs. While dismissed by marine scientists as an impractical ‘band-aid solution’, the proposal won government funding for a pilot program of so-called ‘reef havens’ involving underwater fans to better circulate water on popular tourism reef sites (Knaus, 2017). Other proposals for improving reef resilience included research into coral farming, potentially breeding or genetically engineering ‘super corals’ which could better withstand warmer ocean waters, coral shading, as well as potential geo-engineering responses such as cloud brightening (Great Barrier Reef Foundation, 2017; Van Boom, 2018). Importantly, the government and industry promotion of resilience and adaptation occurred within the dominant ideology of market capitalism which was absent from discussion within the political arena. This restructuring of hegemony also incorporated new actors and subject positions for citizens to play into. For instance, while a number of leading marine scientists continued to publicly criticise the government over its failure to address climate change (Gannon, 2018), the shift of government research funding towards corporate charities like the GBR Foundation led other researchers to embrace the Reef adaptation agenda (Braverman, 2017). Corporate-funded charities also promoted the idea that citizens could help to ‘save the Reef’ by purchasing ‘green’ products and committing to avoid the use of plastic bags and straws, and reducing their food waste (McKinnon, 2018). As one tourism-sponsored charity website declared, ‘United we will inspire collaboration and collective impact on a global scale. From ditching single-use plastics to citizen science and world-leading research – everyone has a part to play.’ Thus, while acknowledging climate change as the key threat to the Reef, these appeals sought to enlist the public via social media as concerned consumers rather than politically active citizens pressuring government for meaningful emissions mitigation. The political process of shifting from mitigation to adaptation Our analysis of the corporate responses to the coral bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef established four distinct phases: i) the reactive politics of doubt, ii) the defence of the political constitution, iii) the institution of the political, and iv) the proactive politics of solutions. Theses phases show how hegemony is implicitly reproduced through the politics of interpretation and action when the hegemony is not challenged – phases (i) and (iv), while explicitly defended and instituted when the assumptions underlying the hegemony are challenged – phases (ii) and (iii). Our analysis thus shows the different aspects of politics in explaining the shift from mitigation to adaptation. In the initial phase, industry and government employed the familiar tactics of denying or seeding doubt about the link to climate change. This is the reactive politics witnessed elsewhere in discussions around climate change, where industry claims uncertainties around climate change and questions whether events can be confidently linked to global warming (Dunlap & McCright, 2011; Oreskes & Conway, 2010). These tactics represent politics, whereby a consensus is established through what appears to be free and rational discussion amongst individuals and groups of different opinions. The public debate is considered free, in that the underlying political order – the political – is not considered, and rational, given the emphasis on arguments about how to interpret events. In this first stage of response to a material climate impact, corporate activities were focussed on the demobilization of the population by seeding doubt about the impact and reemphasising the status quo. However, with the second bleaching event, the materiality of climate change undermined the politics and the effects could no longer be contained within the political debate (Nyberg & Wright, 2016). Coral bleaching became a challenge to the constituted political order and CPA changed in order to defend the hegemony. Here, the political strategy included emphasising that climate change is a global (rather than local) issue (e.g. continued reference to Australia’s ‘small’ contribution to total global carbon emissions), and highlighting the importance of the resources sector and coal mining for the Australian economy in terms of royalties, revenue and jobs. Existing business practices were shored up within the coalition of industry and government, and emissions mitigation (in the form of constraints on thermal coal export) were presented as failing to make economic sense (e.g. if Australia doesn’t export coal, another country will). The political activities in the public debate reproduced a common sense view of a global world with nations dependent on a strong economy. Certain commodities and values were defended. The defence of the hegemony was followed in a third phase by shifting the discussion from climate mitigation to adaptation and a focus upon ways to improve the Reef’s ‘resilience’, which as critics have noted ‘seems to fly in the face of any anticipatory action, instead scientifically justifying forms of inaction’ (Braverman, 2017, p. 12). This was done by reinforcing the market ideology through corporate solutions to climate change concerns. Here, government and industry actively campaigned for ‘practical’ solutions based on corporate practices to ensure that the hegemonic positions of implicated industries were instituted. The shift to adaptation shored up the political ground by establishing corporations and industry associations as key players in responding to climate change. The last phase in the politics of the Reef (until the next bleaching event) involved returning to the politics of discussing different activities in response to climate change. This involved a form of proactive politics aimed at proposing a range of local adaptation measures. The ground for this discussion – the political – was disavowed in addressing climate change through economic rationality (Wainwright & Mann, 2015). Through this process, the issue of reducing carbon emissions (mitigation) was sidelined and emphasis was placed on better coping with the physical impacts of climate disruption that were now seen as inevitable (adaptation). Alternatives to corporate solutions were rarely discussed and the assumptions underlying the politics were ignored. Together these four phases explain the process of moving from mitigation to adaptation as the dominant response to climate change. While the findings are unique to this particular case, the four phases in the process can assist in explaining climate change responses elsewhere. For example, during California’s recent record-breaking wildfires the initial political response was to question the link to climate change before shifting the emphasis to local responses such as better forest management (Fuller, 2018). Similarly, political leaders downplay the link between climate change and increasingly severe hurricanes and floods, while promoting the benefits of privatised disaster relief and better local preparedness (Newkirk, 2018). This focus on local adaptation to climate impacts is of course happening at the same time as business and governments promote the neoliberal agenda of weakening environmental protections and opening up new regions of the world for fossil fuel extraction (Klein, 2014). DISCUSSION Despite the existential threat that climate change poses to natural ecosystems and human society more generally, fossil fuel use continues to increase. Indeed, despite over thirty years of international climate change negotiation, fossil fuel consumption continues to break new records (Saxifrage, 2017). This raises the question of why our technologically advanced civilization continues it suicidal path (Kolbert, 2006)? A key factor underpinning such ‘creative selfdestruction’ is the way in which dominant economic and political elites maintain the hegemony of fossil fuel use as the engine of economic growth (Wright & Nyberg, 2015). Our focus in this paper has been to explore the political process through which this hegemony is constructed and maintained in the face of obvious material threats. Our case study of the corporate political response to coral bleaching on the GBR suggests a four-phase process of hegemony maintenance or political grounding. By explaining the political process of shifting from mitigation to adaption, we make three general contributions. First, our analysis of corporate political responses to coral bleaching on the GBR contributes to existing understandings of CPA by demonstrating how major corporations and their political allies create and maintain a ‘common sense’ view of climate change response. This was achieved through an on-going process of reactive politics, defending hegemony from critique, shifting the agenda and then proactively engaging with politics through proposed ‘solutions’. Within the hegemony of market capitalism only certain activities make sense. Climate change mitigation by prohibiting new coal mines (and taxing carbon emissions) was presented as unrealistic and pointless, with industry representatives arguing that Australia’s emissions on a planetary scale were limited and that the nation depended on the economic value of coal mining. When challenged, the political required reproduction and was shored up by industry associations and government. With mitigation not an option within corporate capitalism, responses shifted to local adaptation. New practices, products, and discourses were developed to feed into the politics of reef adaption and resilience. CPA focussed on convincing the public of the familiar ‘win-win’ discourse of corporate environmentalism in which business would provide leadership and innovation and citizens could ‘save the Reef’ by purchasing products and voicing their support on websites and social media. These solutions favoured certain actors over others, with adaptation practices defined within the acceptable boundaries of the dominant economic system. This is indirect CPA that emphasizes building and maintaining a hegemonic bloc of actors that defend and reinforce a political ground privileging corporate actors and neoliberal political policies. Fragmented corporate actors that participate individually in politics come together when hegemony is directly challenged (Nyberg et al., 2013; Walker & Rea, 2014). Despite their power, corporate interests can lose political battles in the politics of interpretation and action, but unifying threats to corporate hegemony ensure that the coalition of business interests unite to defend the political ground. Corporate power in society is then best illustrated by the unquestionable business logic driving public policy, rather than the outcome of particular policy debates. The political ground gives corporate narratives and arguments credibility in politics over public policy (Murray et al., 2016). Analytically separating politics from the political demonstrates how constituency building occurs on political grounds where the overlap between corporate and public interests are taken for granted (Nyberg & Murray, 2017) – it is established as common sense. Second, our analysis builds on the analytical distinction between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ in explaining how hegemony is constituted. Through politics, CPA mobilizes resources to coerce or manipulate other actors’ interpretations and actions. This is the episodic focus on particular events or activities within CPA (Hillman et al., 2004; Lawton et al., 2013). These episodes also challenge or reproduce a social order grounding the episodes – the political. This is the systemic form of domination that ensures that the social order appears inevitable and natural (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). When this order and relations are challenged the public debate takes different forms, with CPA supporting rationalities, hierarchies, and values (Nyberg et al., 2017). This ensures that any form of discussion or deliberation in response to climate change occurs within a taken for granted political regime (Levy et al., 2016; Nyberg et al., 2017). We can thus differentiate between the often overlapping corporate campaigns to i) influence particular public policy by direct influence such as lobbying (Lux et al., 2011) or indirect strategies such as coalition building (Murray et al., 2016), and ii) constituting a political ground where certain arguments of lobbyists make sense and actors interests are amenable to corporate interests (Nyberg et al., 2017). Finally, our study sheds light on the role of ‘disaster capitalism’ in the political economy of climate change. Environmental catastrophes are increasingly exploited by economic and political elites to further expand neoliberal agendas of privatisation, corporate deregulation and the marketisation of social relations (Klein, 2007, 2014). As demonstrated in the case of coral bleaching, climate change impacts paradoxically provide further spaces for the expansion of the very neoliberal policies that have created the climate crisis. Here, the movement from climate mitigation to adaptation allows for an expansion of corporate interests in the determination of climate response. For vulnerable communities reeling from record-breaking storms and floods, wildfires, droughts or the destruction of local ecosystems, the political response refuses to countenance the dramatic decarbonisation required to avert worsening climate impacts and rather advocates the expansion of corporate and market ‘solutions’ which facilitate further emissions growth (Sovacool & Linnér, 2016; Wright & Nyberg, 2015).

#### Cap collapsing now – most recent ev

**IMT 21** (World Perspectives 2021: a global epoch of revolution is being prepared https://www.marxist.com/a-worldwide-epoch-of-revolution-is-being-prepared.htm International Marxist Tendency 30 July 2021 Accessed 8-13-2021) CSUF JmB + meza Work Week

The nature of perspectives The present document, which should be read in conjunction with the one we produced in September 2020, will be somewhat different to world perspectives documents that we have issued in the past. In previous periods, when events were moving at a more leisurely pace, it was possible to deal, at least in outline, with many different countries. Now, however, the pace of events has accelerated to the point where in order to deal with everything, one would need a whole book. The purpose of perspectives is not to produce a catalogue of revolutionary events, but to uncover the fundamental underlying processes. As Hegel explained in the Introduction to the Philosophy of History: “It is in fact, the wish for rational insight, not the ambition to amass a mere heap of acquisitions, that should be presupposed in every case as possessing the mind of the learner in the study of science.” We are dealing here with general processes, and can only look at a few countries which serve to illustrate most clearly those processes at this stage. Other countries will, of course, be dealt with in separate articles. Dramatic events The year 2021 commenced with dramatic events. The crisis of world capitalism is making waves that are spreading from one country and continent to another. On all sides, there is the same picture of chaos, economic dislocation and class polarisation. The new year barely began before a far-right mob stormed the US Capitol Building in Washington at the urging of former US president, Donald Trump – giving the centre of Western imperialism the appearance of a failed state. These events, coupled with the vastly larger Black Lives Matter protests last summer, show how deep the polarisation of US society has become. In addition to this, big protests in India, Colombia, Chile, Belarus and Russia demonstrated the same process: the masses’ resentment is growing, and the ruling class is failing to govern in the old ways. A global crisis like no other These world perspectives are unlike any other we have dealt with in the past. They are enormously complicated by the pandemic that is hanging like a black cloud over the entire world, subjecting millions to misery, suffering and death. The pandemic still rages out of control. At the moment of writing, there have been more than 100 million cases worldwide, and almost three million deaths. These figures are unprecedented outside a world war. And they continue to rise inexorably. This terrible scourge has had a devastating effect in poor countries around the world and has also seriously affected some of the richest countries. In the USA there are 30 million cases, and the number of deaths has gone over the half a million mark. And Britain has among the highest number of deaths per head of the population: over 4 million cases, and well over 100,000 deaths. The present crisis is therefore not like an ordinary economic crisis. This is literally a life-and-death situation for millions of people. Many of these deaths could have been avoided with proper measures early on. Capitalism cannot solve the problem Capitalism cannot solve the problem: it is itself the problem. This pandemic serves to expose the intolerable divisions between rich and poor. It has revealed the deep fault lines that divide society. The line between those who are condemned to get sick and die, and those who are not. It has laid bare the wastefulness of capitalism, its chaos and inefficiency, and is preparing class struggle in every country in the world. Bourgeois politicians like to use military analogies to describe the present situation. They say we are at war with an invisible enemy, this terrible virus. They conclude that all classes and parties must unite behind the existing government. But a yawning gulf separates words from deeds. The case for a planned economy and international planning is unanswerable. The crisis is worldwide. The virus does not respect frontiers or border controls. The situation demands an international response, the pooling of all scientific knowledge and the mobilisation of all the resources of the planet to coordinate a genuine global plan of action. Instead, we have the unedifying spectacle of the row between Britain and the EU over scarce vaccines, while some of the poorest countries are virtually denied access to any vaccines at all. But why is there a scarcity of vaccines? The problems of vaccine production – to cite just one example – are a reflection of the contradiction between the urgent needs of society and the mechanisms of the market economy. If we were really at war with the virus, governments would mobilise all their resources on this one task. From a purely rational point of view, the best policy would be to ramp up vaccine production as fast as possible. Capacity needs to be expanded, which can only be done by setting up new factories. But the big private vaccine manufacturers have no interest in expanding production massively because they would be financially worse off if they did. If they ramped up production capacity so that the whole world was supplied within six months, the newly built facilities would stand empty immediately afterwards. Profits would then be much lower compared with current scenarios, where existing plants produce at capacity for years to come. Yet another obstacle to mass production of the vaccine is the refusal of Big Pharma to relinquish intellectual property rights over “their own” vaccines (in most cases developed with massive amounts of state funding) so that other companies would be able to produce them cheaply. Pharmaceutical companies are making tens of billions in profits, but problems with both production and supply mean shortages everywhere. In the meantime, millions of lives are at risk. Workers’ lives at risk In their haste to get production (and therefore profits) moving again, politicians and capitalists resort to cutting corners. Workers are sent back to crowded workplaces without adequate protection. This is equivalent to passing a death sentence on many of these workers and their families. All the hopes of the bourgeois politicians were based on the new vaccines. But the rollout of vaccines has been bungled, and the failure to control the spread of the virus – which increases the risk of new vaccine-resistant strains developing – has serious implications, not just for human lives and health, but also for the economy. Economic crisis The present economic crisis is the most severe in 300 years, according to the Bank of England. In 2020, the equivalent of 255 million jobs were lost worldwide, four times more than in 2009. The so-called emerging economies are being dragged down with the rest. India, Brazil, Russia, Turkey are all in crisis. South Korea’s economy shrank last year for the first time in 22 years. That was despite state subsidies worth about $283 billion. In South Africa, unemployment reached 32.5 percent and GDP contracted by 7.2 percent in 2020. This is a greater contraction than in 1931 during the Great Depression, and this in spite of spending the equivalent of 10 percent of GDP in a fiscal stimulus package. The crisis is plunging millions of people ever deeper into poverty. In January 2021, the World Bank estimated that 90 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty. The Economist of 26 September 2020 wrote: “The United Nations is even gloomier. It defines people as poor if they do not have access to things like clean water, electricity, sufficient food and schools for their children. “Working with researchers from Oxford University, it reckons the pandemic could cast 490 million in 70 countries into poverty, reversing almost a decade of gains.” The United Nations’ World Food Programme put it in these terms: “Across 79 countries with WFP operational presence and where data are available, up to 270 million people are estimated to be acutely food insecure or at high risk in 2021, an unprecedented 82 percent increase from pre-pandemic levels.” This alone gives one an idea of the global scale of the crisis. In addition to the effects of the pandemic, the global ecological crisis will likely aggravate this situation, fuelling poverty and food insecurity. Capitalist exploitation of the environment threatens to put key ecological systems on the edge of collapse. We have seen an increase in conflicts over scarce water resources and environmental destruction that will inevitably lead to social instability and massive climate migration. The general instability around the world is organically linked to growing poverty. It is both cause and effect. It is the most fundamental underlying cause of many of the wars and civil wars taking place. Ethiopia is just one example of this. Ethiopia was presented as a model. In the period of 2004 to 2014 its economy was growing by 11 percent a year, and it was seen as a country to invest in. Now it has been thrown into turmoil with the outbreak of fighting in Tigray province, where 3 million people are in need of emergency food relief. This is not an isolated case. The list of countries affected by wars in the past period is very long, and the catalogue of human suffering appalling: Afghanistan: two million deaths; Yemen: 100,000 deaths; the Mexican drug wars have led to over 250,000 killed; the war against the Kurds in Turkey, 45,000 deaths; Somalia, 500,000 deaths; Iraq, at least one million deaths; South Sudan around 400,000 deaths. In Syria, the United Nations estimated the number of deaths at 400,000, but this seems too low. The real figure may never be known but is sure to be 600,000 at least. In the terrible civil wars in the Congo, probably over four million people perished. But there again, nobody knows the real figure. More recently we had the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. And so the list goes on and on. Such things are no longer considered suitable for the front pages of newspapers. But they express very clearly what Lenin once said: Capitalism is horror without end. The continued existence of capitalism threatens to create the conditions of barbarism in one country after another. A crisis of the regime From a Marxist point of view, the study of economics is not an abstract academic question. It has a profound effect on the development of consciousness of all classes. Everywhere we look now there is a crisis, not just an economic crisis, but a crisis of the regime. There are clear indications that the crisis is so severe, so deep, that the ruling class is losing control of the traditional instruments they used in the past for running society. As a result, the ruling class finds itself increasingly unable to control events. That is particularly clear in the case of the USA. But it also applies to many other countries. It is sufficient to mention the names of Trump, Boris Johnson and Bolsonaro to underline the point. USA The USA now occupies a central place in world perspectives. For a very long time, revolution in the richest and most powerful nation on earth seemed to be a very distant prospect. But the USA was hit very hard by the world economic crisis and now everything has been turned upside down. 68 million Americans filed for unemployment during the pandemic, and as always it is the poorest and most vulnerable, especially the people of colour, who suffer most. The scourge of unemployment falls most heavily on the shoulders of the youth. A quarter of under-25s have been thrown out of work. Their future has suddenly been taken away. The American dream has become the American nightmare. This dramatic change has forced many people, old and young, to reconsider views that they previously considered sacrosanct and question the very nature of the society in which they live. The rapid rise of Bernie Sanders at one end of the political spectrum and Donald Trump at the other set the red light flashing for the ruling class. This kind of thing was not supposed to happen! Alarmed at the danger posed by this situation, the ruling class was compelled to take emergency measures. Let us remind ourselves that, according to the official dogma of bourgeois economists, the state was not supposed to play any part in economic life. But faced with looming disaster, the ruling class was forced to throw all the accepted economic theories into the dustbin. The same state which, according to free-market theory, should play little or no role in economic life, has now become the only thing propping up the capitalist system. In all countries, starting with the USA, the so-called free market economy is really on a life support system, like a coronavirus patient. Most of the money handed out by the state went straight into the pockets of the rich. But the ruling class feared the political consequences of yet another corporate bailout. They therefore gave grants to every resident and massively boosted unemployment benefits. This cushioned the impact of the crisis on the poorest layers. At some point, these supports will be cut back or withdrawn altogether. We have the paradox of the most terrible poverty in the richest country in the world existing side by side with the most obscene wealth and luxury. By October 2020, more than one in five American households did not reliably have enough money for food. Food banks are proliferating. Inequality and polarisation Levels of inequality have broken all records. The gulf between rich and poor has become transformed into an unbridgeable abyss. In 2020 the wealth of the world’s billionaires grew by $3 .9 trillion. The Nasdaq 100 index is 40 percent higher than before the pandemic. Listed global equities, as of February 2021 had risen in value by $24 trillion since March of 2020. The average chief executive of an S&P 500 company earns 357 times as much as the average non-supervisory worker. The ratio was around 20 in the mid-1960s. It was still 28 at the end of Ronald Reagan’s term in 1989. To quote just one example, Jeff Bezos now makes more money per second than the typical US worker makes in a week. This takes America back to the times of the capitalist robber barons that Theodore Roosevelt denounced before the First World War. And this has an effect. All the demagogy about the ‘national interest’, that ‘we must unite to fight the virus’, ‘we are all in the same boat’, stands exposed as the vilest hypocrisy. The masses are prepared to make sacrifices under certain circumstances. In times of war, people are prepared to unite to fight a common enemy, that is true. They are prepared, at least temporarily, to accept lower living standards and also, to some extent, restrictions on democratic rights. But the gulf separating the haves from the have-nots is deepening the social and political polarisation and creating an explosive mood in society. It undermines all the efforts to create a sensation of national unity and solidarity, which is the main line of defence for the ruling class. Federal Reserve statistics show that the richest tenth in the US had a net worth of $80.7 trillion at the end of 2020. That means 375 percent of GDP and far above historical levels. A five percent tax on that would yield $4 trillion, or one fifth of GDP. It would pay for all the costs of the pandemic. But the rich robber barons have no intention of sharing their plunder. Most of them (including Donald J Trump) show a marked disinclination to paying any tax at all, let alone five percent. The only solution would be the expropriation of the bankers and capitalists. This idea will inevitably gain more and more support, sweeping away the remaining prejudices against socialism and communism, even among those layers of workers who have been bamboozled by the demagogy of Trump. This is already causing concern among the serious strategists of capital. Mary Callaghan Erdoes, head of assets and wealth management for JP Morgan, drew the inevitable conclusion: “You’re going to get a very high risk of extremism coming out of this. We have to find some way to adapt, otherwise we’re in a very dangerous situation.” The assault on the Capitol The attack on the Capitol on 6 January was a graphic indication that what the USA now faces is not a crisis of government, but a crisis of the regime itself. These events were neither a coup nor an insurrection, but they glaringly exposed the raw anger that exists in the depths of society and also the emergence of deep rifts in the state. At bottom, what they indicate is that the polarisation in society has reached a critical point. The institutions of bourgeois democracy are being tested to destruction. There is a burning hatred of the rich and powerful, the bankers, Wall Street and the Washington establishment in general (“the swamp”). This hatred was skilfully channelled by the right-wing demagogue, Donald Trump. Of course, Trump himself is only the most cunning and voracious alligator in the swamp. He is merely pursuing his own interests. But in doing so, he seriously damaged the interests of the ruling class as a whole. He has played with fire and conjured up forces that neither he, nor anyone else, can control. By word and deed, Trump was destroying the legitimacy of bourgeois institutions and creating huge instability. That is why the ruling class and its political representatives everywhere are horrified by his conduct. The impeachment The Democrats tried to impeach Trump, accusing him of organising an insurrection. But they predictably failed to get the Senate to convict him, which would have barred him from standing for public office in future. Most Republican senators would have been very glad to do this. They hate and fear this political upstart. And they knew very well who was behind the events of 6 January. The Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell delivered a damning verdict on the ex-President, after voting to acquit him. In reality, he and the other Republican senators were terrified of the reaction of Trump’s angry followers if they took that fateful step. They decided that discretion is the better part of valour and, holding their noses, voted not guilty. But if this was an attempted insurrection it was a very poor one. Rather than an insurrection, it resembled a large-scale riot. The mob of angry Trump supporters burst into the Capitol with the obvious connivance of at least some of the guards. But, having easily gained possession of the Holy of Holies of US bourgeois democracy, they had not the faintest idea of what to do with it. The disorganized and leaderless mob milled around aimlessly, trashing anything they took a dislike to and shouting bloodthirsty threats against Democrat Nancy Pelosi, Republican vice-President Mike Pence and Mitch McConnell, who they accused of betraying Trump. Meanwhile, the insurrectionaries’ Commander-in-Chief had conveniently disappeared. If history repeats itself, first as a tragedy and then as a farce, this was a farce of the purest water. In the end, nobody was hanged or sent to the guillotine. Tired out by so much shouting, the “insurrectionists” went home quietly or retired to the nearest bar to get drunk and boast of their courageous exploits, leaving behind nothing more threatening than a pile of rubbish and a few bruised egos. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the ruling class, it set a dangerous precedent for the future. Ray Dalio, founder of the world’s largest hedge fund, Bridgewater Associates, had this to say: “We’re on the brink of a terrible civil war. The US is at a tipping point in which it could go from manageable internal tension to revolution.” The storming of the Capitol was a serious warning to the ruling class. And this will undoubtedly have consequences. Despite a barrage of media hostility, 45 percent of registered Republicans thought that it was justified. But this has to be compared with the far more significant fact that 54 percent of all Americans thought that the burning down of the Minneapolis police precinct was justified. And 10 percent of the whole population took part in the Black Lives Matter protests – 20,000 times more than those who stormed the Capitol. All this shows the rapid growth of social and political polarisation in the United States. The spontaneous uprisings that swept the USA from coast to coast following the murder of George Floyd, and the unparalleled events that preceded and followed the presidential elections marked a turning point in the entire situation. Changes in consciousness The stupid liberals and reformists naturally understand nothing of what is happening. They only see the surface of events, without understanding the deeper currents that are flowing strongly beneath the surface and impelling the waves. They constantly shout about fascism, by which they mean anything they dislike or fear. About the real nature of fascism, they know absolutely nothing. That goes without saying. But by constantly harping on the “danger to democracy” (by which they mean formal bourgeois democracy) they sow confusion and prepare the ground for class collaboration under the flag of “the lesser evil”. Their support for Joe Biden in the USA is a very clear example of this. What we have to take account of is that Trump’s base has a very heterogeneous and contradictory character. It contains a bourgeois wing, headed by Trump himself, and a large number of reactionary petty bourgeois, religious fanatics and openly fascist elements. But we must remember that Trump received 74 million votes in the last election and many of these were working-class people who previously voted for Obama but are disillusioned with the Democrats. When they are interviewed, they say: “Washington doesn’t care about us! We’re the forgotten people!” There are violent swings to the left and also to the right. Nature abhors a vacuum, however, and because of the complete bankruptcy of the reformists, including the left reformists, this mood of anger and frustration has been capitalised upon by right-wing demagogues, so-called populists. In the USA we have the phenomenon of Trumpism. in Brazil we saw the rise of Bolsonaro.

#### Collapse creates sustainable living

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In October 2011, I visited the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of International Affairs to give a talk entitled "What's Your 12 × 12?" In the audience were professionals and intellectuals from more than a dozen developing countries. I was expecting a wholesale rejection of the "voluntary simplicity" concept. After all, these were all successful developing-country elites who were benefiting from rapid economic growth and increasing prosperity. But the **overwhelming consensus** in the room was that reducing consumption is more than a survival imperative. It **is actually a more desirable way to live**. One audience member, a thirty-something man from China, described the contentedness of his childhood, growing up in a 10-foot-by-15-foot house -- the solidarity it brought, the freedom from clutter and distraction. Others spoke of the need to ratchet up living standards, but only to a point that would allow for an intelligent, holistic balance between doing and being -- just enough, and not more, food, shelter, fresh air, family and friendship. At a certain point in my "development" career, I began to question the whole notion of impoverishment. Indeed, most of the so-called "impoverished beneficiaries" of my programs seemed better off than me. They wore bigger smiles. They engaged more easily in the moment. Through their kinship networks and close relationship with the land, they achieved a greater sense of meaning and purpose. I talked with these folks everywhere from the Gambian coast to the Amazon, and the vast majority told me they would not trade their lifestyle -- with its simplicity and rootedness -- for mine, despite the obvious difference in wealth and mobility. I do not mean to glorify material destitution. I've spent many hours with some of the millions of people for whom a 12 × 12 would represent an unattainable level of prosperity -- luxury, even. They live zero-by-zero, with no lush organic gardens, no gently flowing creek, no shelter at all. They live in what you might call the Fourth World -- those anarchic, failed places where community and basic necessities have been decimated by war, famine, and natural disaster. So, when discussing relatively "poorer" countries, I always make a clear, explicit distinction between people living in a state of material destitution and people living healthy subsistence lifestyles. There's a point where one's material life is in balance -- possessing neither too much nor too little. Roughly one-fifth of humanity has too much and is overdeveloped; another fifth or so has too little, and is underdeveloped. Neither of these groups experiences general well-being. The former can rarely experience the simple joy of being. The latter are so destitute that they can't sustain their bodies physically. Fortunately, the third group -- those with enough -- is by far the largest. It is what I redefine as "sustainably developed," ranging from subsistence livelihoods like the Mayans of Guatemala to the economic level of the average Western European in 1990. By this rough calculation, **60 percent of the world lives sustainably**. In other words, if everyone lived as they did, our one planet would suffice to feed, clothe, shelter, and absorb the waste of everyone.

neither that of one party nor of another. It traverses all discourses without them wanting it to.

#### When confronted with the ethical injunction of the aff, respond with “I would prefer not to”—vote neg on presumption

Baudrillard 98 (Jean, Ex-Prof of Media and Philosophy @ EGS, Paroxysm, p 60//shree)

JB: The paradox of liberation is that the people liberated are never the ones you think: children, slaves, women or colonial peoples. It’s always the others liberating themselves from them, getting rid of them in the name of a principle of freedom and emancipation. Hence the dramatic concern of children to ensure that parents don’t stop being parents, or at least that they do so as late as possible. Hence the collective concern to beg the State not to stop being the State, to force it to take on its role, whereas it’s constantly trying to relinquish that role—and with good reason. The State is constantly ‘liberating’ the citizens, urging them to look after themselves—something they generally don’t want to do at all. In this sense, we’re all potential Bartlebys: ‘I would prefer not to’. Be free! Be responsible! Take responsibility for yourself!—‘I would prefer not to’. Preferring not to, rather than willing something (Philippe Lancon, Liberation). Preferring not to any more. Not to run any more, or compete, or consume, and not, at any price, to be free. This is all part of the pattern of a repentance of modernity, of a subtle indifference which senses the dangers of a responsibility and an emancipation which are too good to be true. Hence the currently triumphant sentimental, familial, political and moral revisionism, which can take on the more violent aspect of a ‘reactionary’ hatred of oneself or others, the product of the disillusionment that follows liberatory violence. This opposite tide, this ‘regressive’ resublimation, is the contemporary form—and, so to speak, the consequence—of the repressive desublimation analysed by Marcuse. Decidedly, freedom isn’t simple, and liberation even less so.

## Case

### Adv

#### Moon dust stops moon basing.

Niiler 21 Eric Niiler “The Next Big Challenge for Lunar Astronauts? Moon Dust” 08.19.2021 <https://www.wired.com/story/the-next-big-challenge-for-lunar-astronauts-moon-dust/> SM

AS NASA AND private space companies prepare to send equipment—and eventually astronauts—back to the moon, they are facing a nearly invisible threat to any future lunar outpost: tiny particles of dust. Ground-up lunar rock, known as regolith, clogs drills and other delicate instruments, and it's so sharp that it scratches space suits. Because the dust absorbs sunlight, it can also overheat sensitive electronics. Dust particles also pose a health risk. Even though Apollo-era astronauts only went outside during a few days on each mission, some reported burning eyes and stuffy nasal passages when they returned from moon walks and took off their dust-covered space suits inside the capsule. Images from the Apollo 17 mission, which focused on geology and featured seven-hour trips in the lunar rover, show astronaut Gene Cernan’s face covered in dust, like some outer space coal miner. During a technical briefing when he returned to Earth, Cernan told NASA officials that lunar dust was nothing to sneeze at. "I think dust is probably one of our greatest inhibitors to a nominal operation on the moon,” Cernan said. “I think we can overcome other physiological or physical or mechanical problems, except dust." The grit clogged the radiators that removed heat and carbon dioxide from space suits and wore a hole in the knee of Cernan’s outer space suit, according to Phil Abel, who researches moon dust as manager of the Tribology and Mechanical Components Branch at NASA’s Glenn Research Center. (Tribology is the study of wear and friction.) The Apollo 17 astronauts brought dust into the capsule, where it smelled like gunpowder and caused lunar module pilot Harrison Schmitt to have hay fever symptoms, according to a report from a NASA workshop on lunar dust in 2020. Here’s how one Apollo 12 astronaut described what happened when he returned to the lunar module after a walk on the moon: “The [module] was filthy dirty and had so much dust that when I took my helmet off, I was almost blinded. Junk immediately got into my eyes.” (The quote appears in a 2009 NASA report entitled “The Risk of Adverse Health Effects From Lunar Dust Exposure.”) Researchers at Stony Brook University exposed human lung and brain cells to lunar dust and found that it killed 90 percent of the cells, according to a study published in the journal GeoHealth in 2018. In fact, respiratory health is a top concern if and when humans return to the moon, according to Abel. “These particles get lodged down deep in your lungs, and that’s a long-term health risk,” Abel says. “There was some concern at the time that if we had needed to do more on the moon’s surface, some of the space suits would have started to leak at too high a rate. It’s something we have been working on to improve.”

#### The asteroid impact threat is propaganda meant to legitimize continued research into incredibly powerful militarized technologies—turning the debate away from existential threats is the only way to develop peaceful solutions and divorce science from militarization

Mellor 07. **–** (Felicity, PhD Theoretical Physics Newcastle University, *Colliding Worlds: Asteroid Research and the Legitimization of War in Space,* Social Studies of Science, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Aug., 2007), pp. 499-531, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2547453>, SUSSMAN, PDF)

During the 1980s and 1990s, a small group of planetary scientists and astronomers set about actively promoting the asteroid impact threat. They drew on an expanded empirical base, but also on narratives of technologi cal salvation. Despite their concerns that their warnings were greeted by a 'giggle factor' and that funding remained too low, they succeeded in cap turning the attention of the media and of some policy-makers and in establishing the impact threat as a legitimate and serious topic for scientific study. By the eve of the new millennium, the meaning of asteroids had undergone a significant transformation. Asteroids had gone from being distant relics of Solar System history to being a hidden enemy that could strike at any time with catastrophic consequences. The reconceptualization of asteroids was accompanied by a reconceptualization of both space and astronomy. In Newtonianism, space had been conceived as an empty geometrical abstraction in which God's handiwork was displayed to the knowing observer. Space was both predictable and dis tant. Now, with the promotion of the impact threat, space was configured as the source of an enemy against which we must defend ourselves. This threatening conception of space matched the conception of space as a theatre of war promoted by the supporters of SDI. Space had become a place, a technologized location for human action where wars could be fought and human salvation sought. Thus astronomy was also reconceptualized. Further developing the violent metaphors already appropriated by impact-extinction theory (Davis, 2001), astronomers recast their role as impassioned prophets of doom and saviours of mankind rather than as cold calculators of cosmic order. Traditionally, Solar System astronomy had dealt with the grand narratives of planetary history and the timeless certainties of celestial dynamics. The technologies of astronomy - telescopes and, later, space probes - were the tools through which new knowledge had been sought. They were not, on the whole, instruments of action. Now, however, astronomy was to be prophetic and interventionist. As comets had been in a far earlier period, both asteroids and comets were now treated as 'monsters' - portents of Earthly calamities. It was the purpose of planetary astronomy to watch for these portents. Equally, it was the duty of astronomers to warn the unsuspecting public and to intervene to save the world. Planetary astronomy was transformed from the passive observation of the heavens to the active surveillance of the heavens, and the instruments of astronomy were to be supplemented with the technologies of war. By the 1980s and 1990s, asteroid science, defence science and science fiction all presented space as an arena for technological intervention where an invisible enemy would be defeated for the greater good of mankind. Science fiction provided a culturally available resource that could give con crete form to the ideas of both asteroid scientists and weapons designers. Through narrative, the timeless and universal speculations of science could be converted into a specific sequence of events. By drawing on narratives of technological salvation, asteroid scientists made their case more compelling, but they also became dependent on narrative scenarios shared by the defence scientists. Even as the scientists themselves attempted to pull back from concrete proposals for weapons systems, their own discourse irresistibly drew them towards the militaristic intervention demanded by the narrative impera tive. The identification of asteroids as a threat required a military response. Astronomer Duncan Steel (2000b), writing about the impact threat in The Guardian newspaper, put it most clearly when he stated that 'we too need to declare war on the heavens'. Just as the overlap between science and science fiction was mutually supportive, so the overlap between impact science and defence helped legitimize both. The civilian scientists could draw on a repertoire of metaphors and concepts already articulated by the defence scientists to help make the case for the threat from space. They would no longer be a marginalized and underfunded group of astronomers, but would take on the ultimate role of defending the world. Similarly, in the context of the impact threat, the defence scientists could further develop their weapons systems without being accused of threatening the delicate nuclear balance of mutually assured destruction or, in the period between the fall of the Soviet Union and the 9/11 attacks, of irresponsibly generating a climate of fear in the absence of an identifiable enemy. The civilian scientists attempted to still their consciences in their deal ings with the defence scientists by suggesting that, with the end of the Cold War and the demise of SDI, the latter had lost their traditional role. This argument was naive at best. In fact, as we have seen, the US defence scientists had taken an interest in the impact threat since the early 1980s, from the time that SDI had greatest political support during the defence build-up of the Reagan era. Even at the time of the fractious Interception Workshop, George H.W. Bush was maintaining SDI funding at the same level as it had been during the second Reagan administration. If outwardly the Clinton administration was less supportive when it took office in 1993 and declared that SDI was over, many of those involved in the programme felt that it would actually go on much as before (FitzGerald, 2000: 491). SDI was renamed, and to some extent reconceived, but funding continued and was soon increased when the Republicans gained a majority in Congress.33 After George W. Bush took office in 2001, spending on missile defence research was greatly increased, including programmes to follow on from Brilliant Pebbles (Wall, 2001a; 2001b). Thus the defence scientists had shown an interest in the impact threat from the time of the very first meeting onwards, regardless of the state of funding for missile defence, which in any case continued throughout the This is not to suggest that the impact threat was not used by the defence scientists as a means of maintaining the weapons establishment. Indeed, the impact threat offered a possible means of circumventing or undermining arms treaties.34 But it does mean that the attempt to access new sources of funding, while being an important factor in the promotion of asteroids as a threat, did not fully explain either the weapons scientists' interests or the civilian scientists' repeated meetings with them. The asteroid impact threat offered a scientifically validated enemy onto which could be projected the fears on which a militaristic culture depends. Far from providing a replacement outlet for weapons technologies, the pro motion of the asteroid impact threat helped make the idea of war in space more acceptable and helped justify the continued development of space based weaponry. Arguably, with the Clementine and Deep Impact mis sions, the asteroid impact threat even facilitated the testing of SDI-style systems. The asteroid impact threat legitimized a way of talking, and thinking, that was founded on fear of the unknown and the assumption that advanced technology could usher in a safer era. In so doing, it resonated with the politics of fear and the technologies of permanent war that are now at the centre of US defence policy. In this post-Cold War period, scholars of the relation between military and civilian science need to examine carefully claims about 'ploughshare' or 'conversion' technologies. New technologies arise not just out of fund ing and policy decisions, but also out of the social imaginaries in which new weapons can be imagined and construed as necessary. Concepts such as 'dual use' or 'cover' also need to be assessed critically.35 One way of characterizing the Clementine missions would be as dual-use technologies whose scientific aims served as cover for the testing of SDI technologies. Yet this fails to reveal the ways in which these missions were just one concrete output of a more **fundamental conceptual alliance between weapons designers and astronomers.** In this paper, I have attempted to show that by also considering the narrative context in which such initiatives are located, it is possible to throw some light on the cultural web that binds civilian science to military programmes. But the focus on narrative also begs a question: Which stories would we prefer to frame our science? Should science be driven by fear or by curiosity? Should it be aimed at creating technologies of war or cultures of compassion? These are normative questions, but they are also precisely the questions that make the military influence on science such an important issue. Narratives are inherently ideological and a refusal to see them as such does no more to enhance the scholar's objectivity than it does the scien tist's. The stories told by the asteroid scientists led them into collaborations with weapons scientists and helped fuel a discourse of fear that **served a particular ideological purpose**. This should be both recognized and challenged, not for the sake of regaining some impossible ideal of an undistorted science but because there are other stories, based on different ideological assumptions, that we could tell in order to guide science towards more peaceful ends.

### Framing

#### The 1AC’s try or die extinction scenario is a form of sublime rhetoric that compels us to endlessly repeat the failed project of Empire through confirmation bias. In the face of the incalculable violence of capitalism, the only response is to prioritize imperial violence over try or die risk calculus. Only de-linking existential risk calculus from instrumentality can break the cycle of political tautology.

Matheson 17 [Calum, Assoc. Prof Communication @ Pitt, “The sublime rhetoric of Pascal’s wager,” Argumentation and Advocacy Vol. 0, Iss. 0,0, Sep 2017, <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/CTPGbVmNAmtvfJPI8Q86/full>//ak47]

The form of Pascal's wager has been adapted outside of its explicitly religious context. It perennially crops up in debates over important public political decisions, from space exploration (Bostrom 2003 Bostrom, N. 2003. “Astronomical Waste: The Opportunity Cost of Delayed Technological Development.” Utilitas 15 (2): 308–314. ) and asteroid collisions (Matheny 2007 Matheny, J. 2007. “Reducing the Risk of Human Extinction.” Risk Analysis 27 (5): 1334–1345. [Google Scholar] , 1340–1342) to climate change (Hurka 1993 Hurka, T. 1993. “Ethical Principles.” In Ethics and Climate Change: The Greenhouse Effect, edited by H. Coward and T. Hurka, 23–38. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. , 25) and anything else potentially covered by the precautionary principle.1 [Footnote 1: Those with recent experience in intercollegiate policy debate should recognize the logic of Pascal's wager in the “try or die” arguments that dominate its risk calculus in debates over the desirability of hypothetical plans and the attendant necessity to describe the outcomes of any decision in terms of possible human extinction, whether the topic revolves around military deployment, subsidies for agriculture, or decriminalizing prostitution in the United States. End footnote 1] Chief amongst these is nuclear weapons. Most clearly articulated in Jonathan Schell's (1982 Schell, J. 1982. The Fate of the Earth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. ) Fate of the Earth and modified in Dick Cheney's “One Percent Doctrine,” the logic of the wager features in calculations of the catastrophic, but relatively unlikely, prospect of nuclear destruction. But despite its continued iteration, the logic of Pascal's wager is far from uncontroversial. A great number of critics over the years have shown that Pascal's argument is fundamentally unsound whether or not God exists. Indeed, as a logical proof the wager has few defenders. How then might we account for its persistence? What political possibilities does the trope afford? To answer these questions, this article will examine Pascal's original wager and the logical objections to it with reference to debates over nuclear weapons. My central argument is that Pascal's wager is best understood as an example of the rhetorical sublime. In making this case, I will link the sublime to Paul de Man's observations on the undecidability of grammar and rhetoric. Critics of Pascal have often interpreted his wager grammatically as a logical argument for belief rather than rhetorically as a use of trope to establish the impossibility of logical argument. Even those who identify rhetoric at work in Pascal's wager tend to analyze it in terms of rational persuasion, oftentimes with some distrust. However, Pascal's rhetorical method in the wager is more akin to the sublime style of Longinus (1991 Longinus. 1991. On Great Writing (On the Sublime). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company. ) than the rational persuasion of Aristotelian logos, a result of the negative theology that informed Pascal's approach to the subject of God. The wager's power comes not from its mathematical consistency or reasoned argument but rather its stark presentation of infinity as something that exceeds reason itself in some measure and forces the potential believer to confront what exceeds logic itself. The outcome of this discussion matters because it implicates modern-day uses of the wager's argumentative structure and the sublime more generally. Appeals to act in the face of enormous, but enormously unlikely, threats cannot be effectively resisted by simply disputing the logic of their calculation, nor are they productive roadmaps for politics as conventionally understood. Rather, these arguments should be read in relation to Pascal's original theological motive as efforts to overwhelm auditors with the appeal to values and forces beyond their ability to comprehend or calculate with reason alone. Like Pascal's wager, the sublime also has its critics, and the nuclear example suggests that it might be particularly threatening in combination with Pascal's wager. However, the wager might also be read as evidence that the sublime also presents opportunities for political critique. Although Schell and Cheney's opposite deployments of the infinite demonstrate that aporia may result, Pascal's sublime rhetoric should not be dismissed. Indecision can also gesture towards political possibilities beyond rational, orderly politics. This essay will proceed in four parts. First, it will elaborate the structure and context of Pascal's original wager in the Pensées and the logical objections to it with the aim of recovering Pascal's reputation as a rhetorician employing a powerful trope, rather than a mathematician systematizing belief. Second, it will discuss Jonathan Schell's famous appeal for nuclear abolition in his book Fate of the Earth and Dick Cheney's so-called “One Percent Doctrine” against terrorism as contemporary uses of the wager's logical structure. Third, it will analyze the wager in terms of its sublime rhetoric and the influence of negative theology on Pascal's work. Finally, it will conclude with a discussion of the appeal to infinity as an argumentative strategy and the challenges of the sublime as an aspect of political rhetoric. Pascal's wager When he died at the age of 39, Blaise Pascal was in the midst of a project (or projects) of apology for the Christian faith. Although the work was never completed, it was ultimately to be assembled as the Pensées, a “mildly heretical” treatise reflecting Pascal's Jansenist conviction (Velchik 2009 Velchik, M. 2009. “Pascal's Wager is a Lie: An Epistemic Interpretation of the Ultimate Pragmatic Argument.” Aporia 19 (2): 1–8. , 1). Much of the book concerns the fallen state of humanity and the inability to directly contemplate the “hidden God,” the motive force of the universe that exists beyond the realms of speech and rational cognition. Pascal's work was inspired by the events of November 23 1654, eight years prior to his death, which he christened the “Night of Fire.” Vividly described in the Pensées, the Night of Fire was a two-hour long religious vision which he interpreted as a revelation of God (Ludwin 2001 Ludwin, D. 2001. Blaise Pascal's Quest for the Ineffable. New York: Peter Lang. , xi). Unable to communicate this experience directly, Pascal nevertheless endeavored to reach unbelievers with his brand of Jansenist Catholicism. One result was his famous wager, which Westel (1995 Westel, D. (1995). Pascal and Disbelief: Catechesis and Conversion in the Penseés. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press. , 13) has suggested would have been near the beginning of the assembled Penseés based on Pascal's notes and more recent textual scholarship. There is “not one inkling of doubt” that the final project was intended as an extended Christian apology (Westel 1995 Westel, D. (1995). Pascal and Disbelief: Catechesis and Conversion in the Penseés. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press. , 18) with the wager as a key element.22. Pascal himself was not the first to propose such an argument (Ryan 1994 Ryan, J. 1994. “The Wager in Pascal and Others.” In Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager, edited by J. Jordan, 11–20. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefied. ), but his formulation of it is the most complete, widely known, studied, and influential and is therefore the most appropriate target for analysis. Also, although the wager argument did not originate with Pascal, Patricia Topliss has argued that its mathematical expression did, which again makes it a key analogue for later, secular iterations (Topliss 1966 Topliss, P. 1966. The Rhetoric of Pascal: A Study of his Art of Persuasion in the Provinciales and the Pensées. Leicester: Leicester University Press. , 193–194). As Westel notes, “apology” applies a modern concept which Pascal would have understood somewhat differently. “‘Either God is or he [sic] is not,’” Pascal (2003 Pascal, B. 2003. Pensées [Kindle version].. Amazon.com . (Original work published 1670). ) wrote. “Reason cannot decide this question. Infinite chaos separates us. At the far end of this infinite distance a coin is being spun which will come down heads or tails. How will you wager? Reason cannot make you choose either, reason cannot prove either wrong” (122). Because the proposition that God is real cannot be proven or disproven, neither decision is clearly correct. But some decision must be made, because one either believes or does not – “you are already committed,” as Pascal put it (2003 Pascal, B. 2003. Pensées [Kindle version].. Amazon.com . (Original work published 1670). , 122).33. This reflects the Jansenist emphasis on individual faith as an element of salvation, a doctrinal commitment opposed by the Jesuits. View all notes Pascal argues that four outcomes are possible – that God exists and I believe, that God exists and that I do not believe, that God does not exist but I believe, and that God does not exist and I do not believe. These outcomes can be mapped onto a decision matrix, and indeed Pascal is considered one of the progenitors of decision theory for his analysis of alternative choices (Jordan 1994a Jordan, J. 1994a. “Introduction.” In Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager, edited by J. Jordan, 1–10. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefied. , 3). Although Pascal implied a 50% probability of God's existence (assuming that the coin he described is fair), the most significant aspect of his argument is that probability itself is unimportant for this particular decision. Because the rewards for belief if God is real are “an eternity of life and happiness” while the potential losses of false belief are finite, the potential benefits of belief outweigh any drawback. “[T]hough there were an infinite number of chances,” Pascal (2003 Pascal, B. 2003. Pensées [Kindle version].. Amazon.com . (Original work published 1670). ) wrote, “of which only one were in your favor,” one would be right to wager if “there were an infinity of infinitely happy life to be won.” But the chance of God's existence is not one-in-infinity, but some finite fraction: “there is an infinity of infinitely happy life to be won, one chance of winning against a finite number of chances of losing, and what you are staking is finite” (123–124). That Pascal describes the bet in terms of “lives” bet and won only eases the way for its adaptation to public policy questions. Pascal's argument here is not that God exists, but that given the non-zero chance that God exists multiplied by the infinite reward of correct belief, it is rational to act as if God exists. It is rational to believe because of the expected value of this course of action, and if the “passions” prevent “reason” from convincing the gambler, then behaving like one believes by “taking holy water, having masses said, and so on” will eventually lead one to belief (Pascal 2003 Pascal, B. 2003. Pensées [Kindle version].. Amazon.com . (Original work published 1670). , 124). Pascal also argues that the salubrious effects of a pious lifestyle are worth the attendant loss of hedonistic pleasures even without the infinite rewards of Heaven (125). Eventually, as these boons accumulate and the convert behaves in a pious fashion, the repetition of worship will instill genuine faith and fear for one's immortal soul: “Anyone who grows accustomed to faith believes it, and can no longer help fearing hell, and believes nothing else” (126). The fear of hell adds a dimension of infinite suffering as an alternative to infinite happiness, and it is this negative incentive that is often echoed in secular incarnations of the wager. Leaving aside the moral objections to Pascal's wager, the logic of this argument has been attacked in a number of ways. One objection is that because many gods – perhaps an infinite number of them – are possible, Pascal cannot do more than argue that atheism and agnosticism are irrational, which does not prove that Catholicism is correct (Jordan 1994b Jordan, J. 1994b. “The Many Gods Objection.” In Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager, edited by J. Jordan, 1–10. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefied.). The argument that any small probability with an infinite impact should be assessed as infinite creates an obvious difficulty when two infinitely important outcomes – one good, one bad – are compared against one another. Suppose that choosing the wrong god results in damnation by the right one. On which god does one then decide? The result is either paralysis, which Pascal rejects with his insistence that some choice is inescapable, or an assessment that returns to probability, making the appeal to infinity moot (Schlesinger 1994 Schlesinger, G. 1994. “A Central Theistic Argument.” In Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager, edited by J. Jordan, 83–100. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefied, 89). At this point, Patricia Topliss (1966 Topliss, P. 1966. The Rhetoric of Pascal: A Study of his Art of Persuasion in the Provinciales and the Pensées. Leicester: Leicester University Press.) argues, the wager no longer makes sense. The unbeliever might argue that sufficiently low odds make the wager irrational (“is there an even chance that the unicorn exists?”) and that, knowing only the mortal world in which we live, to stake one's life in exchange for the possibility of salvation is to risk everything potentially for nothing (195–196). Perhaps God does exist but perversely tortures true believers – even if this outcome is unlikely, to make a judgment on this basis merely returns the debate to probability. Other difficulties exist with the nature of infinity as a concept, vital to the rewards and punishments of Pascal's wager. Leaving aside the well-known problem of Russell's Paradox, in which a set that contains all sets must paradoxically either include or exclude itself, there is also the St. Petersburg Paradox. Imagine that Peter offers a game to Paul involving coin flips. Peter will pay Paul a dollar if the coin ends up heads, two dollars if the second flip also turns up heads, four if this is repeated on the third flip, eight on the fourth, and so on to infinity (Bernoulli 1954, 31). How much would one be willing to pay to play this game? The amount that one could win rises towards the infinite, but the chances of winning decline toward zero as one continues to play. In addition, after a certain amount, doubling the prize money does not double its actual value – while having a 1000 dollars might legitimately make one twice as happy as having 500, having 200 billion dollars is not twice as good as having 100 billion, because as the prize increases the marginal utility of each dollar decreases. Although the expected value may only have an asymptotic relationship to zero, the value of playing this game has been set as low as two dollars (Ellenberg 2014, 244). The various objections to Pascal's wager have substantially discredited it is a logical argument and therefore led to its rejection by many scholars. In the summary judgment of Ian Hacking (1994), although the arguments of the wager are “valid,” none of them are convincing. “The arguments are worthless as apologetics today, for no present agnostic who understood the arguments would ever be moved to accept all the premises” (27). The wager is structured something like a geometric proof, so if Pascal the geometer has the math wrong, the wager has no value. At its extreme, this line of thinking lends credence to Buford Norman's (1977) claim that the Pensées are not rhetorical at all. “[M]any of the fragments of the Pensées,” he wrote, “consist of a direct association of ideas, with few connectives. This is precisely what the Port-Royal Logique calls jugement, which is basically the same as grammar … perhaps the most logical of all methods (styles), since it follows thought quite closely, and it is definitely far removed from rhetoric” (32). It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that Blaise Pascal, one of the great scientific and mathematical minds of his age, might well have realized the logical deficits of his wager but advanced it anyway for its rhetorical effect. In this sense, it is less a demonstration and more an effort to persuade, and Pascal should instead be judged for his merits as a rhetorician. Grammar and rhetoric of the wager The mathematical or logical reading of Pascal is the chief claim against him as a rhetorician. For interpreters such as Ellenberg and Hacking, Pascal's work is an effort to persuade through demonstration or at best grammar, as Norman argues. This interpretation sees Pascal as an earnest mathematician establishing what amounts to a proof, rather than a rhetorician employing his persuasive art to win the hearts of believers along with their minds. Others, however, have claimed the opposite position that Pascal's Penseés should be understood as primarily rhetorical, and Pascal himself as an expert rhetorician, although whether this is a complement or aspersion varies according to the source. This section will summarize and analyze this rhetorical interpretation, ultimately concluding that the opposition between grammar (as indexical structure) and rhetoric (as persuasion) is an opportunity to view Pascal's rhetoric as something in excess of both, more in line with the sublime tradition than the Aristotelian one. Pascal's own theory of rhetoric is developed in an essay called “The Art of Persuasion” (1909),4 which begins by acknowledging that although people tend to believe what pleases them, this is “base, ignoble and irrelevant” (406). The “art of persuasion,” as Pascal names it, is “simply the process of perfect methodical proofs,” and “consists of three essential parts: of defining the terms of which we should avail ourselves by clear definitions; of proposing principles or evident axioms to prove the thing in question; and of always mentally substituting in the demonstrations the definition in the place of the thing defined” (Pascal 1909, 410). Blaise Pascal, “arguably the most successful and significant practitioner of written rhetoric in his century” (Lockwood 1996, 273), thus seems to treat the art of persuasion as something with a set of codifiable, if elusive, rules and laws, a sort of geometry of human interiority. Although Pascal professes not to know all the rules, persuasion is, in this view of his work, still thought of a technique bound by laws, hidden or not (Ijsseling 1976, 73). Rule-bound and systematic, this view of Pascal's rhetoric tends to support the idea that his mathematical language is meant to be taken literally, which is perhaps what Paul Valéry (1968) was thinking when he wrote that the wager is “absurd” because it “concludes with a hope in mathematics” (319). Pascal could be expected to transmit ideas with the minimum amount of figural embellishment or distortion, and it was precisely his failure to do that which sparked Valéry's ire, leading him to describe the deceased mathematician as “an enemy of the human race.” “My complaint against Pascal,” he wrote, “is that he wanted to persuade … For me this is shocking – I've caught him in the act of literature. As I see it, if a man has something to say and thinks it should be said, he should put it just as it is in his mind … Exactly as it is” (318). This attack resonates with criticisms of rhetoric more generally as an art of deception and deceit, unsuited to the serious questions of religion, science, and even statecraft. Indeed, in discussing another of Pascal's arguments Valéry claims that he cannot be an “inspired writer” because “it's a piece of rhetoric, a fake window … It's an effect—[Pascal] is a rhetorician” (317). Even Velchik, who acknowledges Pascal as a rhetorician without condemning him as such, still concludes that Pascal's wager is deceptive – “a white lie,” no matter how insightful (Velchik 2009, 8). The most influential work on this subject is Topliss's (1966) The Rhetoric of Pascal in which she concurs with Valéry's claim that Pascal uses figurative language as more than mere ornament, transforming the meaning of his arguments through sophisticated rhetorical technique. Although she did not envenom her judgment as did Valéry, Topliss argued that Pascal's technique departed from “Ancient Rhetoric” substantially in this regard (258). For Topliss, while something more may be at work, persuasion is still the central project of the Pensées, and in this sense Pascal does follow a certain tradition of ancient rhetoric beginning with Aristotle's well-known definition of rhetoric as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. Topliss and Valéry thus see Pascal's work as persuasive at its core, the exact opposite of Norman's claim that Pacal communicates so directly that his work is not rhetorical. The work of Paul de Man (1988) suggests one way to resolve this disparity. de Man argued that two theories of the function of language were at work in Pascal's writing. One was a “cognitive function” that is “right (juste) but powerless,” while the other was “a modal function” that was “mighty (forte) in its claim to rightness.” The “necessary choice” between “seduction and truth remains undecidable,” de Man argues, because even the language of Holy Writ cannot be squared in its persuasive power with a geometrical understanding of proof (de Man 1988, 153). This undecidability is what de Man calls allegory. The conflict between “seduction” and “truth” mirrors a distinction he developed in Allegories of Reading between “rhetoric” and “grammar.” In a famous passage in that book, de Man relates a scene from All in the Family in which Archie Bunker's wife, Edith, asks him if he would prefer his bowling shoes laced under or laced over, to which Archie replies “what's the difference?” When Edith begins to explain this difference, Archie becomes agitated; his statement, although it grammatically requests more information, rhetorically denies the need for it and is thus aporetic (de Man 1979, 9–10).5 In this formulation, both Norman and Topliss are correct: Pascal's language is “basically the same as grammar” as Norman argued, and yet paradoxically “restored to figures of rhetoric that had long been thought of as ornaments, their original function as instruments of persuasion” (Topliss 1966, 321). There is something undecidable in Pascal's rhetoric between reason and belief. Rather than leading us to accept the wager as a demonstration of how reason might be applied to God, the second half of this aporia suggests that the wager is a figurative argument for why there can be no such proof – something that Pascal himself hints at when he wrote that because the order of the holy infinitely exceeds the corrupt speech of human beings, “divine truths” could not fall under the arts of persuasion. “God alone,” he wrote, “can place them in the soul” (Pascal 1909, 406–407). If Pascal believed that the “hidden God” lies infinitely beyond the capacity of persuasive language to represent, why write the wager at all? Scholars who, like Topliss, argue that Pascal's work should be analyzed rhetorically share a basic assumption with the grammatical view of Norman and those who treat the wager as a kind of mathematical proof: in short, both view Pascal's central project as one of persuasion. Even de Man's somewhat more subtle reading largely shares this understanding. Pascal, through demonstration, rhetoric, or aporetic uncertainty is guilty of Valéry's charge of attempted persuasion. The wager does not seem to add much in this regard beyond a simple effort to persuade, an appeal to logos with the minor quirk of its mathematical appeal to infinity. Pascal's religious background suggests that this dismissal may be too hasty. As Topliss wrote, that Pascal's style “will not yield up all its secrets” hidden in his “most banal devices,” suggests that the author of the Penseés had his own “impenetrable places” (321). Negative theology and the sublime Dawn Ludwin (2001) makes the case in Blaise Pascal's Quest for the Ineffable that Pascal owed a great debt to the tradition of negative theology, particularly the work of Pseudo-Dionysius,6 which he seems to have read despite his relatively limited reading and citation of other scholarly works (3–4). Negative theology is an ancient tradition in Christian thought with strong parallels in other religions. Its central concern can be framed as the problem of infinity: if God is infinite and exceeds all human understanding, how are we to talk about the divine? Language fails to capture God because it is a fallen thing of human artifice and must necessarily provide a limit where none exists in the case of the divine. Language and its limits are thus central concerns in this line of thinking. Divine experiences, such as Pascal's Night of Fire, might be described, but they can never be fully understood through speech. We can only say what God is not because even the word “infinite” is nothing more than a linguistic marker, a condensation and thus a kind of paradox in itself. Like Pascal, Pseudo-Dionysius described God in striking terms as “light” and “fire,” arguing that although language might show a path, it is only in the silence that exceeds it where God might make itself known (50–56). These metaphors for God do not persuade, but rather lead the audience to the edge of a precipice beyond which the currency of language has no purchase. As Ludwin argues, the rhetorical theory deriving from such a position on God is more consistent with the sublime of Longinus than with the rational persuasion of Aristotle, and it is in these terms that Pascal might be best understood (140–141). The sublime has been partially absorbed into the field of aesthetics, but its origin is squarely rhetorical. For Longinus, powerful rhetorical figures – chiefly metaphor – may circumvent the auditor's reason by the sheer force of the concepts it invokes. Although it is unlikely that Pascal ever read Longinus,7 striking similarities exist in their theories of rhetoric. For Longinus, the greatest writing does not persuade, but “takes the reader out of himself [sic]” by employing and “irresistible force beyond the control of any audience.” Although the individual elements of style gradually accrete in a text to indicate the author's skill, individual tropes are sublime to the extent that they disrupt this coherence: “greatness appears suddenly,” Longinus wrote, “like a thunderbolt it carries all before it and reveals the writer's full power in a flash” (4). Like Pseudo-Dionysius's belief that the infinite power of God revealed the fragility of human subjects, Longinus's theory of rhetoric uses language as an appeal to a powerful motive force that exceeds the individual. A sublime trope conceals the proof of its own argument by “startling” the reader by “its own brilliance” (Longinus 1991, 27). The best figures are not even identifiable as such because their disruptive effect draws attention away from artifice altogether, making it appear natural (Longinus 1991, 29). The technical character of the trope is less important than its ability to shock the reader away from mundane language by changing their orientation towards the text and its associated concepts, however briefly. Viewed through this lens, Pascal's wager takes on a different significance. The purpose of the wager is not to provide a rational proof for God or even to compel adherence to the liturgy, but to use the trope of the infinite to disorient and displace subjects by revealing their finitude. The wager's logical structure is obviously flawed, but this fact does not undermine its significance – it is an example of rhetoric beyond persuasion. First, following Longinus, the effect of the trope should be to conceal the proof of its own argument if it is successful, rendering the proof itself relatively unimportant. The important part of the wager is not the finitude of probability in the coin toss, but the overwhelming, literally incomprehensible stakes of the wager. The wager is supposed to shock the reader into an inspired choice that will eventually lead to conversion through repetition, not to complete the process all at once. No part of Pascal's wager has to be compelling on its own, so the 50% probability of God's existence, for example, is arbitrary and irrelevant. The sublime is supposed to circumvent the faculty of reason, rather than appeal to it in an effort of persuasion that ends in a carefully calculated decision to convert. Second, following Pseudo-Dionysius, the weakness of the wager's logic might be precisely its appeal. The secret in the “banal devices” that Topliss diagnoses is that words never succeed in capturing the majesty of God. Pascal's sublime trope does its work through catachresis. As Pseudo-Dionysius (1987) writes, “incongruities are more suitable for lifting our minds up into the domain of the spiritual … the sheer crassness of the signs is a goad so that even the materially inclined cannot accept that it could be permitted or true that the celestial and divine sights could be conveyed by such shameful things” (150). The same characteristic describes the wager. The hitch in its logic – the catachresis resulting from juxtaposing the crude indexical statement of the wager with its divine referent – forces the reader to engage the claim more thoroughly. Valéry's fury at Pascal's base rhetoric might be precisely the point: after all, it did lead the later French critic to write at length about a single sentence in Pascal's work, stewing over the crassness of its persuasion for many years.8 Confusion at the logic of the argument only helps to conceal its non-rational effect: after all, to be angered at its irrationality is to presume that it is supposed to be rational in the first place. Pascal was an “enemy of the human race” (in Valéry's language) to the extent that he wished to dissolve its finitude in the rapture of the divine by catachretic revelation. Even at his most rational and precise, Pascal argued that persuasion had its limits because the rules could never be fully known and individuals would follow their passions (Pascal, 1909). It is more fitting with his indisputable genius that the wager be read as an immensely subtle attempt to shock readers out of complacency rather than an immensely clumsy use of probability by one of Europe's greatest and most diligent mathematicians. Pascal's heirs The purpose of this exercise in reinterpretation is not only to vindicate Pascal the rhetorician. The wager's basic form is perhaps more influential today than it ever has been in past. Since the detonation of the first atomic bomb in 1945, human beings have become aware that their decisions have the potential to destroy the entire species – and many others along with it. The challenges of thinking in terms of existential risk are immense, and many old habits of thought are irrelevant or even counterproductive when making these decisions. The root of this problem is that people are not accustomed to thinking in the appropriate scales. The magnitudes of some potential impacts, such as nuclear war, are so large that our minds are not well equipped to fathom them. If they are not truly “infinite,” they are at least close enough to exert the same effects on our minds. At the same time, probabilities are so low that in conjunction with existential risks they too are hard to grasp (Yudkowsky, 2008). It is this intersection that mirrors Pascal's wager: unpredictable, low chances married to immensely, possibly infinitely, important outcomes.9 Debates about existential risk thus adhere to Pascal's wager in form: at issue is not Pascal's argument for religious debate so much as his deployment of infinite value as a rhetorical device. The most thoroughly studied existential risk is nuclear war. Since the beginning of the Cold War, academics, think-tank employees, and military planners have made an effort to quantify the risks of nuclear conflict and manage it with the tools of reason (Abella 2008 Abella, A. 2008. Soldiers of Reason: The RAND Corporation and the Rise of the American Empire. Orlando, FL: Harcourt. ; Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005 Ghamari-Tabrizi, S. 2005. The Worlds of Herman Kahn: The Intuitive Science of Thermonuclear War. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. ). The arms race appears to be the first consistent use of Pascal's wager to inform arguments on both sides of a single dispute, and may serve as a prototype for later deployments. Roy Sorensen (1994 Sorensen, R. 1994. “Infinite Decision Theory.” In Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal's Wager, edited by J. Jordan, 139–159. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefied. ) reported that a version of Pascal's wager showed up in arms control rallies (141), but its most complete and eloquent formulation is in Jonathan Schell's widely-read book Fate of the Earth. Schell (1982 Schell, J. 1982. The Fate of the Earth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. ) argues that the consequences of a nuclear war largely are unknown, but due to the possibility that an ensuing nuclear winter might destroy all life on Earth, such a war cannot be risked for any reason. He writes: the mere risk of extinction has a significance that is categorically different from, and immeasurably greater than, that of any other risk, and as we make our decisions we have to take that significance into account…. We have no right to place the possibility of this limitless, eternal defeat on the same footing as risks that we run in the ordinary conduct of our affairs … although the risk of extinction may be fractional, the stake is, humanly speaking, infinite, and a fraction of infinity is still infinity. In other words, once we learn that a holocaust might lead to extinction we have no right to gamble … we have no choice but to address the issue of nuclear weapons as though we knew for a certainty that their use would put an end to our species. (Schell 1982 Schell, J. 1982. The Fate of the Earth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. , 95) The above passage follows the structure and content of Pascal's wager very closely. First, Schell asserts an infinite value coupled with an uncertain probability, which together result in an infinite expected value for one choice (and therefore, an infinite opportunity cost for another). Like the rewards of Heaven and the consequences of Hell, the virtues of peace and the losses of extinction are unquantifiable. Probability is irrelevant in this calculation because “a fraction of infinity is still infinity.” Second, Schell argues that although the chances of extinction are unknown, we should act as if it is a certain result of nuclear war, just as Pascal attempted not to prove that God exists, but rather that we should act as if this was the truth. It is possible that nuclear winter would not result; it is possible that a nuclear war will not occur; it is possible that the worst-case projections are wrong. Thus, although “scientifically speaking” there is “all the difference in the world between the mere possibility … and the certainty of it, morally they are the same,” which is why we must act “as though we knew for a certainty” that extinction will result from the possession of nuclear arms (Schell 1982 Schell, J. 1982. The Fate of the Earth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. , 95). Third, Schell appeals not only to the unknown but to the unknowable. The impact of a nuclear war is beyond our comprehension, just as the God of Pascal's negative theology is. The passage cited here comes at the very end of the first part of Fate of the Earth, “Republic of Insects and Grass,” which is an extended description of the potential horrors of nuclear war written lyrically and beautifully, but includes an acknowledgement that nuclear war can be imagined but is indescribable because its witnesses would be dead (Schell 1982 Schell, J. 1982. The Fate of the Earth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. , 26). It mirrors the many names of God used by Pseudo-Dionysius to impress upon his readers that God is something that must necessarily exceed the human standpoint. Near the conclusion of his “wager” passage, Schell asserts, “we stand before a mystery.” Like Pascal's worshipper gradually humbled before God's revelation, the reader “take[n] outside” of themselves by Longinus's sublime, or the believer “struck by [God's] blazing light,” Schell's audience is to be overwhelmed by his language and made to realize their own finitude. “Our ignorance should dispose us to wonder,” he writes, “and our wonder should make us humble, our humility should inspire us to reverence and caution” (Schell 1982 Schell, J. 1982. The Fate of the Earth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. , 95). Finally, Schell's sublime rhetoric is supposed to be an impetus for action. The third section of Fate of the Earth is called “The Choice” and is an explicit call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The existence of this technology forces a decision, just as the possibility of God does so in Pascal's wager. As in Pascal, for Schell the wager does not merely dislocate its reader – however vital this is to its effect – but also provides a framework for decision under the conditions of uncertainty, perhaps a hallmark of rhetoric itself. Faced with incalculable risks, inaction is not possible. To paraphrase Rush, choosing not to decide is still making a choice. The invocation of infinity does not have to persuade in an Aristotelian sense to serve a purpose. The Old Testament's Abraham was made to feel “but dust and ashes” before the Lord, but the end result of his encounter was clear: follow the divine law. Thus, it is for Schell: our confrontation with finitude breeds humility, reverence, and caution, resulting in support for disarmament without the need for a nuclear Revelation. The paradox of Schell's sublime wager grows out of the necessity for decision. If any fraction of infinity is still infinity, then it becomes impossible to choose between competing options that might stake claims to the same infinitely important outcome. While abolition might prevent a nuclear war from eradicating humanity, through any number of improbable outcomes, it might also cause human extinction, perhaps by triggering devastating non-nuclear wars, another wave of nuclear proliferation, biological war (Payne 2010 Payne, K. 2010. “Disarmament danger.” National Review Online. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/229492/disarmament-danger-keith-b-payne ), or even preventing humanity from deflecting an asteroid collision (Wall 2014 Wall, M. 2014. “How Nuclear Bombs Could Save Earth from Killer Asteroids. Space.com. http://www.space.com/24696-asteroid-strike-nuclear-bombs.html ). When probability is rendered irrelevant by the sign of the infinite, there is no way to distinguish between one outcome and another: all fractions of infinity are infinity. While for Schell the risk of nuclear war mandates a policy of abolition, for advocates of nuclear deterrence, the possibility that disarmament might encourage another power to develop or use nuclear weapons against the defenseless United States mandates the exact opposite: maintenance, perhaps even aggressive expansion, of the nuclear arsenal. Such a position was, in fact, taken by former Vice President Dick Cheney. Ron Suskind reports that in 2001, CIA Director George Tenet briefed Cheney about the possibility that terrorists or hostile nations might develop nuclear weapons with the aid of Pakistani radicals. In response, Cheney proffered the now-infamous “One Percent Doctrine.” “With a low-probability, high impact event like this,” he said, “I'm frankly not sure how to engage. We're going to have to look at it in a completely different way” (qtd. in Suskind 2006 Suskind, R. 2006. The One Percent Doctrine. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. , 61). That “different way” turned out to mirror Pascal's familiar construction. “If there's a one percent chance that Pakistani scientists are helping al Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response … It's not about our analysis, or finding a preponderance of evidence … It's about our response” (qtd. in Suskind 2006 Suskind, R. 2006. The One Percent Doctrine. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. , 62). The bar for acceptable evidence, as Suskind notes, can be “set so low that the word itself almost didn't apply” (62). As Cheney himself stressed, the doctrine was about response: any probability of an adversary possessing nuclear weapons should be taken as a certainty. The “Cheney Doctrine” thus helped to establish the “Bush Doctrine” of preemptive use of force against enemies potentially armed with “Weapons of Mass Destruction,” itself a somewhat ill-defined term. In the realm of nuclear weapons, this meant that American leaders could contemplate the preemptive use of nuclear arms against potential nuclear adversaries, as detailed in a 2005 draft of the Pentagon's Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2005 Joint Chiefs of Staff. 2005. Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations (Joint Publication 3-12). http://www.wslfweb.org/docs/doctrine/3\_12fc2.pdf ). The Cheney Doctrine thus brings Schell's logic full circle and exposes the aporia of the wager's need for decision.1010. This problem is also known as Buridan's Ass: an ass, equally hungry and thirsty, dies of privation when forced to choose between a pile of hay and a trough of water because both are exactly equally appealing. View all notes Conclusion The difficulty with Schell's argument (and conversely, with Cheney's) is equivalent to the “many gods” objection to Pascal's wager. Given a range of mutually exclusive options, each representing a potentially infinite impact, there is no longer a way to choose amongst them. For Pascal, that decision boiled down to faith, but the same was true for the Bush administration in its embrace of impulse and conviction over rationality and evidence (Suskind 2006 Suskind, R. 2006. The One Percent Doctrine. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. , 308). This same problem affects decisions over other existential threats: perhaps manipulating asteroids to miss the Earth would save us all, but perhaps the technology could be used to cause a strike; perhaps slowing the rate of climate change could prevent warming temperatures and ecological disruption, but perhaps it could cause a new ice age; perhaps space colonization would safeguard the human species, but perhaps it would attract the attention of xenocidal extraterrestrials. Infinite stakes combined with indeterminate probabilities and the necessity of decision is a counsel of despair. Even if, like Pascal's, Schell's wager is not meant to be a logical proof but an appeal to a dislocating sublime force, the problem remains. The rhetorical effect of the infinity trope is part of nuclear deterrence. One accepted mission of the US nuclear arsenal remains as the capacity to “overawe” enemies with the sheer incalculable force of thermonuclear weapons (Oelrich 2005 Oelrich, I. 2005. Missions for Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War (Federation of American Scientists Occasional Paper No. 3). https://courses.physics.illinois.edu/phys280/archive/01282005175922.pdf , 46). The “madman” theory of nuclear deterrence, named for Richard Nixon, relies on projecting the image of irrationality over nuclear decisions to that a rational opponent might believe that they will actually be used in response to aggression, even if the cost to the defender is also very high.1111. To some extent, as Kavka's Toxin Puzzle suggests, all nuclear deterrence is paradoxical: after an attack, nuclear retaliation is no longer a rational choice because one's one destruction can no longer be prevented, so, assuming the rational actors necessary for deterrence to work in the first place, it is required that one intend to do something in the future that one would be irrational to actually intend to do at the time when that decision is required. View all notes This is precisely the logic of doomsday weapons such as cobalt bombs or the Dead Hand: the cost of extinction is so high that it overwhelms any possible gain for an aggressor. Schell's vivid descriptions of the nuclear aftermath may just as well result in a passionate commitment to nuclear deterrence. The same factors that make Schell's appeal powerful also limit the ability to resist Cheney's reinterpretation of the wager. When rational calculation is made subservient to infinite risks, then reasoned arguments fail to diminish the force of sublime rhetoric, just as the various logical objections to Pascal's wager have not eliminated its staying power. The limitless damage of a nuclear war (or imagined terrorist attack) overwhelm reason. John Mueller (2010 Mueller, J. 2010. Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ) has done a detailed analysis of the probability of nuclear terrorism that assigns it roughly one in three billion odds (204–206), but the numinous fear of nuclear weapons seems to remain. It is tempting to conclude with Ned O'Gorman claim that the sublime is antithetical to politics. Because the sublime is an overwhelming, illimitable force, no adjective changes it; there is no “political sublime” because one term cannot modify the other. As O'Gorman (2006 O'Gorman, N. 2006. “The Political Sublime: An Oxymoron.” Millennium 34: 889–915. ) writes, “the sublime is a free-floating force, a univocal power, which because of its univocality cannot provide alternatives for change, guide critique, or articulate new horizons. The sublime speaks only unpredicated power” (889). The sublime may be radical in a sense, but it is not politically radical. Rather, it tends toward the conservative because it cannot offer alternatives to the status quo and constitutes a “rhetorical lure” best employed by the elite and powerful (O'Gorman 2006 O'Gorman, N. 2006. “The Political Sublime: An Oxymoron.” Millennium 34: 889–915. , 891). In this reading, the present article is merely a Synodus Horrenda, dragging Pascal forth again as rhetorician rather than a mathematician and condemning him nonetheless. To write off Pascal's wager so quickly would be premature. As Schell and Cheney demonstrate, it is the need for decision that frustrates its possibility and results in aporia. Both men have read the wager grammatically and used it to calculate a decision. They may also present it rhetorically, attempting to impress not the rightness of their judgment but the overwhelming force represented by the infinite losses of a nuclear war. In either case, the wager is still aimed at persuasion but cannot overcome its own paradoxical logos. What is missing is a different aporia on an altogether different level: that identified by de Man as the contradiction of grammar and rhetoric. At issue is a practice for reading the wager, and this contradiction can be seen working in Pascal's original if it is read not as an appeal to believe in a specific God but rather an attempt to disrupt the obstacles that lead some people not to believe in any power beyond themselves. Pascal himself was not converted by this proof nor any other, but by the revelation of his “night of fire.” His wager is not a rational argument or a rhetorical device, but rather a rhetorical device illustrating the limits both of rationality and rhetoric. The point of the coin flip is to demonstrate that no rational decision is possible. Faith and fidelity constitute a moral life. Pascal argues that piety comes through repeated practice, but this practice itself is a means to realize the scope of what exceeds the human, not an end in itself. This conception of the sublime is not political according to O'Gorman's definition, where the “sine qua non of all politics except the totalitarian is differentiation” (2006, 891). As the juxtaposition of Schell's and Cheney's uses of the wager shows, the political result of sublime rhetoric is by no means determined by its use. To say that these figures do not assist one in making instrumental choices between different political goals is not to suggest that the sublime may still have radical – and not necessarily conservative – potential if “political” is not synonymous with “politics.” As Jean-Luc Nancy (2008 Nancy, J.-L. 2008. Philosophical Chronicles. New York: Fordham University Press. ) argues, nothing requires that the two terms be identical and we should be conscious of our linguistic choice between them (27–28). The political can be understood as an orientation to community, an attitude rather than being “dissolved in the sociotechnical element of forces and needs” (Nancy 1991 Nancy, J.-L. 1991. The Inoperative Community. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. , 40). The sublime may not aid directly in politics, but it may help to develop a conception of the political by revealing the limits of our capacity to order and to comprehend our social world. To dislocate the reader by illustrating the limit of knowledge is to call into question the inevitability of social structures that we have built and inherited. Nothing about the sublime need favor the elite and powerful. Oft forgotten in Longinus's writing is an attack on avarice and material accumulation as measures of value. Longinus argues that “wealth, honors, reputation, absolute power, and all things which are accompanied by much external and theatrical pomp” cannot be noble because to “despise them is in itself no mean blessing” (9). There is a contradiction inherent in any set of social values that idolizes the rich because they are rich and also values those who forgo material benefits because they are hollow and superficial. Why is it, Longinus asks, that although there is “no dearth” of people “who are persuasive, interested in public affairs, shrewd, skillful, and certainly delightful speakers,” there are so few who are truly outstanding? His answer is that the love of money “is a disease that shrinks a man [sic].” “I cannot see how we can honor wealth without limit or, and this is nearer the truth, make it our god, without admitting into our souls those kindred evils that inevitably follow it” (Longinus 1991, 57). Rather than proscribe an instrumental solution like those shrewd speakers occupied with public affairs might, Longinus seeks to identify the attachments that serve as the conditions of possibility for corruption. “For surely if our selfish desires were altogether freed from prison, as it were, and let loose upon our neighbors, they would scorch the earth with their evils” (Longinus 1991, 58). The “worst bane” is that nothing is done for its own sake, he argues, but only because it serves as a means to an end (58) – which is close to Nancy's concern about dissolving the political into the “sociotechnical element” of politics. The sublime's inattention to differentiation might be read as a critique of instrumental politics and accumulation. Configured this way, Pascal's wager, like Longinus's sublime and Pseudo-Dionysius's negative theology, displays the presence of something beyond the technical capacities of reason to resolve and reveals the arbitrariness of power as it is exercised in an unequal society. In disorienting its readers, the sublime is a check on hubris rather than the basis for programmatic action. At the very least, the sublime is important for argument research because its use continues, for better or for worse, and exploring the collective psychology underpinning its appeal might be a more effective means of countering its dangerous uses than rational debunking alone allows. O'Gorman's critique is a useful corrective for those who might use the concept as a kind of universal solvent that obviates the need for day-to-day political choices or provisional commitments. But the genius of Pascal's wager as a rhetorical trope is its capacity to remind us that the quotidian decisions of politics, vital as they are, do not exhaust the political itself. What we value in community has no satisfying objective basis, but is something we must deliberate collectively in an age when technological progress makes a literal Night of Fire all too possible.