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Climate Obstruction, Micropolitics of Denial, and Power-Knowledge

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Abstract:

I 40 år har en rekke høyreorienterte tenketanker sponset av store oljeselskaper sådd tvil om realitetene rundt klimaendringer og klimapolitikk i USA. Dette har de gjort ved å sette spørsmålstegn ved klimavitenskap og overnasjonale organisasjoner som IPCC, eller ved å så tvil om løsninger ved klimapolitikk. I en rekke lekkede taktiske dokumenter legger tenketankene ut om hvordan de har jobbet for å skape tvil. Gjennom høy organiseringsevne har disse aktørene hatt en vesentlig påvirkning på hvordan amerikansk klima- og miljøpolitikk utøves, og de oppfatningene som gjøres rundt vitenskapen om klimaendringer. I denne oppgaven forsker jeg på hvilke metoder, taktikker, og mekanismer som amerikanske tenketanker har blitt brukt for å så tvil i befolkningen.

Gjennom kritisk diskursanalyse (CDA) leter jeg etter spor av retoriske trekk, affekt, og vinklinger i ti forskjellige dokumenter som kan sette lys på trekk ved 'climate obstruction' eller hindring av klimatiltak. Jeg argumenterer for at diskursene som profileres av høyreorienterte amerikanske tenketanker er en utøvd sabotasje eller 'petrotasje'. Petrotasje sikter på å produsere forskjellige følelser og logiske slutninger hos befolkningen i tilknytning til klimavitenskap, klimaforskere og klimapolitikk, noe som sår tvil rundt viktige klimatiltak. Til slutt argumenterer jeg for at motivasjonen til å så tvil handler om en opplevd trussel mot industrisamfunnet. Dette sammenfaller med en trussel mot maskulinitet som idéene og politikken rundt klimaendringer fremkaller hos de som ønsker hindring av klimatiltak.

Acknowledgements:

This was not the thesis I thought I would write. Sometimes you get caught in the rhythms of life, and you can either cha-cha or be left behind. I chose to dance.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Center for Climate and Energy Transitions (CET) for letting me write in their offices and be part of their academic milieu for the duration of my thesis. My days wouldn't be nearly as structured or motivated without the promise of pleasant conversations during lunch breaks or interesting presentations during CET-lunches. A particular thank you must be lent to Mahir Yazar at CET who graciously let me contribute to his project on right-wing populism and climate disinformation last year (and later became very supportive as a supervisor to this thesis). After trudging through the entirety of the DeSmog database, my interest was sparked around climate disinformation which lit a fire for trying to understand how climate obstruction works. This thesis wouldn't exist without that experience. I must also thank Kjetil Rommetveit for his incisive supervision, perceptive reading, and constructive comments throughout this process. I wouldn't have been as proud of this work as I am without my supervisors to continually challenge my perspectives and thinking. I have learnt a lot from them.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my mother who have spent hours listening intently and with great support despite her unfamiliarity with my topic. Lastly, I would like to show appreciation towards my friends Ida, Sadjuka, Thomas, Eivind, Sunniva, and Matias for being alternately very supportive, joyous, and stabilizing throughout this often-unstable year. My best work is your support.

13. May 2024

Richard 'Vincent-Abraham' Dahlberg Andresen

Table of Contents

Figures

Introduction:

The aims of this research:

The Earth is not dying, it is being killed.

-Utah Phillips

To know and not to act is not to know.

-Wang Yang-ming

How would you go about to delay something that went against your interests? Say you were a business whose product was about to become illegal; how would you go about making sure that you weren't put out of business? You could lobby your representative, argue for your product, or move to a different market. There are many routes to the same outcome, but in this thesis, I want to look at one particular route: knowledge pollution. It involves arguments, publications, conferences, and congressional hearings by experts whose goal is to misinterpret, mislead, or deny the scientific consensus on a topic in order to keep the business alive.

This route has been well-trodden by the fossil fuel industry. It is no small operation, but as we have seen on the topic of climate change in the last 40 years, it can be very effective for a time. Understandably, the fossil fuel industry does not want its product phased out or eliminated, but it couldn't directly dispute the reality of climate change. Despite the knowledge of the American Petroleum Institute (API) and other fossil fuel companies that their products were harmful to the planet (Dembicki 2022), fossil fuel actors have continuously paid certain scholars and think-tanks in order to dissuade the perception of a consensus on the reality of climate change and of the perception that it is a problem worth handling (Oreskes and Conway 2012). We could call these actions "climate obstruction" and it is its actors and the discourse which they produce that I want to focus on in this thesis.

There has been much research on climate obstruction, from how they went about denying or stalling the scientific consensus (Oreskes and Conway 2012), to the demography and organization of climate obstruction (Dunlap and McCright 2011; 2010), to the history of particular efforts in climate obstruction (Dembicki 2022), to tracking the strategies and political implications of climate obstruction (Ekberg et.al. 2023). There are databases such as DeSmog which has tracked and logged hundreds of individuals and organizations with their respective

connections to industry, think-tanks, or conferences. Entries vary from bill-mills (e.g. the American Legislative Exchange Council), to industry-lobbying groups (e.g. API and the National Association of Manufacturers), to "knowledge-producers" (e.g. Heartland Institute), to political action groups (e.g. Americans for Prosperity). Some individuals are funded by the fossil fuel industry, others are 'true-believers'. What is important however is that these actors have had an outsized influence on American climate policy and the epistemological imagination of climate change, and as such I think it is important to take them seriously both as scholars, but also as a political force.

The literature has currently focused on the problem which climate obstructionists have posed to epistemology or climate policy, but I believe there is an opportunity to look at these actors through a different perspective. After having worked through the literature, the database, and various journalistic sources, I was struck by how organized and tactical these organizations have been in their production of scientific and other non-fiction materials, media appearances, and increasingly on social media platforms. There are numerous documents which have been leaked, outlining the goals, tactics and strategies that climate obstructionism ought to employ in order to be effective. These documents made me interested to understand:

What are the tactics of obstruction employed by right-wing think-tanks in the US and why are these tactics so effective?

I argue that this shift in focus towards tactics and the mechanisms underlying them will show why climate obstructionists argue the way they do and why previous attempts to debunk or provide more facts have not worked to counter disinformation. The perspective that humans will gravitate towards facts and away from fiction and that producing and presenting more information is beneficial is called the 'information deficit model'. This thesis will *not* labor under this assumption. Producing and disseminating knowledge is very important to inform the public about the reality and profundity of climate change, but climate obstructionists do not share those same underlying goals. Instead, I will try to understand their arguments not in the light scientific discussion but rather as a weapon in an act of warfare. The resulting text is laced with affective statements which point towards a defense of a specific political and ontological worldview. Climate obstruction is about obfuscating, denying, delaying, minimizing, framing, and producing affects in order to dissuade fossil fuel phase-out and towards continuing or expanding fossil fuel production.

The stated goal of climate obstruction is to induce doubt in the public (GCSC 1998). This means that the perceptions created/facilitated by obstructionists *does* something to the subjectivity of both individuals and the public at large. I want to investigate this avenue of the 'residues' left behind by certain climate obstructionist discourses and how these influence the subjectivities of a couple of choice characters such as the layperson, the authoritarian, and the cynic. Furthermore, I will argue that the reasons that obstruction takes place on the topic of climate change is that climate change represents a threat to a particular worldview which privileges Man in a historic Man/nature binary.

Outline of the Battlefield:

I want to create a roadmap to lead you on this journey alongside me. To understand the narrative and argument I will make, let me provide information of what is argued where and a little of why I chose to do things in this order.

To start off, I need to give you the sufficient information to understand the different narratives and actors that are going to be part of this story. In "Background and Context" I will tell the story of climate denial from the 60's and onwards, putting most of the focus from the 1980's and up to around the 2020 election. To understand climate obstruction as a form of backlash politics, we need to also understand what it draws its reactionary tendencies towards. As such, this story will be a form of dialectical storytelling where we observe the rise of the environmental movement and then I will explore the reaction to environmental politics by certain actors. I will attempt to tell a story of reaction by also telling a story of action.

After filling in the context, I continue to show where the information on climate obstruction comes from. Much of the materials that delve into this subject matter is not peer-reviewed scientific papers, but rather the work of journalists who have tried their hardest to give access to materials which can be dissected by researchers. I want to highlight the work being done in this field, both to show my work as a researcher, but also to give those who want to further delve into the field of climate obstruction a handy literature review.

Next, I present my theoretical decisions, in particular explaining why I have chosen poststructuralism and the theoretical versatility that poststructuralist thinking can give to a project such as this one. After explaining my reasoning for choosing poststructural theory as my jumping off point, I will continue to give an explanation of two poststructural thinkers, Foucault

and Guattari, and their concepts 'power-knowledge' and 'micropolitics' in relation to climate obstruction. Foucault and Guattari might seem like strange bedfellows despite both being poststructuralist thinkers. Foucault was notoriously wary of psychology and psychological arguments instead favoring to view the world historically, as the good Nietzschean he was. Guattari, on the other hand, was an apprentice under psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and went on to develop a form of psychoanalysis called schizoanalysis alongside philosopher Gilles Delueze. Since their work shift between micro-and marcrolevels, I will attempt to bind these thinkers together through an explanation of the emotions of climate obstruction through sources varying from Cohen's work on denial, to psychological reflection on paranoia, and ecopsychoanalysis. This reflection on affect alongside tools from poststructural theory will give us a good theoretical toolbox to understand the effectiveness of these tactics in the findings and discussion section. But before I am ready to discuss anything, I need to show how I went about demarcating and choosing my material.

In "Research Design", I explain the process of demarcations, data collection, reflections about academic rigor, and an explanation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). I explain why I chose the four organizations: Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP), Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), Heartland Institute, and Center for Industrial Progress (CIP). Research design will touch on issues of interdisciplinary research, and some of the traits of doing critical discourse analysis. This section will also give a quick run-through of the intersections between my methodology and theoretical framework focusing on affect.

In the findings section, I will present the documents and their contents. Documents include internal planning documents as well as executions of said plans in order to show correlations and divergences on tactics and planned rhetoric. The documents include three tactical documents from the Global Climate Coalition, Frank Luntz, and Richard Berman respectively. Moving onwards to how the discourse is deployed, I will analyze the "Heidelberg Appeal" and the "Leipzig Declaration" from SEPP, an opinion-piece and a Global Warming FAQ from CEI, the "Skeptics Handbook" 1 and 2 from Joanne Nova and Heartland, and lastly, I will look at the book "The Moral Case For Fossil Fuels" by CIP-chairman Alex Epstein. These all occur at different periods of time, which I will note along the way. As such, we get to see the tactics being played out through a story which should now be known to the reader. Findings will be framed through this story so that I can pinpoint specific moments in time and delve into them.

Finally, in the discussion section, I will delve into the findings with the comb of ecopsychology and poststructuralist theory. Here I discuss issues related to knowledge-production and

institutional trust, the destabilizing micropolitical impact of producing affects such as doubt on subjectivity, why such doubt is easier to produce in certain individuals, and how discourses related to industrial growth interrelate to newly developed concepts such as petro-masculinity (Daggett 2018). These topics facilitate an understanding of why these topics are so effective on certain people, and I argue that climate obstructionist discourses advocates for a particular worldview broadly favoring Man over nature.

PART 1: Background and Context:

"Doubt is our product": The Dialectical History of Climate Change Obstruction in the US:

In this section, I will tell the story of climate obstruction in the US from the 1960's until 2020. The story of US climate obstruction is a story of three interplaying forces: 1) US petroleum interests, 2) contrarian scientists funded by 'Big Oil', and 3) the environmental movement which lays the groundwork for international climate change agreements in the 90's onwards. The story is comprised of three actors, but there are two interests which are being played out. The interests of Big Oil, which has fluctuating support from differing presidential administrations, and the interests of environmental activists and climate scientists. I will explain the interests of fossil fuel companies, its relationship with climate obstructionism, and how they and the thinktanks which collaborate with them were actors against environmental-and climate politics.

The 60's was an opportune moment to get into the petroleum business. The end of World War two had opened the demand for oil with products e.g. plastic, asphalt, and cars being important to the post-war economy (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016). Although oil was important to many US states (chief among them Texas), I will ground the interest of petroleum companies in one field for simplicity, *the Athabasca Oil Sands*.

Located mostly in Alberta, Canada, the Athabasca Oil Sands would be one of the most outstanding oil finds of the 20th century. Discovered in 1967, measurements of total oil deposits put Canada at around 10% of the world's oil deposits which were mostly in the tar sands (CIA Factbook 2021). A monumental find. American companies would rush in to secure rights for the extraction of bitumen, which it had just been figured out how to make profitable (Dembicki 2022). Exxon, the second largest corporation in the US at the time, had taken an interest in the tar sands project. There was a concern, however. Extraction from tar sands were still

prohibitively expensive. As concern for lost profits increased, Exxon had to make sure that their investment would turn a profit. Despite the dire warnings of industry scientists such as H.R Holland that oil extraction would lead to global warming, they continued development of the Alberta tar sands (Dembicki 2022). Exxon's involvement was too lucrative to sacrifice.

Simultaneously, the environmental justice movement (coupled with the civil-rights movement) had been gaining followers due to their concern about the unequal environmental benefits among marginalized urban communities, alongside an increasing worry that we were wreaking havoc upon the Earth (Schlosberg and Collins 2014). Scientists such as Rachel Carson, James Lovelock and later the Club of Rome were shining a light upon various environmental issues varying from the widespread ecological impacts of pesticides e.g. DDT (Carson 2002), to the fragility of ecosystems using computer modeling (Meadows et.al. 1972). Philosophers were also starting to take an interest in issues of ecology, most notably Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss and his Deep Ecology (Næss 1973; 1987). There were also developments in economics. Economists were trying to remodel certain ways we picture value and nature, which developed into ecological economics. These growing interests and concern for environmental issues led to an increased environmental activism. Much of the historical literature credits Rachel Carson's 1962 book "Silent Spring" (Caradonna 2014) as a kickstarter for the modern environmental movement. This movement consisted of people from various backgrounds such as academia, to concerned citizens, to members of the civil rights and counterculture movement (Scholsberg and Collins 2014). These people got to work to start fixing problems such as pollution or rivers catching on fire (which happened regularly in many industrial towns). In June 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Ohio caught fire. After the initial small local news coverage from when Cleveland mayor Carl Stokes gave a "pollution-tour" of the river, it became of national importance after an article in Time-Magazine in 1970 (National Park Service 2022). The Cuyahoga River had caught fire at least nine different times before 1969, but in Stradling and Stradling (2008) they argue that the deindustrialization of Cleveland and the following depopulation along the industrial river created a new perception of river-fires. As a consequence of this however, Republican president Richard Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which gave the federal government the powers to protect against environmental pollution by requiring environment to be taken into account in permits and planning. NEPA led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 1970 which had as its goal to protect human health and the environment including drinking-water, the air, and land. In that moment, the activists had made a material change in the conditions of environmental politics. The creation of the EPA was a landmark moment for

environmental activism. The EPA went on to create the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, it phased out leaded gasoline and paint (which was a major public health victory) and banned DDT among many other things (EPA 2023). The creation of this agency is a foundational moment for public policy in US environmental politics. It was also a shock to the many industries suddenly being regulated. They were not going to take it lying down.

Environmentalism was widely accepted in the 70's. To such an extent that US President Jimmy Carter had solar panels on the White House. But the 70's was also a turbulent time for US gas consumers. Remembering both the 1973 OPEC crisis and later the 1979 oil crisis, the Americans were done with the weak Carter, and elected Ronald Reagan in 1980. In Alberta however, as the oil prices soared and supply was artificially held back because of the OPEC crisis, Canadian local and federal government had economic pressures alongside oil companies to invest in the project (Dembicki 2022). Suddenly the project had promise again. As US oil companies soared into the region, they started to make profits and suddenly had a very strong incentive to keep extracting. With US crude oil production dropping during the late 70's and 80's, the promise of Canadian oil was a lot of profits. That promise would been challenged very soon.

The developments of interdisciplinary environmental research and the creation of the EPA were followed by findings that shook scientific communities, as well as the public. In the late 70's, there were growing concerns around issues such as acid rain which had lowered the productivity of forests, and the ozone hole which scientists worried could cause a massive public health problem (Oreskes and Conway 2012). Then there was the development of climate change (2012). These issues were often complex, but they engaged scientists who were ready to explain them in front of Congress. There was real progress trying to understand and make sense of these problems, such as the Hubbard Brook experiment, Harold Johnston's nitrous oxide work, and scientists such as Carl Sagan had enough scientific credibility to communicate findings in front of both representatives and the public (Oreskes and Merchant 2012). This would change in the 1980's. At each new development, there was a group of scientists who seemed unable to agree on interpretations of certain findings or to be convinced of the scientific conclusions. These scientists were sympathetic to the Republican president at the time, Ronald Reagan, who ran on a vehement anti-communist and pro-free market ticket. The science around these issues was built on consensus and that consensus was built on discussion and agreements about certain findings. It was not strange to have dissenting voices, but the extent of dissent and the conclusions of these scientists were puzzling. Let us focus in on climate change.

The first significant mention of climate change was in 1965. Confirmed by his science advisors, President Lyndon B. Johnson said "Air pollution is no longer confined to isolated places. This generation has altered the composition of the atmosphere on a global scale through radioactive materials and a steady increase in carbon dioxide through the burning of fossil fuels" (Dembicki 2022, p.32). This was already thoroughly known to many companies (Dembicki 2022). Companies like Exxon, Suncor, Royal Dutch Shell, and the relatively small Koch Industries were busy with investing and extracting in the Athabasca Tar Sands. Despite the promise of fossil fuels and in particular petroleum extraction, there were regular reports that the release of CO2 from burning fossil fuels would lead to an increase in the temperature on Earth due to "the Greenhouse effect". Global warming could be a major challenge to the fossil fuel industry's profits, but it wasn't the US governments' priorities to fix such a problem in the 60's and 70's (Oreskes and Conway 2012). Despite this we would see the first murmur of the denial machine from the then president of the API: "The substance of the report is that there is still time to save the world's peoples from the catastrophic consequence of pollution, but *the time is running out*" [emphasis added] (Dembicki 2022, p.32). In the 70's and 80's however, this priority would change and the aforementioned skeptical scientists started getting interest from fossil fuel companies.

Climate change, or global warming as it used to be called, was an established phenomenon within scientific circles around the 70's and 80's. A newly published report in the 80's called "Carbon Dioxide and Climate: A Scientific Assessment", mostly known as the Charney Report, was making the rounds in Washington D.C. It caused a stir with these projections: "[a]tmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide are steadily increasing, and these changes are linked with man's use of fossil fuels and exploitation of the land" (Climate Research Board 1979, p. vii) and "[i]t appears that the warming will eventually occur, and the associated regional climatic changes so important to the assessment of socioeconomic consequences may well be significant, but unfortunately the latter cannot yet be adequately projected" (1979, p.3). The report showed something important for the oil companies, climate change mitigation could hurt the bottom line. With this context, economist Thomas Schelling was attempting to figure out the economic consequences and found that only certain climatic zones would shift, and that this indeed meant that we should focus on adaptation rather than mitigation (Oreskes and Conway 2012). Conveniently, this meant we should keep burning fossil fuels and leave it to the free market to sort out a solution. The Schelling letter was the first scientific inkling of denial.

As Charney was wrapping up the report, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) were proposing new work on climate change. Head of the NAS, Bill Nierenberg, were proposing a comprehensive look on the consequences of global warming. There was already a lot of atmospheric research on the problem, but Nierenberg wanted to synthesize social and economic problems as well. Nierenberg appointed Thomas Schelling and Yale economist William Nordhaus, as well as top climate scientists such as Roger Revelle to fill out his team. Natural scientists concluded that the earth was warming, agreeing with previous reseach. The economists however thought that warming had ""enormous uncertainty" beyond 2000" (Oreskes and Conway 2012, p.178). Their argument was that it was difficult to know the future consequences of continued fossil fuel use and warming, so it would be unwise to change it by for example a carbon tax. In the economists' conclusion however, Schelling wrote that the climate changes naturally, so CO2 ought to be assessed alongside other factors such as dust or compared to historical findings. He even made his doubt explicit by writing: "[I]t would be wrong to commit ourselves to the principle that if fossil fuels and carbon dioxide are where the problem arises, that must also be where the solution lies" (Schelling 1983, p.449, quoted in Oreskes and Conway 2011, p.179). I interpret this as: "finding causes isn't finding solutions". Schelling and Nordhaus, as leaders of the economists' team, had opposed the findings of the natural scientists. It was also quite strange that Bill Nierenberg, who was a renowned physicist, had taken to speculation about mass migration and adaptation as a strategy to climate change (Oreskes 2008). It was quite peculiar that the Nierenberg report had such diametrically different recommendations. On the one hand, a clear message to start *phasing out* of fossil fuel use, and on the other, *continued* fossil fuel use. With this schizophrenic conclusion came condemnation from inside the NAS. Accordingly, the Nierenberg report would become an archetype of climate denial tactics and strategy, and this could be seen by its aftermath.

As this report was a joint effort by the top scientist of the NAS, it seemed legitimate from the point of view of the public and media who were generally ignorant about the diverging conclusions of the report. The report's suggestion to continue fossil fuel production was, strangely enough, the same conclusion as the newly appointed energy department of the Ronald Reagan administration, and his energy department "did not approve of ... speculative, alarmist, 'wolf-crying' scenarios" (Oreskes and Conway 2012, p.182). But this wasn't the conclusion of the atmospheric scientists, but of economists and Nierenberg. Despite this, Nierenberg's report was duly used by the White House to counter the policies from the EPA. The EPA was *alarmist* in contrast to the "scientific rigor" of America's best scientists at the NAS. This was especially true for the press who would parrot the economists' assertion, who I ought to remind

you were *in the minority* in the report. The report's economic section was also biased by its selection process, since many of its economists were laissez faire economists. The economists' conclusion wasn't representative of most economists. Not only this, but since the report sidelined rather than debunking climate change, it was easier to make the next argument: if climate change is happening, the free market will innovate new technologies for us to adapt and, worst-case scenario, we could always just migrate. The underlying message was: treat the symptom, not the cause. Nierenberg would go on to start the impartial sounding George C. Marshall Institute (GMI), funded by fossil fuel companies currently developing infrastructure in Alberta such as Exxon (DeSmog 2024). GMI was a right-wing think-tank which explicitly fought climate change policy. One of the first of its kind, but definitely not the last. Throughout the 80's, the George C. Marshall Institute was hard at work producing a paper called "Global Warming. What does the Science Tell Us?" which disputed the accuracy of climate findings. Their main argument being that the historical increase in warming wasn't being caused by CO2, but rather by the sun. The data Nierenberg and his fellows at GMI used seemed representative of the field but it was actually cherrypicked to show the results they desired (Oreskes and Conway 2012). The sun had been considered in evaluations by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 1990, where GMI's concerns had been raised. IPCC found no significant change in comparison to just the greenhouse effect in three different scenarios (IPCC 1992). Despite this, the GMI report stood firm in Washington-circles with Nierenberg even repeating the claim.

The climate obstructionists were part of a general backlash towards liberal politics that happened in the 80's. Into the 90's however, with the Soviet Union teetering out and falling apart at the seams, the main enemy of conservative politics were out of the picture. The 90's became the decade for organizing against the new threat for conservatives: green politics. Green politics was frequently called "watermelon" due to being green on the outside, but secretly communist (Dunlap and McCright 2010). The discrediting of anything regulatory was part of a view which some have called "free-market fundamentalist" (Oreskes and Conway 2012). To discredit climate change, a fulcrum of green politics, you needed to reconfigure the severity of climate change and the ethos of climate science. A researcher which commanded a lot of respect int the field was Roger Revelle. Revelle was part of the Charney report and a prominent figure in geology. In February of 91, Revelle met with S. Fred Singer, a physicist part of the obstruction efforts on the scientific research of the ozone hole, to review a paper about climate sensitivity. The paper which Singer had brought to Revelle argued that there would be a slight warming of less than a degree, which Revelle corrected by writing in the margins that it would

warm outside the range of natural variability. Singer didn't correct his claim, merely changing the wording to: "Assume what we regard as the most likely outcome: A modest average warming in the next century, well below the normal year to year variation" (Oreskes and Merchant 2011, p.193). He merely struck out the number from his original draft.

The article was published in a 1992 edition of Cosmos magazine, a magazine for the Washington elites. Singer was the main author, but Revelle was credited as co-author of the paper. A paper which seemingly had *the* expert in climate change agree with the fact that the warming would fall within normal variability. Revelle was outwardly embarrassed by the article but died in July of 1992 without denouncing the article publicly. This article would go on to become a tool which Republicans could attack candidate vice-president Al Gore in the 1992 elections.

During the late 80's and early 90's the evidence was starting to mount on climate change. The Brundtland commission published Our Common Future in 1987 and on the momentum from this, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was formed in 1988. The IPCC based its work on the work of climate modelers and not the understanding of traditional meteorology (Miller 2004). In 1990, the first assessment report (FAR) was presented, and it depicted climate change as a policy issue common to all of Earth instead of specific climatic regions (Miller 2004). The contents of the report became integral to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), or commonly known as the Rio Conference. This conference addressed waste management, ocean conservation, and phasing out fossil fuels.

With the 1992 Rio conference looming over him, S. Fred Singer was busy creating the Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP), a right-wing think-tank funded by fossil fuel companies such as Exxon (DeSmog 2024). SEPP's mission was to undermine climate science and to produce publications favorable to the industry. Similar to the George C. Marshall Institute, SEPP was comprised of Singer, alongside other scientists who worked to contest climate change findings. After Rio concluded, SEPP released the Heidelberg Appeals, a one-page document which contested the outcomes of the conference, authored together with Michel Salomon. Attached to it was a list of signatories by scientists in dissensus of contemporary science on climate change. The appeal made it seem like a lot of scientists disagreed with the findings and that the issue of climate change was politicized. Since it was written in light of the Rio Conference where many world leaders were present, the Appeal was relevant to the media at the time. Since it included almost 500 signatures from scientists, it also had an air of

credibility. A version of the document was published in the Wall Street Journal in 1. June 1992. But the Heidelberg Appeals would fall on deaf ears in the US government as Bill Clinton was elected in November 1992 and started passing legislation relating to sustainable development already in 1993 (Clinton White House Archive 2000). 1993 is also the first year on record of US imports of 431 million barrels of Canadian crude oil (U.S. Energy Information Administration).

In 1993, the Clinton administration would ratify NAFTA bringing the Canadian and American economies even closer together, which was good news for the companies invested in Albertan tar sands. Even as US crude oil production sank; Canadian imports would increase. The Clinton administration however, was frustrating for climate obstructionists because of their open adherence to Rio. Clinton was by no means an angel on the environment (see increasing Canadian oil imports), but his EPA had considerably more opportunities to do their jobs. It was also more amiable to the recommendations of the IPCC who was working on its second assessment report. During the work on this report, there was a familiar critic who entered the fray. In 1996, Singer attacked the IPCC for not being in line with scientific evidence, claiming that the IPCC had not taken into account weather ballon data in their calculations. In fact, Singer claimed, if you accounted for this data there was no warming at all (Oreskes and Conway 2012). Singer had also made a fuss about the IPCC using data which wasn't peer-reviewed. Ben Santer, part of the working group of the IPCC, responded to Singer saying that the evidence showed clear warming, and that the IPCC used up-to-date materials which weren't peer-reviewed *yet*, but which had to go through internal review at the IPCC (Oreskes and Conway 2012). The release of the second assessment report in 1995 was going to lay the foundation for the upcoming Kyoto Protocols which really threatened to reduce the profits of American investments in the tar sands. Crude oil imports had increased by 50 million barrels in 1995. SEPP would repeat their actions of the Heidelberg Appeal with the "Leipzig Declaration" in 1995 with little fervor. An updated version was released in 1997 ahead of Kyoto but didn't make any impact on the US signing the Kyoto Protocols in 1998. However, this didn't mean that the Kyoto Protocols were binding on the US. For it to become binding it had to be ratified by the US Senate, which it wasn't.

On a document dated 3. April 1998, executives and members of think-tanks met in the headquarters of the American Petroleum Institute to draft a plan going forward to undermine scientific findings of climate change. Titled "Global Climate Science Communications", the document outlined how to win the global warming issue (GCSC 1998). The document was

strategy for the "Global Climate Coalition", which consisted of major oil companies (e.g. Exxon and Chevron among others), industry players (e.g. the National Association of Manufacturers), alongside think-tanks (e.g. SEPP, George C. Marshall Institute and CFACT among others). This was the formal coalition which would fight against climate change policy and reputability into the 2000's, and its main goal was to sabotage the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol into the US (Dembicki 2022). The 2000-election was very close. Bush did not so much clearly win, but barely eked out a victory due to a number of decisions which increased his margins in Florida. With Bush in the Oval Office, there was again someone who was just as skeptical to climate science *and* favorable to industry as Ronald Reagan.

The year was 2001, the Canada crude oil imports had passed 667 million barrels, and one of the first actions of the Bush administration was to appoint politicians and persons hostile to environmentalism to cabinet positions such as the EPA. One such person was James Inhofe, who became the Senate Chair on Environment and Public Works. Inhofe was one of the most prominent US politicians in climate obstruction stating that global warming was "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people" (Oreskes and Conway 2012, p.213). The EPA, although not defunded, was functionally put on hold for the duration of the administration. In 2002 the think-tanks wrote a joint letter to Bush pleading for him to not implement the Kyoto Protocols and also to withdraw from the 2002 Climate Action Report, which Bush did promptly (Smith 2002). As environmental positions were filled by people who didn't believe in environmental science, the EPA put on a leash, and the Kyoto Protocol being dead within the first term of the Bush Administration, the Global Climate Coalition disbanded[i]. They had in a sense achieved their goal. They only needed to keep up momentum by continuing to discredit and produce more materials in their favor, something that they were hard at work doing (Dunlap and Jacques 2013), mostly funded by US oil companies (GCSC 1998).

Meanwhile, in the Alberta tar sands we see a surge in production around 2003. The U.S. Department of Energy officially acknowledges the tar sands as holding around 180 billion barrels of oil, which puts Canada around the same spot as Saudi Arabia (Dembicki 2022). This coincides with oil prices surging which led to a black-gold rush around Alberta. The interest in Canadian oil was massive and ever-increasing. The oil prices also impact just south of the border where Koch Industries were located and reaping massively from their now long-time investments in bitumen production in the tar sands. Koch Industries were going to become the second richest privately owned company in the US (Forbes 2023) and with this wealth came massive power of influence. In the final year of the Bush Administration, with the surging oil

prices, the Alberta tar sands would be approved to be interconnected with US pipeline systems. The Keystone Pipeline, which was opened during the Obama administration, would connect the vast Athabasca oil fields to US refineries all over the country. The US crude oil imports from Canada had ballooned to 900 million barrels of oil by 2008. The tar sands were becoming very profitable for those involved, including the Koch Brothers who were going to become very influential in American politics to come.

With the US economy crashing in 2008 due to the sub-prime mortgage crisis and America being in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, there was a demand for change. Obama was elected on a campaign of changing major aspects of American society such as healthcare and financial regulation, along with promises of sweeping environmental policy, major investments in renewable energies, and lowering subsidies to fossil fuels. Obama implemented the Climate Action Plan in 2008, which was legislation that was updated every two years (Obama White House Archives 2015). It could be bad news for energy companies who were starting construction on Keystone. Many conservatives were also frightened and outraged by the proposed legislation of the first Obama administration, not only environmental policy but healthcare in particular. Obama became a lightning-rod for conservatives and libertarian Americans. Both political camps disliked him passionately and united to oppose him (Arceneaux and Nicholson 2012). The ensuing demonstration movement was called the Tea Party movement, alluding to the Boston Tea Party which started the American Revolution. A major contributor of the Tea Party movement was Americans for Prosperity (AfP) and FreedomWorks which was funded by David Koch of Koch Industries (Meyer 2016). The Koch brothers had started to contribute quite substantially to many organizations which leaned favorably to their interests (e.g. AfP, George Mason University, the Cato Institute), including the most influential in climate obstruction at the time, the Heartland Institute. As environmental politics was again gaining legitimacy in American politics, Heartland was at the front of the delegitimating efforts of climate politics. In 2009, it was central in the proliferation of the so-called ClimateGate scandal, where emails from the University of East Anglia supposedly showed foul play of climate scientists (DeSmog 2024). Heartland would partner up with S. Fred Singer of SEPP to create the NIPCC (Non-Governmental International Panel on Climate Change) which sought to create dissenting reports to the IPCCs findings (Oreskes and Conway 2012). These conferences were sponsored by major industries, many of which had vested interests in the Keystone Pipeline and the Athabasca oil fields. The NIPCC became the hub of climate obstruction attracting major players not yet mentioned such as Willie Soon, Kenneth Haapala, and the Idso family (NIPCC 2017). The NIPCC rebranded into the ICCC

(International Conference on Climate Change) to distance itself from the IPCC name while still maintaining legitimacy. Heartland was also starting to create international ties to the ICCC eventually spreading climate obstructionism to countries in Europe such as the UK and Germany (Huth and Peters 2020). The think-tank was also heavily connected to other think-tanks (e.g. the American Legislative Exchange Council, SEPP, and CFACT).

In 2012, barely twenty years out from the first recorded imports, the crude oil had crossed one billion barrels a year. Heartland was using its connections and large-scale funding to propose many different projects such as a "Global Warming Curriculum" to be sent to schools to 'balance the discussion' in schools. It was a full-frontal attack on climate science with a frequent production of climate denial books and articles (Dunlap and Jacques 2013). But while the think-tanks were hard at work obstructing energy policy and climate change education in the US, the IPCC came out with its fifth assessment report. The report laid the foundation for the international community to iron out an agreement to tackle climate change, namely the Paris Agreement in 2015. It was a landmark achievement in the history of climate change, 195 nations, including the US, signing the agreement to limit temperature increase to below 2 degrees Celsius.

The Obama years fueled a backlash politics which were hard-fought, and obstruction was organized around many different fronts. Many who voted for Obama became disillusioned with the lack of progress made since his win in 2008, others were terrified that the US was hurtling towards Soviet Communism. Underneath, there was a movement of far-right-wing forces bubbling underneath the surface. It is uncertain there would be any substantial rise in right-wing populist rhetoric without the massive backing from billionaires and dark money groups (e.g. DonorsTrust and Donors Capital Fund) during the Obama years (Meyer 2016). Right-wing populists were prideful of their politics which became erected around Donald Trump. Trumps politics was built around xenophobia, climate denial, and a whole lot of emotions about the withering US empire. Breaking with the euphemistic language of politicians like Bush, Trump 'spoke his mind' and connected with many conservatives. After winning 2016-election, instead of 'draining the swamp' as he promised, he filled his cabinet full of oil and coal executives such as Rex Tillerson, and most controversially, Scott Pruitt to chair the EPA. Pruitt was very controversial, as he had previously sued the EPA 14 times during his time as Attorney General of Oklahoma. The think-tanks came to his defense in a public letter of support (E&E Legal 2018). How could Trump promise to "drain the swamp" while stocking his administration full

of executives and oil tycoons? Some might say it was merely a cynical move, but I will argue we can make this legible later.

The discourse had shifted during the last years of the Obama Administration and continued into the Trump Administration. Fossil fuels were not to be phased-out but embraced as *the* American energy source. With this context, Trump pulls out of the Paris Agreement in much the same way that the Bush Administration never ratified Kyoto. Another climate agreement had been obstructed after it was signed by a liberal president. The Trump years, fueled by the Tea Party momentum and right-wing think-tanks, became the era of out and out climate obstruction. Heartland sent out "Why Scientists Disagree about Climate Change" (an NIPCC-report) to grade-schools alongside an 11-minute DVD on the subject. The think-tanks had detailed plans on repealing the Obama administrations work on environmental protection and climate policy such as CAFE, Clean Power Plan, and subsidies to renewable energies (DeSmog 2024). A lot of this policy was repealed or weakened during Trumps tenure. The obstructionists were in power again and gained control of the conversation. Maybe doubt couldn't be manufactured around climate change itself anymore, but one could sow doubt on its solutions. It is with this in mind we see the increasing *defense* of fossil fuels as an energy source; putting coal-workers back to work; sowing doubt upon renewables. The clearest example of this is "The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels" by Alex Epstein of the Center for Industrial Progress. By the end of 2019, US oil imports from Canada had peaked at 1,6 billion barrels, and the ongoing mission to obstruct climate science and policy to avoid fossil phase-out continues. As this story shows, Big Oil and its scientists have been very effective at obstructing and confusing the science and maintaining fossil fuel dependency which has benefitted their shareholders greatly.

Previous Research; or Standing on the Shoulders of Giants:

To my knowledge, the network of right-wing think tanks and their actions whilst having been covered by others earlier, became mainstream through Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway's 2010 book "Merchants of Doubt", which was based around a landmark paper by Oreskes called "Behind the Ivory Tower: The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change" from 2004. The work of Oreskes and Conway cannot be understated in the field of climate obstruction and agnotology. It has also inspired the namesake of this thesis.

Scholars, both in the social and natural sciences, have broadly studied climate obstructionism. Riley Dunlap, alongside scholars Peter Jacques and Aaron McCright, has done a lot of research on climate obstruction (Dunlap 2013; Dunlap and McCright 2010; 2012; Dunlap and Jacques

2008; 2013), including the demographics of climate deniers (Dunlap and McCright 2011). Their work has been valuable for the background of the thesis and has given a baseline for regional research for example in Norway (Krange et.al. 2021). The work of anthropologist Myanna Lahsen informed my section on SEPP and scientific cultures in relation to climate obstruction (Lahsen 2013). The social scientist Kari Marie Norgaard has done research on the emotions of climate denial (Norgaard 2011; Norgaard and Brulle 2019) and in her book "Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life" (Norgaard 2011) gives a scholarly account to the cultural and social side of climate denial as an emotion. Her work is important for portions of my discussion section. Scholars in populism such as Matthew Lockwood and Martin Hultman have given insight into the links between right-wing populism, climate denial, and traditional beliefs in masculinity (Lockwood 2018; Anshelm and Hultman 2014). Hultman has also been joined by scholars Kristoffer Ekberg, Bernhard Forchtner, and Kirsti Jylhä to write the book "Climate Obstruction: How Denial, Delay and Inaction are Heating the Planet" (Ekberg et.al 2023) which has been important for the foundational understanding of what is usually called climate denial/skepticism.

A book closely related to the theory of this book is "Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos" by Joseph Dodds (2011). Dodds uses Deleuze and Guattari's perspective in relation to climate psychology and became important to me as a scholarly resource on ecopsychoanalysis. On the critical side of scholars, Cara Daggett (2018), Val Plumwood (1993), and other ecofeminist perspectives (Merchant 1990) have been valuable for understanding the ideological and gendered perspectives of climate obstructionist thinking. Their contributions have become important for the thesis discussion as a supplement to understanding other social science observations.

Others who have contributed knowledge to this field is a host of journalists and activists ranging from Greenpeace to DeSmog to the Climate Investigations Center. Greenpeace, who in 1993 came out with the first book listing many of the most prominent anti-environmental groups, should get credit for the originating work of exposing not only oil companies, but also the think tanks themselves (Deal 1993). They used to produce materials for their page 'PolluterWatch' but it is no longer online. DeSmog is another organization which does useful journalism. Their Climate Disinformation Database is *the* reason I have found the materials which I used in this thesis. DeSmog has hosted journalists such as Geoff Dembicki who in 2022 wrote the book "The Petroleum Papers" telling the story of the #ExxonKnew campaign that fossil fuel companies knew of climate change as early as the 1950's. DeSmog does up-to-date and relevant

work in most English-speaking countries. There is also the work of the Climate Investigations Center who hosts the Climate Archives, a great resource for materials such as the insider documents used in this thesis, archived versions of presentations, and old webpages.

Isaac Newton famously wrote to his rival Robert Hooke "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants". The resources mentioned have been integral to my research on climate obstruction. The thesis wouldn't be what it is without the work of these scholars and if I have seen further, it is because I have taken advantage of thousands of hours of academic and journalistic effort. However, I believe that by combining the work of Oreskes, Dunlap, Norgaard, Dodds, Daggett (and many more) through my theoretical toolbox of poststructuralism, I gain something interesting and useful. Poststructuralism is such a big portion of the thinking which grounds this thesis that the next part will be dedicated to understanding why I chose poststructuralism, the relevant portions of Foucault and Guattari, alongside affects relating to climate obstruction.

PART 2: Theoretical Framing; or Why Is There Poststructuralism in My Soup?!

Why poststructuralism?

The theoretical discussion from existentialism and structuralism developed to poststructuralism. Poststructuralism was a movement of (mostly) French intellectuals who sought to question various tendencies in the Western intellectual tradition over the past thousand years. Although they were not the first[ii] their stances were quite notable for the time. The poststructuralist thinkers were trying to question everything from how we understand texts (Derrida 2001), to historical methodology (Foucault 2002), to the western metaphysical tradition (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). While that sounds lofty, it was in fact an exercise in creative new philosophical concept creation. Alongside this came concepts and prose which challenged contemporary academic practices about writing and its purpose. Poststructuralism therefore has a rumor for being obtuse and difficult, even intentionally vague to hide from criticism (MacKinnon 2000; Scruton 2007). Conservative critics have gone farther, saying that the poststructuralists are trying to dismantle western civilization from within. They claim that poststructuralists were relativists or nihilists out to get academia by questioning relations of gender, power, race, the bounds of the text, or even the western literary canon. (Scruton 2007).

The poststructural paradigm produced many new concepts, some of which have been difficult for some to penetrate. Their interpretations of traditionally solid concepts like truth got many of the same critiques one could find in the contemporaneous critiques towards Nietzsche, namely that conceptualizing truth and falsity more fluidly or historically leads to the disintegration of truth. I'll discuss this further in the next section. Many poststructuralists have gone on to shift the ways we conduct research and what kinds of questions that researchers are interested in asking. Even as poststructuralism has gained a foothold in literature, political science, and geography departments, the question still emerges, why would I choose poststructuralism as a theoretical framework to tackle climate obstructionism?

The answer is simple, because of the variety of tools that are at our disposal. When we look at large issues e.g. climate change, it is often important to carry large scale analyses where you look at macrolevels of change. How does the phasing out of fossil fuels affect the economic standing of regions dependent on fossil fuel jobs? This question requires theoretical models aimed at macroeconomic and political changes. And on the microlevel, the denial aspect of climate denial often leads to a psychologizing of the subject where we enter into a particular frame of

understanding individuals as cognitive processes and bio-chemical agents. These can be helpful ways of understanding either societal change or human behavior. However, to cope with other forces in society such as institutional power, consequences of dissemination of knowledge, and the luring effects of denial upon subjectivity, one cannot silo off one level from another: "everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a *macropolitics* and a *micropolitics"* (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p.235). Hence the practicality of poststructuralism for a project such as this one. Since we are trying to grasp at micropolitical elements (affects and rhetoric) in a macropolitical setting (an organized climate denial campaign by right-wing think-tanks funded by large oil companies), it turns out to be quite the fit.

The following sections will try to give an outline of the theoretical concepts at use in this thesis with as much clarity as I can provide while also giving a reasoning for the conceptual usefulness. The concepts are provided by Michel Foucault, Felix Guattari, and various scholars of affect.

Michel Foucault and Power-Knowledge; or, How Subjectivities are Molded by Knowledge

Michel Foucault was an academician associated with the poststructuralist movement of the 1970's. He is instrumental in many fields including sociology, geography, and cultural theory, but he mostly wrote in history of ideas. He wrote about a variety of subjects in order to illuminate issues such as the productive nature of power; normality contrasted with abnormality; the changing of discourses through historical contingencies; and dismantling a linear progressive great-man idea of history. Foucault had a particular Nietzschean perspective on history and philosophy more broadly, which challenged many of the presuppositions of academia in the 60's and 70's. Although a central figure of power in many disciplines, what Foucault is particularly adept at doing is reminding us that power is inextricably linked to knowledge. This idea Foucault calls "Power-Knowledge", and it is this idea which we will be focusing on in this section because it ties into the actions of climate obstruction. But before we can tackle power-knowledge in itself, we first need to understand the workings of Foucauldian notions of power and their connections to "subjectivation".

The notion of power is central in Foucauldian analysis and is different from other conceptualizations of power. The way we usually tend to conceptualize power is through hierarchies or through metaphors of authority. Power represses, censors, hides, or obfuscates. Power says "no" or negates (Foucault 1980). We tend to think of totalitarian states or secret

police. Foucault, however, has a different perspective on power. Power in the Foucauldian sense is a force which produces, shapes, and molds rather than merely whipping or repressing (Foucault 1977). To think of power in the latter sense limits our scope to see how power can be deployed through institutions such as medicine or universities. Foucault has plenty of examples of how power is deployed. For example, the invention of "the healthy person" which he discusses in "The Birth of the Clinic". Medicine and "the healthy person" produce a set of knowledges and discourses about "health" and how to attain it which doctors have authority to give suggestions on (Foucault 1973). It also creates a *standard* which comparatively creates a "normal person" alongside its contrast, the "abnormal". Importantly however, the authority of the doctor is partly bestowed by the certificate which the doctor got from an accredited institution (a medical school) *and* from the knowledge around a set of discourses which make up the discipline of medicine. The same could be said about a classroom. The teacher or lecturer cannot impart knowledge unto his pupils or students without institutional recognition, but more importantly the production of a reality which knowledge itself constitutes. When we create knowledge at universities, we are partly also producing new ways of viewing the material world, or what Foucault would call the production of reality and truth regimes (Foucault 1980). Thusly we could say that creating knowledge is the producing of a "normality". We can think of climate science and its creation of abnormality in relation to the current carbon concentration in the atmosphere. This is reflected in how we sometimes talk about the earth in that it is "sick" (invoking planetary health) or that our current business-as-usual paradigm is "mad" (likening current fossil fuel production to insanity). We are deploying terms of normalization through institutions such as the university to leverage the power in these institutions towards some end. Climate science has produced knowledge which indicates abnormalities towards the current accumulation of CO2 in the climate. These are all relevant reflections of power-knowledge.

Power-knowledge is the term which Foucault landed on after his middle period turned into his "ethical turn". He described it as latent throughout his entire bibliography (1980). Power-knowledge describes the inextricability of power and knowledge and the effects which both produce upon subjects. We ought to first look at where knowledge is produced and often used. Knowledge is produced by institutions: the university, research institutes, the government, or private institutions such as banks or corporations. Knowledge is thusly mostly a phenomenon of larger scale entities and not something which is generally produced individually[iii]. This must not be confused with the lone researcher who might produce knowledge. Their knowledge is often produced within a historical and institutional context and then disseminated and given credence

through the institution. Hence the prestige of certain universities or institutions like Harvard or Oxford.

But since knowledge produces reality, it comes into contact with what Foucault calls "subjectivation", which is the instillment of a position in the subject based on knowledge produced and made part of subjectivity (Prozorov 2018). Knowledge can create normalization of certain positions. "The healthy man" might be one such norm, just as well as the abnormality of the current climate is its opposite. This duality between normality and abnormality ought to be noted. Normalization is often introduced by institutions. Two examples are the American Psychiatric Association or the International Commission on Stratigraphy. These norms can be internalized by the subject and produces a different subject than before the knowledge was created. It ought to be noted that normal and abnormal positions are also affectively pregnant. When Victorians created the *deviant* character of the homosexual, they had deployed a duality of straight as normal and homosexual as abnormal which constituted a certain population as devious or monstrous. This was based on knowledge produced contemporaneously (Foucault 1984). It produced a whole new subject position which was negative compared to straightness. Even the language reflects this: what was homosexuality deviating from? However, this also means that normalization can also be pushed back through by larger cultural shifts. Since power isn't carried out through a big stick, but produced through a confluence of knowledge and deployed, it is much less stable and concrete. Power is diffused throughout society and Foucault even makes the remarkable suggestion that "power is everywhere" (Foucault 1984). This makes it so that resistance to power through the recognition of newly produced norms is possible. Just as the homosexual was created as the deviance from heterosexuality, it could be reformulated as just another category of broader sexuality. The reframing of knowledge means a restructuring of power.

It is all well that Foucault notices the links between institutions, knowledge, and power, but if power and knowledge produces these 'truth regimes' doesn't this lead to relative truths? Not necessarily, as it depends on what we mean by relative truth. Let's use Popper's definition of relativism:

> "...the theory that the choice between competing theories is arbitrary; since either, there is no such thing as objective truth; or, if there is, no such thing as a theory which is true or at any rate (though perhaps not true) nearer to the truth than another theory; or, if there are two or more theories, no ways or means of deciding whether one of them is better than another"
> Karl Popper 2002, The Open Society and Its Enemies, p.558

Foucault does not make this claim. He suggests it is very difficult to locate capital-T 'truth' as its production is seldom found in human history: "On the scale of human history the game of veridiction has cost much more than it has yielded" (Foucault 2017, p.238 quoted from Prozorov 2018, p.21). Foucault does indeed believe there is such a thing as truth and that it is locatable *as a fragment of reality*. Discourses of truth does not merely *describe* reality. Truths supplements reality; is part of reality. Although counterintuitive, it allows us to ask the question: "[Why], then, in addition to reality, is there truth? What is this supplement that reality in itself can never entirely account for, which is that truth comes into play on the surface of reality, in reality, right in the depths of reality?" (Foucault 2017, p.237 quoted in Prozorov 2018, p.20). This question is fascinating. Foucault answers that truth augments reality and opens opportunities for the self. Foucault believes that there are multiple "games of truth" being played out at the same time which are incommensurable. There is not one "scientific truth" but multiple being played out at the same time (e.g. genetics, mathematics, sociology). I think this is where some of the confusion or frustration might appear, as this makes it seem that truth is relative to perspective. But remember that truth is not a reflection *of* reality, but *part of reality*. Sociological or genetic insights can become tools which the subject uses to understand an aspect of reality. This supplementary character of truth can explain how different people look upon reality and produce systems which shape them or subjectivize them. These systems could be marriage, university, philosophy, ethics, or science. This is what Foucault calls "techniques of the self". This is *the subjectivizing force of truth*.

These notions are at times displayed by climate obstructionists. In particular a borrowing of the practice towards the multiplicity of truth discourses as imagined by Foucault's famous reversal of Clausewitz' dictum:

> "...war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means" (Clausewitz 1989, p.69)

Into:

> "...politics is the continuation of war by other means" (Foucault 2003, p.15).

Climate obstructionists, to a certain extent, use poststructural tactics in order to further their goals. They will present information from institutions which at face-value seem genuine only to poke and prod at institutions which they deem to be ideological. Although I would be cautious to call this Foucauldian, it does demonstrate what seems like a *battlefield of knowledge*; an understanding that the *territory of knowledge is contestable*. And if we proceed partially from the Foucauldian angle, I believe it will make legible certain tendencies in climate obstructionism.

Felix Guattari and Micropolitics; or How Subjectivities are Molded by Desires

Felix Guattari was a psychologist working alongside philosopher Gilles Deleuze to create new horizons to think philosophically through. As a psychologist Guattari was interested in how to constitute a revolutionary subjectivity through what he called an 'ethico-aesthetic' paradigm. This was particularly important in his solo-work apart from Deleuze which constituted of mainly "Three Ecologies" and "Chaosmosis" where he was theorizing about how one could produce new forms of subjectivity and affect that could work together to create political change on a larger scale. To begin to explain Delueze and Guattari's (D&G) philosophy is a like pulling at a tangled headphone cord or a ball of yarn; it is connected to and tied around itself. So instead of trying to give an overview of Guattari's worldview, we will instead be pulling at strings that we can use to knit our argument later. The two major concepts we will be explaining is the macro/micropolitics distinction and how it applies to my argument, as well as try to explain Guattarian conceptions of subjectivity and subjectivation.

Macro/Micropolitics might sound self-explanatory, but we mustn't be too hasty. Macropolitics concerns the politics on "the level of molar aggregates or assemblages – classes, sexes, nations and so on" (Rækstad 2021, p.65). For those who are not familiar with D&Gs vocabulary molar here means measuring large amounts of very small stuff and it comes from the chemistry term 'mole'. An example of viewing politics in molar terms is the Marxist viewing of politics as a struggle between capitalists and working *classes*. This is how many political scientists view politics play out in society; they take on a bird's eye view. But political matters are not in and of themselves made of classes or sexes who fight for their interests, they are made up of many *molecular phenomena*, such as people, specific affects, or subjectivities (Rækstad 2021). This means that in as much as one can look at politics from the sky, one can also look at it on the ground or through a microscope where we can analyze what is making the molar arrangements happen. These molecular phenomena are *forces of desire,* which could be for example an individual's devotion to God or a general sexism towards women who are perceived to be unavailable. Devotion (or sexism) is made up of affects, desires, or thinking towards something. These molecular phenomena (desires, affects etc.) are associated with the motions of becoming, which means that they connect subjectivities to their objects. Micropolitical matters are not necessarily only focused on specific individual affects or beliefs but could just as easily be a social phenomenon. Thusly they are not narrower in scope or extent than macropolitical issues, but they function differently, so the distinction between macropolitical and micropolitical lenses are more of a position one steps into and not opposing forces. In fact, as has been mentioned

earlier, all politics is at once both macro *and* micropolitical (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). This means that when we look at micropolitical issues such as affects or rhetoric in this thesis, we ought to be mindful about what macropolitical implications come as a consequence. Or to spell it out, what kinds of political goals do these affects work to achieve and what political structures does it end up reproducing?

When analyzing through these lenses there are some extra precautions which must be pointed out. Firstly, how does one make sense of objective interests in these terms? How can we talk about a potentially liberatory (or totalitarian) politics through this lens? Deleuze and Guattari comments that one can only understand objective interests, e.g. issues of false consciousness, through molar terms. The reasoning behind this is that the macropolitical assemblages can struggle to overcome divisions such as economic or gendered oppression through understanding of overall contradictions in societal interests (Rækstad 2021). For example, a worker as a molecular phenomenon has a multitude of desires and affects which work through them, but only when working through the assemblage of class can you understand the contradictions between the working class and the capitalist class. On the other side, racist fear or aggression towards a person of color who wishes to marry your white daughter work on a different set of beliefs, affects, and desires (2021). This is however not to say that macro and micro are unconnected to each other. Racist beliefs might very well play into and reproduce certain kinds of affective structures and processes and constitute a molar politics. The point is however that these are different ways of engaging in analysis. So, through micropolitics we can look at how documents, billboards, mass media, can influence what Guattari calls 'mental ecologies' (Guattari 2000) to shift how we position or feel about a certain topic or theme. This can easily be done if society is incurred with certain kinds of unfreedoms in interpersonal or institutions, the so-called 'microfascisms'. When we are acclimatized to unfreedoms at work, in marriage, families or other places, masses are, according to D&G, more likely to fall for fascist or totalitarian politics (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). Molar fascism mirror molecular fascism at the level of desire in subjects as molecular fascisms builds structures of affect. This could be accepting our loss of freedom through the surveillance state e.g. the Patriot Act, the indifference to internment at the southern border of the US, or the authoritarian rule of bosses at work. But it mustn't only be the emotions of everyday unfreedom but could also be the reorientation of affects and beliefs through *events* on the molar scale. January 6th shifted the experience of what the Republican Party was for both Republicans and Democrats. These events like Jan 6th or Occupy! show politics in action with the intention of showing the allure of freedom or totalitarian politics, working from the assumption that freedom or authority is contagious. In this

sense, microfascisms push and pull on our freedoms to develop and cultivate a particular form of subjectivity to engage with the world. Which leads us nicely into the cultivation of subjectivity and subjectivation.

The two works which are important for understanding what Guattari understands subjectivity and subjectivation to be is "Three Ecologies" and "Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aestheic Paradigm". These works try to unpack and theorize how to create revolutionary or singular forms of subjectivity in lieu of May 69, but we can also use his models in order to understand how subjectivity is produced more generally. Subjectivity in Guattari is a complicated matter as it isn't made up of a single stream of consciousness or similar "voice in the head" as one can find in other philosophical systems (e.g. Cartesian or Lockean thought). Guattari's influences and training are in Lacanian psychoanalysis, Marxism, and semiotics. As such his view of subjectivity varies quite a bit from the liberal or even psychological models of Freud or Piaget. To Guattari, we can think of subjectivity as a confluence of semiotic registers: economic, social, techno-scientific, mass-communications etc. which diffuse into a polyphonic experience of *desires* (Guattari 1995; 2000). The notion of desire is very important to Guattari's theory of subjectivity. In a condensed way, we can say that subjectivity is a form of 'mental ecology' which is driven by various signs and desires that are produced and reproduced by society. It is not a univocal entity produced by the mind, rather a territory under constant production by a complex number of signs and flows in the world. Subjectivity is therefore not something wholly one's own, but something that is organized into systems of discursive chains which escape the bounds of any individual (Guattari 2000, p.54). Guattari in "On the Production of Subjectivity" gives a provisional definition of subjectivity: "The ensemble of conditions which render possible the emergence of individual and/or collective instances as self-referential existential Territories, adjacent, or in a delimiting relation, to an alterity that is itself subjective" (Guattari 1995, p.9).

With this in mind, deviating knowledge, culture, technology, or affects are all apart of moving and changing the constitution of subjectivity (Guattari 2000). Mental ecology in Guattari's philosophy cannot be pried apart from the two other ecologies at work in the world namely environmental and social ecology. Environmental ecology is the kind of ecology we are taught about, while social ecology is more about our day-to-day experiences in society and the social interactions we have. As these are intertwined, they work upon each other to create a context which subjects interact with. As such, we get a different way of starting to understand subjectivity as nature, social groups or assemblages, and subjects themselves engage and oppose the flows in the world. As nature pushes back it produces ripple effects in social and mental ecologies and

vice versa, as the fight against fossil fuel production will impact the constitution of mental ecology and influence the trajectory of the environment. It is a complicated system of interlinked flows and forces which must be looked at both macro-and-micropolitical levels to get a picture.

How does this work for my argument towards the right-wing climate denial machine? Guattari was mostly interested in how to produce forms of heterogenous or revolutionary subjectivities by the constitution of new practices, knowledges, and skills in order to change society, but as mentioned earlier it needn't be that we look at this through liberation goggles. In fact, Guattari also believes there is an allure in fascist politics and in his essay "Everybody Wants To Be A Fascist" he discusses this seduction. Fascism(s) relate themselves towards our desires or "libidinal dispositions" (Guattari 2009). It speaks towards the deviances of individuals and masses, and the desires which lie within us. It participates in both a macro- and micropolitics of desire. In fact, Guattari claims that fascism isn't simply "the Party", "the totalitarian state", or "ultranationalism", but a whole host of different interplaying forces: industry, banking, military, police, technology, religions etc., which if analyzed can reveal "the *permanence* of certain fascist machineries" (Guattari 2009, p.162). The form he was concerned with was the molecularization of fascism through capitalism as a machine which constructs libidinal models. The success of capitalism is that it brings "about the internalization of these models by the masses it exploits" (2009, p.175). The failure of fascism is that "the deadly form of libidinal metabolism" (2009, p.167) could not compromise the micropolitics of desire of different masses. Fascism is a politics of desire which speaks towards quite different subjectivities but which aims at homogenization.

When we use this paradigm considering climate obstructionists, the goal is not to point the finger and say "Fascist!", but to reveal how certain affects, desires and hints at fascist (in the Guattarian sense) subjectivizing strategies. I believe it is extremely pertinent to be precise in what I mean by bringing up fascism in this context. The purpose of this *is not* to depict or insinuate that climate obstructionists are all or mostly fascist. Most are conservative or libertarian. The suggestion towards fascism here is to paint it as a set of *practical tools*, some of which climate obstructionists use, consciously or unconsciously, which 'speak' towards our individual desires and how this has political implications.

In Guattari's thought it is necessary to theorize paths to resingularize oneself precisely because the semiotic powers of mass media, politics, and culture aims to homogenize. This is as true for ecomodern discourses as it is the climate obstructionist one. The key to organized climate

denial is to circumvent and oppose environmental subjectivities and other divergent forms of heterogeneity in order to continue fossil fuel extraction. It is pertinent to mention that the interests of fossil capital are largely in lockstep with the status quo. Despite the institutional support from neoliberal governments and supranational organizations such as the UN for environmental concern, fossil fuel extraction is still the order of the day and steadily increasing. Consequently, we ought to understand climate obstruction as a homogenizing force which targets the public and policy makers in order to dissuade forms of subjectivity which might undermine the current fossil paradigm. This could include hard and soft sustainability, degrowth, post-growth, or many other theoretical persuasions to a world post-fossil economy. Additionally, there might be a micropolitics of desire, and identity in which they advocate.

Microfascisms and other forms of discourses which target facts or identity aspects in relation to climate change is most definitely a territory which climate obstructionists play on (Anshelm and Hultman 2014; Ekberg et.al 2023). Climate obstruction has also historically both worked on policy levels to delay or outright remove environmental policy as well as propaganda campaigns to move public opinion (Ekberg et.al. 2023). They target both molar and molecular levels in order to facilitate a certain form of subjectivity in relation to fossil fuels and climate change to be reproduced (Daggett 2018). As well as speaking to a 'target audience', their actions and goals also target a wider public in order to question the consensus about climate change. All of this creates the cumulative pressure on environmental, social, and mental ecologies towards homogenization of subjectivities against their material and/or ideological interests.

An Inventory of Affects; or How Emotions Can Direct Reasoning:

Socrates: *On the assumption that there are some people who desire bad things, others who desire good things? Do you not think, my friend, that everyone desires good things?*

Meno: *No, I don't.*

-Plato, Meno 77C

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

-James 4:17, King James Bible

I start this section with these two quotes as I believe they are indicative of a common intuition in Western thought, that if you *know the right*, you *will* or *ought to do the right*. But as the previous section alludes to, if we want to understand aspects of micropolitical assemblages we need to understand the affects extant in their presentation. And that knowledge isn't apart from affect. This is what this section aims towards. It will work from the supposition that affects are discursive tools which in certain ways can be transferred and transposed to other subjectivities and that it is possible to detect such affects in a text. The affects we will look at more in detail are denial, paranoia, apathy, guilt and anxiety. I will argue that denial is a defense mechanism which protects subjectivity from feeling uncomfortable emotions such as guilt or anxiety. I will also look at how denial manifests itself into paranoia and how this affect in particular creates an us-vs-them binarism which we see in climate obstruction and in other conspiratorial thinking which is called 'splitting'.

To understand denial we turn towards Stanley Cohen, who wrote a famous book about denial. He believes that what ought to happen when we process information is a unity between knowledge and action. In denial, what we see is that information presented about unpleasant topics can be processed in different ways. To achieve the unity of knowledge and action, one must digest it, make it apart of oneself (Cohen 2008). After being presented with information which leads to uncomfortable feelings one could either 1) believe the information to be true, 2) think the information untrue or the product of a lies or propaganda, or the most interesting possibility: 3) *to know and not-know at once*. It seems contradictory to Socrates who claimed, "virtue is knowledge", but to Cohen there is nothing contradictory about it. It is present in phrases we use like "they saw what they wanted to see" and "it didn't happen on my watch". The curious thing about denial is that isn't a purely epistemological problem, but rather something which touches unto areas of cognition, affect, morality, and action. The latter is the

problem we are trying to get at: why people who know about the dangers of climate change do not act to mitigate it. Cohen goes on to identify three aspects of denial:

- Literal denial, which sounds like 'it didn't happen'.
- Interpretive denial, which sounds like 'it's not what it looks like'.
- Implicatory denial, which sounds like 'it's not my problem'.

While all of these are part of the issue we are dealing with, they have different functions for the subject. Literal denial is the most easily understood as it is used to flat out disregard the information one has been presented. It could sound like 'Climate change isn't happening'. When you cannot even muster the thought that the information might be true, you deny it wholesale. Interpretive denial on the other hand is more subtle. It works to reframe either through euphemism or to use jargon to shift the observers' cognitive perceptions towards something different. In this way, one can both acknowledge an event while constructing it in such a way that it presumably makes it look not so bad. This could be 'I'm a social drinker, not an alcoholic' or 'this is not an invasion, it is a special military operation'. The function of interpretive denial is to alleviate the cognitive dissonance which exists between the beliefs we hold about ourselves and the acts we commit. But the most relevant form of denial for climate change research is found in implicatory denial. Implicatory denial is when the subject neither denies the facts or the interpretation of said facts. What one does instead is to deny or minimize "the psychological, political or moral implications which normally follow" (Cohen 2008, p.8). To Cohen it includes patterns of justifications, rationalizations, and evasions of responsibility. It sounds like 'It's not *my* responsibility that the homeless man is poor' or 'I don't care that you have to move because of climate change, it's not my problem'. In this form of denial, it is the responsibility of the speaker which is minimized or the harm of the potential event. As Cohen succinctly put it: "Unlike literal or interpretive denial, knowledge itself is not at issue, but doing the 'right' thing with this knowledge. These are matters of mobilization, commitment and involvement" (Cohen 2008, p.9). A more laconic description of casual climate change denial is difficult to come up with.

Before we proceed any further, I want to add a disclaimer. These are tactics our brains can use to avoid digesting unpleasant information. Knowledge is, as stated previously, not a neutral substance but rather something which incurs upon subjectivity. It is a difficult to deal with knowledge about traumatic incidents, "shameful sexuality", or the complicity of not stopping a genocide (or climate change). These are often not a conscious effort on the part of the individual, but a defense mechanism which protects something about subjectivity or identity. It

is often not done with malicious intent on the behalf of the denier, even if the denial often can lead to disastrous consequences. Denial isn't *always* damning of your character.

The defense which denial provides is to avoid guilt. Guilt is a moral emotion; it tells us that we have compromised our moral values. It is an unpleasant emotion, and it drives us to different ways of either avoiding or alleviating this emotion. Denial is one way of avoiding this. Guilt can also be deflected unto someone else. The classic example in climate denial is: it's not my fault, it's the Saudi's, Chinese, Americans, Indians, whomever, "so there's nothing I can (or should) do, so I may as well just ignore it" (Dodds 2011, p.43). This is a deflection of your responsibility, however little that might be. And while that might alleviate guilt, "...the deflection of guilt does nothing to stop the disastrous consequences of climate change so we would still need to take urgent action" (Dodds 2011, p.43). Guilt can also be shared or distributed through humor (Dodds 2011). When environmentalists are joked about as fuzzy killjoys (which might be true), there is a sense of togetherness being formed. Be it self-deprecating environmentalists, climate deniers, or even the car enthusiasts on Top Gear (Garrard 2019). Humor is a powerful tool to share in or distribute emotions, one being guilt (Norgaard 2011). And to be precise again, most people are capable of deflecting to avoiding feeling guilty, but when we do this, we must also remind ourselves that this has political implications.

There are also political implications considering apathy. Apathy *can* be a defense against unwanted emotions as well. It can signal that one is helpless to resolve or confront a problem. Being apathetic means being indifferent, but indifference isn't always calm or unconcerned about a particular challenge. It can also mean that one does not have the emotional resources to deal with a problem. Apathy usually means that one throws in the towel, admits defeat and keeps going with other things. In this way it can resemble denial in a way, in so far as one forfeits to process or deal with one's emotions or problems. Dodds makes this explicit quoting Harold Searles:

> «Searles (1972: 366) asks: 'Is not the general apathy in the face of pollution a statement that there is something so unfullling about the quality of human life that we react, essentially, as though our lives are not worth fighting to save?' Our deteriorating environment then becomes both the means to this end, and a defence allowing us to avoid acknowledging how deep our depression goes, so that "instead of feeling isolated within emotional depression, one feels at one with everyone else in a "realistically" doomed world" (ibid.)»
>
> Joseph Dodds 2011, Psychoanalysis at the Edge of Chaos, p.70.

Apathy can therefore be an unfortunate response to unfreedoms mentioned in the Guattari-section. This is a problem which has puzzled thinkers since La Boetie and Montesquieu.

Another disposition related to climate obstruction is paranoia. Ruth Stein characterizes paranoia as "alienation of the Other and from the Other. It is about the creation of enemies, a process where inner tension, fear of humiliation, shame about weakness, and repressed self-doubt crystallize into the figure of a threatening Other" (Stein 2010, p.231). Paranoia is suspicion towards an Other, the lizard brain which tells us that something is not right and that we should be alert. It is a response to troubled times on both micro- and macrolevels. On the molar level, it pervades in conspiracy theories since "[c]onspiracy theories are a natural reaction to social situations that elicit feelings of fear and uncertainty. Specifically, the more strongly people experience such aversive emotions, the more likely it is that they assign blame for distressing events to different groups" (Prooijen 2018, p.22). And it is in states of fear or uncertainty that we can become suspicious and alert, and since our brains are pattern-seeking and agency detecting machines, it leads certain people to "perceive malevolent conspiracies as responsible for a range of societal events" (Prooijen 2018, p.27). Paranoia may or may not look rational. Since vigilant people always seek more information to prove its position, it often has reasons for why it believes why it believes. Whether or not the information does prove the paranoid's conclusion is a different matter, but paranoia "can pose as rational and well-reasoned" (Stein 2010, p.235).

Being fearful and alert therefore can lend towards 'splitting' which is when an object is seen in black and white terms: "Environmentalists are conniving and evil, while I am good and heroic". Splitting is often an unconscious way of dealing with complex or unpleasant emotions such as fear. But this binarism can come in the way of personal relationships and be destructive in politics. An infamous occasion of splitting is George Bush's address to Congress after 9/11: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Bush White House Archive 2001). This rhetoric polarizes and makes non-partisanship seemingly impossible. Paranoid politics should therefore be seen as forming a sense of who is "us". Findings show that "...uncertainty makes people endorse conspiracy theories more strongly for leaders that they find immoral but less strongly for leaders that they find moral" (Prooijen 2018, p.31). Thus, we can learn a lot about who is "us" and "not-us" by searching for where accusations are leveled towards. If the subject finds or perceives their leader to be moral it might make it less likely for them to accuse their leader of conspiracy. There is community and safety in those who share your morality or are similar to you. Looking through

paranoia therefore might expose why certain conspiracy theories don't seem to level their accusations at the 'correct people' and denote villainous intent to others. It isn't about rationality, as much as communication of whom one feels safe with, trust, and who holds your values. Paranoia can therefore be an affect of microfascism. Paranoia is present in fascism (in the Guattarian sense) as it communicates who belongs, what is certain, and displays clear splits of desire. This binary style of Western thought has been pointed out by Bateson, Plumwood, and Derrida (Dodds 2011; Plumwood 1993; Derrida 2004).

Denial and paranoia are defense mechanisms against anxiety. Anxiety has many definitions in philosophy from Kierkegaard to Heidegger. To us however, anxiety is an emotion of worry towards something unpleasant in the future. It is different from fear which is directed towards a present danger. Anxiety is a gnawing or ruminating emotion towards future discomfort (Talkovsky and Norton 2020). It is composed of worry, anticipatory physical activation, and motivations to alleviate it. Anxiety makes us vigilant towards expected threats e.g. exams, rejection, or climate change. Climate change is both a current issue and something portrayed as an apocalypse. A little eco-anxiety is permitted with this characterization (Dodds 2011). But anxiety is also an unpleasant emotion, so much so that one can start feeling anxious about anxiety, which is often the case when anxiety becomes disordered (Talkovsky and Norton 2020). Accordingly, there can be a lot of motivation to alleviate anxiety or outright try to escape it. Again, denial might be one such way, splitting another (Dodds 2011). But the anxious person wants to resolve anxiety and for it to stay resolved.

The forces of passionate emotions can make one do or say irrational things, but there are also quite rational explanations for emotions and why they come to be. In this section, my intention has been to paint a picture of different affects present in and around climate obstruction which motivates and makes legible certain features of climate obstruction.

PART 3: Research Design; or How I Navigated the Corridors Climate Obstruction.

Demarcations and Data collection:

To invoke the spirit of Derrida, what is often the most interesting about a project is the topics and information that the author avoids or puts towards the margins of the text. All academic texts do this with some necessity as it is impossible to cover the whole of any given topic. But this would be speaking past Derrida, as his meaning is more along the vein that what is being avoided reveals what is precisely the most difficult to manage in the text. In semiotics this would be called an *absent signifier* (Chandler 2007). Avoidance is an on-going theme in much writing. As such, I want to be forthright about the process of developing and demarcating a space for my thesis and the question we are investigating, which to remind you is:

What are the tactics of obstruction employed by right-wing think-tanks in the US and why are these tactics so effective?

Looking at this research question again we can ask a couple of questions about the demarcation, which I will attempt to explain:

1) *What is implied by the word 'tactics' and why focus on them?*,
2) *Why use the term climate obstruction?*,
3) *Why focus on the US?*, and last but not least,
4) *How will I attempt to explain effectiveness?*

As many of the climate obstructionists' fashion themselves as experts, it felt quite fitting for me to look at them through a strictly rhetorical or philosophical lens. It became obvious after engaging with the data and the literature that the philosopher would have to wait his turn and let other disciplines to the table as well. In order to facilitate the multifaceted nature of climate obstruction I decided that I would adopt a focus on discourses and look at how those legitimated a certain ordering of the world. The word 'tactics' encompasses a broader range of things than just the written word and since there are many ways to obstruct climate policy, the variety of ways and tools in order to achieve their goals was what I wanted to understand.

The theoretical work that I had been done up until this point did, I must admit, influence the types of research questions which would be relevant for this thesis. Poststructuralist theory does

facilitate certain questions over others and gives one a toolbox to start analyzing historical, rhetorical, and psychological aspects of climate obstruction. During research I had accumulated leaked tactical documents which were at once fascinating but also very disconcerting. To such an extent that I had only scanned through them before the research. Instead of moving away from that discomfort I wanted to understand why these documents were alarming to me and after reading them, the imminent obligation was to dissect them in detail for the knowledge they provided[iv]. Accordingly, the questions that were fascinating were related to how the rhetorical and affective moments deployed in climate obstructionist texts could influence the attitudes of the public. A lesson I learned from this was that the researcher is never wholly separate from their previous circumstances as well as the contingencies shaped by choices that seems disconnected from work. I shouldn't labor under a belief of *tabula rasa*.

The terminology of this field has been quite varied. First off, there is the standard denotation of climate denial we see in the media. This term has recently been challenged for being obfuscatory or not applicatory to newer tactics which we see being proliferated. Ekberg et.al. 2023 has argued that the term 'denial' obfuscates the subtle ways in which normal political processes and deceptive science can work against climate policy socio-politically. It also belies the goal of the actors and chooses to focus on their beliefs instead of what the denial/skeptic discourse *does*, which is to occlude actions that undermine fossil dependence (Ekberg et.al. 2023). Considering the recency of the critique, a lot of scholars (Norgaard, Lahsen and Mazo) have used climate denial as a catch-all term as it has firm establishments in media and culture (Norgaard 2011; Lahsen 2013; Mazo 2013). In McCright and Dunlap (2012), we see them use the term "Organized Climate Denial" to denote the very specific subsection of American think-tanks which were facilitating climate denialist discourse. This term is the one I started off using due to its specificity of the target and which I might occasionally use to refer to right-wing think-tanks. There are other terms such as 'Fossil Capital' (Dahlberg 2023) popularized by Andreas Malm in his book by the same name. Fossil Capital frame right-wing think-tanks as an actor on behalf of petroleum companies and has a Marxist 'structure-superstructure' tone. It is true that petroleum companies and billionaires have been bankrolling the activities of right-wing think-tanks (Meyer 2016), the choice of framing it in this way I believe to be counterproductive for the aims of displaying *tactics*. 'Fossil capital' focuses on the economic relationship or motivations between parties, rather than what discourse *does*[v]. Which leads us to the term 'climate obstruction' which encompass or cluster many things together. Climate obstructionists tend to be in or associated with right-wing think-tanks, they tend to deny or be skeptical of Anthropogenic Climate Change, they may even have been paid extensively by fossil capital, but

most importantly their goal is to delay or fully stop climate change policy as this undermines action towards climate change (Ekberg et.al 2023). This term was conceptualized in Climate Obstruction by Ekberg et.al. (2023) and divvies up climate obstruction into the right-wing think-tanks, far-right politics, and its effects on public society and culture. This way of approaching climate denial lets us focus in on a specific group, namely right-wing think-tanks in America and show how there are more things at play than only denial and that there are other motivations which pervades this group, as well as their effect on the public. Focusing on actions, rhetoric, affect, and the interstices of these with strategy is helpful in charting neutralization and also why certain demographics seem to be more likely to be climate deniers.

There are a lot of right-wing think tanks and there is also a whole host of things to discuss and research about them. In the process of trying to formulate a question about climate obstruction I had to reflect about many different things, some of which I will make explicit here. First, was the narrowing down on think-tanks to dissect. Organized climate denial is most widely studied in the US and its stories are also deeply documented and sourced. This is not to say there aren't finds of this in countries such as Germany, France, Norway, Great Britain, and other countries. But the database I had relied upon for the research had a significant English-speaking slant which is a limitation of the information source which I felt I had to work *with* and not *against*. As the context of climate obstruction is widely documented in the US and the information was freely available, I believed that this would be a good fit.

As the spatial element was being worked out, the next issue was the quantity and quality of information. The breadth of the climate denial machine is part of its design. If there were only one climate denial organization, it would be very easy to spot and label in the media. But the deluge of organizations can help create the perception that there really is a significant dissensus on climate change. This breadth however is impossible to reflect in the space I have at my disposal.

A solution was to understand climate obstruction through a select number of organizations organize them temporally. The intuition was to structure the organizations based on presidential terms as this could reflect how American's thought about environmental causes. It would be foolish to say that the environment were key issues in elections, my intention was rather that different presidential periods generally coincided with changing attitudes in government about environmental policy. Starting in the Clinton-era up including the Trump-era, we have two Democratic presidents with a more pronounced environmental concern and two Republican presidents with diverging outward opinions about the environment and climate change. In total

that would amount to four organizations from four different presidential terms totaling around 30 years. The number of organizations is the most limiting moment of this analysis, so the filtering of organizations would be an important moment in the work. What I eventually decided upon was to try to reflect prominence in their time-periods alongside strategical defences to pick out the organizations. I viewed these two factors as the most interesting properties, but they are not without limitations in and of themselves.

What I landed upon were four organizations: the Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP) for the Clinton administration, the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) for the Bush administration, the Heartland Institute for Obama administration, and the Center for Industrial Progress (CIP) under Donald Trump. These organizations were chosen for their respective reasons of both prominence and relation to climate obstruction as a whole. SEPP was chosen for its insistence on discrediting the science behind climate change and its version of scientific practice. CEI was chosen for its focus on "free-market environmentalism" and its reflection in the ideology of the Bush administration, namely free-market conservatism. The Heartland Institute was chosen specifically for its relationship with the contemporaneously emergent Tea Party movement and as the catalyst as a fulcrum of climate obstruction towards right-wing populist rhetoric. CIP were chosen not because of their prominence, but rather due to its fiercely loyal stance to fossil fuels which I believe we see reflected in the messaging of the Donald Trump administration (although a little less eloquently). These four organizations matched what I thought were some central tenets of organized climate obstruction: discrediting science, free market fundamentalism, a propensity towards us vs. them thinking, and die-hard loyalism towards fossil fuel dependence. The goal now was to understand the rhetoric and why these tenets seemed to be so important. Which led to data collection and discrimination of what I felt was relevant.

The journey of data collection started with the comprehensive search of data-entry points in the DeSmog database. As I was required to give a brief summary of all organizations on the database for a previous research project I was working on, it became clear that I would have plenty of material to work with if in this project if I so desired. Sometimes the problem a researcher might have, is that there isn't enough data or documents to look at. It was the opposite problem here. There were *too many* organizations who produced a deluge, an onslaught, a proverbial tsunami of materials. How do you choose the material in this scenario? In my case, I chose to segment my material based on the temporal perspective, as I had the sense as I had been going through the database that I could detect a shift in argumentation

through different presidential administrations. The DeSmog database also organizes their inputs on each organization temporally, which might have influenced my thinking about the problem. It made sense to me however that conservative climate obstructionists are likely to argue differently towards liberal Bill Clinton policies versus conservative George W. Bush.

Which leads me lastly to write about what I mean about effectiveness. Effectiveness is a loose term of measurement of how you get to your end-goal. When we discuss effectiveness in this context, I aim to understand the rhetorical, logical, and implicatory schemes of the discourse I will look at, as well as locating the affects present in the text. Often a tactic can be good because you play on the framing of a particular assertion. Other times, there are institutions which are being criticized and the effectiveness of a tactic is reliant upon discrediting an instituion. It will vary based on the target of their criticism, how they argue, and what motivations they might have. But most importantly, I think effectiveness can explain the memetics of particular kinds of discourse and why it proliferates. Effectiveness understood this way is a measure of the ways in which certain rhetorical, logical, implicatory, and affective discourses continue to be reproduced despite the attempt to debunk this misinformation. An effective climate obstructionist discourse, thusly understood, is a rhetorically and affective potent discourse which is useful towards upholding fossil fuel dependency, be it through simplicity of *mimesis* of the world it represents, affective transmission, or by logically fallacious, albeit rhetorically convincing reasoning. The goal is superlative to climate obstruction, so the tools or tactics to achieve said goal are varied and multifaceted.

Interdisciplinarity and Academic Rigor:

To conduct the analysis, I wanted to look through a particular theoretical lens, namely poststructuralism. I am familiar with using poststructuralist theory to approach problems, but a purely poststructuralist analysis, I thought, would be insufficient in understanding the problem at hand. I was early on seeing that I needed to broaden my approach and think interdisciplinary. In "Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies", Gunilla Öberg (2011) outlines some questions of how to go about doing interdisciplinary research. Those of note to us here are mainly question 1-3 regarding the use of interdisciplinarity and 7-9 which concern academic rigor. Doing interdisciplinary work is at times difficult because one must juggle different disciplinary expectations of rigor and structure. We therefore want to reflect upon the choices

we make to not overstep the implications of the research and also make sure that it is useful in other disciplines.

In this thesis, I want to attempt being a "reflective doer" (2011, p.26), or someone who uses different methods and reflects upon those choices. The end of using an interdisciplinary method is in part to bridge how we tend to frame climate obstruction and its effectiveness. The literature now tends to show that the "information-deficit model" is not sufficient to understand ways to combat climate denial. I tend to believe that climate obstruction and the denial which it is closely related to is largely an issue of identity, affect and power. Specifically, who has the power to shape the ontology of science and the sympathies towards industrialized society and its assumptions concerning science. In Öberg's terms, this is an "ontological" ambition, or using interdisciplinarity to understand climate obstruction in new and different terms (2011, p.25). The question thus becomes: what disciplines am I borrowing my concepts, theories and methods from? The main ones are chiefly environmental sociology, psychology, and philosophy, in particular poststructuralist philosophy. These are different avenues of looking at climate obstruction, persuasion, or scientific discourse and they feed into each other at different points. In order to look at affect production for example, a psychological reading of the empirics is a fine place to start. Others however have done many readings of climate obstructionist texts and those are more often than not academics of sustainability or environmental sociologists and their readings are valuable empirical resources in order to evaluate the relation to power and discourse production. A philosophical reading would emphasize the aspects related to epistemological truth, fallacious reasoning, and sociohistorical narratives about science. Looking through my perspective of poststructuralism lends itself to these different aspects of these disciplines and I believe it integrates them into a new framework. In losing any one of these you would lose different dimensions of the object being studied, be them power dimensions, affective and attitudinal dimensions, or the dimensions relevant to epistemology and politics. All of these dimensions put together add something relevant to discussions about the nature of science in the 21st century, post-truth, and the political challenges of climate change policymaking.

Moving on towards questions concerning academic rigor. Interdisciplinary work is particularly subject to this problem. It demands that the researcher is aware of the waters they are swimming in, and that they understand the challenges of demarcation, data collection, literature review, and relevant framing when moving across disciplines. I have already explained my choices in

the demarcating and data collection section, so to ensure no repetition our main focus of rigor is the choice of literature and my framework for later.

Citation is integral to scientific practice, but as you are about to see, sometimes citations can be deceptive. Anchoring your scientific project into a wider body of research means that you must be aware of what that research is (Öberg 2011). In my case, this meant I had to read about affects and what they are from sources in ecopsychoanalysis like for example Joseph Dodds. I had to read through articles tracing the history and demography of climate obstructionism of which the literature itself falls within disciplines ranging from philosophy of science (e.g. Merchants of Doubt) and sociology (e.g. Dunlap and McCright, or Norgaard), or journalistic sources (e.g. Petroleum Papers). I also read ecofeminist texts, alongside literature about petro-masculinity and populism as I believed these revolve around eachother. Figuring out whether these were good sources was a different process and included cross-checking facts, considering prominence within their fields, critical arguments against their findings, and clarifying the origins of framings. When working across disciplines, it is important to be mindful that different disciplines have different standards and weights they put on citations, framings, structure, and not least, evidence (Öberg 2011). My objective then was to use the work of other scholars in a manner that I could frame through this broader poststructural frame. This could point to a weakness in my theoretical frame which is at times filled with jargon unfamiliar or disagreeable to some scholars. I have attempted to clarify this jargon because I believe that the poststructural concepts in concert with the use of other disciplines reveals a different tendency in climate obstructionism which I don't think has been sufficiently explored.

Transferring methods from one discipline to another is also problematic. Poststructural methods, such as Foucauldian genealogy, operates in quite a different way than psychoanalytic readings of texts, or even quantitative sociological research. Thusly, my focus was to ground the different threads through a framework which could accommodate what I attempted to achieve. None of the material I used to anchor my method was natural sciences, so I could still "move back and forth between the general" and concrete as Öberg puts it (2011, p.110). The method which I felt to accommodate the different perspectives the best was Critical Discourse Analysis with an added emphasis on an affective micropolitical angle.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Feeling Knowing:

What I aim to do in this thesis is a form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which focus on the ways in which the discourse produced by climate obstructionists are interlinked with issues such as power, affect, and the ways in which we use scientific discourse in public debate. The ultimate goal of climate obstruction is to use a series of strategies in order to maintain the current state of fossil dependence and they do this with the use of specific discourses that reproduce affects which again facilitate implicatory climate denialism within the wider public. As such, the role of this thesis is to "take [an] explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality" (Dijk 2008) through the theories of Foucault and Guattari and to understand the discourses as related to reproduction of fossil dependence and social apathies towards climate change. The tenets of CDA are summarized very succinctly by Fairclough and Wodak:

> "1. CDA addresses social problems.
> 2. Power relations are discursive.
> 3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
> 4. Discourse does ideological work.
> 5. Discourse is historical.
> 6. The link between text and society is mediated.
> 7. Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory.
> 8. Discourse is a form of social action."
> (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, p.271-80. Reproduced from Dijk, Discourse and Power, 2008, p.86)

In these definitions we see the emphasis on language and how it reproduces certain orderings of society. CDA aims to expose or work to undo the power relations present in discourses and is therefore situated not as a 'value-free' descriptive scientific endeavor, but as a positionality in and of itself. Using Foucauldian theories of power however, trying to undo power would be the wrong way of phrasing the aims of this project. I aim to show how the mechanisms of power flow, so that I can identify how to potentially counter such mechanisms. Another tenet found in CDA, according to Dijk (2008) is the frequent use of multidisciplinarity. Since CDA isn't a specific research direction, but rather *a mode of research*, it includes a large number of theoretical and conceptual frameworks within it. I could do a conversation analysis, narrative analysis, media analysis, or what I aim to do here, a rhetorico-affective analysis. Since I aim at clarifying the ways in which obstructionists clamor at reclaiming the scientific and political imaginations of climate change, I am doing CDA. As Dijk highlights multidisciplinary methods, I would argue that interdisciplinary methods would be welcomed under the umbrella of CDA since my tools still aim at socio-political issues.

In line with our reflections on Guattari previously, Dijk also believes that CDA seeks to find relationships between microlevels and macrolevels. While patriarchy for example is often viewed as a wider structural problem, a macrolevel problem; the verbal and written communication we use function on the microlevel to uphold certain power imbalances between men and women. These could be little comments between men about women or directed towards women, but the discourse deepens or upholds ideas, beliefs, and structures of affect that we have about women and which constitute patriarchy. This means that CDA also seeks to link micro- and macrolevels. It does this in one of several ways. One could read: 1) language users as constituent of members of their social group or institution or, 2) actions of individual language users as part of larger social actions such as an agenda-setting or legislation or, 3) moments of discourse as contexts of larger structures the way lectures are parts of praxis one finds in a university or, 4) language users as having both personal and social cognition, which means that they have personal memories and opinions but also a larger social cognition of their social group (Dijk 2008, p. 88). I will mostly be reading using the first option, focusing on the ways in which individual climate obstructionists use the discourses of science as members of their scientific communities and the emotions which they use in order to reproduce climate inaction and sustain fossil dependence. The affects and rhetoric of climate obstruction is at once a microlevel (e.g. the particular discourse examined), but also macroscopic meaning that it falls in line with larger trends of feeling or affective structures related to climate change. These feelings are part of our methodology, and it must be explained how I am to work with affect.

Affect theory is an emerging academic theory which is typically traced to Brian Massumi or Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick but could be traced all the way back to Spinoza's 'affectus'. Coming from the 'affective turn', it is found in the works of for example Sara Ahmed who wrote the influential "The Cultural Politics of Emotion" in 2004. I will be more in line with Massumi and a Guattarian sense of affect as "changes in bodily capacity" (Hickey-Moody 2013, p.80). In "Affect as Method: Affective Pedagogy" Anna Hickey-Moody explains that working with affect is working *aesthetically*. In line with an ethico-aesthetic model, Hickey-Moody works us through how to understand affect, how to use it methodologically, and what it does to the research. Hickey-Moody claims that when we look at a fragment of a text, it communicates feelings or a sense and that this in turn changes how we imagine the world: "To feel or sense is to imagine. The materiality of imagination, feeling, is relations between ideas and the bodies that are their objects... How we feel about things impacts on how we can think about them" (2013, p.82-83). Our social imaginings are not static but in flux as we encounter new situations, interesting images, injustices, and the randomness of the world. Bodies, molecular or molar, are in motion

"re-making themselves through their actions: relations, interests, the contexts in which they live" (2013, p.82). Working with affect therefore becomes a way of observing the ways in which bodies speak or imagine the world. And as affect is fluid, it is changeable and contestable. When we watch TV, read books, listen to music, or even when we read scientific research, it "teaches us to feel in certain ways and these feelings have politics" (2013, p.83). While it might be counterintuitive to think of science affectively, this is in part what I will be doing. As an enterprise of knowledge, it is intermingled with power, but *as a text* there is an aesthetic to science, a communication of sense or affect – certitude, trust, apprehension – which influence how we think about the world. We speak of how things *feel true* or that there is a 'truthiness' (Morton 2018). This is not the Platonian 'justified true belief', but an *intuitive feeling* that something is true. Besides this, learning is never wholly divorced from sensation as bodies engage at once with rationality *and* sensation. As such, "[r]esearch that works affect as method recognizes that processes of making meaning, crafting emotional responses and producing images in thought are practical and political acts. These acts inform *the possible* in social imaginings" (Hickey-Moody 2013, p.85). Accordingly, it is the job of the researcher of CDA and affect to challenge how correct the representations that underlie emotions.

PART 4: Findings; or How to Deny Anthropogenic Climate Change in Just 3 Easy Steps:

Step 1: The Art of Warfare Starts with a Plan:

The Global Climate Science Communications Action Plan:

> *No one starts a war - or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so - without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.*
>
> Carl von Clausewitz 1989, On War, p.579

In the process of collecting data, I found three internal documents which discuss tactics and rhetoric on climate change and environment. The first is the API and Global Climate Coalitions tactics for evading the Kyoto Protocol called the "Global Climate Science Communications Action Plan". The second is a memo from Republican strategist Frank Luntz's research company called "Straight Talk". The third is a transcript from a presentation by marketing whiz Richard Berman called "Big Green Radicals: Exposing Environmental groups" from 2014. As climate denial strategy is similar to tobacco politics (Oreskes and Conway 2012), they draw the same kinds of tactics. With this I mean that think tanks are often getting media training from marketing managers or political strategists and they must know their way around a camera and know what rhetorical and affective buttons to push. These documents are some of their tips and tricks in order to learn this and proceed from the logic that the "general is skillful in attack whose opponent does not know what to defend; and he is skillful in defense whose opponent does not know what to attack" (Gilles 2000, p.20).

In the "Action Plan", the API and GCC start out by surveying the current landscape under a situation analysis. In this they give a reading of the Kyoto Protocols where they start by painting a picture of the dire consequences for fossil fuels and the economy if Kyoto was ratified by Congress. They then go on to write about the ignorance of the American people on the uncertainties of climate science stating: "The climate change theory being advanced by the treaty supporters is based primarily on forecasting models with a very high degree of uncertainty. In fact, it is not known for sure whether (a) climate change actually is occurring, or (b) if it is, whether humans really have any influence on it" (GCSC 1998, p. 1). It is curious that when certain commentators have conceptualized climate obstructionists, they think of them as

Machiavellian, but here we see that they, at least to an extent, believe what they say. We should however be cautious to try to read minds from this document, but the documents give us access to their plans, portrayals, and intentions.

They argue that environmental activists and climate change activists have been successful in "misrepresenting the science" (1998 p.2) and urges its readers to show that the science does not support the Kyoto Treaty's presuppositions. Then comes the admission: "Yet if we can show that science does not support the Kyoto treaty – which most *true* climate scientists believe to be the case – this puts the United States in a stronger moral position and frees its negotiators from the need to make concessions as a defense against perceived selfish economic concerns" [emphasis added] (1998, p.2). This is an example of a No-True-Scotsman fallacy, which is when you defend an assertion by defining your opponent's claims as coming an impure source. Here, only the climate scientists who are not in alignment with the goals of Kyoto are *true*. Its inclusion here indicate that climate obstructionists believe that current climate science which has been established is not *true* climate science, or at least that the situation isn't serious. More noteworthy however is the tactical advantage of arguing from morality than arguing from economics. Corporations (and their beneficiaries) understand the optical challenges of trying to convince the public that they need to make more money against the backdrop of a process which might be morally fraught e.g. global warming. It is therefore preferable to make a different argument that it isn't about the profits of the company, but rather about the integrity of knowledge production and its dissemination, or about truth standing up to falsity. This is an aesthetic idea which you can see traced to how we teach the history of science and philosophy. It conjures the heroism of Socrates, the gall of Copernicus, or the radicality of Galileo standing up to the Catholics. The aesthetics of bravery of deviant thinkers (e.g. *true* climate scientists) standing up to the authority of a system or person is a powerful tool since it has roots in Western history of science. It frames climate obstruction in a similar position to Galileo or Socrates. But it also should not be forgotten that as much as there are significant figures with paradigm-shifting thoughts, there are exponentially more whose ideas and concepts have been wrong.

After the situation analysis, it states that the project goal is that a majority of the American public will recognize the uncertainty of climate change. Under the heading "Victory Will Be Achieved When" it lists five ways to know if the project has succeeded:

- Average citizens "understand" (recognize) uncertainties in climate science recognition of uncertainties becomes part of the "conventional wisdom"

- Media "understands" (recognizes) uncertainties in climate science
- Media coverage reflects balance on climate science and recognition of the validity of viewpoints that challenge the current "conventional wisdom"
- Industry senior leadership understands uncertainties in climate science, making them stronger ambassadors to those who shape climate policy
- Those promoting the Kyoto treaty on the basis of extant science appear to be out of touch with reality

  Global Climate Science Communications 1998, p. 3

These goals show that the purpose of climate obstruction is to change the meaning of climate change and for industry to regain influence over climate policy. The quotation marks around understand are revealing as those seem to imply that the public and media needn't really appreciate the intricacies of science, only to recognize that there are dissenting voices and to keep those voices in mind when they hear any proposed action to combat climate change. This seems to suggest that misinterpretation and creating convenient mental shortcuts are part of the goal. Denial becomes easier if you give the public an excuse, however lazy or sturdy it might be. Looking at the third goal we see that *balance* is a central part of this. False balance or what is called "the argument to moderation" is an example of a tool which plays on a bias that we ought to give both sides of an argument an opportunity to negotiate on a position. To be more precise, it is the fallacious belief that a compromise between two positions is where the truth might lie. It is particularly exploitable in a world where the media does not want to look biased or politically motivated; to be in line with journalistic codes of ethics. But to presume that climate science is exclusively political (and therefore negotiable) is an assertion which belies the fact that climate science is built on modelling empirics. Of course, its findings aren't uncontestable, but the particular charge that it is built upon faulty science is something which would need to be argued for instead of assumed. The last goal in particular is a way to frame the issue which is particularly favored to the media-savvy world of the 1990's. Being able to smear someone as a lunatic or an extremist is a good way to make the average person discredit them. This works from an assumption of the Overton Window, namely that there is a window of acceptable discourses in a culture. While this is not explicitly mentioned in the text, it works from the same logic. When modern day right-wing populists say that free speech is restricted because they feel they cannot say what they feel, this is an admission that the Overton Window is at least not centering the voices of right-wing populists. When the API and GCC aim towards framing climate science (or other knowledges) as lunacy or extremist, they are using the logic of

the Overton Window. Before going into detail on "Strategies and Tactics", it ends by giving an image of the contemporary landscape they were up against:

> Unless "climate change" becomes a non-issue, meaning that the Kyoto proposal is defeated and there are no further initiatives to thwart the threat of climate change, there may be no moment when we can declare victory for our efforts. It will be necessary to establish measurements for the science effort to track progress toward achieving the goal and strategic success
> Global Climate Science Communications 1998, p.3

The pessimistic nature of this prospect shows the insecurity of the position. Even though the US never did ratify the Kyoto treaty, a very important win for fossil fuel companies, they are never truly safe. Unless they have squashed all opposition and their framing is total, it is a constant struggle.

Following this comes the "Strategies and Tactics" which amount to four bullet-points: 1) A National Media Relations Program, 2) a Global Climate Science Information Source, 3) a National Direct Outreach and Education program, and 4) Funding Sources and allocation. These make up the techniques to get towards the goals mentioned above. In order to understand this, I will conceptualize this like an assembly line in order analyze the processes separately[vi]. We're starting with funding the project. You cannot proceed with a project unless you have capital to make sure it is carried out as planned. In this paper they estimate they can get funding from the "American Petroleum Institute and its members; Business Round Table (BRT) and its members, Edison Electric Institute (EEI) and its members; Independent Petroleum Association of American (IPAA) and its members; and the National Mining Association (NMA) and its members" (GCSDC 1998, p.7). In essence from a broad coalition of energy and business associations, though not all fossil fuel, predominantly fossil fuel. The amount they were looking for was around $2 million. After having gained funding from industry, you engage stage number two: Developing information.

The second part of the plan is the creation of a "Global Climate Science Information Source" to "inject credible science and scientific accountability into the global climate debate, thereby raising questions about and undercutting the "prevailing scientific wisdom"" (1998, p.5). This will be achieved by establishing a Data Center in Washington which initially will be staffed with "professionals on loan from various companies and associations with a major interest in the climate issue" (1998, p.5). These professionals will have three sub-goals to acheive: 1) Giving the coalition involved in the plan a history of climate research and the IPCC as well as a network analysis of outspoken climate scientists, 2) an overview of climate knowledge and their

relations with Congress, in particular Senators, and 3) the organization of both a visible team of experts and grassroots organizations. It is understanding the water you are swimming in. Read tactically it mirrors Sun Tzu's famous saying: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles" (Giles 2000, p.11).

The data center will also function as "the logistical and moral support they have been lacking. In short, it will be a sound scientific alternative to the IPCC" (1998, p.6). It is curious to see that the aims of the Data Center are not the production of material which creates a more *accurate* picture of climate change, but rather the production of material that undergirds the tenuous structure of their already formed beliefs about climate change. This is seen later in the bullet points where you see goals such as: "Identifying and establishing cooperative relationships with all major scientists whose research in this field supports our position" and "[r]esponding to claims from the scientific alarmists and media" (1998, p.6). It is about *reacting* to the findings of established climate science rather than producing materials which stand on their own.

In this step we see that the coalition is building up ethos and credibility within the discourse they are engaging in. It is impossible for the fossil fuel industry to tackle this subject directly as it would be immediately recognizable that this industry has a vested interest in the continuation of their own product. Ethos is important in science as it provides the groundwork for the creation of audience attention. Academics usually build their ethos by routinely engaging with the literature, formulating new knowledge, and gaining experience in academia. A Ph.D. fellow usually has less ethos than a Professor Emeritus in the same field. The hierarchy of academia is built on the assumption that persons who have displayed competence in a field will flow up the ranks as other professionals recognize their prowess. The public however are less knowledgeable about the production of knowledge and the differences between universities and neutral sounding institutes such as "Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change". Reports, memos, amicus briefs, and other written materials seem on the surface grounded in fact. But the standards of peer review are different in these two worlds and there is no peer review goal in the coalition document. This omission should in and of itself be quite revealing.

After having constructed a Data Center for climate science, the next step is outreach and education initiatives. In this step they plan on informing and educating "members of Congress, state officials, industry leadership, and school teachers/students about uncertainties in climate science". Through this step they intend to "erect a barrier against further efforts to impose Kyoto-like measures in the future" (1998, p.6). This is trying to future-proof climate obstruction

from events further down the line. The sub-goals in this strategy are developing information kits that aim specifically towards "the needs of government officials and industry leaders" as well as "serv[ing] as the point of outreach to the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and other influential science education organizations" (1998, p.6-7).

Lastly, to catch the public imagination you must engage with mass media. This point in particular is very important. The document emphasizes the importance of this point by being the longest and the most extensive part of the plan by engaging "national, regional and local media coverage on the scientific uncertainties, and thereby educat[ing] and inform[ing] the public, stimulating them to raise questions with policy makers" (1998, p.4). This strategy is also heavily dependent on the second part of the strategy as the information created in the data center are the quotes, reports, and articles created for this purpose, namely manufacturing dissensus. The GCSC has in this document facilitated a clear and concrete war-plan to maintain their position.

Frank Luntz and The Republican Plan to Win the Global Warming Debate:

Frank Luntz is an American political communications consultant who is famous for his work regarding Republican causes such as the estate tax and global warming. He is concerned with how words influence and produce desired outcomes in political messaging. In 2001, Luntz wrote a memo to the Republican Party about how to talk about the environment which was called "The Environment: A Cleaner, Healthier America". This is the document famous for writing: "It's time for us to start talking about "climate change" instead of global warming and "conservation " instead of preservation" (Luntz 2001, p.142).

The document contains an eight-point plan stacked with many examples and strategies for Republicans to win control over the conversation. The plan as such is about how certain words and phrases influence the discourse of global warming (or climate change if you will). If Republicans were to reframe the conversation in certain ways, they could more easily gain a foothold in "Democrat expertise" such as the environment. Luntz also focuses on how Republicans have to act and the correct affects they should show even the most skeptical voter. The first eight points are as follows:

1. *First, assure your audience that you are committed to "preserving and protecting" the environment, but that "it can be done more wisely and effectively."*
2. *Provide specific examples of federal bureaucrats failing to meet their responsibilities to protect the environment.*
3. *You plan must be put in terms of the future, not the past or present.*
4. *The three words Americans are looking for in an environmental policy, they are "safer," "cleaner," and "healthier."*
5. *Stay away from "risk assessment," "cost-benefit analysis," and the other traditional environmental terminology used by industry and corporations.*
6. *If you must use the economic argument, stress that you are seeking "a fair balance" between the environment and the economy.*
7. *Describe the limited role for Washington.*
8. *Emphasize common sense.*

Frank Luntz, The Environment: A Cleaner, Healthier America, 2001, p.131

The overarching themes are *reassurance*, *sincerity*, and *distance from industry*. It is paramount that Republicans aren't perceived as they are on the side of "corporate fat-cats", even if they were. Perception of distance is more important than actual distance. This is not to speak of the fact that Republicans, as Luntz himself describes, are at a tactical disadvantage since they are viewed through "the prism of suspicion" (Luntz 2001, p.132). This is seen clearly in the first example which Luntz provides which is arsenic in the water. The Bush Administration tried to cancel Clinton's executive order which would have toughened the federal water standards on arsenic from 50 parts per billion to 10 parts per billion. As Democrats hammered the charge that Republicans put business ahead of public health the "hit had been scored... and that was the first chink in President Bush's approval ratings" (2001, p.133). Which leads us to what I consider to be a major point in the memo: "The facts were beside the point. ***Facts only become relevant when the public is receptive and willing to listen to them*** ... Americans didn't know that. They heard "*arsenic in the water,"* and it was news to them. No wonder that they reacted in horror" (2001, p.133). It is therefore a very important to secure the right perceptions. As Luntz himself points out, if the choice is between corporate fat-cat profits and nature, profits will never win. It shows a self-awareness around the weakness of the Republican position that Democrats have historically exploited and "[a]ll war presupposes human weakness, and seeks to exploit it" (Clausewitz 1989, p.256). Then how do Republicans prove their good intentions on the environment and in turn strengthen their position?

To answer that question Luntz suggests that Republicans can become the champion of national parks and forests. These are the heritage and national symbols most Americans are proud of. Becoming a champion of national parks is smart because "Americans love the outdoors". Instead of fighting *against* environmental legislation, they ought to flip it and by stating that they want to "update" or "modernize" legislation such as the Clean Water Act all the while reassuring that Republicans are committed to "protecting and maintaining what we have" (2001, p.135). The word choice is quite important as Republicans have previously spoken of "providing stewardship of nature" which paints you, according to Luntz, as passive and unclear on the environment. On the other side, the Democrats are "preserving and protecting", which paints an active and clear picture according to the memo. Luntz also dissuades Republicans from going into details about climate policy since the public does not understand the technicalities of environmental law, but they *do* understand the broader aims such as the benefits of conservation. While conservation guidelines are important federally, it ought to be largely left up to the states and local municipalities to enact them. If this is combined with the message that Republicans will provide common sense environmental policy without extremism you will hit something strong in public consciousness, or as Luntz puts it: "***Give citizens the idea that progress is being frustrated by over-reaching government***" (2001 p.136).

Focusing in on the Global Warming issue, Luntz has five pieces of communications advice which we will comment on individually:

1. ***The scientific debate remains open.*** Voters believe that the is ***no consensus*** about global warming within the scientific community. Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, ***you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate***, and defer to scientists and other experts in the field.
   Frank Luntz, The Environment: A Cleaner, Healthier America, 2001, p.137

The strategy of doubt is the first and most important tool to climate deniers in the 1990's and 2000's (and still continues to be important for certain demographics). This recommendation frames consensus as *the* thing to avoid at all costs. Luntz here recognizes that Americans, if presented with an accurate portrayal of climate science and the consensus on climate change (which is around 97 percent among climate scientists), the obstructionist side would lose credibility and the power to make denial arguments at all. Knowledge enables the public to be proactive in their choices and to ask for the right choices of their government. It is a Foucauldian "technique of the self". The consensus on climate change serves thusly as the

largest obstacle to fight because it undermines the climate deniers' central claim they want to protect: *that burning fossil fuels is not causing an increase in the temperature on earth*. By keeping the debate open and never letting go, you are able to delay *forever*, or "[y]ou can ensure the safety of your defense if you only hold positions that cannot be attacked" (Gilles 2000, p.19-20). If we talk, discuss, quarrel, and fight about the reality of climate change, we never *do* anything. And this is exactly the favorable position that climate obstructionists want to be in. Because they don't want society to do anything as they are generally either sympathetic to or in cahoots with fossil fuel companies. Doing something means cutting into the bottom lines of these companies which is unacceptable, so as long as the conversation never comes to a halt and an agreement is found, there is never any imperative for action. Luntz gives two examples of how to frame these arguments: "We must not rush to judgment before all the facts are in. We need to ask more questions. We deserve more answers. And until we learn more, we should not commit America to any international document that *handcuffs* us either now or into the future." [emphasis added] (2001, p.138). As well as: "Scientists can extrapolate all kinds of things from today's data, but that doesn't tell us anything about tomorrow's world. You can't look back a million years and say that proves that we're heating the globe now hotter than it's ever been. After all, just 20 years ago scientists were worried about a new Ice Age" (2001, p.138). The point in both of these arguments is to fortify a position with an impossibly high standard of evidence.

There is also the deferment to "scientists and other experts in the field". Here Luntz again recognizes the primacy of expertise and their dissemination of knowledge as an opportunity to win good ethos within a subject. Deferring to an expert means first that the delineation between science and politics remains separated. If a politician hands of responsibility of scientific discourse to an expert, they can be "off-the-hook" for a statement which they wouldn't have the credibility to say. This could be done by using scientific norms against science. If, for the sake of argument, you make the case that one needn't give so much credibility to the IPCC's reports because there are studies saying otherwise, you can make the next argument stating "that more research is needed" and that you, the Republican politician, will help fund more research on the climate issue. The subject framed is restrained, rational, and willing to learn. One also gets to use the caution of scientists as a tool of obstruction.

Another way is to attack the science outright or by deferring to scientists who do. In this way you can claim that you are committed to "sound science" and reframe what knowledge gets to be viewed as credible. Knowledge in this sense moves the window of the sayable or thinkable. But

as we have seen above, the knowledge and experts that obstructionists have produced throughout the late 90's and the early 2000's were not intended to be credible sources of information. This point, in a sense, serves a double-function. As well as being able to frame climate science as an "uncertain science left to the experts", you can also cite the work of industry-compensated researchers. It makes the goal of achieving false balance easier and gives the Republican politician a way out of the difficult debate of what to do about climate change[vii].

2. ***Americans want a free and open discussion.*** Even though Democrats savaged President Bush for formally withdrawing from the Kyoto accord, the truth is that none of them would have actually voted to ratify the treaty, and they were all glad to see it die. Emphasize the importance of ***"acting only from all the facts in hand"*** and ***"making the right decision, not the quick decision."***

   Frank Luntz, The Environment: A Cleaner, Healthier America, 2001, p.137

Beside rehashing my point above which applies here as well, there is another point to be made here. American's value their freedom of speech as given by the first amendment to the constitution as one of their highest values. Thusly, freedom of speech protections are central to being able to engage in obstruction and, as American's value free speech highly, it is a tactic which could be used if there is ever a feeling that the constructed falsehoods aren't being taken into account enough.

3. ***Technology and innovation are the key in arguments on both sides.*** Global warming alarmists use American superiority in technology and innovation quite effectively in responding to accusations that international agreements such as the Kyoto accord could cost the United States billions. Rather than condemning corporate America the way most environmentalists have done in the past, they attack their [sic] use for lacking faith in our collective ability to meet any economic challenges presented by environmental changes we make. This should be our argument. ***We*** need to emphasize how ***voluntary*** innovation and experimentation are preferable to bureaucratic or international intervention and regulation.

   Frank Luntz, The Environment: A Cleaner, Healthier America, 2001, p.137

Technology can be part of our solutions to climate change. This is the premise of the ecomodernist movement (Hajer 1996). But here Luntz is framing the market and its innovative powers as the central premise that should be pushed from the Republican side. Republicans should, in Luntz's framing, use the freedom of markets as the main sticking-point to solve climate change. Free markets have not been shown to a significant effect on the curbing of

climate change, but this point plays into two different discourses which help Republicans (and Democrats for that matter): techno-optimism and the freedom of markets.

4. ***The "international fairness" issue is the emotional home run.*** Given the chance, Americans will demand that all nations be part of any international global warming treaty. Nations such as China, Mexico and India would have to sign such an agreement for the majority of Americans to support it.
   Frank Luntz, The Environment: A Cleaner, Healthier America, 2001, p.137

This is an argument made from the position of populism. Even back in the Bush presidency Americans were being "cheated out of their economy" by "low-cost countries". To sign the Kyoto Treaty without getting industrializing countries onboard would feel to Americans as if they are being cheated out of their economic growth and handicapped in comparison to other countries e.g. India or China. These are fears seen from populist rhetoric today (Agius 2020) but is present in the past as well. What this point belies however is that the industrializing clock didn't start ticking for everyone at once. India and China are in the process of industrializing, whilst American industry started back in the 1800's.

5. ***The economic argument should be secondary.*** Many of you will want to focus on the higher prices and lost jobs that would result from complying with Kyoto, but you can do better. Yes, when put in specific terms (food and fuel prices, for example) on an individual-by-individual basis, this argument does resonate. Yes, the fact that Kyoto would hurt the economic well being of seniors and the poor is of particular concern. However, the economic is less effective than each of the arguments listed above.
   Frank Luntz, The Environment: A Cleaner, Healthier America, 2001, p.137

Last but not least from Luntz, there is nothing that sours your credibility as a conservationist than to focus too much on money. Remember, Republican's are already viewed as suspect conservationists. Perception is everything. Focusing on economics is bad on two fronts. First, it does not engage your discussion partner on the central problem at hand, which is the cause of climate change, but rather on *the consequences of climate action*. This means that you are appealing to the material interests of those listening. If you are rich, the cause of climate change is still the same whether its solutions are expensive. However, if climate action doesn't affect your pocketbook all that much, then you might lose interest in discussing solutions, as long as the problem is fixed. The argument is variable to the level of economic concern you're addressing. The second and more problematic issue of focusing on economics is related to the first. When you focus on consequences, you are forfeit the consensus debate, because of the

things which are implied but not stated: *if climate change isn't happening, it wouldn't matter how much it costs to fix. Because it doesn't exist.* The economic argument is a failsafe if you are not able to hammer the consensus argument, but is not a favorable position. These are the order of positions:

1. Climate change isn't happening.
2. Even if it is, it is not caused by humans.
3. If it is caused by humans, it would be too expensive or late to fix.

The first two are epistemological claims while the last is an ethico-political statement. Leave ethics out of the debate and focus on the epistemology and you will be playing according to Luntz's manual.

Richard Berman And How to Win a War:

Richard Berman is a marketing whiz who in 2014 gave a talk on tactics for the Western Energy Alliances Annual Meeting. Berman has a very clear conservative leaning, being vehemently anti-union, anti-environmentalist, anti-animal rights, and pro-industry (producing defenses of trans fats (Berman 2006)). In the talk, Berman lays out the principles of how to effectively engage in political advertisement. The framework which Berman uses and teaches to his audience is not to engage in civil debate, but in warfare:

> This is an endless war... They are in the public policy business. They are in the business to change laws. And you change laws by changing people's behavior. You change laws by changing people's attitudes, which in turn is followed by legislators changing their opinion. So, think of it as an endless war.
>
> Richard Berman, Big Green Radicals 2014, p. 17

Berman engages similarly in his political advertising to Foucault's reversal of Clausewitz: "Power is war, the continuation of war by other means. ...politics is the continuation of war by other means" (Foucault 2003, p.15). In a worldview which favors binary antagonistic thinking (us vs. them), the model of war becomes *the* way of showing dominance, quick wit, and strategical superiority. There is no compromise, "you can either win ugly or lose pretty" (Berman 2014, p. 16). The battlegrounds of war are the attitudes and perceptions of the public and despite there now being rules of war: *all is fair in love and war*. Once you frame the problem in these terms, a lot of politics start to make sense. Despite our unspoken rules of engaging with each other,

within this framing, when push comes to shove, it is kill or be killed (Schmitt 1996). It is "no more than the implementation, within a pseudopeace that is being undermined by continuous war, of a perpetual relationship of force" (Foucault 2003, p.17). Or as Berman phrases it: "We're in a game with no clock. The game never ends. You move the ball forward. Maybe the ball comes back. But the game never ends" (Berman 2014, p.18).

Berman's three main tools which he affords his audience is to 1) reframe the issue, 2) reposition the opposition, and 3) taking away someone's moral authority. Reframing the issue is in essence trying to put the issue in different terms to what is in common usage. Indeed, reframing the issue is a very potent strategy because the goal isn't to defeat, but merely to stall your opponent. You only need to defend what *is*, or as Berman notes: "You get in people's mind a tie. *They don't know who is right.* And you get all ties because the tie basically insures the status quo" (Berman 2014, p.5). The point of reframing is to paralyze the one listening with uncertainty. Reframing the issue therefore is a technique which neutralizes your opponent's attack and brings the battle to a stalemate. This is similar to Luntz's consensus tactic.

Repositioning the opposition is to tell the public "you think that this group is a group that does X, well, let me tell you, what they are really doing is Y. I don't care what they tell you that they are doing, they doing something else" (Berman 2014, p.3). Berman's example is the Humane Society of the United States who advertises for animal rights, but which he calls a vegan organization. In his attack ads then, the point is to expose the opponents' true motives, which is to stop any animal exploitation. Repositioning the opposition is channeling a hermeneutics of suspicion to show the underlying intent of an opponent and expose their deception to the public (Ricoeur 1970). Exposing deception is integral to establishing credibility with your audience as "[a]ll warfare is based on deception" and exposing deception frames your opponent as Machiavellian and not having the audiences best intentions in mind.

"Taking away moral authority" (Berman 2014, p.3) is questioning the expertise and relevance of someone's position in relation to an issue. Berman likens this to two different ways of getting to the same target. The first is simply to provide materials that question someone's authority. To make someone think "why are these people in charge"? The second is to get someone sympathetic to your opposition and massage their message in such a way that they say something that conforms to your position. Getting a union leader to question worker safety laws could be one such example. The point of this second way is to get something counterintuitive from a person to make the publics ear perk up.

Aside from the main tactics, Berman is particularly focused on emotions. Berman suggests that there is a difference between public opinion and public judgment, in that the latter is preferable to influence than the former (2014). We can question whether this distinction is really a distinction at all but let us go along with Berman. Public judgment is preferable, according to Berman, due to its strong interlinks of knowledge and affect. Berman uses the acronym FLAGS in order to denote the five most important emotions to stir: Fear, love, anger, greed, and sympathy. The point of tying emotions and knowledge together is exactly to get at public judgment instead of public opinion because to Berman if you achieve judgement "you're willing to tax it, you're willing to ban it, you're willing to put warnings on something" (Berman 2014, p.2). You cannot, according to Berman, just produce knowledge and assume that it is effective. You need to integrate it with something that stimulates subjectivation. You need to engage the affects.

But all of this detail obscures the objective central to Berman's thesis which is how to gain the upper hand in the continuous struggle between two antagonistic forces. Berman himself characterizes it by saying "There's a pro side. There's an anti side [sic]. You can war game this pretty easily" (Berman 2014, p.9). Berman talks of two arenas in which this struggle takes place. The first is the struggle for credibility or *ethos* which is the same arena seen in the two previous tactical documents. Ethos is obtained either by minimizing and marginalizing your opponent or by "...diminishing the other side's ability to capture people's imagination and to become credible" (2014, p.8) in the first place. By doing this you might not win momentarily, but you are at least gaining ground against a potential counterattack later. *Ethos is, in the information age, the mark of a General.* Any major hit to their trust is akin to losing any other General in battle, it leads to disarray. However, this framework fosters a particularly hostile attitude where you are always on the offensive. Berman summarizes the attitude succinctly: "I get up every morning and I try and figure out how to screw with the labor unions. That's my offense" (Berman 2014, p.3).

The second territory which Berman highlights is the arena of language, in particular semantics (Berman 2014). In linguistics they call this a semantic shift. This is not a new phenomenon in climate obstructionism as we saw with Luntz's recontextualization of "global warming" into "climate change". The term global warming is harsher conjuring slow boiling of oceans, whilst climate change is a sanitization of this image[viii], as change implies neither progress nor regression. Semantics are in fact quite relevant to many conservative campaigns and to mention two contemporary examples you have the association of "Critical Race Theory" with any anti-

racist education and "groomer" associated with LGBTQ+ persons. The interesting observation that this demonstrates is the amenability of normalization to counterforces, which means that as language is a part of what constitutes subjectivation, reconstitutions of language means reconstitutions of subjects. When we use different meanings in the different semiotic registers which subjects are exposed to, we shift subjects about. This means that semantic change is a potential harbor to a form cultural violence (Galtung 1990), an indoor towards structural and direct violence. This is quite relevant to climate justice as those most at risk from the climate crisis (the global south, women, and racial minorities) is the least likely to be in mind when Berman talks about the support of climate justice (rich Westcoast elites).

Step 2: Deploying the Troops of Disinformation:

Science and Environmental Policy Project and the Scientific Ethos:

The Bill Clinton administration was, as mentioned earlier, a pivotal moment for the climate obstructionists. As the environmental movement had put climate change unto the map following Rio and with Kyoto on the horizon, it seemed like climate science would do the same for global warming as the atmospheric sciences did for the Ozone hole. But it didn't happen. Because the science was questioned. And this is what I want to focus on in this subsection, precisely the scientificity (to use a Foucauldian term) of climate science according to the main organization of this section Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP). The two documents I want to discuss are the "Heidelberg Appeal" and the "Leipzig Declaration" both of which are premised as open letters towards the public. Both also contest the scientific validity of climate science and does boundary work (Gieryn 1983).

The Heidelberg Appeal is 11 sentences long and covers about a regular A4-page. It was written after the Rio Summit in 1992 and was signed by 425 members of the scientific and intellectual community. It became particularly famous after it was published in the Wall Street Journal in June 1992 (Pesendorfer 2014). The appeal starts off: "We want to make our full contribution to the preservation of our common heritage, the Earth. We are however worried, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, at the emergence of an irrational ideology which is opposed to *scientific and industrial progress* and, impedes economic and social development" [emphasis added] (SEPP 1992, p.1). This is the thesis-statement of this document. It serves a double objective,

namely to conjure the image of standing on the side of science whilst also smearing ecological preservation, climate science and global warming activism as ideological and *unscientific*. Remember, the Berman adage that you ought to "reposition the opposition". What SEPP are doing here is repositioning the IPCC as an alarmist and unscientific organization by claiming that they are not in line with scientific progress by being blinded by "irrational ideology".

The text is written in a diplomatic and humanitarian tone similar to the style of international organizations such as the UN. This is mimesis of the respectability of those organizations. It argues that while the preservation of the climate is a noble goal, the scientific rigor is not enough to warrant any action:

"We fully subscribe to the objectives of a scientific ecology for a universe whose resources must be taken stock of, monitored and preserved ... We do however forewarn the authorities in charge of our planet's destiny against decisions which are supported by *pseudoscientific arguments* or false and non relevant [sic] data"
[emphasis added] Science and Environmental Policy Project, 1992, p.1

In fact, the document argues that "progress and development have always involved increasing control over hostile forces, to the benefit of mankind" and that "[t]he greatest evils which stalk our Earth are ignorance and oppression, and not Science, Technology and Industry..." (SEPP 1992, p.1). I take this to be a diversionary tactic, because climate scientists who are behind the IPCC reports are not saying to stop *all* forms of extraction activities, but rather that the current trajectory of energy demands are unsustainable for human and animal life to flourish on Earth. The Heidelberg Appeal highlights a form of anthropocentric thinking, which is obvious when the appeal claims that "...humanity has always progressed by increasingly harnessing Nature to its needs and not the reverse" (1992, p.1). This reinforces the idea that nature is humanity's object to do with as we please, which is an assertion which is common in Western thinking (Plumwood 1993). If we center a different species the results might be very different. There is certainly a case to be made that humanity's "harnessing of Nature" was very bad for the dodo, the great auk, the Javan tiger, or the long list of animals and plants made extinct by human activity. There is a radical self-absorption in anthropocentric thinking, which although very interesting, is not something I have space to discuss further.

More to the point however is the assertion that "progress and development have *always* involved increasing control over hostile forces" (emphasis added). This reads as self-justificatory and almost tautological. As progress and development are, implied by the text, products of "Science, Technology and Industry", the instance of climate change; the very fact that human

scientific endeavors and exploitation of nature is leading towards the degradation of human well-being cannot be scientific since it does not entail progress and development. Or put differently, since science leads to progress, and climate change undermines this idea, climate change cannot be scientific.

It is interesting also that the appeal refers to an enlightenment-era 'improvement discourse' about nature with a strict demarcation between nature (object) and humanity (subject). This demarcation is not a coincidence, and it has a history which is linked to the scientific revolutions' mechanical model of nature and the scientific practices which co-occur in such a framework. The implications of this are discussed later in the thesis. It is important however for SEPP and the climate obstructionists to clearly demarcate the lines of science and the specific scientific model we see here, as climate modelling blurs the lines between fundamental and applied sciences.

The version of science which is being advocated for by the Appeal is what Lahsen, borrowing from Gibbons (1994), calls a Mode 1 science, which imagines a strict demarcation between fundamental and applied sciences that excludes "computer modelers" (2013). Climate modelling on the other hand is part of Mode 2 sciences which blur this line between fundamental and applied sciences alongside the blurring of what purpose the science is conducted for, which is mostly in search of viable policy goals. Mode 2 sciences are more often multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary and crosses the traditional boundaries of scientific endeavors. This flies in the face of a stricter notion of science where the atmospheric sciences, physics, and biology are separated. Integration of fields for the solution of problems is not how the scientific process is meant to work according to the Mode 1 typology.

The interesting thing about the Heidelberg Appeal is precisely this discrediting of "scientific ecology". This text is part of larger goal which is the "sound science" versus "junk science" dichotomy which climate obstructionists were fighting for at the time (Powell 2011). Again, attacking the epistemological status of Mode 2 sciences is an important goal as it achieves to solidify the boundaries of science. This form of scientific contestation is called "boundary work" and is integral to the institutional trust of science as a practice. Gieryn (1983) argues that boundary work is the product of a long-standing need for science to continually produce and reproduce public legitimacy by demarcating science from pseudoscience. Why? Because scientists are often dependent on the trust of the public and those in power to continue to work. Lahsen makes the argument that the union between newer forms of atmospheric sciences (which includes climate modeling) being taught to new generations of scientists, alongside the

more empirically focused sciences losing their favor mainstream climate science is the reason we see the vehemence of argumentation from certain climate obstructionist scientists. In a sense, being left behind by an institution and academic culture which one has invested time and energy into is a hurtful experience. There is a cultural shift that has permeated their fields and shifted the epistemological presuppositions and ethical goals which these scientists have been abiding by, challenges the notions of science they are used to. Without psychologizing too much, I find this perspective a useful explanation for the need to discredit.

The Appeal is frustrating because the text wants to have its cake and eat it too. With phrases such as "irrational ideology" and "pseudoscientific arguments" to discredit environmental sciences, it does not seem to be onboard with the goals of environmental sciences. But remember the earlier remark that it "fully subscribe to the objectives of a scientific ecology" (SEPP 1992, p.1). This is a major tension that is manifest in the text, and it belies the fact that major industrial actors are not only the biggest contributors to global climate change, but also responsible for major ecological disasters. How can you coherently hold the industrial and environmental perspectives in concert? In this dialectic there is a tension between extraction and preservation which instead of resolving, they claim preservation when the goal is to sustain extractive business.

However, this document is often understood only as a precursor to the Leipzig Declaration which came in November 1997, ahead of the Kyoto Climate Conference. This document could be seen as an extension of the underlying principles already underlined in the Heidelberg Appeal. It works towards the same goals, but mainly focuses on the scientificity of Mode 2 sciences discussed earlier. The Declaration, as the Appeal that preceded it, was signed by a host of people. This is to bolster the perceived disagreement amongst climate scientists. While an extratextual observation, within the logic of the text, the signatories represent the "counter-consensus" to the consensus supporting climate change.

The thesis statement in this text is similar to the Appeal in that it deems the "computer models" of Mode 2 sciences to be working from a non-credible scientific presupposition by stating that:

> "... we consider the scientific basis of the 1992 Global Climate Treaty to be flawed and its goal to be unrealistic. The policies to implement the Treaty are, as of now, based solely on unproven scientific theories, imperfect computer models -- and the unsupported assumption that catastrophic global warming follows from an increase in greenhouse gases, requiring immediate action."
>
> Science and Environmental Policy Project, Leipzig Declaration, 1997

We will not restate the previous point concerning Mode 1 and 2 sciences. The Declaration in contrast to the Appeal provides a different alternative to the computer models. It states that: "most climate specialists now agree that actual observations from both weather satellites and balloon-borne radiosondes show no current warming whatsoever--in direct contradiction to computer model results" and "there does not exist today a general scientific consensus about the importance of greenhouse warming from rising levels of carbon dioxide" (SEPP 1997). This statement has two interesting qualities: first, the claim that most climate specialists agree with the Declarations position. This statement is in tension with the lack of convincing signatories present at the end of the Declaration. But this is a common tactic of reactionary rhetoric of claiming to speak for the "silent majority". Claiming to speak for a silent majority could be seen as 'constructing a public' (Lewis 2005) and influences subtly the framing of the discussion. If, per the logic of the Declaration, the opinion of *most* climate scientists isn't present at important fora such as the IPCC, then implied, there might be someone tipping the scale in one direction. Serving as an example of paranoid thinking, it is also an interesting example of psychological projection[ix]: The fossil fuel companies have paid the dissenting scientists of SEPP to contest the vast consensus on climate science on ideological grounds. By subtly stating that "the majority" isn't being taken into account, they actually accuse the other side of what they themselves are doing. While these statements are not explicitly paranoid, it is still difficult to counter because it is almost evidence proof. Any meta-analysis on consensus can be framed as part of the self-reinforcing evidence of green ideology. This is the paranoid loop. And as can be intuited, it is difficult to break paranoid thinking unless there is *sufficient trust present* (Stein 2010). I will touch upon this in the discussion section.

The second interesting quality of the abovementioned quote is its deployment of counterinformation. This a tactic which is explicit in the GCSC document, but an important part of any rhetorical endeavor. You cannot defeat another person's information by just stating its political motivation or falsity; to truly be effective it is imperative to introduce counter-positions or a *logos* from which to produce arguments from. The form of the information is from "weather satellites and balloon-borne radiosondes" which are instruments which empirically measure the world. This is played in contrast to "computer model results" which don't directly measure, but rather predict based on empirical data and simulations. This undergirds my previous assertion that there is a contrast in how the scientificity of the two modes are presented by climate obstructionists. Direct observational empirics are given a higher status than the predictions of models.

To end this section, I would like to pay attention to the slippage in the obstructionists first position. The obstructionists first argument is that climate change is not happening. If this one fails however, you could provide another argument to guard against a total defeat. In the Leipzig Declaration, we see this slippage in its next to last paragraph which reads: "Historically, climate has always been a factor in human affairs -- with warmer periods, such as the medieval "climate optimum," playing an important role in economic expansion and in the welfare of nations that depend primarily on agriculture." (SEPP 1997) The supplementary argument we see here is that, even if climate change is happening*, it is not the hostile force it has been presented as*. The climate has "always been a factor in human affairs" and notably has changed before. Climate change might even be a desirable thing as it contributes to "economic expansion and in the welfare of nations". And since "[e]nergy is essential for economic growth" (SEPP 1997) maybe fossil fuels aren't undesirable either? Maybe the goal of "[s]tabilizing atmospheric carbon dioxide -- the announced goal of the Climate Treaty – [which] would require that fuel use be cut by as much as 60 to 80 percent -- worldwide!" (SEPP 1997) is an unnecessary and even politically motivated goal?

Not only does this obscure the intensity of the current pace of climate change in comparison to the medieval times, but the presence of this argument should also make clear that the first argument was always tenuous. If the evidence of the fabrication of anthropogenic climate change was robust enough, if the IPCC really was working on faulty science, the supplementary argument would be superfluous. Its presence seems to imply that the first argument isn't good enough to stand on its own but needs an immediate follow-up. Let us be mindful of what technique is present here. Climate obstructionists make an assertion e.g. "climate change isn't happening" and then go on to make another assertion that "even if it is happening, it might be beneficial to humanity". They are the ones making assertions, and the opponents are left to explain why it is wrong. In short, they subtly implementing Berman's adage on agenda-setting: "When you want to get into public judgment, you can't be on the defensive. Because, when you're on defense you are always answering somebody else's question. You have to be on offense." (Berman 2014, p.2). Let us be wary of how arguments are presented, if they "move the goalposts", it is a clue that someone might be arguing in a different mode than us.

Competitive Enterprise Institute, Free-Market Economics, the Depressive Position:

The Bush Administration presents a different perspective than the Clinton Administration. In this section we will focus on the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) and how to build a sense of futility about the state of climate change when your position is in power. We will be looking at two different documents, the first we will look at is a newspaper article from Senior Fellow at CEI Marlo Lewis called "No realistic way to stabilize CO2". The other is a Global Warming FAQ released before CEI aired two 60 second ads in 14 major cities. It aims "for balance in public discussions on global warming" (CEI 2006).

CEI is a free market think tank whose vision is "a society thriving without unnecessary government burdens, where property rights are secure and Americans are free to prosper" (CEI 2024). It works to undue government regulations and to let the free market play its part. They believe that "[t]he role of government officials—whether at the local, state, or federal level—is to create a system of law and policy that allows voluntary contracts to proceed and the gains from them to be enjoyed by their participants" (CEI 2024). In short, they believe in the power of liberal capitalism, and not the government, to create systems of capital distribution which profit its participants. The government should only facilitate markets to play their eventual game.

In "No realistic way to stabilize CO2", Marlo Lewis plays a different argument than SEPP does. The potent affect in this article is futility and powerlessness. Lewis, responding to Lord Browne's column "Small steps to limit climate change", makes the argument that because Hoffert et.al. (2002) found that alternative energies had problems in stabilizing global climate, it is "wasted effort" (Lewis 2004). After reading Hoffert et.al, I was struck by how different the portrayal that Lewis presents is from how I interpreted the paper. The Hoffert-paper does say that carbon emission-free energy "... currently have severe deficiencies that limit their ability to stabilize global climate" (Hoffert et.al. 2002, p.981). However, it also states they have "identified a portfolio of promising technologies here – some radical departures from our present fossil fuel system. ... At the very least, it requires political will, targeted research and development, and international cooperation" (2002, p.986). To me, Hoffert et.al. frames this problem as a difficult problem, but ultimately a solvable one with the right combination of RND, cooperation, and recognition of the energy problem we are faced with.

Let us set aside the accuracy of portrayal of Hoffert et.al., the central gist in Lewis' argument is that because alternative energies are unable to sustain energy demand at the time, it is a hopeless task to even begin to solve the problem. Lewis states that: "A small step on a journey

one cannot complete and *should not take* is not progress; it is misdirection and wasted effort" [emphasis added] (Lewis 2004). The main problem with arguing against futility is that nothing short of complete solutions are acceptable. It is not only a tool in reactionary rhetoric but also in radical rhetoric (Hirschman 1991). For example, if the revolution isn't present, it is hopeless to create social change. As a key part of obstructionist tactic however, arguing from futility sets an impossible standard for the interlocutor. When trying to come up with any solution, it is said to be unrealistic *or* not enough, maybe even both. This is a frustrating position to argue from, because if you cannot even begin to solve the problem then what are you meant to do? As Hirschman notes that "[a]s the story is absorbed by the listeners, it sets up a tension and activates a dynamic that is *either self-fulfilling or self-refuting*" (Hirshman 1991, p.78). Futility is self-fulfilling because if you never start to solve a looming problem then naturally you don't solve it. It is self-refuting because, according to Hirschman, the high standards it sets for its opponents creates "new, more determined, and better-informed efforts at achieving real change". While I agree with Hirshman that this might happen, I also want to nuance this by claiming that once better solutions are presented one is always permitted to "move the goalposts" to an even higher standard. There is no roof to a standard of evidence, which is obvious if you ever debate an epistemological skeptic.

An interesting side-effect of the futility argument however is that the field of public truths has now been shifted. Lewis' response at no point purports that climate change *is not happening*, which should show promise for the entrenched status of climate change as fact in popular understanding. Instead, what is questioned is that we even have the resources to transform society. In itself tenuous, but more to the point, the fact that this has occurred shows that during the time of this article, climate change was in public discourse taken as a serious idea. This means that Lewis has to make a different argument. He has to make Luntz's economic argument that climate change is too expensive to fix; that mitigation of climate change will come to the detriment of other things and therefore is politically infeasible.

What is particularly interesting about this text however is the conclusion of Lewis' argument, which is that we are too far gone and that even present technology can't help us. What options does such a conclusion lead us with? Very few to none. This position deprives us of anything to *do*. Futility is the position of the depressive, of the hopeless, and it serves, according to Dodds, to insulate us from the guilt that we are responsible for what happens after we acknowledge the profundity of climate change. (Dodds 2011, p.69). The denial at work here is shown in an acceptance at our own demise; that yes climate change is happening, but we're screwed. It is

related to the guilt of having been part of climate change, and as such one retreats into the depressive position for comfort.

What Dodds points out that I find particularly lucid is that "at least at times people can fear guilt more than their own, or even everyone's, destruction" (Dodds 2011, 43). The painful quality of guilt can be so much that one would rather sacrifice any possibility of action rather than confront the responsibility of doing something[x]. Feeling guilty means acknowledging that one is, at least partially, at fault for climate change and that one ought to do something about it. If one can construct a reason to not have to do something, one can also push away the feelings of guilt. The argument works whether or not Lewis *is* guilty. It is circumspect the point. Remember the context of this little column, Lewis is responding to a column by Lord Browne where Browne asks for small steps towards mitigating climate change. The answer he receives from Lewis is: "Given current and foreseeable technological capabilities, any serious attempt to stabilise CO, levels via regulation would be economically devastating and, thus, politically unsustainable" (Lewis 2004). Of course, the change towards sustainable energy sources isn't going to be painless, but the effort you put in towards action, even if small, can bear fruits later. The certainty with which Lewis dismisses the possibility of doing anything is a refusal of responsibility, and furthermore, a defense against guilt and precarity. It can serve as an mental shortcut for others who are skeptical.

The next subject I want to discuss has to do with the preoccupation of economics which we see in the Global Warming FAQ. This document contains two sections: one which has to do with science, which I believe show many of the same tendencies we've seen in the SEPP-section. The second section is devoted entirely to the economics of climate mitigation. To avoid repetition, I will focus on the economic arguments. I believe the function of the FAQ is to build a sense of futility and apathy towards any climate action.

The document discusses the economic projections of climate mitigation strategies where the purported consequences of such strategies are worse than the effect of climate change itself. This leads the FAQ to state that "adaptive and resiliency strategies should be considered as a more cost-effective alternative" (CEI 2006, p.7). This presumes that CEI knows the costs of the consequences of climate change and that adaptation will cost less than mitigation and diversification of energy. Let's assume that they do. Again, what this leads us to is an acceptance of the outcome that climate change is not fixable and that we shouldn't move towards other energy sources. It diverts the attention from the mention of scale, because even if it is important to invest in adaptation strategies, couldn't mitigation impact the scale of the climate change

problem? The position unstated is that the scale of the problem isn't determined by our dependence on fossil fuels and other GHG-emitting practices.

In the FAQ there is also a use of Luntz' international solidarity argument: "The Kyoto Protocol, most observers agree, will have virtually no effect on temperature increase, as it imposes no restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions upon major developing nations e.g. China and India. These nations have publicly refused to accept any restrictions now or in the future" (CEI 2006, p.5). The argument is that it is unfair that the US ought to decarbonize, or that it is US decarbonization is useless because countries who are yet to industrialize are emitting. The emotion detectable here is again futility, but it is curious that CEI seems to express that 192 parties, of which 84 countries who ratified a Protocol to combat global warming which wouldn't combat it. As mentioned in the Luntz section, the industrial clock didn't start for China and India at the same time. However, the Kyoto Protocol did have this provision, which was called non-annex 1 countries.

But what is particular in this FAQ is the underlying understanding of the economy. A fundamental idea in much of economics is to grow the economy. Growth is a goal of economic development, and the assumption is that energy is tightly linked with economic growth. The FAQ then asks:

> "Can't we reduce emissions without affecting the economy?
> Greenhouse gas emissions derive from energy use which in turn derives from economic growth. Therefore, nations that restrict emissions are almost certain to reduce their rate of economic growth."
> Competitive Enterprise Institute "Global Warming FAQ, 2006, p.5

This statement is fascinating. It builds on the assumption that GHG must come with energy use and that any mitigation of GHGs will lead to economic downturn since energy use comes from economic growth. What this statement in a sense does is to link production of fossil fuels to economic growth. It therefore makes sense that if growing the economy leads to GHG-emissions then the assertion to mitigate GHGs must lead to economic downturn. Whether or not this statement is true depends on if we could see economic growth while GHGs are stable or go down. The renewables technology of the time was not cost-effective as we can see from the analysis of the cost history of renewable energy from Roser (2020). But there are other energy sources such as hydropower or nuclear that were cheap (although probably not available to everyone), so the statement that economic growth necessarily will lead to higher GHG outputs is curious.

Lastly, I want to look at the question of market solutions. Remember that CEI is a free-market institute which is devoted to working for market solutions. When we observe the scale of the problem ahead, there is a potentially huge market for renewable energy sources or other market solutions to this problem. Cap and trade are one such solution where governments put a limit on carbon emissions and then gives firms the ability to trade emissions. It lets the market figure it out. Cap and trade ought to be *the* solution for CEI. This is not the conclusion of the FAQ:

> "Cap and Trade" schemes that allow firms and governments to trade the right to emit greenhouse gases up to certain limits are not economically efficient. By creating rentseeking opportunities, they promote the development of a carbon cartel seeking to exploit the system to make profits.
> Competitive Enterprise Institute "Global Warming FAQ" 2006, p.7

This is to me the most telling part of the entire economics portion of the FAQ. Rent-seeking, for the uninitiated, is "[t]he fact or process of seeking to gain larger profits by manipulating public policy or economic conditions, esp. by means of securing beneficial subsidies or tariffs, making a product artificially scarce" (Oxford Dictionary 2024). In a sense, it is trying to increase profits on something that used to be free by trying to play the market in your favor. What cap and trade does is to reward businesses who do not use up their emissions cap with the opportunity to sell their emissions to other high-emitting businesses. This should create a market incentive towards low GHG-emissions leading to innovations that decrease the need for energies which emit a lot of GHGs. It should, in principle, be a virtuous cycle (at least that is the logic). CEI sees this as a rent-seeking behavior because this incentive leads the high-emitting companies to have to buy emissions from other companies for no reason other than releasing GHGs, which is unfair in this logic. What I find telling about this, is that markets are often about finding opportunities or innovating to create profits. In principle, we could all extract resources and take them ourselves, but since we have scarce resources there can emerge a market where people who have different goods can partake in the scare resource. Cap and trade systems work under the logic that there is a finite amount of carbon which can be emitted and that this can create a market incentive to lower carbon emissions lest you pay a penalty for violating the cap. What CEI finds so objectionable is the intent behind this system, in that it creates "carbon cartels" who exploit politics for profits. It sullies the logic and elegance of the market since it isn't economically efficient and puts a political hand in the market. The market, and economic growth more generally, *is dependent on fossil fuels and its emissions.*

Heartland Institute, War Affects, and Conspiracism:

The Heartland Institute is a large player of climate obstruction. It organizes International Conference on Climate Change (ICCC) which is the organizational and knowledge producing hub of the obstructionist cause. In this section I will focus on how they regained influence from the environmental movement during the Obama administration. To do this I will look at two documents: The Skeptics Handbook 1 and 2. As Berman alluded to, *they are fighting a war*, so I will look at these documents in particular for rhetoric of war and combat and the affects which accompany them.

The Skeptics Handbook are two manuals designed to counter climate change science which was authored by Joanne Nova in 2009 and 2012 respectively. The Heartland Institute widely distributed the handbook which is an endorsement. Joanne achieved a Bachelor of Microbiology from the University of Western Australia. The manuals follow more or less the same formula of questioning (or cherry-picking) many of the underpinnings in the science of climate change: the causal chain of CO2's influence on temperature, saying that models aren't scientific since they're not strictly empirical, or saying that CO2 is at a saturation point in the atmosphere. The disinformation itself is not what we will focus on[xi], rather the war-like attitude and the tactics of war ongoing here.

The first thing to note in these two documents is the general sensation of antagonism, paranoia, and indignation. These are the three ongoing affects which pervade the text of the manual. Nova is angry at climate scientists and activists because she perceives them to be bullies who use "dismissive, intimidatory, or bullying behavior" (Nova 2009, p.2). In particular, she takes offense to the word 'denier' as being an unfair pejorative. While it would be intellectually dishonest to say that the word 'denier' is merely a descriptive word in its casual use, it is apt as a descriptor of the attitudes of obstructionism. It is akin to the offense taken by the word 'racist' or 'misogynist' in that the ethical content is obvious (few people want to be racist or misogynist), but the moral wrong is at odds with one's own moral identity[xii]. 'Denier' might serve a similar function, but for intellectual or scientific endeavors. Being called a 'denier' feels like an insult against one's own perceived scientific credentials. In a sense then, 'deniers' are expressing vulnerability at the power to which they are being subjected and are lashing out against the characterization. Which could explain why Nova sees herself and the other 'skeptics' (a term ripe with enlightenment ethos) as brave truth-seekers. This is captured in her portrayal of the Michael Mann and Steven McIntyre debacle:

> In 1995 everyone agreed the world was warmer in medieval times, but CO2 was low then and that didn't fit with climate models. In 1998, suddenly Michael Mann ignored the other studies and produced a graph that scared the world — tree rings show the "1990's was the hottest decade for a thousand years" ... But Steven McIntyre was suspicious. He wanted to verify it, yet Mann repeatedly refused to provide his data or methods — normally a basic requirement of any scientific paper... Within days McIntyre showed that the statistics were so flawed that you could feed in random data, and still make the same hockey stick shape nine times out of ten. Mann had left out some tree rings he said he'd included.
> Joanne Nova "The Skeptics Handbook" 2012, p.8

It serves its own narrative arc: In 95 there was no link for CO2 and climate change, but then Michael Mann presented evidence for a causal chain. Steven McIntyre wanted to see it for himself, but Mann wouldn't let him. McIntyre got hold of the data and exposed it for the fraudulent conspiracy that it was. In this story, there are clear good guys (McIntyre) and bad guys (Mann), and the purported conspiracy is being uncovered by lone scientific investigators: "Real deniers claim something needs to be peer reviewed in order to be discussed. (Bad luck for Galileo and Einstein eh?)" and "Scientists don't vote for natural laws. Science is not a democracy" (Nova 2012, p.14). This is the 'Galileo-discourse' in action. It makes for an effective story because it plays on tropes that are present in the history of science and in western narrative more broadly.

There is, as Cara Daggett has pointed out, a melodrama in this form of climate obstructionist writing whereby the 'skeptics' get to imagine themselves differently from how they feel (Daggett 2020). In melodrama the protagonists are purely good and its enemies are villainous. Obstructionists get to set aside feelings of impotence and paranoia and get to tell themselves that what is *actually happening* is something sinister and that we are exposing it. It is a claim to reality *without distortion*: "The temptation in paranoia is to magically live in the mind ... present reality a mere appearance, a ghostly phenomenon and temporary antechamber to another omnipotently ruled superhuman world ..." (Stein 2010, p.235). They tell each other that 'someone' has corrupted science (Nova 2012), that "[n]othing is as it seems" (2012, p.2), and that *the real scientists* are going to set it right but are up against seemingly insurmountable forces. It's the central conceit of The Matrix: "You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember, all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more". Conspiracism, as such, fits neatly into melodramatic terms.

Nova, throughout her manual, puts together these little mini-arguments where AGW (Anthropogenic Global Warming) replies to an obstructionist claim, and then the obstructionist

rebuts their reply. There is one where Nova claims that "the main cause of global warming is air conditioners" (Nova 2009, p.7). The claim is that climate scientists have put thermometers in parking lots, beside busy highways, and next to air conditioners and just forgotten to correct for the extra heat these environments produce: "How could recorded temperatures *not* rise under these circumstances" (2009, p.7). This is the discussion presented afterwards:

> AGW Reply: Modellers have corrected for the Urban Heat Island effect.
> Skeptics say: Modellers have adjusted for "measurable and predictable data biases," but they haven't done a site-by-site hands-on survey to account for heat sources nearby. (These photos were taken by volunteers for a blog: surfacestations.org.)
> Joanne Nova, The Skeptics Handbook, 2009, p.7

The take-home conclusion: "We can't trust thermometers in places surrounded by engines, concrete, and air conditioners" (Nova 2009, p.7). The AGW reply is handled swiftly by the 'skeptic'. The larger point however is that this argument presumes that the scientists were either malevolent in producing and using this data, or foolish enough to still believe in this data source. Another example of this is her example of CO2 saturation. She makes the argument that since most of the warming comes from the first 20 ppm of CO2 and then drops off logarithmically, the CO2 at say 380 ppm is nothing to be concerned about. The arguments in return are: 'The climate models take this logarithmic absorption curve into account' *and* 'It's not 100% saturated'. Her rebuttals:

> The models make brutal estimates and many assumptions (guesses) ... For example, high clouds tend to warm the planet but at the same time, low clouds tend to cool it. So which effect rules? Models don't know but they assume clouds are net-warming. This is not a minor point, the feedback from clouds and humidity accounts for more than half of carbon's alleged 'effect'.
> Joanne Nova, The Skeptics Handbook, 2009, p.8

> True, but meaningless. Log curves never get to "100%". (So even the air on Venus, which is almost pure CO2, does not absorb 100% of the infra red [sic] light). Every CO2 molecule will increase warming by a small amount ad infinitum, but it has less effect than the CO2 that's already up there. And the effect is already so small, it's unmeasurable.
> Joanne Nova, The Skeptics Handbook, 2009, p.8

Again, the arguments seem to the layperson to be a coherent response. The model gets associated with high amounts of uncertainty to undermine its credibility, but the second rebuttal is more interesting to me. The word 'saturated' is sometimes used in common parlance. A sponge, for example, can be saturated with water, but this isn't an accurate interpretation of the

physics of CO2. Apparently, when sunlight hits the Earth some of the infrared radiation bounces back up towards the atmosphere where it comes into contact with CO2. CO2 *does not* absorb the photons of sunlight, rather its energy. There are two processes which can occur, either this energy gets reradiated back towards the Earth, or the energy moves the CO2 particle which collides with other atmospheric particles transferring its heat to colder parts of the atmosphere (Mason 2023). Either way, this traps and accelerates the amount of heat in the atmosphere. If we double the CO2 in the atmosphere, we produce a few degrees of warming, because the energy in the photons which reaches earth does not get into the higher atmosphere and leave into space. When Nova mentions Venus, it is very convenient that she doesn't mention that the surface temperature is around 450 C largely due to the runaway greenhouse effect (Sagan 1980). My point, however, is not the falsity itself, but the confidence and perceived expertise in these replies, despite the fact that they are indeed false. It is as if whatever argument the experts can provide, Joanne has a counter. It is also noteworthy that Nova as the author has the opportunity to pick her replies without the need for citation. We are expected to take her word that these are indeed the best rebuttals from climate scientists.

If we take a look at how Nova characterizes her opponents, we get this clearer picture. Climate scientists, according to Nova, are on the one hand fraudulent bullies who will lie and cheat to take control of your life (e.g. Michael Mann). They are strong in the sense that they use force or their emotional outbursts and not the scientific process to come to their conclusions:

Figure 1 Joanne Nova The Skeptics Handbook 2, 2012, p.3

On the other hand, they do not want to discuss the evidence and the reason is that it is so flimsy it can be easily debunked. The scientists are not aware of all of the different ways they are wrong

or building their evidence on faulty assumptions. It sounds as if "by a continuous shifting of rhetorical focus, the enemies are at the same time too strong and too weak" (Eco 1995). The conspiracy is global and perpetrated by the most powerful people in the world, but the evidence presented is so feeble even someone who isn't a climate scientist can debunk it. This is the major tension in paranoid thinking. It is a dialectic which is fundamental to the affection of conspiratorial thinking. If your enemy is too strong, then you lose and cannot win. It is a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness. If the enemy is too weak however, then why have you not won already? This questions its own presuppositions. Shifting between too strong and too weak is a dissonant position, but it is also a position where you can claim that action is dire. It means that you can claim that victory is always on the horizon, but that we must keep moving towards it whatever it costs. The tricky thing about horizons is that there is always another one right in front of you.

Figure 2 Joanne Nova, The Skeptics Handbook 2, 2012, p.14

How do you solve this tension? You cannot, rationally: "[Paranoia] is about the creation of enemies, a process where inner tension, fear of humiliation, shame about weakness, and repressed self-doubt crystallize into the figure of a threatening Other" (Stein 2010, p.231). Nova exhibits this in her conspiratorial ideas about climate change being perpetrated by some shadowy cabal of world leaders. The problem with arguing against this rationally is that the paranoid person is a seemingly rational and well-reasoned agent, but in fact is terrified of being

duped or controlled and will justify this anxiety with clues and evidence (Stein 2010). It is useless to merely debunk their evidence because the evidence is an intellectualizing of that inner tension: "Beset by such deep-seated fear, the brain searches for explanations. It decides that *something* is persecuting you" (Stein 2010, p.231). So, the core is a complex mix of anxiety, shame, and self-doubt which is projected outwards. This happens to all of us sometimes, but to people who are predisposed to conspiratorial thinking it is a lot more pronounced.

This affective space of paranoia is also where we find a lot of tactics of war in the text. Our debate is framed as a number of "surgical strikes" (Nova 2009, p.2) against central positions. If we read it not as a truth-seeking endeavor, but rather as an attempt at domination we get a different reading. We see the repositioning of the opposition. Nova attempts to paint the picture that climate scientists are foot soldiers for global capital (Nova 2012), setting the scene by claiming that green initiatives exist wholly to enrich big American banks by letting them trade financial papers e.g. carbon credits (2012, p.5). It follows then that 'climate skepticism' is a war not only against the conspiracy, but against the "big banks". We need to look into this claim with care. While as mentioned in the CEI-section, the majority of climate obstructionists are conservative free-marketeers. One would think that financial institutions are part of this free-market, but seemingly not: "This is not a free market. No one would pay a cent for a "permit" unless it was forced on them at the point of a gun*. *Gun? What gun? Try not paying your carbon taxes and say "hello" to four grey walls." (2012, p.5). The government is said to be the main culprit, issuing permits as a fiat currency (this is important) to be exploited by big banks. Fiat currency is a target of free-market criticism, due to the Federal Reserve (the government) gaining too much control over the money supply. A similar argument is made here with carbon permits, in that carbon permits is a way for the government to control you and the banks to exploit you. There are criticisms of carbon permits one could make, but the assertion which Nova purports is that it isn't fossil capital which is the influencer and exploiter, but rather carbon initiatives and the government. And the paranoia lingers: "Time for greenies to ask — why would banks be "green"?" (2012, p.20).

Another quality of war that we see in Nova's handbook is the page on "Believers are becoming Skeptics" (Nova 2009, p.9). It denotes allegiance and loyalty: "These notable people all felt global warming should be taken seriously until new evidence changed their minds ... *Their numbers are growing.*" (Nova 2009, p.9). They are converts, a fact which is made explicit in her examples. The converts are environmentalists, geographers, and meteorologists who used to believe but have acknowledged the truth. Those who previously were on 'your side' is now on

'my side', which makes you wonder: what do they learn that caused them to change sides? In a sense, they are dissenters who 'defected' to the other side. Science isn't warfare, but the way it is being presented here it seems as if there are two parties which are in conflict. The framing of war is not the same as the reality of war. The position that climate change is happening is open to contestation if and when the evidence presents itself, but it hasn't, so there are no legitimate sides or fronts.

A minor addendum to this is to look at her intelligence, or her footnotes. Footnotes are often revealing places and Joanne's are no different. Sources in academia function so that readers and colleagues can check your work and read further on the topic. If you check my sources, you will find out where I found my information and check if I am true to the material. Sources is also a good way to check the quality of their information. We can ask questions such as "is the information accurate?", "is it from a reputable source?", "how is the information interpreted?" etc. (Wang and Strong 1996). Nova's sources are almost exclusively from inside the obstructionist filter bubble with the odd NGO source every now and then. The aforementioned McIntyre is an example, being a mining executive with no qualifications in climate science (Desmog 2024). There are several references to other right-wing think-tanks such as the Science and Public Policy Institute (Nova 2012) and CO2Science which is the rebrand of the George C. Marshall Institute (Nova 2012). Scientists such as Richard Lindzen, Henrik Svensmark, Patrick Michaels, and Craig Loehle are referenced, all with their own problems[xiii]. The most egregious is the referencing of her own husband David Evans at "ScienceSpeaks" where Nova collaborates. The sources can function as a proof of her work, or they can function as a deluge of information. Which brings us to our last point, information overload.

The more critically minded among you might've been asking themselves: why aren't you debunking *all* the information? My answer is simple: it is simply *impossible*. Those who make wrong assertions can make however many with as much creativity of thought as they please. The more the merrier, in fact. This *techne* goes by many names, the gish-gallop, the firehose of falsehood, document dumping, whatever we call it, it serves to overwhelm the opponent with evidence. It can be used in arguments or as a tool of propaganda. As a tool it is frighteningly difficult to counter while it is happening because if you leave only one assertion unchecked, this source can be used in other settings to great harm. In the information age, this is our problem. The excess of information leads to analysis paralysis, feeling overwhelmed, or the tedious task of having to painstakingly go through each and every source and check it against other sources. It is extremely labor-intensive. And since the speed at information is produced has only gotten

faster and the attention required to read debunking of complicated science is large, it is no wonder it is effective. So as a tactic of climate obstruction, the production of new information, as has been pointed out in the GCSC document, serves not only the logistical function of having something to cite, but also when there is enough information, you can deploy it all at the same time in order to overwhelm your opponent. It would be wrong to say that this is definitely deliberate, but the act still produces the same outcome and as a tool of propaganda is well-known for its effectiveness.

Center for Industrial Progress and Reclaiming Industrial Modernity:

The last section here is dedicated to the Center for Industrial Progress (CIP), which is the think-tank created by Alex Epstein. Epstein is trained as a philosopher, so has a different set of tools than other climate obstructionists we have looked at in this thesis. Many of the other obstructionists are either physical scientists (e.g. Singer and Nova), political scientists (e.g. Lewis), and there are even the odd jurists (e.g. Chris Horner whom we have not discussed in the thesis). Being a philosopher however means a different analysis and to be fair, often a very honest depiction of the mindset which characterizes obstructionists. We will be taking a look at portions of his book 'The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels'[1] which he released in 2014. The book was central to his argumentation leading into and during the Trump administration where he gave talks about this book way into 2018 (McEwen 2018). I will argue that Epstein brings us the final piece of the puzzle for us to understand the affective and ontological features of climate obstructionism. He will argue that fossil fuels are the greatest asset towards prosperity, progress, and health and that the fossil fuel industry and its workers should be proud of the product they produce.

As a former fellow of the Ayn Rand Institute (ARI 2007), Epstein is very much influenced by the philosophy of objectivism which itself is highly influential on American conservatism alongside Christianity. I mention his association with objectivism for a reason, namely, to make clear that the text we will be looking at carries presumptions from Randian philosophy such a conception of Man and an ethics which are important to the arguments of the text. The book

[1] The version of the book I own is a digital ePub which unfortunately does not keep page numbers. To remedy and give clarity to the reader, I have counted paragraphs *and* provided a percentage marker from the ePub to make any verification as easy as possible as per recommendations from citation guidelines. The most consistent way of counting is counting every line-break from chapter start. The citation will include chapter, paragraph number and percentage marker.

argues that there are three main effects of fossil fuel use: 1) the greenhouse effect, which is counteracted by 2) the fertilizer effect that CO2 emissions will have on plants, which leads us towards 3) the energy effect which makes it possible for humans to do all manner of things on the planet. The book is set up by looking at claims made about climate change and dissecting them.

Epstein's central argument is, as mentioned above, that fossil fuels use lead to virtuous ends such as powering hospitals and schools or being able to use the internet (Epstein 2014). However, energy politics, according to Epstein, is often tinged with the guilt of fossil fuel use, or as he puts it: "The idea of ruining the world for the less fortunate and, even worse, for our children or grandchildren is horrifying to us. Thus, when someone tells us of a major risk that our behavior is causing, we want to do something about it" (Epstein 2014, chap. 9, paragraph 111 [67.11%]). I think he is right in this assumption. Environmental and climate justice movements do use this rhetoric (some of which I surely have used in this thesis) in order to inspire action. It also plays into an eschatological angle; that we are hurtling towards apocalyptic consequences. Epstein proposes a different perspective: "Mankind's use of fossil fuels is supremely virtuous—because human life is the standard of value, and because using fossil fuels transforms our environment to make it wonderful for human life" (Epstein 2014, chap. 9, paragraph 116 [67.49%]). In a sense, Epstein is correctly pointing towards the fact that energy opens avenues of possibilities in the world for people, but I want to put a pin in the anthropocentrism which we find in Epstein's writing because it will become important later.

Science is important to Epstein. For example, there are accusations leveled in chapter 7 where he questions the evidence of 'studies' related to for example the link between fracking and pollution by warning us of oversimplified arguments of causation saying: "It's hard to prove cause and effect" (2014, paragraph [51.53%]). I agree with this assertion. Epstein himself uses many figures throughout the book to back his argument up with data. These are related to everything from fossil fuels and increased access to clean water, fossil fuels and "human progress", fossil fuels and fewer tuberculosis deaths, to fossil fuel use and less climate related deaths. Here is an example of those:

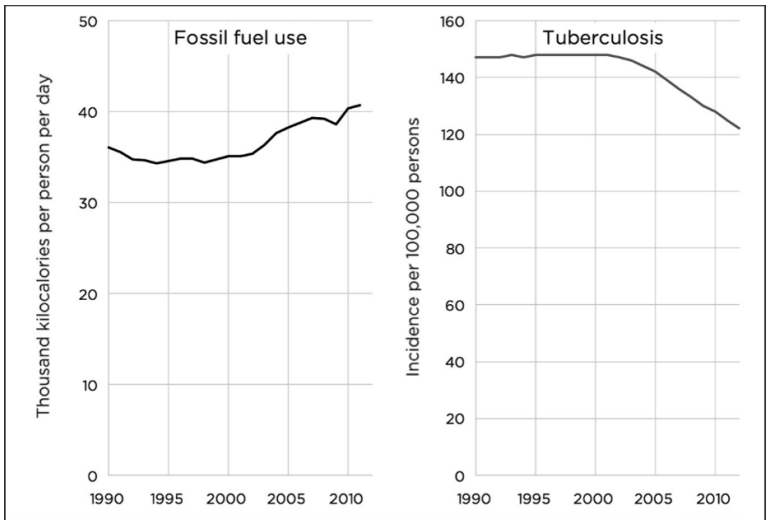

Figure 3 "Figure 6.2: More Fossil Fuel Use, Less Tuberculosis" from Chapter 6 of The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels

The general point of these graphs is to argue that fossil fuels *cause* these effects. But the causes he demonstrates are illusory and to demonstrate this I will look at his fossil fuel and tuberculosis figure (Figure 1).

The argument he uses is that fossil fuels enable us to spend more time towards research: "Want an increasingly disease-free population around the globe? We need more cheap, reliable energy from fossil fuels" (2014, chap 6. paragraph 26 [45.52%]), Epstein concludes. This is a spurious notion, difficult to properly quantify. One which also isn't really backed up by his graph. While the graph negatively correlates, we could just as well have made the argument that less tuberculosis increases fossil fuel use. But more to the point, the drivers towards declining tuberculosis are more likely to be increased access to medicine such as bedaquiline or antibiotics, better hygienic practices, and better housing conditions (Merrill et.al 2016). This is an example of Epstein's illusory use of data to prove spurious causations.

Let us dissect the anthropocentrism which we mentioned earlier. Epstein's central proposition is that fossil fuel improves human life, that "we've seen what we do with energy—we make our lives amazing ... We transform the planet for the better. Better—by a human standard of value" (Epstein 2014, chap. 9 paragraph 52 [62.91%]). And this is his Randian ethics showing. What is 'good' is what serves the self-interests of the individual and what is 'bad' (altruism in the Randian framework) is that which makes us sacrifice in order to serve others (Salmieri 2016). The environmentalist messages of degrowth or even the permaculture movement would thusly run quite contrary the ethics of Epstein, as it asks for us to give up industrial or economic progress due to its effects on the environment or climate. Environmental ethics is often about the unforeseen human impacts of our behavior and practices, and it asks us to center something

different than ourselves and our immediate desires. Some examples could be our use of CFC's that ripped a hole in the ozone layer or the consequences of fossil fuels. The ethic is not so much about what is in a person's self-interest, rather how self-interest can harm the environment.

Epstein is very critical of this environmental ethic and believes it to be the fossil fuel industry's moral duty to challenge it: "*So long as you concede that your product is a self-destructive addiction, you will not win hearts and minds—and you will not deserve to*" (Epstein 2014, chap. 9, paragraph 97 [65.93%]). Epstein wants us to analyze and critique this ethic and specifically buying into the proposition that nonimpact is a moral virtue: "*So long as we accept nonimpact as an environmental ideal, we will not fight passionately against those who oppose the energy of life, because we won't consider its essence—the transformation of nature in service of human life—as a moral ideal*" (Epstein 2014, chap 9. paragraph 80 [64.12%]). He seems to deny that nature has any moral worth if it is not put to use for humans. Man and nature is, in Epstein's philosophy, a binary where he privileges Man over nature. Man is the arbiter of moral worth or what he calls the 'human standard of value' and nature ought to be influenced for our interests, be that resource extraction, removal of features for housing, or any other reason. When we use airplanes for convenient travel, power our houses with cheap and abundant coal, or remove woods to make space for low density housing, we are acting in ways in which Man is the arbiter of good. Industrial progress is the ideal behind this ethic, namely that there is a "progressive improvement of our environment using human industry, including energy and technology, in service of human life" (2014, chap. 9, paragraph 81 [64.17%]). This I believe to be the center of Epstein's argument. It is industrial progress as *telos* of Man. Certain environmental positions such as degrowth have been quite critical of this way of conceptualizing environment or ecology (Soper 2020). These logics are therefore very much in tension with each other. I believe however, that there is a more cogent point beneath this which relates to affect and ontology.

If we do with Epstein as we did with Nova and look at how Epstein characterizes his opponents, we see a picture start to emerge. Epstein views his scientific and political opponents as anti-human. Such a claim calls for examples. In his concluding chapter we have two assertions about environmental ideas. The first is that environmentalists are only interested in untouched nature:

> "The environmental thought leaders' opposition to fossil fuels is not a mistaken attempt at pursuing human life as their standard of value. They are too smart and knowledgeable to make such a mistake. Their opposition is a consistent attempt at pursuing their actual standard of value: a pristine environment, unaltered nature."
> Alex Epstein, The Moral Case For Fossil Fuels, 2014, chap. 9, paragraph 42 [62%]

From this we should intuit that green politics does not have *our* human scale of value as their priority since "[w]e're not taught that some people truly believe that human life doesn't matter, and that their goal is not to help us triumph over nature's obstacles but to remove us as an obstacle to the rest of nature" (2014, chap. 9, paragraph 112 [62.24%]). Epstein seem to believe that green politics and fossil phase out is about removing human interests in favor of nature, to subvert the binary and place nature over humans. There is a malevolence over the way Epstein describes green politics. In particular that environmentalists do not care about people and seek to "harm everything you care about. Not because they care about you – they prioritize nature over you – but because they see you as a tool" (2014, chap. 9, paragraph 113 [67.29%]). There is a paranoid quality over these descriptions. A description where the motives of environmentalists are deliberate harm on modernity due to an uncaring nature towards human life and then environmentalists claim the moral high ground. This hostile picture of his adversary is revealing.

What this all boils down to is a defense of a particular philosophy and affect as it relates to fossil fuels. We ought not be guilty, anxious, or hopeless in the face of our accelerating use of fossil fuels. Energy is what is making our lives better. Epstein makes the case that fossil fuel workers should be proud to work in this industry and that they are a part of industrial progress which is the ideal which founds this position. Our use of fossil fuels provides more utility than harm *to humans*. The emotions of pride and identification with industry are themes which grounds a certain identity. When we use and advocate for "the energy of life" (Epstein 2014) we are part of creating "the dream – and energy revolution that spawns revolutions in every other field" (2014, chap 9. paragraph 84 [64.47%]). I argue that Epstein makes explicit, arguments and ideas which were only implied in other texts we have looked at, and that he provides clear moral principles which can be used to ground identification with fossil fuels. As fossil fuels, Epstein argues, provides prosperity for humanity, it can be anchored as part of a certain position in which one can identify with. This identity is very much contrasted with the logic of environmental ethics. In the end Epstein does not think we need "to "save the planet" from human beings; we want to improve the planet for human beings" (2014, chap. 9, paragraph 81 [64.24]).

PART 5: Discussion; or Step 3: The Macro-Micropolitics of Obstructionism

"Knowledge-Pollution" and Introducing 'Petrotage':

"So, climate skeptics disagree with the consensus, so what? What is the harm in scientific disagreement?"

In the information age, we are dependent upon trusting those who have access to information. The complexity of our society is seemingly ever-increasing. The problems we face: increasing AI-dependence, climate crisis, ecological breakdown, and antibiotic resistance, are getting more and more technical to the point we are uncertain how they work. The tension we find going forward is one of differences in quality between the equality of democratic politics and the inequality of the knowledge required to solve problems. This is not a new problem (Max Weber discussed this problem in the early 1900's), but one which will become more intensified going forward.

Democracy requires that those who have voting rights are equal, while there is a distinct hierarchy in expertise. In fact, expertise makes no sense without the novice (Goldman 2011). I argue that the increasing "expertification" of politics is a mode of politics which is heavily dependent on trust, particularly in democracies. The climate obstructionists have from the very beginning preyed upon this expertification and used its aesthetics to gain and erode trust in institutions and experts in such a way as to create doubt unto what the truth might be (Ekberg et.al 2023). In order to understand this, we ought to understand the normalization processes of Foucault and how knowledge is always subject to counter-knowledge. We might call this a form of an 'petrotage'[xiv] on an expert's knowledge as it "pollutes" an ecosystem of information. In much the same way an oil-spill is a complex ecological disaster with a complex cleanup procedure and has major unforeseen consequences in its ecology; the tactics of science denial, be it flat earth, climate denial, or vaccine skepticism, impair politics and culture in our information society in complex and unforeseen ways. This metaphor will allow us to discuss the 'residues' of what is left in ecosystems after oil-spills.

A large part of how our representational democracies have functioned the last 50 years have been by deferring specialized problems to agencies. In the US, this power is granted by the Chevron Deference which defers unto the agencies the task of interpreting the ambiguity of congressional legislation (LII 2022). As such, much of the specialized policy work of

interpreting science into decision-making has been done by agencies and "taking issues of epistemic uncertainty largely out of the dynamics of popular democracy" (Jasanoff 2011, p.632). As humans produced PFAS chemicals, there needed to be someone who could regulate it. To many Westerners the daily life of practical information was not reading scientific journals directly, but reading and trusting the material of government agencies either directly or through the media. These institutions are normalizing forces, they literally regulate the constitution of their specialized area. If asbestos or CFCs were found to have adverse effects, then they were phased out from construction and products. Agency positions are however not democratically elected but employed based on their competences of the field. The world of bureaucracy is the threshold in between competence and decision-making (Weber 2000).

This has also been co-occurring alongside an externalization of policy-advice in which think-tanks are but one of many actors (Hesstvedt 2018). As governments have to solve complex problems, they rely on expertise from outside. Politics is expected to be constructed on the available 'evidence'. This has led to what is called a 'scientification of politics' and a 'politification of science' (Weingart 1999). The development has the unfortunate outcome of creating two co-occuring problems: an accountability problem (who chose these people?) and a trust problem (why are these experts?). The accountability problem can be framed as 'who has the authority to appoint these experts?'. It suggests that those in charge have the knowledge to discern experts from novices. Trust, on the other hand, is a matter of *vulnerability, power imbalance, and dependency*. 'How do I know that you are what you say you are, namely, an expert?' and 'Can this person help solve my problem?'. The trustee must rely on clues about competence, credibility, and intentions in order to be able to trust (Origgi 2012; Goldman 2011). This is where agencies such as the EPA, FCC, FBI, IMF, IEA, UN etc. come in to fill that gap and (hopefully) prove that they are competent (that they have abilities and knowledge), credible (that they have a good track-record), and have the trustees best ends as their drive. This only works however if you trust the government with the power to regulate.

Science, as it is presented here, is not a politically neutral domain. It shows that some people have power over others. Agencies have the regulatory authority of government, the power to regulate the behavior of society, but individual experts also have power in that they have an education. They have the power to understand, of interpretation, and that is no minor thing. It is the power to understand the experiences of others; to tell others that *they are wrong*. Knowledge, if applied unwittingly, can therefore have a sort of totalitarian effect. For what is more totalitarian than *the* truth and to be demanded to cohere to it? In such a way of viewing

science, knowledge can be seen as a coercive force. This does not mean however that we necessarily must delve into relativism for political sake. The remark is that expertise and the authority which it is given in agency regulation impinges on the lives of the community. If your ideological outlook tends towards viewing regulation and institutions as a matter of democratic politics and not science, we might find ourselves in an accountability and trust problem, which is where we can continue towards climate denial and obstruction.

A failure to convince or deliver on accountability and trust problems can lead to the famous declaration of Michael Gove on Channel 4: "I think the people of this country have had enough of experts with organisations with acronyms saying that they know what is best and getting it consistently wrong" (London Business School 2017). In fact, this is where think-tanks can thrive. The literature points to a double-bind: as the scientification of politics has led towards a deligitimation of science, politicians nonetheless need to rely on scientific evidence in order to create legitimate policy (Weingart 1999). This is the perfect environment where think-tanks such as SEPP, CEI, Heartland, and CIP can at once critique the science that agencies use, while at the same time feigning institutional credibility for laypeople. They appropriate an aesthetic of institutional credibility with their acronyms, their reports, and 'pseudo-experts'. In reviewing climate obstructionist literature, learning about how CO2-saturation works to understand Nova's argument, what the relationship between fossil fuels and tuberculosis are to see Epstein's evidence, or the mechanisms of cap-and-trade markets, there was a vulnerability towards the complexity of the fields and towards needing to rely on others *who knew*. If you, as a layperson, see on your TV-screen: "S. Fred Singer - Chairman of Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP)" testifying to congress, you do not have the information to question his expertise. There is an unstated assumption in all expert appearances: Why would they be in front of congress if they did not meet criteria of expertise? This is a quite common occurrence in our media-landscape. We frequently hear testimony from experts and don't question it (Origgi 2012).

This dynamic can be understood in the Foucauldian notion of power/knowledge. In our institutionalized lives, the experts are those who shape normalization processes in society and who in turn use knowledge and argument in order to make the public internalize "the normal". This is what boundary work is comprised of: the policing of the boundaries of "real" science vs. pseudoscience (Gieryn 1983). In climate obstruction then, the think-tanks are wolves in sheep's clothing. They work as counter-normalizing forces in which climate change isn't 'abnormal', rather a natural variation of the climate. They seemingly use many of the same processes as

agencies such as publishing reports, memorandums, and providing expert testimony. They explicitly seek to create doubt through (manufactured) evidence and (cherry-picked) engagement with scientific literature; the internalization of this counter-knowledge is what produces doubt. But remember, knowledge for the obstructionists is not referenced in access to the truth, *it is warfare towards a specific end* (GCSC 1998; Berman 2014), namely the continuation of fossil dependence. In its practices, it blurs the boundaries of what evidence to trust and questions the legitimacy of governmental agencies. This again diminishes trust and accountability.

Foucault notes how knowledge is often analyzed as "types of consciousness, modes of perception and forms of ideology" but not as "tactics and strategies of power" (1980, p.77.). It is integral to how Foucault understands knowledge that power be a central element. If we view the pursuit of knowledge not as a singular line towards universal truth, but rather as a geography of knowledge and power (Foucault 1980), the obstruction of climate change starts to make sense. If the obstructionists are merely 'wrong' or 'in denial', their continued efforts seem 'irrational'. Rather, if obstructionists seek to 'control territories of knowledge', to 'lay siege upon disciplines', and 'recruit soliders' in pursuit of this goal, actions which seemingly made no sense are now legible as a strategy of war.

If attacking a knowledge ecosystem is a goal of obstruction, we could call the infusion of 'pseudo-experts' in climate discourses a form of 'petrotage', akin to the 'ecotage' of blowing up an oil-pipeline. Petrotage are acts of willful obstruction or destruction that aim at preservation of fossil dependence. In much the same way as bombing a supply line harms the logistical capacity of an army, the deployment of 'experts' with counterinformation in strategic areas aids "the logistical and moral support they [petroleum companies] have been lacking. In short, it will be a sound scientific alternative to the IPCC" (GCSC 1998, p.6). Petrotage is a strategy that seeks to pinpoint particular points of exploitation in mental ecologies and exploit or subvert them, in order to defend fossil fuels.

The ways in which this act of petrotage function are similar to the ways in which an oil spill is detrimental. Oil spills can be explosive (Deepwater Horizon) or continuous leaks from drill holes (Taylor Energy Spill) and clean-up is often costly and complex, so prevention is preferred to clean-up. The clean-up could be skimming oil out of the water, or providing physical barriers so that oil doesn't make landfall. The problem is that ideally one can only recover 40% of an oil-spill mechanically (Helton 2022). The main goal of petrotage is likewise to tactically sabotage or exploit leaks or weaknesses in our knowledge-infrastructures in order to pollute our mental

ecologies. This happens through producing books mimicking institutional legitimacy (like CIP), constructing scientific dissensus (like SEPP), or full-frontal attacks on scientific experts like Nova. Since obstruction aims at preserving the status quo, acts of petrotage function not to produce new knowledge or clear up misconceptions but rather to question the authority, excessively simplify or complexify knowledge, or occlude it by producing counter-information. It is a paradigm of knowledge as bombs and guns, and the mental ecologies of the public as the fortress with the regulatory machine of the state as their enemy. The problem of petrotage is similar to the problem of oil-spills, one can only clean up so much and residues have real consequences on knowledge ecosystems. Petrotage must be understood as a tactic of the battlefield where the rules and norms of science can be subverted and employed to diminish the resources of the enemy. Arguments about air conditioners influencing climate heat-readings can be deployed only to divert the attention towards another front, and then another argument, and then another assertion. Each report, each document accumulating for the public to find and consume. The result is an accumulated body of information, uncontrollable in the midst of democratic politics whilst being very efficient at producing doubt to the layperson.

Climate obstructionists have identified a structural weakness in modern democratic politics, specifically the reliance on trusting expertise and the tensions in this relation: The equality of speech innate to democracy and the inequality of institutional hierarchies inherent to expertise. This weak spot wasn't apparent to many until the fortress was breached and experts scrambled to understand what was happening. If climate obstructionists as such planned an attack (as is made clear in their internal documents), then one of the outcomes of this attack is the 30-years of debunking, understanding climate deniers, and the unfortunate rise of anti-climate populism. To answer the question that started off this section, there is nothing wrong with scientific disagreement, but this isn't regular scientific disagreement. This is petrotage.

Obstruction Residues; or How Petrotage Subjectivizes:

"Okay, so some scientists have been careless in their scientific work. How does that impact society?"

We have thus far been focusing on strategic concerns on a macroscale and how petrotage exploits the weaknesses of a knowledge society. What we have yet to give insight into are the small ways that this justifies climate denial on a microscale. Climate obstruction, as a series of strategies in order to achieve a goal, has a number of side effects on the micropolitical level which anchor how we think and feel about climate change. In this sub-section, I want to look at the social upholding of fossil dependence that climate obstruction contributes to, as well as looking into the social processes from certain characters which we find in the literature on denial and their socially organized processes. In particular, I want to discuss the ignoring layperson, the fossil-fascist, and the cynic radical, and discuss them in relation to climate obstruction.

The residues of which the title of this sub-section refers to is the doubt left over from disinformation campaigns which linger in an information ecosystem. It can be understood as "micro-climate-denials" (modifying a Guattarian term) that result from acts of petrotage. The CO2-saturation argument from Joanne Nova for example, could be supplemented by thousands of other assertions which produce dispositions like uncertainty, possibly leading towards intensification of affects such as futility and paranoia (or the alleviation of guilt through implicatory denial). The accumulation of these distrusting, uncertain dispositions has both molecular and molar effects. They produce a micropolitics of denial, an attitude of distrust or hopelessness towards climate action. Let's investigate the social organization of denial residues in our three characters, starting with the layperson.

The presence of climate change has been found to have a distinctly nightmarish quality (Norgaard 2011). It's as if it isn't 'real' on the immediate temporal scale. Since it is a phenomenon with a very peculiar temporal scale, this nightmarish or dreamy character of climate change can be said to be one of its unique aspects. It could be called a 'hyperobject', an object which is too big to grasp in human terms (Morton 2013). Climate change is this temporally unspecific, nonlocal process which is mentally imperceptible as a whole material 'thing'. It is the uniquely processual aspect of climate change which runs so counter to a metaphysics of matter and present sense-experience. Part of the challenge of perceiving and

being consistently conscious of climate change is the bio-psychological need for comfort and emotional management, and another part of it is that climate change challenges a set of historic-philosophical constructs which help order our ways of knowing about the world. The contestations towards these structures demonstrate something about human consciousness and the usefulness of specific ways of thinking towards the challenges of our time. The ongoing work to find new mental models of science such as 'post-normal science', post-humanist sciences, and trying to make sense of affects in times of ecological disaster are ways of trying to incorporate climate change into our general consciousness.

The ways in which climate obstructionists fit into a social organization of denial is by pushing the terms of normalcy towards denial. It is a thankless fight, but even if a climate obstructionist is swimming against the tide, they can at least manage to delay the inevitable and squeeze the last remaining denial they can muster from the public before fossil fuels are phased out. If denial is socially organized by community members, that means that it can be fought to be upheld and deepened *or* unraveled and processed. While climate change is the interdisciplinary object *par excellence*, I think it is helpful to view it as a set of particularly emotionally challenging processes. Climate change confronts a very long history of subjugation, addiction, and complicity towards our need for energy. It is the culmination; the challenge of all challenges; the result of the western project of science, economics, and politics. And to figure out that what we thought was the glorious march of progress and prosperity is hurtling us towards a number of fundamental challenges is, to say the least, disappointing. It might even challenge the way we have constituted ourselves, subjectively and collectively. One might even use all the energy one can muster to protect that subjectivity. For the remainder of this section, I shall focus on the tools which can be used to protect subjectivity and the creation of in-groups and out-groups.

In "Living in Denial", Kari Marie Norgaard (2011) discusses how the people of "Bygdaby" process and live in denial of anthropogenic climate change. Her thesis is that denial is a socially organized process which is kept alive by certain tools which administer normalcy. It builds on Cohen's ideas of denial as both an individual defense mechanism and a wider social process of organizing emotions. Norgaard explains that we can observe this social organization of denial through a number of tools applied in culture. Viewing culture and social organizations of emotions as a variety of tools lets us observe emotions and affect in more empirically visible ways. Her tools include using humor, "knowing the information" (intellectualizing), controlling the exposure to information, staying positive, and shifting one's attention. These tools are ways

of managing two major emotions which is fear (or hopelessness) and guilt, both of which disrupt how we think about ourselves.

One of the tools Norgaard discusses is humor or jokes. Humor provide ways in which one can float serious topics and brush them aside (Norgaard 2011). Humor lets the subject acknowledge the object of anxiety whilst showing that it does not affect you (Dodds 2011). Humor could also be a powerful tool for building social togetherness, a sense of "us". We see this in the manuals of Joanne Nova in the ways in which her illustrations portray her opponents as hysterical[xv] and furious while her in-group is calm and rational (Figure 1 and Figure 2). These are meant to be funny pushbacks against "climate alarmism" and show appropriate emotions to climate change, namely skepticism. Berman also makes humor an important tool as well. Humor diffuses the seriousness of topics and provides a bit of levity in social groups; an emotional pressure valve.

Knowing about the technicalities is similar in that it presents a quite direct way of "knowing and not-knowing". In psychoanalytic terms it might be called "intellectualizing" (Dodds 2011). Being preoccupied with getting all the correct information and technicalities is a way of maintaining control and to keep from confronting the dread of what is occurring. Norgaard explains this with her personal anecdote of continually asking the doctor about the newest details of her fathers' heart surgery while he was in the hospital. Knowing about the subject makes oneself seem composed and smart, which in turn reenforces a sense of control. In gaining all the information, you can focus on technicalities while avoiding confrontation of uncomfortable emotions and remain composure.

Other tools are more connected to the seriousness of the information itself. Controlling the flow of information both socially and individually allows in-groups to manage the emotions that uncomfortable information (e.g. climate change) provide. In interpersonal situations there is sometimes information which weren't meant for your ears, and we recognize the embarrassment and discomfort which appear when we overhear a conversation about us we 'shouldn't have heard'. In a similar sense that we construct agreements of what we are allowed to discuss in what contexts. The problem arises however when an important topic (e.g. climate change) can never be discussed or even be taught because it either makes the individual or the in-group uncomfortable. The abnormal, as such, is a uniquely distressing position. Normalcy means being in the group, being protected and maintaining social identity. Anyone who have felt like an outsider can quickly feel the tense feeling in their gut when you feel socially excluded. It is a feeling which can drive people mad or into states of shame and self-blame.

Social exclusion is a very powerful force in human behavior. So, staying quiet about certain topics can also be a means of self-protection from interpersonal exclusion.

The tools now discussed are pieces of collective emotional management, and they vary in different in-groups. What is important is the sense security it attempts to build around the group. We see this tendency in the literature on populism that there are similar elements of building "ontological security" (Agius 2020); of trying to anchor certainty underneath your feet. The implementation of social justice and climate justice programs into society has led to certain men feeling insecure and they respond with fear, anger, or even hatred at those they perceive to be taking away from them their homeland (Agius 2020). This gendered nationalism of a form of toxic masculinity leads inevitably to a backlash politics which tries to reintroduce the past. But the sorry thing for those who wish to reintroduce the past is that it can never really be returned to fully. You never quite get your object of desire (Zizek 2008) and you must either confront the difficult emotions that create that response, or you will be a prisoner of your emotions. While Norgaard's subjects are simply regular citizens, this ontological security described isn't periphery to "normal subjectivity".

The demonstration of knowledge by experts in the public sphere could also be a contributing factor. When two experts demonstrate their technical knowledge in a field, the layperson is left with a sense of complexity which might feel imposing or overwhelming. This is a real problem, which I do not have any (current) solution. Climate science, like most natural sciences, might feel above their level of competence. It has its unique methods in climate modelling, it includes a complex world of particle and atmospheric physics, and demonstrates a vision of complexity and uncertainty that is impossible for a single human to comprehend, let alone calculate. As being knowledgeable demonstrates control of a subject, when doubt is cast, control diminishes. This is where Berman and the GCSC aim their petrotage by "inject[ing] credible science" (GCSC 1998 p.5) to "get in people's mind a tie. [So,] *They don't know who is right.*" (Berman 2014, p.5)

All of this overwhelming information might produce a need to "stay positive" (Norgaard 2011). I sympathize with this desire since gloom and futility is counterproductive as we saw with Lewis' arguments from futility, but positivity can manifest in less than helpful ways. Norgaard suggests that staying positive for the layperson is not about staying positive after hearing bad news, but rather about filtering bad news out of our attention spans. This produces a selective attention where information about climate change gets filtered out because it sours the mood or "kills the vibe", or alternatively interpreting weather appropriate to its seasons as evidence that climate

change isn't too bad (Norgaard 2011). Climate obstructionist arguments can therefore work as little sayings one can feed oneself to not have to think so much about it. While claiming that climate change is a global conspiracy (e.g. Nova in her Skeptical Handbooks) might be a bit too much for most people, the mental ecology can become a kind of typology where only the pieces which apply to one's own life is reproduced. To put it differently, obstructionists can provide arguments of all different qualities, be they solidarity arguments, scientific arguments, economic arguments, philosophical arguments, paranoid demonstrations, the flavor of micro-climate-denial isn't as important as the overall trajectory towards their goal that "[a]verage citizens "understand" (recognize) uncertainties in climate science recognition of uncertainties becomes part of the "conventional wisdom"" (GCSC 1998, p.3). Lest not forget that micro-climate-denials contribute to and accumulate into structures of feeling which aren't merely the size of one's own convenience (e.g. my meat-eating isn't that bad, or I don't believe there is a consensus) but can become a larger mental ecology where the tactics of obstruction become mental shortcuts against processing the emotions around climate change.

Our response towards inaction must not be overly confrontational, but treated like a cultural trauma that it is showing to be (Norgaard and Brulle 2019). It is an intense experience to work through trauma, and it is a slow and methodical process to dismantle and rework harmful habits into constructive patterns (Dodds 2011). In this sense, I believe there is a deep guilt but also a deep unwillingness present in our societal structures which are so dependent on fossil fuels, but it cannot pull away. Any process of change on a must occur because a participant wills it; because you understand your trajectory and staying the same doesn't yield prosperity. Despite the anathema of change, there can be well-being if we confront our guilts and anxieties, and sincerely meet the situation as it is, not how we want it to be.

We must also recognize that there are very seductive alternatives to climate justice[xvi], which vary from accelarationism and fossil-fascism (Zetkin Collective and Malm 2020), to doomerism and cynical melancholia (Sloterdijk 1988). The former has an allure, as mentioned in the section on Guattari, in a production of carnal desire: the seduction of totality. It asks of subjectivity not to change; that its correct to feel the way it does, and that hopelessness is not due to any outside factors such as capital exploitation, economic precarity, and feelings of inadequacy, but minorities and communists. Fascists will defend the territory of western imagination with an over-wrought romanticism (Fischer and Madureira 1994) and a future where subjectivity can stay the same and "the doomsayers" will be dealt with. The politics of the fascist, of whom some climate obstructionists (though not those discussed here) (Ekberg et.al 2023) participate in, is an

intensely affective politics. It speaks to our desires to shun the deviant, the criminal; to lash out at difference; to translate our powerlessness into violence on the weak; and to desire the purging of "degenerate intellectuals" or "effete snobs" (Eco 1995). And while climate obstruction isn't overtly fascist, it speaks towards a micropolitics of desire and a mental ecology which lends credence towards the same mental tools replete in fascism. We must take this seduction very seriously and not let "micro-climate-denials" accumulate into fossil fascism.

The cynic is a less clear seduction. Why would someone feel attraction towards doom and cynical hopelessness? Because there is comfort in certainty, even apocalypse. Modern cynicism is characterized by a profuse and striking realism bordering on melancholia (Sloterdijk 1988). It is a reflexive position of what Sloterdijk calls "enlightened false consciousness" (Sloterdijk 1988, p.5). A person which is aware of its own ideological presuppositions, but self-reflexively justifying his lack of action as a way to preserve their position of self-reflexiveness. It is the person who is tired with ideological criticism, longing for naïveté but unable to return to innocence. To the cynic, there is nothing more tired or dull than the critique of ideology. To a certain extent, the cynic is unto something, but lost in their own disillusionment, what they would call "realism", we also find the stability of self-reflexive misery: an intellectualizing of deep emotional confliction. The feigning of control by knowing that you know.

The cynic might "doomscroll" to be "in the know", or alternatively know all about the technicalities of, for example climate change, but in both their doomscrolling and learning the problem remains the same, the comfort of apocalypse (Dodds 2011). The doomscrolling, functioning almost as a form of digital self-harm, provides evidence to their certain demise. And uncertain about what to do or how to help with the information it now knows, they retreat into cynicism and self-preservation. As Zizek has commented extensively on, paraphrasing Sloterdijk: the main problem of ideology critique today is not that 'people don't know what they're doing', rather 'I know very well what I am doing, but I do it anyway' (Zizek 2008). This is a denial of denial. It is a seduction of staying put, of extensively knowing but yet not-knowing, of choosing the comfort of present bitterness over future potential failure. This isn't characteristic of the obstruction we have discussed, but rather its potential opponent. For the cynic sees obstruction, environmental degradation, and the normal politics of fossil fuel dependence and says not "I will care" or "I want to help", they say "but what am I to do?".

The solution to these conundrums could be manifold and cannot be fully explored here. But the one which I find the most sympathetic is a reintroduction of sincerity and honesty into our lives. In the style of confessional poetry, to be honest about our vulnerability, but to be daring to

work towards real justice. To be frank yet understanding of the anxieties of change and our overwhelming force on the planet. It is also an affective politics which recognizes environment not as outside, other, or as an accident we happened upon, but as a friend (Plumwood 1993). We must be honest by admitting that we might feel hopeless, but that we will recommit ourselves to sincerely fighting for a world habitable and comfortable for all. To, as Zadie Smith puts it, "believe in human limitation, not out of any sense of fatalism but out of a learned caution, gleaned from both recent and distant history. We will never be perfect: that is our limitation. But we can have, and have had, moments in which we can take genuine pride" (Smith 2016). It is in this spirit which the future of climate change, I believe must be fought. With vulnerability, sincerity, but also an honesty about the direness of our situation. As such, the growing of solarpunk communities such as the Rjukan SolarPunk Academy reminds us that there are ways to engage in climate change activism, which are not despairing or angry, but honest yet still optimistic.

Industrial Growth Desires, Petro-Masculinity, and the Creation of Togetherness:

"So, the fossil companies want fossil dependence, so what? What would motivate a scientist to do that?"

In 1980, Carolyn Merchant wrote the book "The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution" where she argues among other things that there was a shift in discourse about nature which coincided with the scientific revolution which turned nature from an active living mother into a dead and passive object which humanity had dominion over (Merchant 1990). In a sense, there were two different frameworks of understanding the earth, one as organism and one as machine. What Merchant argues is that it is not neutral whether one thinks of earth as organism or machine. This does something subtle about how we approach economic and social matters related not only to nature but also gender. Climate sciences stem from this mechanistic model of nature. This will not be contested. Its results are predicated on a mechanistic paradigm. The point however is when we discuss solutions to climate change, whether one favors measures of engineering the atmosphere, building renewables by removing forests, or stopping fossil fuel extraction, it reveals an attitude towards our authority over nature and the planet. A key insight here is that the shift from the nurturing Gaia to machinic Earth was a piece of social construction which was predicated on the intersection between knowledge, politics, and gendered frameworks. These two discourses, Merchant argues, facilitates two

different paths for understanding a whole host of things such as gender, the organization of the economy, and epistemology. I will continue from here to argue that to understand the effectiveness of climate obstructionist discourses, we must understand the importance of 'industrial growth desires' which underpins a capitalist and petro-masculine discourse which make up the ontology of climate obstructionists[xvii].

Delving into the mechanistic framework we find a model of the natural world which is presupposed for resource exploitation under capitalism. It is fundamental to capitalism that the external world is the dominion of humanity. It is the thinking of humanity dominant over nature which we find with both SEPP and CIP (SEPP 1992; 1997; Epstein 2014). We can trace these discourses back to for example Locke and the early liberal thinkers who thought of for example, the indigenous lands of the America's as "undeveloped" and therefore not owned by anyone in particular (Graeber 2021). In order to show proper ownership one ought to "improve the land", which usually meant agricultural development or building housing (2021). Capitalism has therefore been seen by many scholars as being undergirded by a growth-discourse which is inherent to its functioning (Merchant 1990; Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016; Mitchell 2023). In capitalism, the economy must grow year after year and if it doesn't it causes a stagnant or receding economic output which is detrimental to its functioning. Ecological economists have critiqued this notion, as viewing the economy in this fashion occludes the fact that the growth of the economy often is a product of exploitation of nature (Caradonna 2014; Costanza et.al 2014). The economic value of nature has thusly not been factored into the economic analysis. In energy markets one can tax or put fees on using fossil fuels through carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems, but the value of natural environments which are being exploited are often not even part of the economic analysis but rather mere resources to be extracted *for humans*. Whole mountains can be filed to large holes in coal extraction and oil pipelines run through large swaths of "undeveloped" land. If industry is telos, then nature is only a roadblock towards progress and not a set process.

The framework being presumed in obstructionist thinking is precisely the control of nature. This is most obviously found in Epstein, but also in SEPP and it is even implied in the economics of CEI. The environment exists to exploit *for human benefit*. It presumes an anthropocentric world where the transformation of nature is the moral ideal (Epstein 2014), and where "progress and development have always involved increasing control over hostile forces, to the benefit of mankind" (SEPP 1992). This ideal is supported by "Science, Technology and Industry..." (SEPP 1992). It is self-similar to a scientific paradigm of control

which sought to subjugate not just nature (Merchant 1990), but also women's sexuality and bodies (Foucault 1984; Federico 2004). The micropolitical desire of control and domination in the mechanistic worldview of science is alluring because it allows for climate obstructionists to presume a binary whereby Man controls nature (Plumwood 1993). And nature exists to make way for industrial progress.

There is now a growing body of evidence that climate denial (in the Global North), at least the explicit kinds of literal denial, which is correlated quite significantly with race, gender, and political sympathy (Hultman and Anshelm 2014; Krange et.al 2019; Lockwood 2018; McCright and Dunlap 2011). I want to situate the discourses I found in relation to this evidence and the wider literature because I believe it will make intelligible arguments in climate obstruction like why industrial progress and energy are important to them.

The particular character that is more likely to fall into climate obstructionism is usually (though not always) a white, politically conservative, male. The findings which the literature emphasize is that this group in particular has certain expectations that relates to their ontology and its link to the fossil economy. The fossil fuel industry has historically been a male dominated field. Industrial masculinity has certain gendered presentations connected to it such as machismo, stoicism, and production as opposed to care (Hultman and Anshelm 2014). Male industry workers dig, crack, hit, and screw, all verbs which show physical activity of the muscles. The industrial male, according to the narrative, provides for his family and is head of the household (Nelson 2020). One could therefore see the industrial man as the peak of working-class masculinity and as a "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 2005)[xviii]. Men as such are, brought up on the social organization of masculinity, dominant, virile, active, producers who control both their external and internal circumstances, and if you are not capable of that, you are deviant, gay, a sissy (Connell 2005). The fossil fuel industry provides a concrete example of Man's control and exploitation over nature, in a sense, a vehicle for stabilizing masculinity.

Contrast this with environmentalist thinking, where the discourses around masculinity have evolved to be different (Anshelm and Hultman 2014). Since feminism has been in and around the environmental movement since at least the 1980's, the relationship of masculinity to feminism had to be dealt with (Connell 2005). The negotiation of masculinity that this resulted in was influenced by values in the environmental movement such as equality, solidarity, personal growth, and organicism (Connell 1990). We see that there is a confrontation between these values and those of hypermasculinity which we see in the hegemonic-industrial kinds of masculinity. The men inside the environmental movement had to be open to and engage with

feminists and their ideas to be part of the community, which led to a renegotiation of masculinity. This included some renouncing their careers, being less domineering, or being more open and expressive about their emotions (Connell 1990). The space for masculinity in environmentalism thusly is constituted around a renunciation of large parts of hegemonic masculine ideals and practices. Some of these practices are: giving up eating meat, giving up the sole provider role of your family, and eco-friendly consumerism or even anti-capitalism (Connell 1990)[xix].

The conclusion might be then that men in the environmental movement are all failures of hegemonic masculinity but let's challenge this framing. Hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily entail better lives for men. The main aim of hegemonic masculinity is to police the boundaries of masculinity in contrast to women (Connell 2005). It is to serve the politics of patriarchy. A politics of domination, of stoic control, and of hierarchical relations. It is not, as Plumwood as argued, all that dissimilar from the discourses of Mans control of nature (1993). We see these discourses in our finding. It is a perspective which has fit snugly at the interstices of industry, scientific progress and its relationship to capitalism.

It is with this in mind that Cara Daggett introduces the concept of "petro-masculinity" (2018). The concept revolves around the intersections of gender, racism, and sexism produced by anxiety of the fossil phase-out. It is an authoritarianism which Daggett claims is at the heart of mass-industrial society, which I argue is relevant to understanding climate obstruction as a wider political phenomenon in the US. It is not merely a coincidence of modernity, but rather located in the logic of our carbon democracies in our continuous demolition and subjugation of nature for the freedoms of privileged people (Daggett 2018, p.31). To understand the rise of authoritarianism in the age of climate change, it is quite necessary to understand it as a reaction to the perceived demolition of 'real men' *and* as willful violence and a desire to subjugate the ecological. Be that ecological man, ecological politics, or ecological sciences. The petro-masculine figure is a psychological profile of someone who is anxious about his weakness after the fossil phase-out, and in his desire for power and strength will bow to whatever symbolizes strength: "authoritarian personality is forced to subsume its urge to dominate within submission to a stronger external force, be it God, the laws of the market, the military leader, or a tyrant. Or fossil fuel burning" (Daggett 2018, p.36).

It is no wonder that the presentation of Donald Trump as the billionaire, virile, and dominator is so seductive (Nelson 2020). The thrill of affairs with pornstars, of living billionaire life with limmos, in short capitalist highlife, is mostly vicarious but nonetheless fulfills the desire for

hegemonic masculinity. And while this is not necessarily a description of everyone, it is a model which makes understanding the seemingly contradictory position of observable empirics (the globe is warming) and their allegiance to fossil fuels understandable. It makes legible "draining the swamp" as not a cynical ploy or irrational act. Who was "the swamp"? It was never a concrete term for specific people. It was always laden with affects. The swamp was regulators, reporters, those who had a power to critique or limit Trumps powers (Bierman 2018). Draining the swamp then, was expelling those who could dominate or challenge him. It is an act of violence, of reclaiming strength and power, of petro-man demonstrating that he is not weak, in fact cannot possibly be weak. Violence as such is at the core of authoritarian drives to make things rigid, to enforce generality onto the particular; to eradicate true alterity.

The ecological then, represents to petro-man all things which softens and makes fluid the rigidity of masculinity. Ecology as the study of relationships of living organisms in their environment decenters Man's privileged place as superior to nature. Ecology studies the 'oikos', which is Greek for house, our house, the Earth. While ecological thinking mustn't be tinged feminine (e.g. eco-fascism or ecomodern masculinity (Hultman 2013)), the challenge which ecology provides to the Lockean capitalist worldview, frightens climate obstructionists. Ecological thinking has also been challenging towards industrial society, particularly in the 60's and 70's when ecology was used by for example Carson in Silent Spring to challenge the power of industry. Following from this, we see that the presupposition of a science includes a philosophy, an ethics, a politics. Knowledge, and its ideas of how and why we seek to acquire it, carries with it ideas which start to insist themselves elsewhere in our lives. So, if thinking ecologically means that ecological presuppositions is influencing your thinking, then in much the same way thinking mathematically could lead to different outcomes. Then in a McLuhanist sense, the medium (ecology) is the message. Ecology as such becomes the understanding of systems in flux, and of alterity in those systems, not as a means but as an end.

The evidence of hostility towards the ecological and its perceived effeminacy is widely available. Daggett (2018) makes this clear through examples such as the 'rollin' coal' phenomenon whereby diesel truck owners blast smoke unto bikers, hybrid cars and EVs. EVs in particular is such a potent symbol of environmentalism and gets associated with women and soft men (Daggett 2018). To actively pollute upon that which is womanly is an act of violence, a show of patriarchal force, a restoring of a kind of masculinity. In many jurisdictions this practice has become illegal due to the danger associated with being obscured or covered in exhaust. They do it, Daggett suggests, because it fulfils their desires, not so much to be strong, but to *not* be weak

(Daggett 2018). And the ecological, wherever it is present in consumer products, political activism, or identity presentations is a reminder of their anxieties.

Climate obstruction must be seen then in relation to this larger context of industrial desires. To answer the question which led this section, the scientists are motivated by climate obstruction as it serves a narrative regarding science and the identity of the scientists as discoverer of the passive earth, of Man over nature. Seen in examples such as the scientificity which both SEPP and Joanne Nova's manuals take issue with. They contest consensus and ecology and climate science (which they perceive in much the same light) as valid scientific standpoints because, to them, it undermines economic assumptions, and theories about Man which hold political consequences. We see this in Epstein's entire moral framework, Man controls nature. Climate obstruction as a scientific phenomenon is held up with a certain epistemology which privileges certain domains of exploration and calls others "irrational ideologies" (SEPP 1992). But in so doing, it isn't wholly wrong that ecological thinking as a scientific thinking approach from different perspectives than other sciences. While not an "irrational ideology", it is not non-ideological.

This ought not be read as an acceptance of the premise that there are two equally valid perspectives. Just because there are plural interpretations of a phenomenon, it does not follow to say that all interpretations are of the same quality. As Rick Roderick said in his lecture on Derrida: "If [the traffic lights are] red and you see it as green, the outcome can be disastrous..." (Roderick 1993). The climate obstructionist position is a misinterpretation of basic evidence in climate sciences and ecology. It misconstrues peer-review for democracy, it cherry-picks evidence, and it seems to consistently be impervious to explanations which deconstruct its facts. It is this last point which, to me, seems the most important. If your interlocutor seems impervious to argumentation and evidence on your discussion topic, then maybe that's not the topic they are really arguing about. The discussion of climate change can be approached from different motives, be that protection of corporate profits, scientific ethos, or their own identity and affects.

This is also an opportunity to discuss the framing which has become central to my interpretation of climate obstruction, namely warfare. The image of petro-masculinity which we have outlined here is in close proximity to the hegemonic masculinity par excellence of the military. Believing oneself to be fighting in a war is a neat way of framing to oneself that what one is doing is righteous and puts the emphasis on there being friends and enemies, us vs. them (Schmitt 1996). It also privileges a way of viewing the world, which is littered with conflicts to be

won, a Hobbesian view of humanity (Hobbes 2018), which is in stark contrast to a more liberal view that privileges argumentation and tolerance of different views (Mill 2011). The Hobbesian perspective has become core to conservative ideological presuppositions about the world (Robin 2011) and the views of the Leviathan are about control over chaos, of subjugation towards a benevolent cause, namely peace. While this might seem at first at odds with the free-market ways of US conservatives, the current trajectory of the Republican Party should give us pause to ponder what it is about the seemingly liberty-loving Americans to gravitate towards authoritarian figures such as Donald Trump. The question being asked in some parts of the literature is whether climate denialism (which falls into climate obstructionism as an affective tactic) isn't about being unconvinced of the facts, so much as it is about the affective and ontological concerns of certain demographics, in particular politically conservative men (Anshelm and Hultman 2014; Daggett 2018; Nelson 2020; Letourneau et.al. 2023).

I believe that the climate obstruction phenomenon is one in which certain actors increasingly seek to protect themselves from difficult emotions and ideas and put on the brakes to stop from changing. In order to do this, they produce information which affirm or confirm to a politics of fossil desires; a politics which uses dispositions such as paranoia or denial to suppress a potential guilt or anxiety about the trajectory of society in the 21st-century which threatens capital (Dodds 2011). The idea that Man should be centered and that our exploitation of nature and environment are virtuous (Epstein 2014); that science and industry as actors in that exploitation should be viewed as forces of progress (SEPP 1992; 1997); and that capitalism and its markets lead to virtuous outcomes so long as the government doesn't interfere with green politics (CEI 2006; Nova 2012) are all motivating forces of climate obstructionism. It isn't merely the denial of climate change. It is a denial of what climate change represents, namely a threat to Man, its control over nature, the desire of domination eminent in capitalism. I have focused on politically conservative men and their masculinity in this section as that is what the available demographical evidence suggests, but the female perspective is one which could just as easily be examined[xx]. As climate change accelerates, I believe we will see a larger section of women who will join climate obstructionist men for their own reasons. But the climate obstructionist movement that we see here is a largely male phenomenon, and it seems to be largely connected to an image of industrial capitalism and white male gender roles with fossil fuels as a central pillar of the energy demands which upholds the economic order (Zetkin Collective and Malm 2020).

Conclusion; or The Information Society and the Spoils of War:

The rules of fair play do not apply in love and war.
-John Lyly, Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit (1578)

Now in order to kill the enemy, our men must be roused to anger; that there may be advantage from defeating the enemy, they must have their rewards.
-Sun Tzu, The Art of War (2000), p.7

What are we to make of these tactics and what do they say about our current predicament? I believe that what we have seen in the texts provided here is a sign of a tension in the public debate which I sadly think might intensify. At the bottom of climate change-belief and obstructionist perspectives there is a wide array of imaginings of ethics which diverge drastically, and which point to problems in epistemology, political ontology, and the expert in knowledge society. In this thesis I have focused on obstructionist discourse, but there are other analyses one could do as a follow-up such as ecomodern, climate justice, or solarpunk discourse analyses. The reading of climate obstructionism however has shone a light on the dangers of science obfuscation, the political realities of being a subject in information society, and the affects, rhetoric, and strategies of war which underlie climate obstructionist discourses.

Climate obstructionism is, as we have seen, a defense of a particular desire within American society, namely an industrial desire which makes up the long marching path of progress against nature. I argue that obstructionism is a set of tactics as well as a position that one can inhabit which serves to soothe subjectivity of guilt, anxiety, and provides solutions through binary even paranoid thinking. The consequence of these tactics is manifold, but the most obvious is the delaying of proper action taken against climate change at a time where it is pertinent to act. I believe that a line can be traced all the way from the findings of industry scientists in the 60's shows a trajectory which lead to organizing denial in the Reagan and Bush administrations, to backlash in the Clinton administration, to dismantling and disorganizing Kyoto during the Bush administration, to the regrouping of the Obama administration, which paid its dividends in the election of Donald Trump 8 years later. This line represents a journey which includes multiple contingencies, missed opportunities, and a lot of information, only some of which was presentable in this thesis. The overall picture I have painted is a strategico-affective picture, but

these texts could also be analyzed more thoroughly through only military strategics, affection, or ecocritical readings. I believe however that the mixture of strategy and affective readings paint us a picture about argumentation, industrial desires, and the micropolitics of denial which could be useful in further understanding how to appropriately argue with obstructionists, counter their techniques, or how its molecular content bleeds into politics more broadly. These could be projects for further investigation for the future.

The ways in which climate obstructionists think about science, truth, and debate mirrors certain propositions from my theoretical framework, mainly understanding the research on climate change as a territory for warfare. This paradigm explains the attitudes and tactics which we see employed in their texts where they cherry-pick, misrepresent, cite unreliable research, or suspiciously locate the villainous motives of their interlocutors. I have argued that this practice can be called petrotage, a tactic where you aim your weapons towards mental ecologies in order to sow doubt. These acts have micropolitical effects which we see in the layperson as a set of social processes and mechanisms which could intensify the social organization of climate denial. In the extreme forms of industrial desire and climate denial, we see the allure of fossil-fascism and petro-masculinity which permeate societies all over the world (Ekberg et.al. 2023; Zetkin Collective 2020; Nelson 2020; Daggett 2018; Anshelm and Hultman 2014). This in turn led me to trying to dissect the underlying discourse which I believe climate obstruction seeks to defend, namely industrial progression as a *telos* of the story of Man. While I have focused on climate obstructions tactics and affects, I believe this is part of larger trend of information-warfare which create problems on other aspects of society such as vaccine-hesitancy, democratic values, and a larger distrust towards experts in general. Climate obstruction ought to be seen as a pattern in this larger context of information-warfare on the battlefields of knowledge.

Which leads us to the expert in the information society. How are we supposed to know who is a credible expert? With climate obstructionist tactics came not only a sabotage on the subjectivity of members of the public, but also on the fabric of trust which binds knowledge society more broadly. Frankfurt has suggested that learning to detect "bullshit" is a way in which we can discredit those who do not contribute to our scientific and democratic society (Frankfurt 2005). In the essay "On Bullshit", Frankfurt contends that there is difference between lying and "bullshit": "He does not reject the authority of the truth, as the liar does, and oppose himself to it. He pays no attention to it at all. By virtue of this, bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than lies are." (Frankfurt 2005, p.61). Frankfurt's conception of truth is realist and far from the one I have employed in this thesis, but his framework of motive detection could work to some extent.

Others have suggested that pre-empting bad information before it spreads is a good way to learn what the unhelpful information is, but it doesn't further help us identify expertise. The expert as a political and epistemological agent has in our age become a contestable term, and trying to fully regain its legitimacy or authority might lead to its own democratic problems. But it is clear that there is too much complexity to navigate the world on our own, and our vulnerability and dependencies towards experts and professionals will show itself when crises appear, both personally and politically.

Critics might say that I have characterized obstructionists as villainous people. I think this criticism makes sense, but I want to specify however that I do not believe obstructionists are acting out of an intention to be malicious. The inner life of these people is unavailable to me (except what is apparent in the text), but their intentions are coherent with a particular vision of man, nature, masculinity, and the scientific process which they believe to be virtuous. Obstructionists, like all of us, are only trying to make sense of the world through discourses and affects they are familiar with and view positively. An important thing to remind ourselves of from time to time is that "individual citizens are internally plural: they have within them the full range of behavioral possibilities" (Smith 2016). Humans are not monolithic and my analysis on the actors of climate obstruction must not become a tool for instrumentalizing them in the same ways they instrumentalize the natural world. In this thesis, my goal was to show how their portrayals and emotions about their adversaries were informed by a warlike binary worldview which privileges Man over his environment. It is not a new perspective. It has a long historical path from early modern thinkers like Locke, who were important for the establishment of the American project more generally. They want to protect this philosophy, this conception of Man at the center of the world and they aren't alone in this thought-process as we see other seemingly ecological patterns of thought like ecomodernism have adopted parts of this outlook. I do not want to prove their suspicions right by thinking the same way about them. They are people. This does not mean that I believe that what they are doing isn't ethically and politically suspect and I *do not* want to alleviate them from part of the responsibility of our current post-truth predicament and our hurtling towards climate change. They aren't wholly responsible, but they have contributed more than one might think them capable of. They are people which I believe have done some very destructive things to the trust of climate science, our political discourse and the chances Americans have had to take action on climate change.

The spoils of this war have been sustaining fossil fuel dependence in the US economy. Since 1992 when SEPP released its Heidelberg Appeal, the US economy has become reliant on

Canadian oil through the Albertan tar sands and has even ramped up its own domestic production through the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota. They have at various points in this story been on the attack or defense from regulators or environmental action, but on the whole they have been effective at achieving their goals, which is to defend the material interests of the fossil fuel industry and protect a view of the world where Man is above nature in a hierarchy. Reading through my poststructuralist lenses it is apparent that the warlike paranoid frame of modern political discourse in the US is partly the legacy of climate obstruction. It is a refusal to think through a paradigm of differences, multiplicity, or heterogeneity. This tendency homogenizes subjectivities towards two positionalities, which I believe to be an authoritarian proposition in and of itself. The climate crisis could be, as all other moments or crises are, a great opportunity to open up and challenge certain discourses and modes of thinking which are often used in western thought such as hierarchies in dualistic thinking, binarism more generally, our attitude towards environment, or by living and creating more space to live heterogeneously. To think of environment as friend, to think of its joys and frights, to live alongside all manner of mental ecologies.

The lesson which I have learnt and believe to be the wisest and most useful is this: *to be careful of how, why, and when we read.* It doesn't merely entail to be critical of "bullshit" or to look for clues in the text, of course that is important, but the larger lesson is that texts change us, even if we stand opposed to their content. The way in which something is argued, framed, tactically organized, or affectively communicated can goad us into a mode of thinking which we might find ethically or politically questionable. Climate obstruction's frame can lodge itself into moments of thinking in "micro-climate denials", and recognizing it not only in the text, but in ourselves as well, has been the most useful tool which this project has taught me. Because if I can only identify micropolitics in the Other, have I really learned anything at all? One might say, "*to the victor goes the spoils*". I would reply, "*there isn't a victor*".

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[i] The official reason for the disbandment of the Global Climate Coalition is not known. Dembicki (2022) suggests it might have to do with fearing lawsuits due to Tobacco companies being sued at the time. An archived post from their own website says: «The industry voice on climate change has served its purpose by contributing to a new national approach to global warming». See link: https://archive.ph/Du1Cn#selection-523.52-523.212

[ii] Marx and Nietzsche also engaged in questioning the fundamentals of Western philosophy and were pivotal influences to many poststructural thinkers.
[iii] Subjectivities are also producers of knowledge, but in the sense I am explaining here this knowledge is often not legitimated by institutions, which is a discussion for a different text.
[iv] As mentioned, this is a fantastic example that the affects of the researcher related to a piece of knowledge can be a guiding influence in research. For more on this see chapter 10 and 37 in Critical Qualitative Research Reader edited by Steinberg and Cannella (2012).
[v] Discourse might very well favor capital-owners, or even be produced in direct relationship with capital-owners which I go on to show through the GCSC.
[vi] While this is a choice to make each of the processes clearer individually, it ought to be noted that this in no way means that the processes happen independently of eachother, and we see that they often happen together.
[vii] As an aside, but not any less relevant; this strategy is also being used in other obstructions when it comes to other SDG goals from the UN, especially SDG 5 and SDG 10. By for example stating that the gender wage gap doesn't exist, or by stating that LGBTQ+ people either does not exist as they are, you get to reframe the debate as an epistemological debate rather than the ethical debate about what to do about it (see Bettcher's "Trapped in the Wrong Theory", 2014). In this sense, reframing ethical debates as either an ontological or epistemological debate is a more favorable position for obstruction.
[viii] I am not implying that climate change might not be a more accurate term of the physical process as a whole, but rather focusing in on the quality of the words.
[ix] Psychological projection is a psychological defense mechanism whereby you attribute your own feelings or intents unto someone else. A good example would be an adulterer who fears or accuses their spouse of adultery.
[x] I have throughout the thesis focused on doing something as a goal or achievement in climate politics. It must be noted that this urgency can also be weaponized for ends which are opposed to equitable climate justice.
[xi] Anyone interested in learning the fascinating science underpinning climate change should check out skepticalscience.com which allows you to learn about the physical processes of climate change by countering common climate obstructionist myths.
[xii] With this I mean the discomfort that comes from a thought process that looks like: «I am a decent person and being a racist is bad. I am being called a racist, so that must mean I am bad, but I don't think I am bad. Therefore, I am not a racist».
[xiii] Lindzen is a meteorologist associated with the Koch-funded Cato Institute and Heartland and has received $30 thousand from coal company Peabody. Svensmark is a Danish physicist who claims the warming is caused by cosmic rays and has been to several obstruction conferences. Michaels has been at both Cato and CEI and has been an obstructionist since tobacco politics. The article by Loehle «A 2000-Year Global Temperature Reconstruction Based on Non-Treering Proxies» contained multiple issues and was published in the journal Energy & Environment, a journal with major issues such as peer-review and quality. For more information on the Loehle study see:
https://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2007/12/past-reconstructions/
[xiv] A derivative of 'petroleum' and 'sabotage'.
[xv] Notice the gendered connotation of this word in particular as the socially isolated position of womanhood where one's concern is devalued and shown to be bordering on illness.
[xvi] I am here refering to the people of the global north who generally will be better off than those of the global south.
[xvii] This section could have discussed ecomodern desires, but I believe ecomodern desires are built on a similar, but different sediment.
[xviii] Whether this man actually exists is irrelevant, but as a guiding fixture in the subjectivities of men it is a potent vehicle for many discourses to be embodied by men, as these are the discourses of patriarchy.
[xix] This does not mean that men in environmental movements are automatically free of toxic forms of masculinity. Most men go through a socialization process in school and early adulthood in which you either succeed or fail at hegemonic masculinity. This socialization does leave some of these ideas in day-to-day experience even if they do not like them (Connell 2005).
[xx] One could probably look at climate obstructionist women through a similar lens to what Andrea Dworkin did in her work «Right-Wing Women».