A Critique of Crisis: Environmentalism and the Politics of Historical Time

by

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PART I

This project emerged from my desire to explore how the phenomenon of a global environmental disaster—manifest in fears surrounding climate change, overpopulation, mass extinction, and other planetary issues—could be construed as a secularized version of apocalypse. But as I started researching, I began to question whether apocalypse was the proper concept for my analysis. Though there are undoubtedly certain parallels to be found between environmental disaster and apocalypse—for example, buying a hybrid vehicle can be construed as penance for the sin of owning a gas-guzzling SUV—their conceptions of time and history, which were what truly interested me, were practically antithetical. Apocalypse, etymologically rooted in the Greek word for unveiling, concerns itself with "an underlying truth about world history that is dramatically revealed."[1] The last two words of this definition are critical: they imply that the apocalypse is not a moment of utter destruction, but a radical unveiling in the world historical sense. There is no parallel to this phenomenon in environmental writing, no pulling back of the curtain. In this sense, environmentalism, or at least the dominant strains of it, cannot be said to be apocalyptic. Some texts may employ apocalyptic rhetoric every so often, but such language does not play a role in shaping the temporal or historical framework at work in environmental writing.

Though a properly apocalyptic vision is nowhere to be found in mainstream environmental writing, the word is often used in an imprecise fashion to characterize

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[1] Stefan Skrimshire, "Eternal Return of Apocalypse," in *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Stefan Skrimshire (New York: Continuum, 2010), 220.

an "awareness of the fact that an ecological doomsday [is] imminently at hand."[2] But even this usage of apocalypse does not hold up under analytic scrutiny. Environmentalists do not focus on the imminence and inevitability of a disaster that will mark the end of time, let alone imply that some extra-historical salvation will follow it. Rather, environmental writing that invokes images of catastrophic rises in sea level, destruction caused by colossal storms, or any sort of ecosystem-ravaging event are strictly focused on the necessity of taking preventative action. They are concerned with management and continuity, not fire and brimstone. The environmental apocalypse consists of nothing more than the threat of the end and prescriptive action to combat such a threat.

Forsaking apocalypse, I have instead latched onto the concept of 'crisis.' According to the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck, crisis, understood as a temporal concept, refers to a "definitive, irrevocable decision," a rupture that cannot be undone.[3] I find this term preferable to 'apocalypse' for two reasons. The first is rather straightforward: 'crisis' is the word most typically used by environmentalists to refer to the large-scale threat they discuss. Hence 'crisis' is not a semantic label I have generated to characterize this idea, but an emic classification employed by discourse. I am not imposing the category of 'crisis' on the works of others, but simply teasing out the implications of the term's use given its temporal and historical signification. This leads me to my second and more important reason: as mentioned earlier, crisis, in addition to being a buzzword for evoking contemporary cataclysm,

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[2] Frederick Buell, "A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse," in *Future Ethics*, 14.
[3] Reinhart Koselleck, "Some Questions Regarding the Conceptual History of 'Crisis,'" in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 237.

is, according to Koselleck, "a concept that always posited a temporal dimension, which, in modern times, actually implied a theory of time."[4] Specifically, crisis was, and still is, a manner of articulating a certain kind of historical time, one revolving around a moment in which the continuity of history, or even time itself, is under threat.

To summarize, the temporal framework of a phenomenon often referred to in both popular and academic writing as the 'environmental apocalypse' has little to do with the unveiling of a divine truth and much to do with managing a potential threat to a temporal and/or historical existence, a threat embodied in the term 'crisis.' It is from within this conceptual framework that I embark on the following project. My goals are to explore the contemporary and historical uses of the concept of crisis in environmental literature and to analyze how such evocations of crisis both structure historical existence and gesture towards certain modes of historical consciousness. To put it another way, I aim to show that when environmentalists write about crisis, they are also writing about time and history, and that an analysis of the concept of crisis can speak volumes about the mode (or modes) of historical consciousness that govern canonical environmental texts and environmentalism as a whole.

Historical consciousness, however, does not exist in a vacuum; on the contrary, it is necessarily caught up in politics.[5] This is a point Koselleck emphasizes repeatedly, arguing (as well as demonstrating) that the "discipline of history"—and

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[4] *Ibid.*

[5] I mean "politics" in the broadest possible sense: the intersection of and competition between interests of different groups and how those groups relate to each other. The political here necessarily envelops the social, the economic, the cultural, and many other spheres involved in the issues I discuss in this project. Simply put, politics is the realm in which concepts come to have material consequences.

historical consciousness in general—"always performs a political function."[6] For Koselleck, the reverse is also true: a political stance necessarily assumes and enacts a certain vision of history. Historical time—the remembered past, the present condition, the desired future—becomes a production "mapped out…by particular constellations of power."[7] This analysis of the environmental historical consciousness thus has an additional goal: to illustrate the close ties between the political and the historical, or, to put it more precisely, the mutually constitutive relationship between human action and the conceptualization of existence in time. Politics and historical consciousness are necessarily entangled in a way that is not often discussed, especially in regard to environmentalism.[8]

Additionally, the fact that this analysis focuses on environmental writing should not preclude the conclusions drawn about the relationships between temporal concepts, historical consciousness, and politics from being applied more broadly. Environmentalism is not the base for these concepts, but simply the medium through which I have analyzed and elucidated them. Thus I seek to mark out a niche for what I refer to as the politics of historical time—the meaning of which will become clear over the course of this project—and allow it to develop its place in the field of critical thought. My hope is that this project will open up possible routes of analysis that can be applied and developed further within the critical humanities.

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[6] Reinhart Koselleck, "On the Need for Theory in the Discipline of History," in *Practice of Conceptual History*, 14.

[7] *Ibid*., 15.

[8] There have been many valuable materialist critiques of environmentalism—indeed, I cite some of them in the pages that follow. (See Erik Swyngedouw, cited in Part III, or Cindi Katz, "Under the Falling Sky: Apocalyptic Environmentalism and the Production of Nature," in *Marxism in the Postmodern Age: Confronting the New World Order*.) This scholarship often centers on critiques of economic development, imperialism, and contemporary neoliberalism, and tends to show how environmentalism is complicit in these projects of domination. However, an exploration of the historical concepts at the root of this complicity isn't typically present.

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A side goal of this project is an exploration into the possible applications of Reinhart Koselleck's body of work beyond its usual context of conceptual histories and theories of historical writing. One of Koselleck's main scholarly projects was a revisionist account of the modern concept of history, one that he critiques for both its conceptual flaws and complicity in past injustices.[9] However, his work has not been widely read outside the field of intellectual history. But given the myriad insights he offers into how historical concepts function in the modern context, his work has significant applications to critical and theoretical projects in many other disciplines. This project aims to explore and demonstrate ways in which Koselleck's work could be connected to such projects, and how his and other critiques of modernity stemming from different academic traditions could be made to speak to one another. Laying out a clear methodology for such a project is far beyond the scope of my current abilities, however, so this application of Koselleck's ideas is certainly no more than preliminary.

The following Parts present a close analysis of canonical works of environmental writing. My analysis centers on how the manifestation of 'crisis' within each of these works implies a certain historical consciousness (Part II). Once these modes of environmental historical consciousness are made explicit, I engage in a political critique, focusing on how ways of conceiving of time and history legitimate certain kinds of political action at the expense of others, demonstrating how this manifests itself in environmental writing (Part III). I close with a speculative reworking of environmentalism's temporal consciousness which searches for

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[9] See Niklas Rose's *History in the Plural: an Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* for a detailed overview of Koselleck's life and work.

potential solutions to the issues raised in the previous two sections (Part IV). And so, with explanations and qualifications out of the way, we may commence our analysis of environmental crisis.

PART II

> *"[C]risis and the philosophy of history are mutually dependent and entwined…ultimately one must indeed go so far as to call them identical."*
> —Reinhart Koselleck[10]

Introduction: Two Kinds of Crisis

This portion of my project is designed to give an overview of exactly what the environmental crisis is, specifically how it manifests itself in canonical literature, which acts as both a barometer and trailblazer for the environmental movement as a whole. They are, with a few exceptions, written by white American men, historically the main demographic of the environmental movement.[11] They also serve to map out the environmental movement historically. Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Nature," and Henry David Thoreau's journal entries provide insight into the intellectual origins of environmentalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The writings of John Muir exemplify its late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century focus on resource conservation and the protection of beautiful places. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, and the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth*, chart the movement's surge in popularity during the sixties and seventies and coinciding focus on the issues of pollution and overpopulation. Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature* and James Hansen's *Storms of my Grandchildren* show how climate change has emerged in the past two decades as the most prominent environmental concern we

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[10] Reinhart Koselleck. *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 12.
[11] Robert Gottlieb. *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Rev. ed. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005), 269.

face today. It must be noted that this project does not seek to provide a comprehensive historical or conceptual overview of the environmental movement—rather it aims to elucidate influential concepts that manifest themselves in definitive texts. The works included in this analysis were ultimately chosen because they were both popular among the general public, with many becoming best-sellers, and influential among other environmental writers. The newer texts quite often explicitly reference the older ones.

With such a wide variety of texts, it should come as no surprise that we encounter many different representations of crisis. Crisis has a multitude of permutations, both lexical and conceptual. When reading, one comes across the form of a crisis in words like catastrophe, disaster, cataclysm, Armageddon, or even apocalypse. Similarly, there is no consensus about what constitutes a crisis—what some may see as the end of civilization as we know it others may view as a boon, an opportunity. To name an especially pertinent example, many of those striving against environmental action on climate change have framed the changes in global climate in terms of its benefits—a year-round shipping lane through the Arctic Ocean, or melting polar icecaps opening up vast new oil reserves.[12] Of course, these limitations are not unique to my project. Any analytic scheme is bound to be guilty of some homogenization, some disequilibrium when it comes to which similarities are emphasized and which ideas are left to hover beyond the marginalia. The straightforwardness of categorization inherently belies the complexity of what goes on beneath the surface.

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[12] Bill McKibben. "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math." *Rolling Stone*, 19 July 2012, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719.

But despite these issues, it can undoubtedly be said that certain ideas and strains of thought spring up time and time again in environmental writing. Even though the specific topic or issues at hand may change—we may go from discussing deforestation to pesticides to global climate change—the conceptual foundations remain. There appear with stunning regularity certain assumptions about what is to be valued, what is under threat, and what, exactly, should be done. In this second part of my project, I provide a conceptual and historical outline for two strains of crisis, which I term the Arcadian and the Utilitarian, the reasons for which will be explained below. I explain where these ideas come from and how they work, to show how they emerge in the collective voice of environmentalism again and again, and in what ways they've been present from the beginning.

This division of crisis stems from a similar classification introduced by environmental historian Donald Worster in his 1985 book *Nature's Economy: a History of Ecological Ideas*. In the book, Worster lays out a meticulously researched and comprehensive overview of the intellectual roots of ecology—that is, the scientific study of ecosystems—dating back to the eighteenth century. One of the main goals of his project is tracing two competing conceptions of humanity's relationship with nature that run through the ecological tradition, a distinction that began in the eighteenth century and runs right up to the present day: "one view devoted to the discovery of intrinsic value and its preservation, the other to the

creation of an instrumentalized world and its exploitation."[13] He refers to these as the "arcadian" and "imperialist" traditions, respectively.[14]

Worster's arcadian ecologist finds the Natural world a marvel, one that, like the pastoral idyll from which the tradition gets its name, appears as a place of intrinsic value. The imperialist, on the other hand, seeks to conquer Nature, take its value, and make it useful for the work of civilization. Though Worster presents this distinction in the context of how humans were thought to be related to their nonhuman environs, it can certainly be mapped on to the differing conceptions of environmental crisis that developed concurrently with Worster's ecological attitudes, as well as the texts that in which the environmental crisis appears. In writings by authors like Rachel Carson, John Muir, and Bill McKibben, the environmental crisis manifests itself in the loss of and disconnection from a beautiful and affectively empowering natural world. This brand of crisis necessitates Worster's arcadian view of Nature, a term that I retain to highlight the similarity. On the other hand, works by James Hansen, Paul Ehrlich, and the Club of Rome put forward a conception of environmental crisis that doesn't mourn the loss of Nature, but rather focuses on threats to humanity in the form of damaged lifestyles, lost productivity, and limited possibilities. The environment is treated as nothing more than that which is conducive to the survival—and ultimately the progress—of human civilization. Because these writers often focus on ensuring the collective good—expounding ideas that have precedents in the thought of John

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[13] Donald Worster. *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New ed. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1985), xi.

[14] Perhaps a more well-known classification of this kind might be the divide between conservation and preservation, terminology that emerged during conflicts over land use in the American west. Though the dynamic being described is analogous, I choose Worster's terms because they encompass more, spanning centuries of ideas instead of confining themselves to specific historical movements.

Stuart Mill and other associated thinkers—and because the term 'imperialist' is loaded with negative connotations, I have chosen to use the term "Utilitarian" instead of Worster's "imperialist."

To emphasize what I stated earlier, these two strains of crisis do not necessarily appear in isolation, especially in contemporary writings. Their existence cannot be wholly characterized as either simultaneous or sequential—the two modes of crisis have been variously separate and intertwined, rising in and out of prominence over the course of years and decades. But despite this connectedness, they possess distinct characteristics and unique intellectual roots. Together, they both exemplify how conceptions of environmental crisis have grown and changed over time. By tracing each of these traditions to the source, we can come to understand how the idea of the environmental crisis began, what its intellectual basis is, and how it functions temporally. After all, when it comes to crisis, time is always of the essence.

The Arcadian View

Losing the Natural: Bill McKibben and The End of Nature

Bill McKibben is, according to a 2010 article by the Boston Globe, "probably the nation's leading environmentalist."[15] He has been arguably the most influential figure in the struggle for political action on the issue of climate change. In 2007, he started 350.org, which touts itself as "a global grassroots movement to solve the

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[15] Anis Shivani. "Facing Cold, Hard Truths about Global Warming." *Boston Globe*, 30 May 2010, http://www.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2010/05/30/facing_cold_hard_truths_about_global_warming.

climate crisis."[16] In 2012, he edited *The Global Warming Reader*, an anthology of writing about climate change. But his fame began with the writing of *The End of Nature*, the first book about climate change for a general audience. Its fame is widespread; since its publication in 1989, it has been translated into over twenty languages.[17] In a way, it is fitting that *The End of Nature* was published the same year the Berlin Wall fell. Just as the year marked a great turning point for the international political situation, McKibben's book marked the entry into public discourse of what is now by far the biggest issue in environmentalism. But more important for the purposes of this analysis is that McKibben's text is emblematic of the Arcadian iteration of the environmental crisis. Previously, argues McKibben, the sounds, concerns, and preoccupations of modern human life could be erased by simply stepping outside, entering the presence of the Natural. However, climate change—or more specifically, the *awareness* of it—irreversibly damages this conception of ours. McKibben's thesis is that, given the non-localized character of climate change (it isn't termed *global* warming for nothing) no area on earth is "untouched" by humanity's presence. Climate change has thus permanently blurred the separation between the human and the Natural, or, more precisely, robbed human beings of any confidence that a given place is pure and untarnished by the detritus of human existence. This is "the end of nature": the feeling that nothing can ever be Natural again, and some powerful experience has been lost—this is the crux of the Arcadian crisis.

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[16] "Our Mission," 350.org, accessed 8 April 2013, http://350.org/en/mission.
[17] Bill McKibben, ed. *The Global Warming Reader: A Century of Writing about Climate Change* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 292.

But, as McKibben's book shows, certain assumptions about humans and Nature are necessary for the conceptual genesis this Arcadian vision of crisis. First and foremost, the Arcadian viewpoint presupposes an objectified Natural that exists beyond corporeal human existence. It is predicated on the fact that the Natural is inherently separate from the human realm; it is, in fact, "*defined…[by] its separation from human society*,"[18] a separation which is both physical and ideal. This physical separation manifests itself in the idea of Wilderness—the area that is wild, untamed, untouched. This physical difference between the Natural and the human exists most prominently in their landscapes, a difference that relies on a certain degree of spatial separation. The existence of any archetypal Natural landscape—say, the mountaintop vista devoid of any tall buildings or other signs of human influence all the way to the horizon—is contingent on a distance sizeable enough to push those signs of human encroachment beyond the visual field.

But this is more than just a matter of physical difference; for Arcadians, this distance takes on a symbolic quality. Natural spaces, unspoiled by human presence, are thus also immune to the less tangible markers of encroachment that rode along on the coattails of human-made landscapes. The Natural is free not only of signs of human settlement, but wholly removed, both literally and symbolically, from the artificiality and corruption of industrial civilization. For the more radical environmentalist, these two components merge: the pejorative aspects of the modern world are so closely tied to human presence that to be truly pristine a Natural environ

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[18] Bill McKibben. *The End of Nature* (1st ed. New York: Random House, 1989), 64. Emphasis in original.

must be "unpolluted even by the knowledge that someone has been there before."[19] For McKibben, the mere awareness of previous human presence in a space can leave the pristine Natural contaminated. This is what makes global warming such a devastating issue for McKibben—even if human presence cannot be directly perceived, one is constantly aware that, were it not for the intervention of human beings, the air, the water, the climate, would in some way be otherwise. In this way, the knowledge of possible human intervention even becomes a pollutant.

Even while promulgating a deep-seated separation Arcadians place between human beings and the Natural, McKibben acknowledges that there is no objective basis for this distinction—it is, of course, arrogant and absurd to believe that humans are any less "natural" than anything else found on Earth.[20] However, the capacity to perceive and conceptualize this separation, to make it real in one's own mind and experience, is, for McKibben, enough to make it, in a sense, real, and enough to transform the concept into a universal. But again, this knowledge of the Natural is no less fragile than the physical environment that generates it. Though McKibben acknowledges that "[t]he sound of the chain saw doesn't blot out all the noises of the forest or drive the animals away," it nevertheless "does drive away the feeling that you are in another, separate, timeless, wild sphere."[21] This intrusion of the Human into the Natural amounts to the most powerful kind of pollution, and consists of nothing more than the knowledge that something that once felt pure and untouched no longer is. For McKibben, the importance of this loss of nature equals, or even surpasses, that of the more visceral consequences of climate change. "Most

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[19] *Ibid.*, 53.
[20] *Ibid.*, 64.
[21] *Ibid.*, 47-49.

discussions of the greenhouse gases," he writes, "rush immediately to their future consequences—is the sea going to rise?—without pausing to let the simple fact of what has already happened sink in. The air around us, even where it is clean, and smells like spring, and is filled with birds, is *different,* significantly changed."[22] The phenomenon of this difference is what preoccupies McKibben most, what makes him truly uneasy. Although "[t]he physical consequences…will…be staggering," they will be "no more staggering than the simple fact of what we have done."[23]

For McKibben, this destruction of the Natural amounts to the loss of a particular kind of aesthetic experience, one that often takes on a spiritual dimension. Indeed, McKibben laments that "a certain way of thinking about God—a certain language by which to describe the indescribable—will disappear"[24] once our modern conception of the Natural is no longer tenable. But this spiritual quality of the Natural is inextricably bound to the aesthetic experience the observer has. It is this idea—of mourning something beautiful—that prompts McKibben to proclaim that "[o]ur sadness is almost an aesthetic response—appropriate because we have marred a great, mad, profligate work of art, taken a hammer to the most perfectly proportioned of sculptures."[25] That is not to say the beauty of the physical world will no longer be present.[26] Even when this beauty exists in some form, there is still mourning, a mourning brought on by our knowledge that this beauty is not the same; a kind of creeping knowledge is tarnishing our pure aesthetic experience. Even when it exists,

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[22] *Ibid.*, 18.
[23] *Ibid.*, 44-45.
[24] *Ibid.*, 80.
[25] *Ibid.*, 74.
[26] It has often been commented that many of the most beautiful sunsets are created by air pollution, a topic taken up by Don DeLillo in his 1985 novel *White Noise*.

the knowledge that the nature we see around us is no longer the Natural cannot be escaped; "[w]hat will change is the meaning that beauty carries."[27]

The loss of the Natural that has for so long been part of the experience of being human is, for McKibben, akin to removing the keystone from an archway: everything once stable will come crashing down after it. This is the root of McKibben's crisis. He does not completely eschew from sounding the death-knell-for-civilization that so defines the Utilitarian conception of crisis (to be discussed in the following section), writing that "civilization could rip apart" barring a multi-sided barrage on the problem of climate change.[28] But more often than not, he brackets the issue of human civilization and ponders the implications of the loss of the Natural. He writes that "uncertainty itself is the first cataclysm, and perhaps the most profound one," [29] referring not only to the possibility of civilization's destruction at the hands of devastating physical conditions, but also the loss of a powerful aesthetic experience that amounts to an integral part of human existence. McKibben contends that we don't simply want to keep the Natural as is to have unblocked resource access for generations to come. Rather, "we want it for assurance that the wheel still turns, so that we can worry about our human affairs secure in our knowledge of the eternal inhuman."[30] For McKibben, it is not just about the experience of the Natural; it's also about simply knowing that it's there. We can feel the impact of the Natural not only through its physical presence but by means of our knowledge of it, of the very fact that it exists.

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[27] *Ibid.*, 63.
[28] *Ibid.*, 146.
[29] *Ibid.*, 100.
[30] *Ibid.*, 103.

In losing the Natural, humanity is deprived of not only a fundamental component of its existence, but the experience that comes from interacting with it, an experience that, for Arcadians, serves as one of the definitive markers of what it means to be a human being in the world. This is the Arcadian environmental crisis: the loss of a personal presence and aesthetic/temporal experience, a loss which results in a profoundly changed and confused world, devoid of meaning in the one way that matters.

But before McKibben could lament the loss of Nature, he had to find it in the first place; though Arcadians may say otherwise, the Nature they adhere to is unquestionably historical, originating in an intellectual tradition exemplified by the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and John Muir. The genesis of McKibben's Natural, and thus the Arcadian crisis as a whole, can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century, specifically to Emerson's seminal essay "Nature." It is in this essay where the notion of a sensory encounter with the Natural embarks on its journey towards the Arcadian crisis.

The Experience of Nature: Emerson, Thoreau, Muir, Carson

In his 1836 essay "Nature," the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson laid out a foundational view of the Natural that influenced a whole generation of thinkers, including Henry David Thoreau. Worster even goes so far as to label it "a manifesto for an important strain of Romantic ecological thought."[31] "Nature," though more of a philosophical treatise than environmental polemic, revolves around a portrayal of the Natural that is instrumental in understanding how

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[31] Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 103.

the Arcadian vision came into being. Emerson's Nature is, like that of McKibben, wholly distinct from the human in more than spatial terms. For Emerson, Nature consists of "all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME"—it is cordoned off from the realm of the human.[32] Contrasting with the dynamism of human existence, it is labeled that which consists of "essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf."[33] Beginning with this categorical and temporal separation, Emerson then explores how nature is instrumentalized in the process of the aesthetic experience. The beauty of Nature, consisting of its aesthetic possibilities, lies in "a pleasure arising from outline, color, motion, and grouping…owing to the eye itself. The eye is the best of artists."[34] For Emerson, it is the eye of the individual, his or her "whose eye can integrate all the parts,"[35] which allows one to access nature. Nature's beauty emerges by means of its appropriation by the individual. For Emerson, this beauty goes beyond mere sight— Emerson does not simply *see* Nature, he *experiences* it. This human experience of the Natural is coextensive with Nature's value. For being in the wilderness, experiencing this beauty, permits him to feel as if

> nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all…I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty."[36]

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[32] Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Nature." (James Munroe and Company, 1849), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29433/29433-h/29433-h.htm (accessed 15 March 2013), "Introduction."
[33] *Ibid*.
[34] *Ibid*., "Beauty."
[35] *Ibid*., "Nature."
[36] *Ibid*.

This description lays the groundwork for the Natural experience later found throughout the Arcadian tradition. The beauty of Nature, made manifest thanks to the intervention of the human eye, allows the owner of the eye to enter "infinite space," to become "nothing," to experience great pleasure and become lost to time—as Emerson puts it, "Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us."[37]

Emerson distinguishes himself from his followers in his openness about the conceptual separation of the human and non-human, and the appropriative element of the Natural experience. But as the Arcadian strain of environmental thought develops, this knowledge becomes merely implied. It retreats underground, present but unacknowledged, or even denied. As Worster puts it, "Emerson was much more intent on assigning to mankind an essential, ongoing, creative role in the world" than later Arcadians, such as his fellow New Englander Henry David Thoreau.[38]

Like Emerson before him and McKibben so many years later, Thoreau's relationship with nature was contingent on the value of the sensory experience it provided him. When it came to the Natural, Thoreau felt that "[t]he important fact is its effect on me"[39]—an effect he goes on to describe in detail. Quoted by Worster, Thoreau recalls a moment when he "ranged about…looking at the spiring tops of the trees, and fed my imagination on them,—far-away, ideal trees not disturbed by the axe of the wood-cutter…Where was the sap, the fruit, the value of the forest for me, but in that line where it was relieved against the sky."[40] The value of Thoreau's experience lies within his ability to have a profound aesthetic moment and the

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[37] *Ibid.*, "Idealism."
[38] Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 104.
[39] *Ibid.*, 91.
[40] *Ibid.*, 99.

corresponding feeling that moment awakens within him—it is precious because it allows him to access a certain transcendent mode of thinking that the rapidly modernizing society around him had closed off. Thoreau saw this iteration of the Natural as an eternal and immutable attribute of his life experience, one that he had an almost instinctual desire for. Worster describes how Thoreau desired "a resurgent, irrepressible wilderness that man supposedly had vanquished. 'I long for wildness,' Thoreau wrote, 'a nature which I cannot put my foot through…everlasting and unfallen.'"[41] Just as McKibben would nearly one hundred and fifty years later, Thoreau longs for a Natural with a power that neither humanity nor time can diminish, a static nature frozen in time.

We see this view reappear in the writings of naturalist and preservationist John Muir. Active in wilderness exploration and preservation from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Muir co-founded the Sierra Club in 1892 and is widely known as the "Father of the National Parks."[42] Muir was an avid reader of both Emerson and Thoreau,[43] a fact that becomes quite clear when analyzing his accounts of his excursions into the Natural. In "My First Summer in the Sierra," originally published in 1901, Muir describes a vista as "so glorious a landscape, so boundless an affluence of sublime mountain beauty," that even "[t]he most extravagant description I might give of this view…would not so much as hint at its grandeur and the spiritual flow that covered it."[44] But the beauty that Muir cannot

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[41] *Ibid*., 74.
[42] "John Muir, Naturalist Whose Writings Inspired the Conservation Movement," about.com, accessed 8 April 2013, http://history1800s.about.com/od/americanoriginals/a/johnmuirbio.htm.
[43] "Influential People in John Muir's Life," Sierra Club, accessed 10 April 2013, http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/people/influential.aspx
[44] John Muir. *Journeys in the Wilderness: A John Muir Reader* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2009), 209.

articulate or describe does not exist simply in the environment—rather, it is facilitated by the human capacity to have such an experience. Sketches or representations of this beauty are fruitless, "for little can they tell to those who have not themselves seen similar wildness, and like a language have learned it."[45] An individual must become a connoisseur of wilderness, must have a change within to be able to experience it. When fully immersed in the Natural, Muir leaves behind the encumbrances of his human state. In the wilderness, "no petty personal hope or experience has room to be. Drinking this champagne water is pure pleasure, so is breathing the living air, and every movement of limbs is pleasure, while the whole body seems to feel beauty…making a passionate ecstatic pleasure glow not explainable."[46] Muir's wilderness is, at times, a conduit to an inarticulable pleasure, one that, in this passage, takes on a tone of (decidedly erotic) transcendence.

But this transcendence is not strictly sensual. The wilderness experience permits Muir "no fear of the past, no fear of the future."[47] Within the parameters of the experience, Muir can leave time behind. This possibility stems from the timeless quality Muir ascribes to wilderness itself. He valorizes what he perceives to be its atemporal and static character, describing his awe at the "vast glowing countenance of the wilderness in awful, infinite repose."[48] But Muir, of course, does not only seek sensory access to the unchanging space—he employs that space to create atemporal experiences of his own. His time atop Yosemite's North Dome sketching the valley

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[45] *Ibid.*, 218.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Ibid.*, 231.

becomes a day "without measured beginning or ending. A terrestrial eternity."[49] These threads of beauty, temporality, and appropriative experience emerge together when Muir reflects on his first full month in the Sierras: "[l]ooking back through the stillness and romantic enchanting beauty and peace of the camp grove, this June seems the greatest of all the months of my life, the most truly, divinely free, boundless like eternity, immortal."[50] Not only is Muir's location sensorially alluring, but those qualities that make it so—the atemporal "stillness" and "romantic enchanting beauty"—are what propel Muir's own mental experience. His vision of the past month as "boundless like eternity, immortal" is facilitated by the landscape that surrounds him. It is only the natural landscape, which is in itself timeless, or contains elements of the timeless, that is able to give the individual that experience and the substantial pleasure that comes with it.

The fact that Muir's preservationist stance is grounded in his desire for the continued existence of the Natural experience manifests itself in his more polemical tracts, most notably his diatribe against Hetch Hetchy Dam in "The Yosemite," published in 1912. When in 1903 the city of San Francisco sought to construct a dam in Yosemite National Park's Hetch Hetchy Valley in order to provide San Francisco with water and power, Muir fought back against the potential loss of this conduit for Natural experiences. He blasted those who sought to destroy "this most precious and sublime feature…one of the greatest of all our natural resources for the uplifting joy and peace and health of the people."[51] For Muir, the destruction of Hetch Hetchy meant that the sublime and panacean experience it facilitated would be lost forever.

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[49] *Ibid*., 219.
[50] *Ibid*., 183.
[51] *Ibid*., 500.

Its preservation—and Muir's entire preservationist project—rested on his love and desire for places in which "Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to the body and soul alike."[52]

For a purpose this important, not just any landscape will cut it for Muir. Though he lambasts "gainseekers and mischief-makers…trying to make everything immediately and selfishly commercial," Muir is by no means anti-development, commenting "water as pure and abundant can be got…in a dozen different places."[53] It is not so much that the dam is being built, and that modern infrastructure is growing—it is that this encroachment impedes on the ability of Muir and other wilderness enthusiasts to experience the Natural. If the dam project were to go ahead, in Hetch Hetchy's place there would be a "beautiful sham lake" which Muir bemoans as "only an eyesore, a dismal blot on the landscape, like many others to be seen in the Sierra."[54] Muir's valuation of Hetch Hetchy above other parts of the Sierra is contingent on the uniqueness of the aesthetic experience it provides. If the dam were to be built, he would care for Hetch Hetchy no longer—it would just be one of the "dozen different places" in the Sierra. Thus, by the early twentieth century, we see one of the earliest fully-formed iterations of the Arcadian crisis manifest itself in the elimination of the individual's capacity for a Natural experience. Though dormant for many years, this form of crisis reemerges in the popular consciousness decades later with the publication of *The End of Nature*. However, McKibben, and just about every other prominent environmentalist of the latter decades of the twentieth century, owes

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[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *Ibid.*, 503.

a huge debt to Rachel Carson, whose genre-defining book *Silent Spring* propelled the environmental crisis into popular consciousness.

Although Carson was certainly not the first writer to present readers with a doomsday prognosis for long-term environmental health—William Vogt and Fairfield Osborn each published popular books detailing the environmental crisis in 1948—her book was the first to generate significant national attention, enough to cause Worster to label her the historian who "[inaugurated] the literature of ecological apocalypse."[55] In a preface to the 1994 edition of the book, environmentalist and then-Vice President Al Gore wrote that Carson's book "changed the course of history,"[56] a claim certainly lent credence by the fact that it sold over two million copies.[57] For more specific signs of its power, one need not look further than *The End of Nature*: in the first of his many references to Carson's book, McKibben begins with the phrase "[w]hen Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*"—he provides no other context, not even its year of publication, almost as if he knew his audience would already be familiar with the book.[58] The fact that McKibben was almost certainly right is a testament to the canonical status of *Silent Spring* within environmental writing.

The book's title refers to a brief parable that starts off the book, one that describes a charming New England that one year faces a 'silent spring' in which no birds sing, no flowers bloom, and no fish swim; the environment is destitute and

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[55] Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 23.
[56] Rachel Carson. *Silent Spring* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), xv.
[57] Eliza Griswold. "How 'Silent Spring' Ignited the Environmental Movement," *NY Times*, 21 September, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/magazine/how-silent-spring-ignited-the-environmental-movement.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
[58] McKibben, *End of Nature*, 56.

"stricken," everything that the Natural environ shouldn't be. And worst of all, writes Carson, "[t]he people had done it themselves."[59] "It," we soon find out, was caused by chemical pollutants of all forms, most notably pesticides and herbicides. Carson's staunchly Arcadian rhetoric regarding chemical pollutants—long considered an incontrovertible mark of scientific progress—was responsible for much of the popularity, as well as the controversy, that met *Silent Spring*'s publication in 1962. But although she treats a different environmental issue than McKibben (climate change's rise in the popular environmental consciousness was still decades away) Carson's preoccupation with the Natural—specifically its separation from humanity and aesthetic value—firmly situates her in Thoreau and McKibben's Arcadian tradition.

Like McKibben, her conception of the environmental crisis is wholly contingent on a separation of the Natural from human beings. She frames the issue with the declaration that only "has one species—man—acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world."[60] This specific phrasing of man's relationship with nature, in which the agent ("man") is exercising control over the object (the "nature of *his* world," or the Natural), operates under the assumption of a separation, a duality, between humans and the physical world. Carson makes this conceptualization of humanity's relationship with Nature even clearer when she describes chemicals synthesized in laboratories as "substances that nature never invented."[61] This phrasing frames these chemicals as being decidedly *un*Natural, created by humans in a manner

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[59] Carson, *Silent Spring*, 3.
[60] *Ibid*., 5.
[61] *Ibid*., 39.

not in accordance with Nature, a relationship that once again hinges on a clear distinction between the two.

This distinction between the human and the Natural extends to the realm of time, with modern human civilization portrayed as operating within a time out of joint with that of Nature. For Carson, modern time is reckless and accelerated compared to the prudent and careful temporality of Nature. This point is made explicitly when, while describing the chemical assault of humans on the Natural, Carson writes that "[t]he rapidity of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the impetuous and heedless pace of man rather than the deliberate pace of nature."[62] In deploying pejorative terms like "impetuous" and "heedless" to describe human temporality while, in contrast, lauding Natural time as moving at a "deliberate pace," Carson makes clear her valuation of the slower pace of Natural time over the rapidity of human time. Though Nature is not completely static for Carson (as an ecologist, her view of ecosystems is necessarily one of dynamism), it is defined by a pace of change wholly different from that of the human world, generating a separation between the human and the Natural couched in temporal difference. The time of the Natural moves so slowly that, in contrast to human time, it may as well be eternal. As with earlier environmental writers, Carson is not free from the seduction of the timeless.

In addition, Carson's view of the Natural's value has a similar aesthetic grounding, and its loss is just as clearly a loss of aesthetic experience. Each chapter begins with a black and white pen-and-ink drawing that works to depict the Natural as a pastoral, bucolic wonderland, a place of harmony and beauty that contrasts starkly

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[62] *Ibid.*, 7.

from the mechanized industrial world in the process of taking it over. The illustrations are striking. Wide paths snake through meadows and small groves of trees; plumes of mist rise from below waterfalls as a gnarled tree branch arches overhead; and, in one particularly affecting picture, a solitary bird's nest lies in the bottom-left corner of an empty white page, adjacent to the chapter heading "And No Birds Sing." The fact that the Natural is represented visually again and again, that the text of the book is regularly interrupted to make room for these powerful aesthetic moments, is a testament to how integral they were to Carson. The prominence of this kind of representation of the Natural, it seems, was to aid Carson in making the reader pine for the Natural's loss even more. The book's opening parable, as described earlier, describes the harrowing scene:

> There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example—where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed…It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.[63]

Words like "stillness" and "silence," phrases like "without voices," denote a brand of sensorial absence, one that makes the possibility of an aesthetic experience mediated via sound or touch inaccessible.

Carson devotes pages of her book to the human consequences of this loss of experience, emphasizing the pleasure humans are deprived of when the Natural vanishes. Due to excessive spraying by well-traveled scenic roads, many individuals berated chemical spraying companies with "indignation at the despoiling of the roads they had traveled. Once it had been a joy to follow those roads through the evergreen forests, roads lined with bayberry and sweet fern…Now all was brown

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[63] *Ibid*., 2-3.

desolation…reached the proportions of a 'roadside crisis.'"[64] Carson even goes so far as to declare that "anything that destroys the wildlife of an area for even a single year has deprived him ["man"] of pleasure to which he has a legitimate right."[65] This statement makes explicit what has previously only been hinted at: that nature's value to human beings lies in the "pleasure" it provides them via the human aesthetic experience, an experience that can be so easily tarnished. Almost anticipating objections to this point of view, Carson declares directly following the statement that "[t]his is a valid point of view," adding that "[e]ven if…[natural populations] are able to re-establish themselves…a great and real harm has been done."[66] This last statement implies that despite a Natural rehabilitation following the cessation of pollution, the fact that the damage has happened at all indelibly marks the Natural as tarnished, as tainted. Like McKibben, the very *knowledge* of man's impact on the Natural, regardless of whether such an impact is visible in the present moment, constitutes an infringement on the aesthetic pleasure an individual inherently has a right to.

Though Carson's book foreshadows McKibben's later invocation of knowledge pollution—the contamination of supposedly pure Nature by one's awareness of some form of human presence—it is not her prime concern; rather, it is a certain kind of human presence she dreads, one that is associated with chemical pollution. In her opening description, she crafts a vision of human activity in 'harmony' with nature, framed in a positive light—after all, some interaction must occur with nature in order for a human to be able to experience it aesthetically. But

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[64] *Ibid.*, 69-70.
[65] *Ibid.*, 86.
[66] *Ibid.*, 86-87.

the danger for the Natural's well-being—and our aesthetic experience of it—"has come about because of the sudden rise and prodigious growth of an industry for the production of man-made synthetic chemicals."[67] This "man-made synthetic" rupture into the Natural world, one in which man not only robs the Natural of its aesthetic power but actively changes it, is the ultimate ground for Carson's environmental crisis.

This survey of canonical works of environmental writing shows how the Arcadian view of environmental crisis emerged from a certain strain of Romantic thought in the nineteenth century, and continued to play a part in environmental thought up until the emergence of climate change as the definitive environmental issue of the present.[68] It emerged in the thought of Emerson and Thoreau as the power of a sensorial encounter with the Natural, giving a human a glimpse of eternity; Muir maintained this peculiar experience and, along with the Sierra Club and other preservationist organizations, introduced the imperative to protected Natural spaces; Carson brought it to bear on new environmental problems and inspired a generation of activists; and McKibben, in addition to bringing the issue of climate change to the forefront, extended the value to include not simply its . Ultimately, we are met with a vision of crisis that laments, and seeks to stop, the loss of the Natural and the

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[67] *Ibid.*, 16.

[68] In the last twenty years, since soon after the publication of *The End of Nature*, the Arcadian vision of environmental crisis has played a more and more minor role in environmental literature. McKibben's lament of the loss of Nature has, ironically, became an outlier in contemporary discourse on the climate crisis, the very issue which it ushered into prominence. In fact, in McKibben's more recent books, he has presented a far more Utilitarian concept of crisis. *Eaarth*, published in 2010, is his most notable example. Though an evocation of the Natural is still present, the main thrust of *Eaarth* is about exploring how humans can live on a planet devastated by climate change. Exactly how and why this shift has occurred is beyond the scope of this analysis—however, it seems safe to conjecture that climate activists may have thought that they would be more politically successful if they focused less on protecting an idealized Nature and more on human livelihoods.

experience it provides. This experienced is contingent on a view of Nature that is static, atemporal, and wholly removed from humans and human civilization, and it consists of the appropriation of Nature for the pleasure and benefit of the human—a pleasure to which, as Carson says, each human being "has a legitimate right." For without the Natural and experience it provides, something will be lost from the world. And for the Arcadian, that loss is more than one can bear.

The Utilitarian View

Civilization in Peril: James Hansen and the Climate Catastrophe

Since the publication of *The End of Nature*, climate change (previously catalogued under the less general moniker of 'global warming') has emerged as the preeminent environmental issue of our time. It is far and away the most ubiquitous form taken by contemporary iterations of environmental crisis; even in books in which environmentalism is not the main concern, the specter of climate change is regularly looming, always carrying with it the potential of a rapid and devastating impact on life as we know it in time frames we can conceive of. Many scientists and climate advocates—including Al Gore, who won an Oscar for his documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*—have succeeded in bringing this issue to the forefront of popular consciousness, striking rhetorical and conceptual notes of crisis in the process. But Gore and his ilk are no Arcadians. Their crisis does not stem from the destruction and loss of the Natural; in fact, this Arcadian concept plays no significant role. In the Utilitarian conception of environmental crisis, the physical environment exists as nothing more than the medium within which human civilization has come to fruition.

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It is the resources, the soil, and climate patterns that humans have utilized and depend on in creating the infrastructure civilization is built upon. This is not merely a disturbance in the human relationship with the Natural, but a categorical threat to human civilization as it currently exists. Searching to maximize the common good of humanity, it is profoundly Utilitarian.

James Hansen, a prominent climatologist and director the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, is one of the loudest voices within the scientific community advocating for action on climate change. He emerged as a public figure when, in 1988, his testimony before Congress about CO_2 emissions about global warming garnered national attention; in 2012, Bill McKibben referred to him as the "one great hero" of the scientific debate on climate change.[69] Ultimately, he stands out as one of the most important voices in contemporary climate activism. This makes his 2010 book *Storms of my Grandchildren* one of the most prominent examples of contemporary discourse on the Utilitarian environmental crisis.

The subtitle of his book, *The Truth about the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity*, sets the tone that comes to define the work as a whole. From the outset, the language he uses to invoke the crisis is direct, unequivocal, and alarming. The book begins:

> [p]lanet Earth, creation, the world in which civilization developed, the world with climate patterns that we know and stable shorelines, is in imminent peril…the continued exploitation of all fossil fuels on Earth threatens not only the other millions of species on the planet but also the survival of humanity itself—and the timetable is shorter than we thought.[70]

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[69] McKibben, *Global Warming Reader*, 46.

[70] James Hansen. *Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity* (Paperback ed. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009), IX.

The key phrase in this passage is "imminent peril"—each of its two words gestures towards two of the defining rhetorical features of Utilitarian crisis: the unfathomable threat it presents ("peril"), and its temporal proximity ("imminent"). But it is Hansen's material concerns that locate him firmly within the Utilitarian camp. He maintains that it is "the world in which civilization developed" and "humanity itself" that are at stake, nothing more and nothing less. We have thus arrived, he declares, at a "critical time."[71]

As Hansen elaborates on his vision of crisis, he regularly revisits the idea of losing control, understandable as when a system operating within a certain pattern departs from that pattern in an unpredictable way. Although Hansen originally ties this idea into the ungovernable positive feedback cycles by means of which climate change operates (higher temperatures cause permafrost to melt, releasing more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, raising temperatures further, causing more permafrost to melt), the idea of losing control eventually ends up being applied to human civilization itself. But by proclaiming that "future disasters might occur out of our control" and that "[w]e really do have a planet in peril,"[72] Hansen implies that current disasters are, in contrast, under our control. While future setbacks are no doubt inevitable, preferable is a species of disaster that operates in a manner that can be made intelligible, that human institutions can view themselves as having a certain level of control over. The possibility of disaster presents no problem so long as it can be managed. But with the inauguration of the new species of climate crisis, one under the jurisdiction of ungovernable amplifying feedbacks, "climate change will begin to

[71] *Ibid.*, 121.
[72] *Ibid.*, 72.

spin out of our control,"[73] creating disaster after disaster that cannot be foreseen, managed, or mitigated. Hansen describes this moment, this involuntary relinquishing of the baton of global control, as a "tipping point."[74] This indeterminable moment in time marks the closure of the window in which we have the capacity to act— humanity is racing not only to stop the crisis, but to be able to maintain some control over its terms. Following in the Utilitarian tradition, the crisis is not merely about material conditions, but the intelligibility of those conditions, humanity's capacity to view those conditions as something they can control. This is what Hansen means when he describes the peril as imminent: there is a deadline, a limit that, once reached, will doom civilization to be battered and buffeted with rapid changes "that are out of humanity's control."[75] For Hansen, losing this control over the world is an indicator of crisis, and a profound threat to human civilization as it presently exists.

When discussing the necessity of changing our lifestyles and energy infrastructure in order to prevent the rapid deterioration of the climate situation, Hansen regularly touts the benefits of his proposed changes. By using economic rhetoric and framing these changes in economic terms, Hansen locates himself as an insider proposing modifications to a system he wants to maintain for an unspecifiable amount of time. He maintains that "the actions required to stabilize climate, which require addressing both non-carbon dioxide and carbon dioxide emissions, would likely have economic benefits and would certainly be beneficial for energy security and national security."[76] In this passage, Hansen, citing unspecified "economic

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[73] *Ibid.*, 120.
[74] *Ibid.*, 144.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Ibid.*, 35.

benefits" and the certain positive effects on "energy security and national security," presents himself not as a fringe leftist or a herald of the end times, as many enemies of environmentalism typically claim, but rather a proponent of maintaining existing political and economic structures. For Hansen, the goals of the United States, the world, and the environmental movement are one and the same—something typically construed as radical thus becomes incorporated into the dominant narrative.

Hansen's book is a prime example of the contemporary manifestation of the Utilitarian environmental crisis. Civilization as we know it is in danger. Anxiety centers on surpassing limits and losing control. Action to prevent the crisis will not only mitigate disaster, but act as a medium for overall progress. But as with the Arcadian view of crisis, this mode of thought has a lengthy history. Although global climate change has only been a pressing environmental issue for the past few decades, the Utilitarian tradition of crisis has its intellectual roots in the centuries-long debate about overpopulation and resource exhaustion. It begins among the most well known gloom and doom soothsayers in European thought: the Reverend Thomas Malthus. His thought, focusing on the impossibility of exponential and unlimited growth (in many senses) serves as the conceptual foundation for this iteration of environmental crisis.

Utilitarian Origins: Malthus and Overpopulation

Prior to the advent of climate change as the dominant environmental issue of our time, the issue of overpopulation and food exhaustion presented the greatest environmentally-driven threat to human civilization. Thomas Malthus, a British scholar of political economy, is widely considered to be the forefather of all modern

overpopulation concerns. The term Malthusian catastrophe, referring to a population-driven ecological crisis as Earth's carrying capacity is overwhelmed, is based off a reading of his ideas (albeit an inaccurate one), while the term Neo-Malthusian is used to describe twentieth century adherents to his ideas. His most famous work, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (despite the fact that the main thrust of his argument, that the linear growth of food production would always be outpaced by exponential population growth, has long been discredited) has played an influential role in formulating later environmental thought, specifically in framing the concepts of resource exhaustion and overpopulation within the concept of crisis.

Malthus is generally most well-known, both among historians and in popular culture, for making rather dire predictions about human nature and the impossibility of eliminating "misery and vice." This reputation has some legitimate grounding, much of which stems from Malthus's historical moment: as a materialist writing near the end of the French Revolution, Malthus had spent the past decade or so watching what he considered to be a century's ideals decay into decadence, madness, and violence. Malthus characterized the revolution, originally conceived as the ultimate triumph of rationality, as a spectacle of "the human mind…debased by such a fermentation of disgusting passions, of fear, cruelty, malice, revenge, ambition, madness, and folly as would have disgraced the most savage nation in the most barbarous age" that marks the antithesis of "the necessary and inevitable progress of the human mind,"[77] and for Malthus proves that "[a]n amelioration of society to be

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[77] Thomas Malthus. "An Essay on the Principle of Population." (J. Johnson, 1798. http://www.esp.org/books/malthus/population/malthus.pdf [accessed 7 December 2012]), 46.

produced merely by reason and conviction… can never arrive."[78] This situation profoundly influenced Malthus—it amounted to a rejection of the utopian ideals that marked much contemporary thought and instead signaled a return to, or at least the conscious appropriation of, the distinctly materialist thought of Hobbes as well as his more "dismal" view of human nature. This perspective manifests itself in his outline of population dynamics and the possibilities for social improvement.

When it comes to overpopulation, Malthus, unlike Hansen and other Utilitarian writers, does not focus on an impending crisis from the outset; rather, he emphasizes the inherent limits of population growth that keep the possibility of crisis from ever approaching. For Malthus, the positive feedback cycles that would worry later writers were replaced with cycles of negative feedback. For example, as population increases produce greater and greater misery among people, there will be a corresponding check on the birthrate as parents will be unable or unwilling to have children. A father pondering whether to procreate will find that

> reason interrupts his career and asks him whether he may not bring beings into the world for whom he cannot provide the means of subsistence…Will he not be obliged to labour harder?...May he not see his offspring in rags and misery, and clamouring for bread that he cannot give them?[79]

Hence, Malthus concludes, "a foresight of the difficulties attending the rearing of a family acts as a preventive check, and the actual distresses of some of the lower classes, by which they are disabled from giving the proper food and attention to their children, act as a positive check to the natural increase of population."[80] Indeed, it

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[78] *Ibid.*, 55.
[79] *Ibid.*, 8-9.
[80] *Ibid.*, 19-20.

seems for Malthus that fears of overpopulation are entirely unfounded, as material conditions keep exponential growth from ever reaching the point of crisis.

Whether or not this theory has, or had, any empirical validity is beside the point in the present analysis. What matters is that it had a profound influence on Malthus's perception of the population dynamic of society, and consequently influenced his ideas in regard to the historical ideas of crisis and progress. For given the persistent preventative check on population growth, the limit of growth is not a moment of crisis and collapse; rather, it is a zone of "oscillation" stabilized between two poles. This dynamic manifests itself when,

> [d]uring this season of distress, the discouragements to marriage, and the difficulty of rearing a family are so great that population is at a stand. In the mean time…cultivators…employ more labour upon their land…till ultimately the means of subsistence become in the same proportion to the population as at the period from which we set out. The situation of the labourer being then again tolerably comfortable, the restraints to population are in some degree loosened, and he same retrograde and progressive movements with respect to happiness are repeated.[81]

This idea of an oscillating equilibrium will reappear many times in the Neo-Malthusian writings of the twentieth-century; however, in those cases, equilibrium is an ideal to strive for, not a naturally prescribed limit. What Malthus's inherent oscillation prevents is, ironically, that which he has become most famous for: a social cataclysm brought on by exponential population growth that far outpaces food production. Given the constraints of Malthus' system, such an event is impossible.

It thus seems that Malthus's intellectual legacy may very well be based on a misreading: those concerned with overpopulation during the twentieth century appear to have appropriated his ideas in a piecemeal fashion, shearing Malthusianism of both

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[81] *Ibid.*, 9.

its historical context and specific argumentation in order to buttress contemporary population anxiety—a phenomenon which had a complex and distinct genealogy.[82] And although Malthus does describe something akin to a population crisis, it is in the context of his intellectual contemporaries' pursuit of a utopia. For it is only when mankind seeks to live above the station of the natural laws discernible through reason, and achieve things that are physically impossible, that real catastrophe can occur. He writes that in the event that such a utopian strategy towards the perfectibility of man was pursued,

> the difficulty, so far from being remote, would be imminent and immediate. At every period during the progress of cultivation, the distress for want of food would be constantly pressing on all mankind…Though the produce of the earth might be increasing every year, population would be increasing much faster, and the redundancy must necessarily be repressed by the periodical or constant action of misery or vice.[83]

This is the closest Malthus comes to invoking the population crisis: describing it as an impossible hypothetical. Malthus uses the conditional tense—we cannot escape the oscillation long enough to reach a true crisis in the sense Hansen, Ehrlich, and the Club of Rome detail. We cannot access the positive feedback cycles that allow the unrestrained growth that lead to crisis. The oscillation is not the result of centralized state planning, but an *a priori* preventative mechanism. Hence for Malthus, the true crisis was not one of population. Rather, the crisis he was grappling with was intellectual: of generating a response to idealistic notions about the inevitability of progress, views which Malthus now perceived as untenable in the wake of the catastrophe of the French Revolution.

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[82] See Thomas Robertson's *The Malthusian Moment* for an exploration of these issues, as well as a full overview of how the thought of Malthus came to influence mid-twentieth century environmentalism.
[83] *Ibid*., 45.

For much of the essay, Malthus comes across as resigned to accept humanity's constant oscillation between overgrowth and misery. However, in what comes across as part theodicean injunction, part recuperation of Enlightenment ideology, Malthus ensures the reader that these natural cycles (natural and hence divinely ordained— Malthus is a clergyman, after all) are beneficial to human society, and actually enable its progress. Malthus considers the world to be an arena "for the creation and formation of mind, a process necessary to awaken inert, chaotic matter into spirit, to sublimate the dust of the earth into soul… the phenomena around us, and the various events of human life, seem peculiarly calculated to promote this great end."[84] Part of this process of awakening the human life, of transforming "chaotic matter into spirit," involves the exertion and suffering on the part of individuals and groups. As unfortunate as this suffering is, Malthus believes that "[u]niform, undiversified perfection could not possess the same awakening powers."[85] This adherence to an ideology of progress structured by regular loss or suffering foreshadows the historical vision of many other Utilitarian visions of crisis in the decades and centuries to come (explored further in Part III), and figures as a component of Malthus's lasting historical legacy.

But among the most notable connections between Malthus and his progeny, specifically Hansen, is his Utilitarian logic—in Bentham's sense—of working for the universal good. Malthus refers to increasing "the aggregate mass of happiness among the common people" as a societal goal,[86] and also states that "it is a sufficient reason for the adoption of any institution, that it is the best mode that suggests itself of

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[84] *Ibid.*, 111-112.
[85] *Ibid.*, 120.
[86] *Ibid.*, 29.

preventing greater evils,"[87] in effect advocating for an objective authority to determine, in Bentham's terms, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." He ultimately applies viewpoint, that of individual sacrifice for the greater collective good, to the condition of the population check itself: only by virtue of putting man through misery and exertion is his true potential brought out. Malthus writes that "the infinite variety of nature…is admirably adapted to further the high purpose of the creation and to produce the great possible quantity of good."[88] The population law, Malthus concludes, "undoubtedly produces much partial evil, but…it produces a great overbalance of good. Strong excitements seem necessary to create exertion, and to direct this exertion, and form the reasoning faculty, it seems absolutely necessary…the world would not have been peopled, but for the superiority of the power of population to the means of subsistence."[89] The argument presented here, that only in dire times are people inclined to work hard, to achieve, to progress, will recur time and time again throughout the literature of environmental crisis.

Ultimately, Malthus argues that the law of population creates these dire times, which in turns permit progress. This persistent pressure, the constant arising of new situations brought on by the laws of nature, facilitates the advancement of humanity, prompting Malthus to conclude that "[i]f the subjects of human inquiry were once exhausted, mind would probably stagnate; but the infinitely diversified forms and operations of nature, together with the endless food for speculation which metaphysical subjects offer, prevent the possibility that such a period should ever

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[87] *Ibid.*, 82.
[88] *Ibid.*, 120.
[89] *Ibid.*, 114.

arrive."[90] Here Malthus is arguing that there is no limit, and as such no stagnation can occur. Though growth in the quantitative sense is limited, qualitative changes, such as the advancement of the human mind, can continue forever. In this way, Malthus sets the conceptual and rhetorical precedent for a new progress-without-progress, the qualitative-but-not-quantitative human improvement. This idea will reappear, with various alterations, in presentations of overpopulation in the twentieth century, which would in turn set the precedent for the world-altering visions of Ehrlich and the Club of Rome.

Reaching the Limits: Paul Ehrlich and the Club of Rome

Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* hit bookshelves in 1968, selling over two million copies and quickly "[making] Ehrlich into the best known of the environmental Malthusians,"[91] thus setting off a firestorm of interest in the inevitable limits of human population growth.[92] Indebted to Rachel Carson's breakthrough six years earlier, Ehrlich's writing was, like Carson's, directed not towards his scientific peers but a general readership. His book received criticism for being sensationalistic in its doomsday prophecies, and it isn't difficult to see why: his descriptions of what he terms the "population crisis"[93] leave little to the imagination. He begins the book by stating that "[t]he battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970's the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death."[94]

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[90] *Ibid.*, 120.

[91] Thomas Robertson. *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 126.

[92] The intellectual genealogy is a bit roundabout here, but Robertson has argued that many environmentalists, including Ehrlich, came into Malthusianism via Charles Darwin, who, as Worster argues was profoundly influenced by Malthus's ideas (see *Nature's Economy* 149-154).

[93] Paul R. Ehrlich. *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), 96.

[94] *Ibid.*, 11.

We are warned that any measures short of the utmost "can do no more than delay the day of reckoning unless population control is successful."[95] Ehrlich thus identifies an inevitable crisis hovering somewhere in the future, threatening to destroy the world as we know it. And though he dramatically throws in apocalyptic rhetoric, Ehrlich does not see his population crisis as fitting within a religious context. His "apocalypse" is profoundly secular, following in the Utilitarian tradition laid down by Malthus, and is at its core material; Ehrlich's main message is that massive overpopulation, and the environmental devastation it will bring with it, is a threat to "all the American people…to their way of life and indeed to their very lives."[96] As was the case for Hansen, the crisis is an event that sets its sights on our way of life, on the structures, systems, and occurrences that we take for granted. The world as we know it is under threat.

Ehrlich begins by offering his readers two possible futures: "[o]ne is a 'birth rate solution,' in which we find ways to lower the birth rate. The other is a 'death rate solution,' in which ways to raise the death rate—war, famine, pestilence—*find us*. The problem could have been avoided by *population control*."[97] Control is Ehrlich's issue here, even at the grammatical level. Either *we* lower the birth rate and, as the subject of the sentence, remain in control, or lose control by becoming the object of the personified forces of war, famine, and pestilence. Thus combating the crisis of overpopulation is about maintaining agency, keeping the "we" from becoming an "us." The crisis manifests itself not only in the loss of control presented in the latter option, but, as was the case for Hansen, in the fact that the window for making the

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[95] *Ibid*., 108.
[96] *Ibid*., 135.
[97] *Ibid*., 34-35, emphasis in original.

choice is rapidly deteriorating. Not only are the horrors of the population crisis rapidly approaching, but the horizon beyond which corrective action becomes impossible is approaching no less rapidly. The crisis is not just a potential cataclysm of our lifestyles and institutions, but a fundamental inability to dictate the terms on which that cataclysm will occur.

With this in mind, it follows that Ehrlich frames his calls to actions in terms of regaining control. Practically regurgitating the utilitarian rhetoric of Malthus, Ehrlich contends that "we need a stable world population with its size rationally controlled by society,"[98] proposing some sort of global authority that can both objectively determine the best interest of society and create institutions capable of enforcing it. For Ehrlich, this politically-enforced version of what Malthus argued was determined by natural laws serves as the only way to prevent crisis. As such, Ehrlich considers any societal or institutional impediments to this goal as potential threats. These threats—which include "the greed and stubbornness of industries, the recalcitrance of city governments, the weakness of state control agencies, and the general apathy of the American people," have, in Ehrlich's mind, conspired "to keep progress discouragingly slow."[99] He criticizes the Catholic Church, specifically its policies regarding birth control and contraception. The "enlightened atmosphere" Ehrlich claims is needed "does not exist today. Potent forces still must be overcome if we are to get the attitude of our government changed in the area of population control."[100] Ehrlich's invocation of the words "enlightened" and "progress" are telling here. It serves to frame the prevention or alleviation of the population crisis as a necessary

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[98] *Ibid.*, 167.
[99] *Ibid.*, 123.
[100] *Ibid.*, 142.

step in maintaining forward movement, not just regarding overpopulation, but, as the reference to enlightenment suggests, the progress of global human society.

Economic and societal progress, in terms of technological advances, controlled economic development, and overall lifestyle improvements, are the desired results of Ehrlich's vision for a new, population-controlled, environmentally-friendly world. Among many examples of necessary changes, Ehrlich contends that "[f]actories and automobiles can be forced to meet standards of pollutant production…without serious economic loss. Indeed, there are already many stories of industries that have profited by selling the materials that they once gaily disgorged into the atmosphere."[101] Ending the environmental crisis fits into the existing paradigm of economic progress—we can even turn pollutants into value, in effect capitalizing on our waste instead of merely eliminating it. Furthermore, Ehrlich, with the backing of certain unnamed "very distinguished economists," argues that "[t]here, in fact, seems to be no reason why the GNP cannot be kept growing for a very long time *without population growth*."[102] But this growth without growth will not merely be quantitative. Ehrlich crafts his own idyllic view of a growth-free world, one "with less emphysema, less cancer, less heart disease, less noise, less filth, less crowding, less need to work long hours…less assault, less murder, and less threat of war. The pace of life may slow down. We may have more fishing, more relaxing, more time to watch TV, more time to drink beer…"[103] Just as was postulated by Malthus, Ehrlich here argues for a growth without growth, an ideology of maintaining the current economic system while eliminating the parts of it that threaten our lifestyles—in other

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[101] *Ibid.*, 113.
[102] *Ibid.*, 150, emphasis in original.
[103] *Ibid.*, 153.

words, exercising control over growth, reigning in the trends that could lead to crisis. Ehrlich's 'very long time' is the same as the indeterminate finitude, one in which the crisis is postponed and postponed beyond a precise or identifiable limit. In the words of Hansen, the tipping point can be pushed back. This temporal dynamic, seen in Malthus's overpopulation concerns, appears once again in 1972, with the publication of *The Limits to Growth*.

The Limits to Growth, published in 1972, is a report by a group of demographers, economists, and other scholars collectively known as the Club of Rome, after the city in which their first meeting took place.[104] Shortly after its publication, the book "became a cultural phenomenon, ultimately selling millions of copies"[105] and enraging proponents of the free market all over the world. Part of its appeal lay in its use of complex quantitative models to illustrate what Ehrlich evoked rhetorically: that we are fast approaching a point of crisis which we must avoid if we are to survive. Their prose is measured; they do not provide garish descriptions of the catastrophe, but simply inform the reader that:

> if the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.[106]

Even in this restrained dialect, the specter of crisis is front and center—the "sudden and uncontrollable decline" is a slightly formal but nonetheless direct evocation of the

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[104] Though for the sake of complicity I will continue to use this term to refer to the book's authors, four individuals in specific are listed in the byline: Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, who were the four members of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology team that created the computer model used in the report.
[105] Robertson, *Malthusian Moment*, 180.
[106] Donella H. Meadows and Club of Rome. *The Limits to Growth; a Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972), 24.

crisis. And when applied to "population and industrial capacity," the reader cannot help but envision the mass starvation, war, agony, and infrastructural collapse that such language refers to. The writers go on to be even more direct, writing that "*[t]he basic behavior mode of the world system is exponential growth of population and capital, followed by collapse*,"[107] implying that crisis is not a peculiar condition we have brought ourselves to, but rather an integral and necessary part of the "world system" they've modeled, the system we now exist in.

But this crisis is not only expressed rhetorically—*The Limits to Growth* is full of graphs, different crisis scenarios as calculated by their model. These graphs are not simply representations of data, but visual evocations the dynamic of crisis. Each graph contains several lines, sporting labels like 'crude birth rate', 'food per capita', or 'industrial output'; page after page they inch up, peak, and drop precipitously at some point in the not-so-distant (certainly not-distant-enough) future. The reader sees the line labeled 'population' increase, gradually at first, then steepening, only to peak suddenly and plunge back down like a roller coaster. The reader can literally point to the moment when we lose control and life as we know it unravels.

From a conceptual standpoint, the Club of Rome, like Malthus nearly two centuries earlier, is preoccupied with reaching limits and the inevitable loss of control which accompanies it, specifically when it comes to future trajectories of the global political and economic situation. The Club of Rome devotes much of *The Limits to Growth* to developing different scenarios presented by their computer model; in other words, calculating different answers to the question: "[w]hat will the world be like

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[107] *Ibid*., 142, emphasis in original.

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when growth comes to an end?"[108] By giving us multiple options, the authors argue that humanity, as it stands, has a choice. But this will not always be the case. Prefiguring Hansen's argument years later, the Club of Rome maintains that there exists a certain horizon beyond which "the choice of limits will be gone. Growth will be stopped by pressures that are not of human choosing, and that, as the world model suggests, may be very much worse than those which society might choose for itself."[109] Ultimately, the authors conclude, growth must be stopped, but it is undoubtedly preferable for society to have control over how it happens. Sacrifices must be made in order to maintain control, but they are worth it if society is able to remain autonomous in the wake of other forces.

Like Malthus and Ehrlich, the Club of Rome rejects the ideals of limitless expansion, emphasizing the presence of impassible, asymptotic limits that will grow ever more damaging as human beings draw nearer and nearer to them. Even if the writers "do not know the precise upper limit of the earth's ability to absorb any single kind of pollution," it is certain that "there *is* an upper limit."[110] Just as Malthus postulated the upper limit for human population growth and expansion nearly two hundred years earlier, the Club of Rome asserts that a limit to population and economic growth exists, and that the world system is pushing inexorably towards it. And, unlike Malthus, there are no natural checks to keep us in place. But nonetheless this is not a fatalistic declaration, for the limits remain adjustable—just as the limit is reached at a different point in each scenario, the exact moment of the crisis is not set

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[108] *Ibid.*, 122.
[109] *Ibid.*, 153-54.
[110] *Ibid.*, 84, emphasis in original.

in stone. It can be drawn nearer or pushed off into the future, depending on how humans respond.

The solution proposed by the Club of Rome takes the form of what they call "global equilibrium," a state in which resource extraction, population, food production, and global capital flow remain more or less constant, quite different from the current paradigm of constant growth. However, the authors ensure the reader that "global equilibrium need not mean an end to progress or human development."[111] For as Malthus argued nearly two centuries ago, the continuation of overall human progress is by no means at odds with this end of growth—rather, it is actively mediated by it. The Club of Rome writes that the "evolution of a society that favors innovation and technological development, a society based on equality and justice, is far more likely to evolve in a state of global equilibrium than it is in the state of growth we are experiencing today."[112] Malthus proclaimed that a stable society, checked by laws of nature, would be suited to human progress; the Club of Rome simply replaces natural laws with those enacted (presumably) by human institutions. They do not explore exactly how these changes are to come about. But despite never describing them explicitly, the Club of Rome does presuppose a certain set of institutions and mechanisms for global control. After all, enacting the political, economic, and social changes necessary would undoubtedly require substantial reforms all across the world. In the stabilized model, the authors write, "[r]esources are still being gradually depleted, as they must be under any realistic assumption, but the rate of depletion is so slow that there is time for technology and industry to adjust

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[111] *Ibid.*, 179.
[112] *Ibid.*, 175.

to changes in resource availability."[113] The functioning of the new world system is not dictated by unchangeable variables, like levels of non-renewable resources, but, like in Ehrlich and Hansen's ideal visions, controlled by a newly prudent humanity. Exactly how this global resource management would operate is a question *The Limits to Growth* does not answer.

This comment is notable for another reason, however. The writers admit that resources must be gradually depleted no matter what, but that there is a point at which the process is slow enough that humanity can "adjust to changes"—as if pushing the crisis past a distant enough time horizon renders the possibility of environmental exhaustion almost harmless. This becomes even more explicit when the writers concede that "[a]t the limit, of course, no population or capital level can be maintained forever, but that limit is very far away in time if resources are managed wisely and if there is a sufficiently long time horizon in planning."[114] As a consequence, they argue, the "possibilities within an equilibrium state are almost endless."[115] This is the moment when the Club of Rome falls into the Malthusian paradigm of postulating a finite yet indeterminate period of waiting, one in which the moment of crisis is continuously pushed beyond the curtain of intelligibility. For "very far away" may well be infinite, and "almost endless" is in practice indistinguishable from simply "endless." Once the crisis is no longer marked by imminence, the threat it presents is mitigated. The idea of meeting the crisis in that future point is pushed so far forward that it is pushed beyond the realm of conceivable future possibility. The world in which it will occur is so far distant as not to matter.

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[113] *Ibid.*, 166.
[114] *Ibid.*, 172.
[115] *Ibid.*, 179.

From this textual overview, we can chart the intellectual genealogy of the Utilitarian crisis. It began with Malthus's concerns of inherent limits to growth, an idea that was dismissed in the realm of social science until the mid-twentieth century, when it reemerged (most prominently in the work of Paul Ehrlich and the Club of Rome) due to overpopulation concerns linked to environmentalism. Here, however, it took on a distinctly new characteristic: crisis was no longer naturally restrained by negative feedback cycles, but had become a distinct possibility if inherent limits were indeed surpassed. Hansen thus picks up where the Neo-Malthusians left off, replacing overpopulation with climate change, turning too many humans on the Earth into too much CO_2 in the atmosphere. No matter the era, in the Utilitarian tradition crisis serves as a threat to the continuity of human civilization, one embodied by the possibility of losing control over the course of the future. To stop this, the crisis demands some sort of management, some action on the part of existing institutions to ensure that disaster doesn't strike, that, in fact, progress can continue.

Conclusion: Two Traditions, One Crisis

To summarize the differences discussed above, the Arcadian tradition relies on a certain idea of the Natural and a belief about the way human beings relate to it, while the Utilitarian tradition finds value in nothing but the physical conditions conducive to human existence. The conceptions of the environment they adhere to are vastly different. But this does not discount their similarities. Both branches have their intellectual roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Both have been conceptually and rhetorically present in the modern environmental movement,

spanning from the mid-twentieth century to the present. And, most importantly, both outline concepts of crisis with striking temporal implications. But precisely what these implications are does not remain constant. The temporality of crisis varies between the Arcadian and Utilitarian traditions and, in the case of the latter, within the tradition itself. The traits of the crisis, depending on the assumptions and goals of those who articulate it, can outline profoundly different pasts, presents, and futures.

The Arcadian crisis, with its gaze centered on the Natural, at first glance appears to relate to humans only indirectly. But that does not mean time and history only play a peripheral role, for an analysis of the relationship between humans and the Natural, and the accompanying binaries of movement and stillness, mortality and eternity, add a temporal element to the relationship. For the Arcadian, the Natural offers a necessary respite from the modern world. It is a space removed from time, one in which an individual, by entering and experiencing it, can similarly be removed from time by virtue of immersion, or even association. This is the Arcadian dream: ensuring that there will always be a time and place for the timeless. The crisis thus serves as the global encroachment of modern time and the elimination of the possibility of the Natural experience. This crisis, which I refer to as 'losing Arcadia,' is characteristic of Muir, Carson, and McKibben.

In the Utilitarian tradition, the future possibility of crisis amounts to a pressing threat, one which puts the individual, society, and the world in what Hansen termed "imminent peril." The great changes to be wrought by the crisis threaten the continuity of life as we know it, and measures must be taken in order to allow this continuity to continue. This desire frames one possible Utilitarian response for the

environmental crisis: what I call 'infinite delay,' an individual and political response that pushes the crisis indefinitely into the future, locating it a finite but indeterminate distance from the present moment, thus holding back the crisis for as long as can be conceived. This time period could be a few hundred years, or a few thousand. The time isn't specified, which is exactly the point. For once crisis is pushed beyond the horizon of quantifiable time frames, it is robbed of its materiality, becoming an abstract concept that has no temporal locale. This manner of positioning crisis outside the limits of conceivable time expands the space of temporal continuity—space necessary in order for humanity to truly flourish—until its limits are no longer visible. Hansen's temporal logic fits in to this category of environmental crisis.

But there is another temporal vision existing within the Utilitarian tradition. Given that both resources (barrels of oil, tons of coal) and the institutions that use them (economies, nations) cannot exist forever unchanged, moments of rupture, change, and even crisis are inevitable. But that does not mean the situation is hopeless. Within this system of logic, a crisis is not just a threat but an opportunity, an indicator of the potential for large-scale progress. If handled correctly (which is by no means a guarantee), the environmental crisis can open up possibility for large-scale transformation. In this alternate temporal vision within Utilitarian though, the cataclysm is not delayed indefinitely but managed as to facilitate growth. The destructive possibility of crisis is transmuted into a creative force. In this form of crisis, present within *The Population Bomb* and *The Limits to Growth*, it is only by virtue of crisis that an older notion of progress—constant material expansion—can give way to the new vision of global economic equilibrium. In this way, we see that

the crisis is not to be delayed but embraced. So long as it is properly managed, crisis becomes a generator for progress, a force pushing human history into the future. Whereas the infinite delay seeks to avoid indefinitely the threat presented by rupture, this other form, which I will call 'crisis-as-progress,' endorses or even requires it.

As before, the limits of any classificatory endeavor must be advanced: these three traditions rarely exist in their "pure" forms—in any given work, there will be mingling, overlap, or elements that don't quite fit. But together, these concepts delimit the temporal frameworks for the environmental crisis, defining the historical space they operate within as well as their relationship with political action. It is this vortex of crisis, history, and politics that I will explore in Part III, and, in doing so, explore exactly what infinite delay, crisis-as-progress, and losing Arcadia mean when it comes to environmental crisis. My methodology will involve constructing intellectual genealogies of these three iterations of crisis, exploring their latent temporal presuppositions and political implications, and working to make visible what is truly at stake in the realm of environmental crisis.

PART III

"Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era."—J.M. Coetzee[116]

Introduction: Modernity, Progress, and the Politics of Historical Time

Part II ended by outlining three different modes of historical consciousness operating within environmental crisis. One, losing Arcadia, pertained to the Arcadian crisis; the other two, infinite delay and crisis-as-progress, framed the Utilitarian crisis. The aim of Part III is to analyze these three modes of crisis-driven historical consciousness. However, before embarking on this analysis, a brief interlude is in order. Much of the following analysis hinges on showing how each of these visions of crisis operate within a distinctly modern historical paradigm. In the current academic climate, however, referring to 'modernity' can mean a vast number of mutually exclusive things. To remedy this, and to provide some much needed precision to the issues I aim to investigate, some terms need to be defined and some concepts elucidated. Once again, I turn to Reinhart Koselleck, who spent much of his career tracing the development of a distinctly modern historical consciousness. And though his conceptual analysis focuses on the German language, there is little reason to suspect that his conclusions aren't applicable to Western modernity at large, given the scope of the concepts discussed. What follows, then, is an outline of his concepts of modernity and progress, an understanding of which is instrumental to my analysis.

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[116] J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Penguin, 2010), 154.

Koselleck defines and locates modernity in the emergence of three new historical attitudes in the eighteenth century: first, the view that the world was entering a historical era that was fundamentally new; second, that its newness could be shaped by human action; and third, that history could be conceived as universal. Newness, the first trait, has its origins in the Enlightenment thought of the late eighteenth century, which, for Koselleck, marked "[t]he beginning of modernity (*Neuzeit*)."[117] This newness of modernity did not take the form of mere revision, but rather that of absolute difference. Modernity consisted of a total rupture from what came before—it "usher[ed] in something absolutely new; measured against all prior history, it [was] unique."[118] This uniqueness of the present gave birth to a reconceptualized history, one "impregnated with the difference which was torn open between one's own time and that of the future, between the previous experience and expectation of what as to come."[119] As a result, time, in modernity, is "experienced as a rupture, as a period of transition in which the new and the unexpected continually happen[s]."[120] The present thus comes to be defined by its gaze towards the future, one predicated upon a view of "the past as something that was fundamentally 'other.'"[121] For modernity, the future was necessarily conceived as being radically different from the past, and history became the process of continuously breaking away from that past.

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[117] Koselleck, "The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity," in *Practice of Conceptual History*, 160.
[118] *Ibid.*, 162.
[119] Reinhart Koselleck, "Modern Concepts of Movement," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 241.
[120] *Ibid.*, 246.
[121] *Ibid.*, 240.

The emergence of the second and third characteristics of the modern historical consciousness—that history could be made and that it was universal—was related to a linguistic shift: the appearance in the late eighteenth century of "the collective singular form of *Geschichte*…conceived as history in and for itself in the absence of an associated subject or object."[122] In other words, a singular 'History' which superseded individual histories. It is from within this new semantic zone of History that both the makeability of history and its universality emerged. As Koselleck writes, "only since around 1780,"—the time when History emerged—"was it conceivable that *Geschichte* could be made. This formulation indicates a modern experience and even more, a modern expectation: that one is increasingly capable of planning and also executing history."[123] Koselleck makes the same case for the concept of universality, arguing that the new *Geschichte* was, "from the beginning, synonymous with the concept of world history itself,"[124] a world history which took on an all-encompassing character. This newly minted universality, together with the concepts of makeability and rupture from the past, became, in their confluence, the foundation of the modern historical consciousness. As a result, by the late eighteenth century, there emerged, in place of particular narratives of past events, a singular future, fast approaching, utterly devoid of content—a void begging to be filled.

This new history—one that is wholly new, shapeable by humans, and universal—was the fertile conceptual ground from which the idea of progress

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[122] *Ibid.*, 236.
[123] Koselleck, "On the Disposability of History," in *Futures Past*, 194.
[124] *Ibid.*, 196.

emerged.[125] Like modernity, "progress is a modern category…not available before the eighteenth century."[126] It was one of the most important concepts through which this new vision of historical time was understood and enacted, and followed logically from the emergence of the concept of modernity in the eighteenth century. Simply put, it was "the experience of a new time condensed into a word."[127] This novel manner of articulating historical time acted as a structuring agent, a lens through which the constantly emerging newness of history could be read by the modern historical consciousness. In addition, progress acted as a "frame…according to which the whole of history could be interpreted universally,"[128] thus enabling the modern historical consciousness to "temporalize all histories into the singularity of the world-historical process."[129] Progress, as the packaged form of the three new historical concepts of newness, makeability, and universality, thus facilitated the definitively modern belief that that emerging newness of history was to be governed by human action—action which was as unbound by limits as the history it enacted.

Once codified in the notion of progress, this modern historical consciousness colonized all other historical viewpoints. It achieved a brand of "singularity," gradually "[filling] out the space of experience"[130] and retrofitting all existing histories to fit into its universal schema. As a result, "the subject of progress was

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[125] This is not to say that progress didn't have its roots in material changes—Koselleck argues that the modern historical viewpoint was rooted in the "consideration of the best existing constitution of the state of scientific, technical, or economic development" (Koselleck 2004, 238). However, the standing of progress as a new way of experiencing historical time hinged less on "the growth of knowledge about nature" and more on the fact that "past and future differentiate themselves qualitatively from one another" (Koselleck 2002, 225).
[126] Koselleck, "'Progress' and 'Decline': An Appendix to the History of Two Concepts," in *Practice of Conceptual History*, 219.
[127] *Ibid.*, 225.
[128] Koselleck, "Modern Concepts of Movement," in *Futures Past*, 239.
[129] *Ibid.*, 243.
[130] Koselleck, "The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity," in *Practice of Conceptual History*, 166.

expanded to become an agent of the highest generality, or one with a forced claim to generality"[131] that was projected onto all people and things in the world. As such, history necessarily became "a question of the progress of humanity"[132]—a perspective, however, situated within the particular standpoint of the Western European thinkers who posited themselves as the vanguard of their own historical trajectory. Hence "[t]he chosen people of the Judeo-Christian heritage become the hypostasis of progress,"[133] projecting the particularities of their reality universally through the framework of historical concepts. In this way, progress—which "was directed toward an active transformation of this world"[134]—became one of many historical concepts instrumentalized for enacting future visions, a development which transformed historical concepts into political and social ones.[135] With this shift, concepts of historical time "indicated the principle of historical movement, and it was a moral dictate for political action to press it forward."[136] In the modern historical consciousness, concepts of time and movement like progress, decline, and crisis are not merely techniques for piecing together prior events, but serve as a mandate for action on the part of those tasked (or who task themselves) with making history. As such, concepts of historical time are caught up in actions that have real material consequences.

Koselleck's presentation of the modern historical consciousness provides a comprehensive and telling overview of how the concepts of historical time work, and

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[131] Koselleck, "'Progress' and 'Decline,'" in *Practice of Conceptual History*, 230.
[132] *Ibid.*
[133] *Ibid.*
[134] Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories," in *Futures Past*, 266.
[135] Koselleck, "Modern Concepts of Movement," in *Futures Past*, 251.
[136] Koselleck, "Two Historical Categories," in *Futures Past*, 273.

thus serves as a starting point for the arguments I present in this part of my project. After all, given the centrality of crisis within the arsenal of modern historical concepts, Koselleck's analysis can undoubtedly offer insights into the Arcadian and Utilitarian environmental discourses. Koselleck's other important point—that these historical concepts necessitate action in the political and social realm—also resonates with the concept of environmental crisis. As was brought up in the Part II, the environmental crisis, if it is to be averted, must be *managed* through political action. To tie this to Koselleck's framework, management of the environmental crisis is a necessary part of enacting the modern historical vision; hence, in order for progress to occur, certain kinds of political action must be taken. Presented in this way, such a statement seems quite innocuous. However, when we take into account that such a modern historical vision necessitates the enacting a specific universality, one couched in the particular interests of those formulating said vision (in this case, the Enlightenment *philosophes* and those they influenced), it becomes clear just how the concept of environmental crisis can necessitate imposing a certain "forced generality."

Though the crises of infinite delay, crisis-as-progress, and losing Arcadia each function differently, they are nevertheless similarly embedded within the modern historical consciousness and, it follows, emblematic of how this historical consciousness functions politically—in other words, the environmental crisis is embroiled in what I referred to in Part I as the politics of historical time.[137] Accordingly, the aim of Part III is to explore this politics in the context of the three

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[137] I once again indebted to Reinhart Koselleck here—his phrase 'the semantics of historical time' provided the syntactic inspiration for my choice of words.

historical visions of crisis named above. It is divided into three sections, one for each vision of crisis. Each section will contain an intellectual genealogy for the historical vision at hand, an exploration of the political implications contained within said vision, and an analysis showing how the vision of environmental crisis fits into the historico-political framework.

It should be noted that the source texts used in these sections—the environmental works I am analyzing—are not identical to those used in Part II. Specifically, I am discussing several additional works in the crisis-as-progress and infinite delay sections. Though the texts I have chosen all confront current environmental concerns (all of them locate climate change as the major contemporary environmental threat) and fit within the discourses of environmental crisis discussed in Part II, not all of them can be considered "canonical." However, I believe changing my selection of texts was necessary for the sake of relevance. Many of the works discussed previously came out decades, if not centuries, ago. As such, the political implications contained within them can be written off as relics of the past—one could even argue that we've progressed since their publication. In order to preempt these arguments, I have added to my analysis several books written in the past ten years to emphasize the fact that these historical visions of crisis, however distant their origins, are nonetheless pervasive in contemporary discourse. As such, the concerns at stake in this analysis resonate powerfully with what's going on in the world today. In short, I choose to include the new works because the stakes are too high for me to risk anything else.

Losing Arcadia

As outlined in Part II, losing Arcadia consists of the loss of the individual's ability to experience the Natural—to take in a beautiful vista or scene and share in the timelessness of his or her surroundings. For the Arcadian, losing the places that facilitate this experience means losing not only the feeling itself, but also all of the memories and affective possibilities surrounding it. McKibben laments that, as a result of the crisis, "[s]oon Thoreau will make no sense. And when that happens, the end of nature—which began with our alteration of the atmosphere…will be final. The loss of memory will be the eternal loss of meaning."[138] Any Arcadian political action is thus bent on maintaining the possibility of this experience, placing it above all other issues, for it is only by preserving the Natural that the Arcadian can continue living in a "living, eternal, meaningful world."[139]

In this section, we will concern ourselves not with what constitutes a meaningful world, but with the implications of how the Arcadian world comes to be imbued with meaning—or, to put it more specifically, what historical visions are contained within the Arcadian vision, and what political stances they entail. In other words, this section seeks to map out a politics of historical time for the Arcadian crisis. It consists of two main parts: first, an analysis of the contradictions buried within the Arcadian historical consciousness—contradictions bound up in the complex set of relations between the civilized and the natural, the modern and timeless, the human and the nonhuman—as well as what those contradictions mean politically; second, a look into how the affective and temporal structure of the Natural

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[138] McKibben, *End of Nature*, 213.
[139] *Ibid.*, 214.

experience leads to a disengagement from the political realm and an endorsement of existing structures of power.

A 'Janus-faced' Historical Stance

Integral to the Arcadian historical consciousness is the separation it places between the dynamic temporality of modernity and the atemporal character of the Natural. In this way, the Arcadian viewpoint adheres closely to J.G.A. Pocock's description of the anti-traditionalist political thinker. For Pocock, there exist two divergent modes of thought regarding how political authority is derived and legitimated. He classifies them as the conservative and the radical, or, alternatively, the traditional and anti-traditional. Whereas the conservative or traditional view (epitomized by Thomas Hobbes) locates political authority in continuity and considers it a fruitless endeavor to search for the ultimate historical ground political authority rests on, the radical rejects the linkage between continuity and legitimation. Instead, writes Pocock, the radical locates in the distant past the "true" origin of the existing system, presenting it as a pure, unadulterated version of the current political authority, one that can act as a model for reformation. In other words, Pocock writes, "the radical reconstructs the past in order to authorise the future; he historises the present in order to deprive it of authority."[140]

However, there is a certain species of paradox to the thought of the anti-traditional thinker. The radical or anti-traditional thinker is not "one who wishes to abolish the authority of the past or to impose a new conception of authority on society, but…one who, having denied that the past authorises the present by vesting it

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[140] J.G.A. Pocock, "Time, Institutions and Action," in *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 261.

with continuity, is obliged to create a new past and invest it with an authority which easily abolishes the necessity of referring to a past at all."[141] This simultaneous reliance upon and departure from history—or, more precisely, the endorsement of one history and delegitimation of another—Pocock terms "Janus-faced," after the two-faced Roman god. A similarly "Janus-faced" facet of this brand of political thought, one which Pocock does not describe in detail but is more relevant for the purposes of this discussion, is the aporia that stems from the fact that the anti-traditionalist does not take into account his or her own historicity. The alternate historical framework the anti-traditionalist develops would not exist were it not for the very conservative tradition it was seeking to supplant. In other words, the anti-traditionalist seeks to supplant not only the form of government it perceives to be illegitimate but its own source as well. It aims to construct a new past, attach itself to it, and subsequently erase its own peculiar history, the history which would bear the mark of the conservative institution it so earnestly sought to delegitimize and supplant.

Though Pocock outlines the anti-traditionalist within a strictly political context, the schema he designs serves as a model for the manner in which the Arcadian framing of the environmental crisis relates to the historical and conceptual tenets of modernity. The similarity is twofold. First and foremost, the notion of a retreat from the artificial human existence characteristic of industrial modernity is contingent on a classificatory division between 'nature' and 'culture,' a distinction that is itself a product of modernity. Like Pocock's anti-traditionalist, the Arcadian environmentalist seeks to break with the past in a manner that which necessitates maintaining close ties to it. Second is the disjuncture between the Arcadian's

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[141] *Ibid.*, 260.

perception of its own temporal movement—that of returning to an earlier time, or even seeking a space outside of time—versus the contingency of that movement on the very history that the Arcadian seeks to reject. To put it directly, both the Arcadian concept of the Natural and the historical presuppositions that surround the desire to maintain it are products of modernity, creations of the very system the Arcadians see as a threat to the Natural's existence. Furthermore, it is within this contradiction that the political element of the Arcadian stance shows itself. As Bruno Latour notes, the Arcadian claim "to defend nature for nature's sake—and not as substitute for human egotism" is not only deceptive, but serves to conceal the properly political element of Arcadian environmental action. After all, "in every instance, the mission [environmentalism] has assigned itself is carried out by humans and is justified by the wellbeing, the pleasure, or the good conscience of a small number of carefully selected humans—usually American, male, rich, educated, and white."[142] Within the Arcadian historical viewpoint, these politics and particularities are never very far below the surface.

A Strictly Modern Nature

One of the intellectual presuppositions of the Arcadian environmental stance is that there exists a definitive boundary, both conceptual and material, between the wilderness and the human, or, to put it more abstractly, between nature and culture. Raymond Williams, Bruno Latour, and many others have discussed the nature-culture binary in great detail, locating the origins and proliferation of this separation in the

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[142] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 20.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and showing how it has continued into the present day. Discussed in Part II, this nature-culture division is a necessary presupposition in the Arcadian construction of the Natural. However, to ensure the stability of this dichotomy, the Arcadians must mark out a contrast to nature in the form of a profoundly modern world. Hence, the Natural, in order to exist, requires modernity. This is true in two senses: the Arcadian requires modernity both as a foil to a wholly timeless Natural and as the historical moment from which the nature-culture divide could emerge. The Natural, as a product of modernity, cannot help but be modern itself, nor can it avoid being caught up in its politics.

The writings of Rachel Carson and Bill McKibben illustrate the contingency of the natural on the modern. In *Silent Spring,* Carson describes how the widespread use of pesticides has rendered the "search for unspoiled nature" utterly "misguided,"[143] not only because of the potential health risks involved, but because such untarnished, pure nature no longer exists, having vanished from earth following the influx of artificial chemicals. But this loss of Nature moves beyond the boundaries of wilderness, coming to infect human bodies and human experiences as well. The threat of pesticides, Carson writes, is grounded in fact that they "are not part of the biological experience of man."[144] This is a statement presupposing a purely Natural existence—here couched in the scientific term "biological"—eliminated by the widespread use of toxic chemicals in the environment. Through their framing as a non-component of the Natural human experience, chemicals—and industrial modernity, its progenitor—are shown to be, in the Arcadian sense, wholly Unnatural.

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[143] Carson, *Silent Spring*, 127.
[144] *Ibid.*, 188.

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However, it is only through the construction of modernity as dynamic, changing, and solely human that the static, unchanging, and objectified nature can come into being. It is only by presupposing this defiantly modern nature-culture divide that Carson's Natural can be constituted. We see this again when McKibben, writing in praise of the radical environmental organization 'Earth First!', lauds the group for "putting the rest of creation ahead of exclusively human concerns,"[145] thus perpetuating the notion—contingent on modernity's nature-culture divide—that there are, in fact, concerns which are either exclusively human or exclusively nonhuman ones. Herein lies the incoherence of McKibben's assertion that the viewpoint expounded by Foreman and Earth First! constitutes a "fundamental challenge to Western civilization."[146] In claiming to exalt the nonhuman over the human, the Natural over the Modern, Earth First! operates within the very same binaries modernity produces, furthering its logic and the existing political and historical ideologies that sustain it. It is through these contradictions that the Janus-faced historical viewpoint of the Arcadian manifests itself.

This incoherence shows its political character when the nature-culture divide shifts from classification to geography, resulting in a Natural that is physically isolated from the human. An exemplary instance of this politically-infused separation is the rise of wilderness preservation in the nineteenth century United States, when the Natural became intimately connected to the creation of national parks and other specifically Natural spaces. These pockets of wilderness, highlighted by Muir and the preservation movement he spearheaded, were officially cordoned off, made free from

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[145] McKibben, *End of Nature*, 179.
[146] *Ibid*., 181.

the corrupting effects of modernity. They were spaces designated for the aesthetic experience of wilderness, one which would serve as a respite from the ills and chaos of modern, industrialized life. However, as environmental historian William Cronon writes, this sojourn into wilderness became "an important vehicle for expressing a particularly bourgeois antimodernism," for "[t]he very men who most benefited from urban-industrial capitalism were among those who believed they must escape its debilitating effects."[147] In this way, the Arcadian experience allowed individuals in power to compartmentalize their non-industrial, Nature-loving tendencies in an institutionally recognized experience, releasing them from any obligation to humans or nonhumans back in the 'modern' world and literally allowing business to continue as usual. Thus detailing its paradoxes and contradictions, Cronon concludes that the Janus-faced Arcadian

> quietly expresses and reproduces the very values...[it seeks] to reject. The flight from history that is very nearly the core of wilderness represents the false hope of an escape from responsibility, the illusion that we can somehow wipe clean the slate of our past and return to the tabula rasa that supposedly existed before we began to leave our marks on the world."[148]

The Arcadian experience valued by Thoreau, Muir, and McKibben epitomizes this "false hope of an escape." It is a dream built on the desire of fleeing from the fully modern present into the Natural past, a desire rendered incoherent by the fact that the supposedly timeless Natural is utterly contingent on the very modern existence it seeks to escape. The environmental historian Robert Gottlieb notes that Foreman criticized Cronon's assertion that nature is socially constructed.[149] This comes as no

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[147] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1 (1996): 14.
[148] *Ibid.*, 16.
[149] Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 44.

surprise—after all, such an idea renders the Earth First! view of the Natural, and the Arcadian stance as a whole, utterly incoherent. But, as mentioned earlier, there is far more at stake here than a logically sound historical stance: a covert adherence to the presuppositions of modernity has a real impact in the political realm.

The Arcadian Vision of Progress

As was shown in Part II, any Arcadian future vision aiming to resolve the crisis rests on the possibility of reclaiming or returning to a state in greater harmony with the Natural and more directly aligned with a timeless experience—an experience in which modern civilization's industrially and technologically-mediated distance from the Natural can be eliminated for the universal betterment of humanity. From this perspective, the Arcadian stance must perceive itself as aloof from, or even antithetical to, Koselleck's modern historical consciousness and its concept of progress. However, the origins and presuppositions of the Arcadian future visions beg to differ. The Arcadian desire to achieve a state of greater harmony with Nature, to follow the lead of Muir and McKibben and preserve the possibility of the Natural, exists within the very historical framework it seeks to escape, resting on its assumptions and reproducing its dynamics—not to mention the acts of injustice and oppression this framework has been historically complicit with. This erasure of the past permits the Arcadian conception of history to conceal the profoundly modern character of its historical consciousness.

This covert adherence to progress is present in the work of even the most radical of Arcadian environmentalists, such as McKibben and Earth First!, who call

for a complete shift in priorities and lifestyles and an end to techno-industrial modernity as we know it. For, as Lisa Garforth notes, the "the idea of 'progress' has become indelibly written into utopianism itself" by virtue of its own history;[150] given its status as a concept "developing largely in the context of Western modernity, the utopian tradition as a whole bears the hallmarks of its association with humanist and Enlightenment ideals of rational social and individual improvement."[151] This can be seen when McKibben, near the conclusion of *The End of Nature*, describes his own ideal vision of the future. It must be stated that McKibben's is no pastoral idyll; it contrasts starkly from the typical ecological utopia. In fact, McKibben explicitly rejects calling his possible future a utopia because "[utopias] are designed to advance human happiness…it's all in the name of man." Rather, in McKibben's self-proclaimed "atopia," "[h]uman happiness would be of secondary importance. Perhaps it would be best for the planet if we all lived…crammed into a few huge cities like so many ants…Certain human sadness might diminish; other human sadnesses would swell." In this idealized future, the material conditions of life are unimportant; all that matters is that "our desires are not the engine."[152]

But McKibben's assessment of his own viewpoint seems to ignore that the very act of expressing this vision as a potential positive outcome necessarily locates it as an object of desire. In addition, it is logical that this extreme Arcadian vision, that of a world consisting exclusively of wilderness except for a small, miserable human population, would be appealing to the Arcadian: after all, given that it is predicated on

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[150] Lisa Garforth, "Green Utopias: Beyond Apocalypse, Progress, and Pastoral," *Utopian Studies* 16 (2005): 403.
[151] *Ibid.*, 404.
[152] McKibben, *End of Nature*, 191.

the knowledge of the timeless Natural out there—a knowledge that for McKibben, Carson, and other Arcadians is arguably the most important facet of the Natural—it seems that such an "atopia" would in fact serve as the ultimate fulfillment of Arcadian desires. And even if McKibben's vision isn't utopian in the traditional sense, it still operates within the profoundly modern framework Koselleck outlines: by projecting an idealized vision for human existence into the distant future, McKibben locates himself within the progressive historical framework he so actively resents. His contention that his Arcadian utopia would "develop an enormously powerful social taboo against 'progress'"[153] is undercut by both the progressive viewpoint inherent in articulating such a future, and, in a more indirect but altogether more striking way, the profoundly modern attitude towards the world it perpetuates. And as was the case with the nature-culture divide, the problems pertaining to the Arcadian historical vision surpass logical contradiction and enter the sphere of the political. As Garforth notes, "[t]he rational utopia, refusing to acknowledge the relevance of the past and the association between utopianism and totalising social projects of domination, therefore carries with it a baggage of Western history of conquest and colonisation that is projected into the future."[154] McKibben does not specify how his 'atopia' would be brought about, but given the vast scale of such a project, and the particularity of the interests it is based on, such an endeavor would necessitate an unprecedented mobilization of political and social domination.

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[153] *Ibid.*, 193.
[154] Garforth, "Green Utopias," 411.

This complicity with modern projects of domination also manifests itself in the Arcadian evocation of spatialized evolutionary time.[155] Most famously described by the anthropologist Johannes Fabian, this mode of reckoning with difference is one in which a group of people's physical distance from and cultural resemblance to the civilized vanguard of modernity is perceived historically—a manner of constructing relations with other groups in which distance connotes difference.[156] This phenomenon manifested itself most notably in the traditional treatment of non-Western societies as 'primitive' or 'timeless,' and continues today in the economic parlance of "least developed" and "more developed" nations. For Fabian, this use of temporally loaded terminology to describe distinct but coeval groups is a means of both codifying and maintaining difference and of reinforcing power systems between self-appointed modern groups of people and their non-modern counterparts.

Carson and McKibben's texts both contain typical modern deployments of Fabian's spatialized time in the way they valorize those humans who live outside of industrial modernity—and thus, of course, closer to the Natural. Regarding a number of Inuit individuals who had DDT found in their bodies after spending time in more populated areas, Carson remarks that "[f]or their brief stay in civilization the Eskimos were rewarded with a taint of poison."[157] The tone in which she refers to "civilization" is laced with contempt; it is, for Carson, that which poisons the bodies and minds of human beings still living in harmony with Nature and uncorrupted by

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[155] Koselleck discusses this phenomenon as well, but from a strictly conceptual standpoint. He does not draw out its ethical implications in the same way Fabian does. See, for instance, "Modern Concepts of Movement" in *Futures Past*, pages 237-38.

[156] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 16.

[157] Carson, *Silent Spring*, 180.

industrial modernity. This valuation amounts to a textbook invocation of the noble savage trope, the temporal othering of the non-industrial and non-civilized Inuit (for Carson's language implies that the Inuit lifestyle can in no way constitute civilization). We find this again in McKibben's valorizing of the relationship non-Western cultures have with the Natural. Countering those who argue the human relationship with the Natural cannot be rendered more harmonious, McKibben cites the existence of other "civilizations, chiefly Eastern ones, that by choice spent centuries almost suspended in time."[158] In addition to conflating many distinct cultural groups under the umbrella term "Eastern," McKibben perpetuates the Western attitude that locates other cultures, specifically "Oriental" ones (to use Said's term), in the distant historical past, or even outside of time entirely. The fact that McKibben finds value in this non-Western suspension of time does not mitigate the oppression coded in the logic it carries.

The Depoliticization of Arcadia

However, it is not only the denial of its own profoundly modern stance—nor even the complicity in the projects of domination associated with that stance—that necessitates a critical reevaluation of the Arcadian historical vision: the temporal logic it follows, as well as the political action such logic entails, renders the Arcadian mode of thought wholly subservient to the political status quo. In order to understand how this dynamic functions, we can turn to the work of political philosopher Carl Schmitt. In his 1919 book *Political Romanticism,* Schmitt, analyzing the philosophy

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[158] McKibben, *End of Nature*, 193.

of the German Romantics (the Arcadians' intellectual forebears), shows how a worldview predicated on sentimentalized experience will necessarily sanction or conform to the existing political structure. Guy Oakes, introducing his translation of *Political Romanticism*, sums up Schmitt's scathing critique of German Romantics by declaring that "political romanticism amounts to a de facto legitimation of the political status quo and an implicit certification of the political forces that happen to exercise power."[159] In other words, ensuring the possibility of aesthetic and temporal escape precludes the necessity to fight for justice on other issues. For Schmitt, this dynamic is rooted in the insertion into the political sphere of an ideology that is, at its core, nonpolitical.

The inevitably nonpolitical character of Romantic thought resides in the fact that it primarily concerns itself with personal aesthetic experience at the expense of real material conditions. As Schmitt puts it, for the Romantic "the external world and historical reality are of interest only insofar as they can be…the beginning of a novel"[160]—in other words, they consist of nothing more than an *occasio,* or occasion for subjective experience. Schmitt considers this occasion to be the core Romantic concept: that of the ultimate subjective event. As a result, Schmitt writes, the Romantic believes that "even the greatest external event—a revolution or a world war—is intrinsically indifferent. The incident becomes significant only when it has become the occasion for a great experience, a genial apprehension, or some other

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[159] Guy Oakes, introduction to *Political Romanticism*, by Carl Schmitt (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), xxxi.
[160] Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, 84.

romantic creation."[161] The sublime, aesthetic experience comes to dominate and delimit the ethical and political, allowing real-world concerns to fall away.[162]

The political consequences of this privileging of the occasion amount to a tacit endorsement of the political status quo, foreclosing the possibility of true political action.[163] As a result of its grounding in the aesthetic and the ideal, political romanticism "repudiates the 'juridical' as narrow and mechanical, and it searches for the state that is above right and wrong: that is, a point of reference for feelings, which at the same time is a projection of the romantic subject into the domain of the political."[164] The Romantic subject, privileged as autonomous and affective in an environment that is valuable only to the extent that it can be appropriated by the subject, does not engage with but merely experiences the most valued entities of contemporary philosophy or political thought. As such, "[r]egardless of whether the final and inclusive member of the sequence is called God or the state, the ego or history, the idea or organic development, the result is invariably that all activity of the individual person consists in the fact that he is a 'sympathetic fellow traveler,'"[165] the privileged subject whose capacity for subjective experience serves as the medium through which a certain feeling can come into being. In short, the message of the Romantic is loud and clear: "one should not interfere with what the competent

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[161] *Ibid.*, 96-97.

[162] This is possible, Schmitt continues, because, "[p]sychologically and historically, romanticism is a product of bourgeois security" (Schmitt 1986, 99). Schmitt's critique specifically targets German Romantic writers, most of whom were, like the Arcadians that followed them, members of the bourgeoisie. Friedrich Schlegel, Adam Müller, Friedrich Schelling all become targets ripe for critique in Schmitt's analysis.

[163] Though the contemporary reader may be struck by the painful irony of Carl Schmitt discussing the morality (or lack thereof) of a certain political stance, an investigation into the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of Schmitt's writings is beyond the scope of this project.

[164] *Ibid.*, 117.

[165] *Ibid.*, 122.

authorities do."[166] For Schmitt, any substantial action, including political action, is incompatible with this philosophy. Summarizing his argument, he writes that

> [i]n spite of its subjective superiority, ultimately romanticism is only the concomitant of the active tendencies of its time and its environment…it unconsciously submits to the strongest and most proximate power…[and] the sublime elevation above definition and decision is transformed into a subservient attendance upon alien power and alien decision.[167]

Though Schmitt's argument may amount to an oversimplification or even a caricature of German Romanticism, it is no doubt an accurate assessment of certain tendencies within the Arcadian environmental tradition—which, as previously mentioned, has its intellectual roots in Romanticism. The Arcadian environmentalist no doubt differs from Schmitt's Romantic in important ways; the latter finds the *occasio* in any kind of moment, anywhere, while for the former it is only possible within the confines of a Natural space. In addition, for the Arcadian, the overwhelming value of the experience of that space, and the necessity to preserve the possibility of that experience, serves to foreclose true political engagement; this differs from Schmitt's Romantic, for whom any kind of engagement necessarily takes a back seat to the subjective experience of the occasion. Nonetheless, Schmitt's critique is extremely useful for broaching an analysis of how the Arcadian focus on the experience of the Natural is incompatible with true political action.

We see this phenomenon play out in the Arcadian treatment of wilderness and environmental utopia discussed earlier. In the context of the former—which, like the Romantic's attachment to the occasion, serves to exalt the experience of (and struggle for) the Natural into a position of unquestionable value—Cronon argues that the

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[166] *Ibid.*
[167] *Ibid.*, 162.

Arcadian stance "makes wilderness the locus for an epic struggle between malign civilization and benign nature, compared with which all other social, political, and moral concerns seem trivial."[168] Concerns that no longer directly correspond to the individual subjective experience provided by wilderness thus permit "too many other corners of the earth [to] become less than natural and too many other people [to] become less than human, thereby giving us permission not to care much about their suffering or their fate." Ultimately, this nature/culture, human/non-human divide "tempts one to ignore crucial differences *among* humans and the complex cultural and historical reasons why different peoples may feel very differently about the meaning of wilderness."[169] Tackling the subject of utopias, Garforth notes that "...the unreflexive naturalism of the pastoral mode normalises and legitimates some forms of society whilst vilifying others…obscuring the necessity for making explicitly political choices about social relationships and relationships with the nonhuman nature."[170] By valuing a certain lifestyle for its subjective potential while ignoring the political implications and consequences of such a valuation, the Arcadian, like Schmitt's Romantic, is devoted to a strikingly nonpolitical engagement with the world.

The Arcadian de-emphasis of the political realm, the homogenization and classification of all other political issues as merely human, is present within the Arcadian tradition as far back as Muir. Gottlieb describes how, in cases when "resource development was not seen as conflicting with this kind of scenic wilderness value, the preservationists stayed away from the issue." In a land use conflict pertaining to the dry Owens Valley area, Muir and other preservationist had no

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[168] Cronon, "Trouble with Wilderness," 20.
[169] *Ibid*., emphasis in original.
[170] Garforth, "Green Utopias," 405.

interest in intervening—"fixed on their definition of wilderness as scenic resource…neither rural development nor urban growth issues were seen as relevant."[171] Issues of land use that did not involve unpopulated scenic wilderness were off the table for preservationists, and environmental issues that touched at all upon the realm of the human were "even further removed from the preservationist frame of reference."[172] The division between issues relating to the Natural and the Human, between the eternal and mutable, permits an opting out, a delimitation of what is and is not a relevant issue—a divide, Schmitt argues, that necessarily locates the Arcadians on the side of the status quo.

This attitude can also be seen in the work of McKibben. He laments that the Natural, "[h]aving lost its separateness…loses its special power…it is now a category like the defense budget or the minimum wage."[173] McKibben's implication is that things like the defense budget and minimum wage—both of which are connected to myriad political issues that impact both humans a non-humans—are far less valuable than the experience of the Natural, and as such do no merit serious engagement, at least not the kind the Natural does. This is not to say that environmentalism is any more or less serious than these other issues, merely that such a privileged relationship with the Natural forecloses the possibility of true engagement with other issues on their own terms. With this in mind, it should be wholly unsurprising that for decades the environmental movement was intimately tied to eugenics, institutional racism, vehement nativism, and other characteristics of state control of populations in the

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[171] Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 62.
[172] *Ibid.*, 63.
[173] McKibben, *End of Nature*, 210.

twentieth century. These are ties that environmentalism has not fully succeeded in breaking.[174]

This disregard for political issues unrelated to the Natural further manifests itself in McKibben's (repeated) comparison of the loss of the Natural to slavery and the subsequent civil rights movement. Though social justice and environmental justice are undoubtedly interconnected, this is not the main thrust of McKibben's argument. Instead of focusing on the matters of race, class, and structural inequalities entangled with environmental devastation, he argues that "we feel it our privilege…to dominate nature to our advantage, as whites once dominated blacks. When one method of domination seems to be ending—the reliance on fossil fuels, say—we cast about for another, like genetic tinkering, much as Americans replaced slavery with Jim Crow segregation."[175] McKibben thus creates a sequence in which environmentalism has supplanted the struggle for racial equality, implying that institutionalized racism is a thing of the past—its struggle is no longer relevant, and will be replaced by the fight to keep Arcadia intact. Furthermore, though the loss of the Natural experience is undoubtedly significant for McKibben and other Arcadians, the negative impacts of GMOs, in terms of tangible, material suffering, are miniscule compared to the consequences of Jim Crow segregation in the United States; drawing such a connection robs the past struggles of people of color of significance and covers over inequalities in the present day.

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[174] See "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" by Donna Haraway, *Forcing the Spring* by Robert Gottlieb, and *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* by Jake Kosek for detailed analysis of this point.
[175] *Ibid.*, 204-5.

A similar manifestation of the devaluing of existing political and social issues appears in McKibben's response to ecofeminist Ynestra King's critique of Earth First!. King, quoted by McKibben, criticizes Earth First! for ignoring "the structures of entrenched economic and political power within society,"[176] structures integral to the very environmental exploitation Earth First! seeks to eliminate. But McKibben does not engage with the issues King presents in her critique; to the contrary, his response is coolly patronizing. He comments that her frustration with Earth First! is understandable given that "[i]t is an intensely disturbing idea that man should not be the master of all…[a]nd that individual suffering…might be less important than the suffering of species, ecosystems, the planet."[177] Here, as with McKibben's endorsement of Earth First! discussed previously, the nature-culture divide is enforced even as its source, modernity, is upbraided. By discounting particular moments of "individual suffering" in the face of the wider conditions of species, ecosystems, and landscapes, whole categories of matters of concern—issues of race, class, justice, and democracy, to name a few—are written off as peripheral to more important modes of suffering. In this way, the Arcadian ideology marks out the boundary between which issues do and do not matter, closing off the zone of political struggle and denying access to those who don't aim to preserve the Natural above all else.

<div align="right">Conclusion</div>

On the final pages of *The End of Nature,* McKibben describes a new vision for his ideal future, one distinct from his aforementioned atopia. He dreams not of

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[176] *Ibid.*, 182.
[177] *Ibid.*

continued growth, industry, and modernity, but "ten thousand years of humble civilization when we choose to pay more for the benefits of nature, when we rebuild the sense of wonder and sanctity that could protect the natural world," a future in which human beings would finally be able "to revel in the timelessness that surrounds us."[178] This is a future in which the constraints of history and politics can be brushed aside, and the experience of the Natural, like the occasion of Schmitt's Romantics, can be brought to the forefront. Thus valorized, the preservation of the Natural and the experience it provides becomes the sole political act, surpassing in importance any and all merely human concerns. Political mobilization never goes beyond the Arcadian aim to ensure that the experience it values can exist forever, resulting in a profoundly depoliticized stance that serves as a tacit endorsement of existing structures of power. But in order to determine exactly how this endorsement manifests itself—what it means in the present day to acquiesce to existing political conditions and be chaperoned along by the historical visions that accompany them— it is necessary take our project beyond the Arcadian crisis and into a more explicitly political realm. Specifically, an analysis of the concept of infinite delay can give us a glimpse into the politics of historical time to which the nonpolitical Arcadian will unquestionably assent.

Infinite Delay

As was discussed in Part II, infinite delay is one of two historical visions tied to the Utilitarian tradition of environmental crisis. It manifests itself in the work of

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[178] *Ibid.*, 215-16.

James Hansen as well contemporary climate change activists, who demand that political action be taken to keep "the world in which civilization developed" [find citation] safe from the ravages of anthropogenic climate change. Viewed through the lens of crisis, there is a specific historical logic at work here: if the onset of crisis signals an end to civilization, and thus an end to history and progress, the only way to permit history to continue would be to neutralize the crisis—or, if this proves impossible, push its moment of arrival indefinitely into the future. Paradoxically, it is only through delay (of crisis) that progress can occur.

This section seeks to analyze the politics of historical time at work within infinite delay. How does the act of delaying the crisis connect to the legitimation of existing institutions? What kinds of political action does such legitimation entail? What measures must be taken in order to delay the crisis and ensure that history may continue? These are the political matters at stake when it comes to infinite delay, and what I aim to explore in this section. I begin with an intellectual genealogy of infinite delay, locating its origins in secularized Judeo-Christian eschatology, specifically the idea of the katechon, that which is tasked with holding back the end of the world. This is followed by an analysis of how the katechon manifests itself in environmental literature, and what kind of political action such a historical vision entails. The section concludes with a discussion of how infinite delay functions given the emergence of a new kind of historical time caused by climate change. Taken together, this section is designed to render explicit the concepts undergirding infinite delay, as well as the implications of the enactment of those concepts.

Though infinite delay falls well within the boundaries of Koselleck's modern historical consciousness, its conceptual roots lie not in the Enlightenment but nearly two thousand years earlier. For, as German political theorist Carl Schmitt famously put it in *Political Theology*, "[a]ll significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."[179] Though it seems entirely contrary to the secular Enlightenment values upon which the modern state is constructed, this sweeping claim has been demonstrated numerous times by Schmitt and many other scholars. This is not to say that theology and political theory are interchangeable, but rather that the ways in which political theory has diverged from theology, and the emphasis of certain theological concepts at the expense of others, reveals much about the temporal aims and mechanisms of modern Western political institutions. But in order to fully contextualize these mechanisms, and to understand exactly where our "crisis" comes from, we have to explore the theological origins of these ideas.

Karl Löwith's 1949 work *Meaning in History* sets us on course for this exploration. Löwith's goal is to show how the Enlightenment philosophy of history, and its more recent iterations in Marx and Hegel, amounts to a secularized Christian eschatology. As Koselleck would argue years later, Löwith writes that, for modernity, the "future is the 'true' focus of history," a focus which "abides in the religious foundation of the Christian Occident, whose historical consciousness is…determined by an eschatological motivation." This theological origin is the conceptual root of the "scheme of progressive order and meaning" that the Enlightenment philosophy of

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[179] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George D. Schwab. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 36.

history, and its derivatives, abides by: it is what enables "the historical consciousness of the Occident" to "[conquer] the flux of historical time."[180] But this philosophy of history has also diverged significantly from its eschatological origins. According to Löwith, "[t]he world after Christ has assimilated the Christian perspective toward a goal and fulfilment and, at the same time, has discarded the living faith in an imminent *eschaton*."[181] As such, the imminent end predicated by divine time is nowhere in sight; history has been secularized, and the possibility of apocalyptic unveiling has been replaced by a continuous linear advancement in which the end is continuously postponed. To use Walter Benjamin's words, this is the 'homogenous, empty time' of progress, for which there is no end in sight.[182]

But this empty time of progress cannot exist alone; it requires institutional support to be brought into being. This brings us to one of the most telling linkages in Schmitt's arsenal of secularized theological concepts: that of the katechon, or retainer, the one who holds back the end of the world. The term originates in a passage in II Thessalonians 2:6-7, which describes a withholder that must be removed before the "lawless one," generally interpreted as the Antichrist, can arrive."[183] Exactly who or what this withholder is the text does not make clear; for Schmitt, however, the katechon acts as a reference to empire—the Roman Empire, specifically—which had "the historical power to *restrain* the appearance of the

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[180] Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History; the Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 18.
[181] *Ibid*., 197-98. Emphasis in original.
[182] See also Koselleck, FP 232
[183] Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 109.

Antichrist and the end of the present eon."[184] Schmitt thus identifies sovereign power as the mechanism preventing the appearance of the Antichrist. But given that the katechon prevents the appearance not only of the Antichrist but also the Messiah, it simultaneously perpetuates existing systems of earthly power. The sovereign thus ensures the continuity of the present course of existence, manifest in the geopolitical status quo. Building on Schmitt's argument, Giorgio Agamben writes in *The Time That Remains* that "every theory of the State, including Hobbes's—which thinks of it as a power destined to block or delay—can be taken as a secularization of this interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2."[185] For Agamben, the katechon is that which holds onto the law and maintains the existing order, militating against the possibility of revolutionary (political) change that is concealed within every moment. And it is this very action of the katechon, the closing off of radical political action, which allows history to continue. As Horst Bredekamp argues, there is an intrinsic connection between the continuity of political institutions and movement through historical time, for the creation of the katechon constitutes not only the origin of time[186] but history as well. It is "[t]he *katechon*, whatever form he may assume, [who] produces history; without him, time itself would long ago have ended."[187] The modern state is thus bound up in the production of history, history which in turn ensures the continued existence of the state.[188]

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[184] Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 60. Emphasis in original.
[185] Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 110.
[186] Horst Bredekamp, "From Walter Benjamin to Carl Schmitt, via Thomas Hobbes," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (1999): 255.
[187] *Ibid*., 253. Emphasis in original.
[188] This relationship does not hinge on the concept of the katechon. Pocock argues in "Time, Institutions and Action" that in all societies "[t]here is a point at which historical and political theory

To summarize, the katechon, by holding back the end of the world, perpetuates the existence of worldly institutions and, in doing so, allows history to exist. Hence in modernity, where time is grounded not in eschatology but history, the secularized katechon takes the form of the Hobbesian sovereign or the modern liberal state, and is subsequently tasked with the maintenance of institutional power. By holding back the end of the world, the katechon allows for history to continue and for progress to unfold, all while holding the potential of revolutionary change a safe distance away. This is the temporal dynamic that comes to define infinite delay of the environmental crisis.

Infinite Delay on the Level of the Nation

We can use Agamben and Schmitt's interpretation of the katechon to frame the Utilitarian concept of infinite delay, in which striving to prevent the crisis becomes the duty of the modern liberal state. This, in turn, transforms crisis into a tool to extend the state's existence into the future. It thus comes as no surprise that many of the preeminent writers in the Utilitarian tradition—a group that, as Latour mentioned, is overwhelmingly white, male, and Western—conceive of and present efforts to delay the environmental crisis in terms that align with the continuity and expansion of interests and institutions of the United States, Western Europe, and the rest of the global North. When it comes to infinite delay, the most powerful world governments take the form of the katechon. They become the worldly institutions designed to keep human beings within time and history, to keep the 'apocalypse' at bay, and to close off the possibility of radical change. Thus, for the Utilitarians,

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meet, and it can be said without distortion that every society possesses a philosophy of history…which is intimately a part of its consciousness and its functioning" (Pocock 1989, 233).

managing the crisis is equivalent to an endorsement of the power of the katechon—after all, it is the one source endowed with the power to stop the crisis, and the one whose continuity the crisis puts at risk.

Within the literature of infinite delay, writers present the katechon—here the governments of Europe or especially the United States—as either currently failing in their duty of delaying the crisis, a failure which must be rectified, or as working towards future fulfillment, thus expanding their network of power and influence across the globe and into the future. We can most easily see the specific manifestations of infinite delay in the way Utilitarians frame their call for political action on the issue of climate change. James Hansen, for examples, blames the impending climate crisis on the irresponsibility of political leaders. "Our planet," he writes, "is in imminent danger of crashing. Yet our politicians are not dashing forward. They hesitate; they hang back."[189] He also blames the "energy experts" who work with politicians to design policy. These experts, writes Hansen, "have been in Washington too long. They are careful to only nudge industry…They will not state clearly what is needed."[190] Hansen presents the impending crisis as a failure of the existing institution, of its inability to act. However, for Hansen, this inaction is not a flaw inherent in the system itself, but rather a particular moment of weakness. Hansen glorifies the "intrepid early Americans" who sought to "guard against the return of despotic governance and subversion of the democratic principle" and denigrates the current lawmakers who are "heavily under the undue sway of special interests."[191] In the end, Hansen contends that "we should not give up on the democratic system—

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[189] Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, 277.
[190] *Ibid*., 241.
[191] *Ibid*., 242.

quite the contrary. We must fight for the principle of equal justice."[192] Even if our government has failed to act, for Hansen and others, we should still work within existing channels. It is not the system that is at fault, but the individuals within in. For Hansen, the katechon is temporarily waning and must be restored to full strength.

This attitude fits within the characterization of contemporary populism advanced by Slavoj Žižek and Erik Swyngedouw. Just as Hansen endorses global capitalism and representative democracy while decrying the particularities of its inaction, "for a populist," writes Žižek, "the cause of the troubles is ultimately never the system as such, but the intruder who corrupted it."[193] Elaborating on Žižek's argument, Swyngedouw adds that, within the logic of populism, "the solution can be found in dealing with the 'pathological' phenomenon, the resolution for which resides in the system itself."[194] In this way, "environmental populism is inherently reactionary, a key ideological support structure for securing the social-political status quo"[195]—in other words, for ensuring institutional continuity while at the same time demanding the change necessary to delay the crisis. If the agent permitting the environmental crisis is presented not as something intrinsic to the system but rather as a temporary intruder—like Hansen's greedy lobbyists and complacent congressmen—then the call for change can be sounded in a way that nonetheless legitimates the existing political situation. Hansen and others, in their clamoring

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[192] *Ibid.*, 277.
[193] Slavoj Žižek, "Against the Populist Temptation," accessed 8 January 2013, http://www.lacan.com/zizpopulism.htm.
[194] Erik Swyngedouw, "Apocalypse Forever?: Post-political Populism and the Spectre of Climate Change," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27 (2010): 222, doi: 10.1177/0263276409358728.
[195] Ibid., 223.

against climate change inaction, call for the katechon to hold its ground, to maintain the institution's existence in time.

The Utilitarian endorsement of existing institutions doesn't come solely in the form of populism. Utilitarian writers also frame the measures necessary to delay the environmental crisis as methods to extend the power of the same institutions such measures seek to preserve. For Hansen—as well as other Utilitarians whose voices McKibben has assembled and endorsed is his *Global Warming Reader*—delaying the environmental crisis is an integral part of maintaining and expanding American political and economic power. As Hansen writes in *Storms of my Grandchildren*, the "United States risks becoming second-class technologically and economically this century if it does not stop subsidizing dirty technologies and instead move toward progressive policies."[196] The phrases "move toward" and "progressive" are telling in Hansen's analysis: crisis alleviation, technological progress, and economic expansion are all necessary to ensure that the United States maintains its current form into an indefinite future. But Hansen promises not only continuity, but progress as well. He contends that the "[d]emand for low-carbon high-efficiency products will spur innovation, making our products more competitive on international markets," ensuring that a "brighter, cleaner future, with energy independence, is possible" for the United States.[197] In other words, not only will the indefinite delaying of the crisis allow the United States to maintain its current economic and political standing, but it will allow incremental progress—manifest in greater geopolitical influence and the expansion of global capitalism—to continue as usual. Thus the katechon, when

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[196] Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, 297.
[197] *Ibid*., 281.

restored to its proper form, will remain on its traditional historical track—the temporal rupture threatened by the climate crisis will be averted.

This tendency to link global historical progress with the ability of Western countries (specifically the United States) to delay the environmental crisis turns up yet again in other segments of McKibben's anthology. For example, Van Jones, the author of 2008's *The Green Collar Economy* and "one of the most visible leaders of the green progressive movement,"[198] views climate change action as key to ensuring that America retains its position as a premier global power:

> The United States has the power to be a huge obstacle to planetary survival—or giant springboard to planetary salvation. A better America is the best gift that we can offer the world…If we do our work right, the United States will lead the world, again, someday…The United States will lead the world in green economic development, in world-saving technologies, in human rights. We will lead by showing a multiracial, multifaith, rainbow-colored country pulled together to solve tough problems.[199]

Jones's use of the phrase "planetary salvation" is especially telling. Though the theological language of his rhetoric connotes extra-historical action, Jones's vision of an American redemption of the planet exists well within the bounds of secular time—Jones seeks not to end history, but preserve it. His vision amounts to an indefinite continuation of history, one built on the hope that "the United States will lead the world, again, someday" and mediated by the expansion of American political influence, economic prowess, and technological mastery. And, not being one to promote political action unrelated to the interests of the state, Jones frames efforts to delay the environmental crisis via investments in renewable energy sources as advantageous for American geopolitical maneuvering, arguing that they "will free us

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[198] Bill McKibben, *The Global Warming* Reader, 210.
[199] Van Jones, "from *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*," in *The Global Warming Reader*, 216.

from foreign oil and its national security risks."[200] Delaying the environmental crisis, it seems, is also a way to keep the enemies of the United States at bay and manage threats to the current geopolitical situation. For Jones, efforts to combat the environmental crisis presented by climate change are also tools to extend American state power.

The arguments of both Jones and Hansen exemplify the temporal politics of those who advocate an infinite delay of the environmental crisis. For these Utilitarians, the environmental call to action both sets up the United States as the katechon—the only institution with the power to hold back the end of the world—and puts forward the tacit assumption that its continuity is both necessary to avert the crisis and desirable as that which enforces the status quo. In the context of crisis, infinite delay is designed to ensure that the interests of the United States are never under threat. Here, the politics of historical time are decidedly reactionary, seeking to ensure the continuity of a global power structure and, unavoidably, the systemic inequities that permit its existence.

Infinite Delay on a Global Scale

Though many writers tend to focus on a single nation or group of nations when discussing the climate crisis, others do not abide by such geographical restrictions. Indeed, many writers, emphasizing the global impact of climate change, argue for an accordingly global response, a shift which brings about infinite delay on a far larger scale than previously seen. But in order to examine the relationship between this worldwide response to environmental crisis, history, and institutional

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[200] *Ibid*., 218.

continuity, we first need to examine how these globally-minded Utilitarians perceive institutional power. Their view of infinite delay can be read through the work of Ulrich Beck, who has written extensively about a new era in modernity that (Western) society has been steadily moving towards for the past several decades. Beck describes this transition as, in part, consisting of a shift from combating "dangers" to preventing "risks," and has labeled this new form of modernity the "risk society." This concept of the risk society is extremely useful when it comes to analyzing how infinite delay functions on a global scale.

Beck argues that, unlike in the typical modern paradigm of wealth production, the new modernity quickly approaching us (if it has not arrived already) is characterized by a "[loss] of innocence" of the productive forces—it is only now that the "gain in power from techno-economic 'progress' is being increasingly overshadowed by the production of risks."[201] The goal of the new modernity is to compartmentalize and manage these risks, to provide the panacea to systemic flaws by disguising them as mere side effects. The new modernity seeks to determine how risks may "be limited and distributed away so that they neither hamper the modernization process nor exceed the limits of that which is 'tolerable'— ecologically, medically, psychologically and socially."[202] For Beck, the possibility of environmental devastation is one of these risks, something with which the Utilitarians would no doubt agree.

One of the most important characteristics of Beck's new modernity is its unbounded geography. For Beck, the global characteristic of industrial modernity

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[201] Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992), 12-13.
[202] *Ibid.*, 19.

came from the interconnectedness of various localities. But global risks, Beck writes, can "no longer be limited to certain localities or groups, but rather exhibit a tendency to globalization with spans production *and* reproduction as much as national borders, and in this sense brings into being *supra*-national and *non*-class-specific *global hazards*."[203] These risks cannot be classified as merely *inter*national, for they do not distinguish between nations, nor are they restricted to purely human matters of concern. Rather, risks

> undermine the order of national jurisdictions. In view of the universality and supra-nationality of the circulation of pollutants, the life of a blade of grass in the Bavarian Forest ultimately comes to depend on the making and keeping of international agreements. Risk society in this sense is a world risk society.[204]

Furthermore, the dynamic of the risk society demands and dictates "new sources of conflict and consensus" and, "through the dynamic of endangerment it sets in motion, undermines the borders of nation states" and creates "'communities of danger' that ultimately can only be comprised in the United Nations."[205] In this new modernity, risks cannot be responded to in a piecemeal fashion by individual nations. Global risks require a globally coordinated response.

Returning to Schmitt and Agamben's katechon, it is apparent that the emergence of the environmental crisis as the biggest generator of global risk has sparked a corresponding shift in the identity of the katechon and the role it plays. It can no longer be characterized as a single state ensuring its own continuity—rather, it is a unified global front in which national boundaries and local differences are subsumed in the face of a larger threat. The society seeking to rationalize its temporal

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[203] *Ibid*., 13. Emphasis in original.
[204] *Ibid*., 23.
[205] *Ibid*., 47. Emphasis removed.

existence and maintain its own continuity within history has expanded to envelop the entire planet. Both humans and non-humans are encompassed in this new global social-political order dedicated to crisis prevention—though humans are undoubtedly given more agency and privilege, with non-human life forms and objects taking on the role of either the victims or instruments of modern risk production.

Hence, for the Utilitarians arguing in this vein, the new form of the katechon—that of a global institutional order encompassing the political, economic, social, technological, and ecological realms—must commit to marshaling the world's resources for the greater good by managing and mitigating the environmental crisis. Examples of this viewpoint abound in Utilitarian writing: Hansen contends that "[h]uman-made climate change is, indeed, the greatest threat *civilization* faces."[206] Given that all nations "are in the same boat and will sink or survive together," coordinated global effort is necessary, and, adds Hansen, "[i]t would not be difficult to deal with any country that refuses" to join in the global effort.[207] Here Hansen echoes fellow Utilitarian Paul Ehrlich's earlier clarion call for global action on overpopulation, specifically the creation of "a federal Department of Population and Environment" that would work with other developed nations designed to "help the UDCs [undeveloped countries] to control their populations."[208] Here we see how such a global response to environmental crisis, though premised on defending collective or universal interests, in practice often serves to represent and extend the interests of those nations who find themselves in position to determine exactly what "the greatest threat" and "civilization" are. It is difficult to fathom in what way Ehrlich's

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[206] Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, 70. Emphasis mine.
[207] *Ibid.*, 220.
[208] Ehrlich, *Population Bomb*, 138-39.

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contention that the US should "no longer send food to India, Egypt, and some other countries which it considers beyond hope"[209] could possibly be in the best interest of the people of India, Egypt, and the other countries Ehrlich has in mind, which begs the question of exactly whose interests are being represented in such allegedly universal claims.

This is not the only angle from which the global katechon appears defiantly reactionary. As Beck has described, these risks, which stem from the concept of techno-economic development coded into the progressive logic of modernity itself, are instead perceived as external threats. As such, internal mechanisms are mobilized to combat them. Recalling the dynamic of populism, we can once again turn to Swyngedouw for an elucidation of this phenomenon. He writes that

> [w]hile a proper analysis and politics would endorse the view that CO_2-as-crisis stands as the pathological symptom of the normal one that expresses the excess inscribed in the very normal function of the system (i.e. capitalism), the policy architecture around climate change insists that this 'excessive' state is not inscribed in the function of the system itself, but is an aberration that can be 'cured' by mobilizing the very inner dynamics and logic of the system (privatization of CO_2, commodification and market exchange via carbon and carbon offset trading)...[and] through a series of extraordinary techno-natural and eco-managerial fixes.[210]

For Swyngedouw, the underlying logic of this kind of response to the climate crisis functions to ensure that "radical techno-managerial and socio-cultural transformations [are] organized within the horizons of a capitalist order that is beyond dispute," resulting in a situation in which "*we have to change radically, but within the contours of the existing state of the situation...so that nothing really has to change*,"[211]

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[209] *Ibid.*, 78.
[210] Swyngedouw, "Apocalypse Forever," 223-24.
[211] *Ibid.*, 219.

ensuring that "that life (or at least our lives) can go on as before."[212] When Hansen contends that it is "in the common good to preserve…[conditions] that existed during the period that civilization developed,"[213] he is advocating exactly the kind of circumscribed action Swyngedouw describes. Hansen seeks not only to preserve the climate that permitted "civilization" to develop, but the systems, institutions, and structures that have both facilitated and acted as manifestations of that development. For Hansen, this maintenance of the global status quo amounts to nothing less than the "common good."

A New Universal History

But the concept of the katechon has not only expanded spatially, crossing geopolitical boundaries and taking up nonhumans (recall Beck's blade of Bavarian grass) into its sphere of influence. It has also undergone a corresponding temporal shift as the scope of history expands to combine natural history and human history, two time spheres traditionally considered distinct. Koselleck, following the schema laid out by Ferdinand Braudel, has proposed that history, as humans have constructed it, has three time frames, or, more precisely, time layers: the short-term, middle-term, and long-term. The short-term layer of history contains the actions and potential actions of our day-to-day lives, as they are bound by the situations we find ourselves in. Next is the middle-term, one that more or less lines up with our traditional notion of history—individual actors have little agency here, but large-scale change functions as an emergent property, a result of what Koselleck calls "transpersonal framework

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[212] Erik Swyngedouw, "Trouble with Nature: 'Ecology as the New Opium for the Masses,'" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Planning Theory*, ed. Jean Hillier and Patsy Healy (Ashgate, 2010), 309.
[213] Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, 151.

conditions." These conditions dictate what is generally considered to be historical change, and are subject to self-transformation. The long-term, or "metahistorical duration," is far less dynamic, and proves so adept at resisting historical change that it often appears timeless, a "formal statement about the future whose content can be realized at any time."[214]

But this metahistorical realm, Koselleck argues, has, since the advent of modernity, been growing less and less stable. The rate of change perceptible in history's middle-term has been increasing exponentially in the past few hundred years, threatening to diminish the boundary between middle and long-term historical layers, as "formerly long-lasting constants, those which kept the framework conditions of middle-term courses and the interconnected short-term actions stable, have themselves come under increased pressure of change."[215] In other words, previously rigid parameters are now subjected to historical agency. Nowhere is this phenomenon more visible than in regard to anthropogenic environmental threats, most notably climate change.

In the last few decades, as climate change has risen to prominence in contemporary political and social discourse, the separation between different historical times, specifically the twin zones of human history and natural history, has become blurred. Slavoj Žižek provides an apt analysis of this phenomenon as it relates to crisis. "What looms on the horizon today," he writes,

> is the unheard-of possibility that a subjective intervention will intervene directly into the historical Substance, catastrophically disturbing its run by way of triggering an ecological catastrophe...No longer can we rely on the

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[214] Koselleck, "The Unknown Future and the Art of Prognosis," *Practice of Conceptual History*, 144-145.
[215] *Ibid.*, 147.

safeguarding role of the limited scope of our acts: it no longer holds that, whatever we do, history will go on."[216]

Modernity's universal history, what Žižek terms "historical Substance," is for the first time, threatened with the possibility of total derailment. Historical time was, until now, buttressed by the inexorability of Natural time. But, with the advent of the global threat of climate change and the possibility of a world-destroying cataclysm, natural time is now a province of modern time; historical agency has been swapped. To use Koselleck's term, natural history is now makeable, or, more accurately, unmakeable.

Žižek is not the only one who has remarked on the changes our conception of history has undergone. Both historians and environmental writers have commented on the impact of global anthropogenic climate change on human history, regularly remarking on how humanity's newfound ability to manipulate what were previously considered to be unchanging constants—climate conditions, sea levels, the regularity of the seasons—are now, thanks to human actions, changing at accelerated rates. Hansen has commented that "some of these 'fixed' quantities may start to vary on time scales of practical importance…a doubling of carbon dioxide could be expected in less than a century, which is almost instantaneous on geologic time scales."[217] McKibben remarks that "[t]he measure of change has gone from the millennium to the decade; we are altering the climate, says Stephen Schneider of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, at a rate ten to sixteen times its natural rate of change."[218] For McKibben, two rates of change, the geological and civilized, the natural and the

[216] Slavoj Žižek, "Censorship Today: Violence, or Ecology as a New Opium for the Masses (Part 1)," accessed 11 April 2013, http://www.lacan.com/zizecology1.htm.
[217] Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, 41.
[218] McKibben, *End of Nature*, 99.

human, are now interconnected. Ehrlich expressed this sentiment even earlier when he wrote that "even 900 years is much too far in the future for those of us concerned with the population explosion…the next *nine* years will probably tell the story."[219] Actions that happened on time spans too large to be relevant in human history are now pressing and immediate. For these environmental writers, it seems that the borders demarcating the previously distinct realms of "human history" and "natural history" have been blurred.

For the globally-minded Utilitarian, this development necessitates a new conceptualization of historical time, one which historian and postcolonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty has provided. In his 2009 essay "The Climate of History: Four Theses," Chakrabarty argues that "anthropogenic explanations of climate change spell the collapse of the age-old humanist distinction between natural history and human history," a distinction that has served as a fundamental tenet of concepts of history since the Enlightenment.[220] With the advent of anthropogenic climate change, humans have, he argues, become a "geological agent."[221] But even if this aspect of Enlightenment thought has vanished, Chakrabarty, like Hansen, still finds that solutions to the climate crisis "cannot but refer to the idea of deploying reason in global, collective life"[222]—undoubtedly a continuation of the Enlightenment historical project. The result of this is a reconceptualization of human history from the beginning: an establishment of the collective identity of the human species, of which

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[219] Ehrlich, *Population Bomb*, 21. Emphasis in original.
[220] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 201.
[221] *Ibid.*, 210.
[222] *Ibid.*

all are a part, grounded in a deeper, more stable, "universal history of life."[223] Chakrabarty stops short of fully endorsing this "myth of global identity," instead arguing for a global approach to the political arising "from a shared sense of a catastrophe."[224] However, the distinction between the embodied collective risk taken up by people all over the world and the "myth of global identity" is already tentative, and, within discourse on climate change, the two are easily conflated. Hence Chakrabarty's distinction is not one that the Utilitarians make—for them, collective connotes identity, a move which turns the entire world population into subjects of a global historical crisis.

This revised historical time has significant political stakes. As Koselleck has argued, any modern system of governance must be rooted in a corresponding historical consciousness—and, for the Utilitarian vision of global risk management, Chakrabarty has delivered one. Historical progress is no longer calibrated by the growth and power of the individual state, as was the case in previous centuries; rather, in the Utilitarian vision of the global environmental crisis, historical progress has become enmeshed in the continuity and expansion of a global political consensus bent on preventing disaster and keeping civilization within history. The activity of this global State reaches into manifold realms: public and private, human and non-human. As the historical existence of human beings becomes inseparable from that of the biosphere as a whole, historical progress vis-à-vis the techno-scientific advancement and maintenance of political power of the state is replaced by that of the entirety of

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[223] *Ibid.*, 219.
[224] *Ibid.*, 222.

the human and nonhuman world—or, more accurately, the individuals who aim to speak for it. After all, climate change leaves no one, and no *thing*, untouched.

This new historical vision, and the accompanying political worldview, appears frequently in Utilitarian writing. Al Gore, the director of *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Oscar-winning film credited with helping to bring anthropogenic climate change to the attention of a wide audience, has written extensively on the need for a global, transnational response, one that puts aside all other differences in the face of a larger threat. In excerpts from McKibben's anthology, Gore contends that climate change is "about the entire relationship between human civilization and the global environment," a fact that "people in all walks of life are coming to understand."[225] He even remarks that the fight to prevent the climate crisis should be "the central organizing principle of world civilization."[226] Unlike Jones, Gore does not only see the environmental crisis as integral to ensuring the continued existence of the United States. For him, the katechon, the institution that creates time and history, and whose collapse marks the end of both, has been replaced with "world civilization," the human community drawn together by a crisis that knows no national borders, no meaningful differences. Gore's world civilization, composed of humans and nonhumans alike and built on the historical vision explicated by Chakrabarty, thus evokes a new and wholly global katechon.

Speaking at the 1997 Kyoto Climate Change Conference, Gore closed with a call to arms which encapsulated this newly expansive vision of world history and institutions. Addressing an audience of world political leaders, Gore advocated that

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[225] Al Gore, "from *Earth in the Balance*," in *The Global Warming Reader*, 102.
[226] *Ibid*., 103.

"we" must seek to "transcend our differences and commit to secure our common destiny: a planet whole and healthy, whose nations are at peace, prosperous and free; and whose people everywhere are able to reach for their God-given potential."[227] The language Gore uses, specifically phrases like "common destiny," connote a universality and future orientation that locate Gore's remarks well within Koselleck's modern historical paradigm. In this universal zone of historical and political action, progress is not simply the province of one nation, or even group of nations: now that political distinctions have been annihilated in the face of a larger crisis, historical progress can be made on a global scale. In this speech, Gore uses the environmental crisis to articulate a new global political order, one that the Kyoto protocol, had it succeeded, would have been designed to enact and proliferate.

Conclusion

After beginning this section by tracing the conceptual roots of infinite delay, I sought to show how it functioned in the context of environmental crisis—specifically, how the act of delaying the crisis amounted to a mobilization of state power designed to both legitimate that power and open up space to allow progress to continue. In addition, I showed how the perceived merger of natural history and human history has led to the emergence of a new kind of institutionally-governed mode of historical progress, one in which the unit of progress is not the state but the entire world. I have also aimed to illustrate how infinite delay, though certainly distinct in the way it conceives of crisis, fits well within Koselleck's modern historical framework. After all, the historical continuity infinite delay seeks to maintain is, in fact, modernity's

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[227] Al Gore, "Remarks at the Kyoto Climate Change Conference," in *The Global Warming Reader*, 132.

vision of progress. The climate crisis manifests itself as a threat to control, one which would render history no longer makeable. It threatens to end history, thus denying the possibility of continuous entry into unique futures. And, given the global character of the environmental threat, the stakes are universal.

Before closing this section, it must be noted that those advocating infinite delay tend to remain silent on the particularities of the global katechon, on exactly what it means to collude in restraining the global crisis. I speculate that this is at least partially due to the fact that the creation of the structures necessary to enforce the power of the global katechon are not currently in place, and such a transfer from the conceptual to the practical realm would require drastic changes to the existing system that would contradict the desire to ensure continuity. In other words, even when the katechon is rhetorically presented as global, it is, within the confines of infinite delay, generally carried out in a manner identical to that of individual state. In this context, the old environmentalist motto 'think globally, act locally' takes on a whole new meaning.

But that does not mean that Utilitarians do not construct systems and advocate action dedicated towards the managing of crisis on a global scale. Rather, it is only by virtue the historical and temporal logic at play within crisis-as-progress—our third and final variant on the historical consciousness of crisis—that the specificities involved in the enactment of the global state will truly take shape.

Crisis-as-Progress

Not all Utilitarians believe that the environmental crisis can be delayed indefinitely—many argue that material conditions make the moment of rupture inevitable. As described in Part II, Paul Ehrlich and the Club of Rome have, in their writings on overpopulation, commented on the practical impossibility of perpetually pushing back the crisis, given the limited resources and environmental capacities of the planet. Paul Gilding, the former executive director of Greenpeace International, makes a similar point in his 2011 book *The Great Disruption*, contending that "endless economic growth is still not possible on a finite planet when that economic growth involves material consumption."[228] However, this skepticism towards infinite delay is not accompanied by despair: the apocalypse is not at hand, nor is human civilization done for. Rather, Ehrlich and the Club of Rome see the crisis of overpopulation and unsustainable consumption—and, more importantly, the potential response to it—as the driving force for a new, more sustainable global economic system. Following the lead of the Neo-Malthusians, whom he references extensively,[229] Gilding applies this logic to the more contemporary concern of climate change. His environmental crisis threatens the infrastructure (storms and other disasters can destroy it), value (trillions of dollars are bound to be lost), and logic (the doctrine of indefinite growth) of global capitalism, thus exposing the cracks in the foundation of the existing economic system. Now that the global economy is "hitting

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[228] Paul Gilding, *The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring On the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 121.

[229] Gilding considers Jorgen Randers, one of the authors of *The Limits to Growth*, to be one of his "good friends" (Gilding 2011, 17). Theirs is certainly a working relationship—they co-authored an essay entitled "The One Degree War Plan" in 2010.

the limits of both the planet's finite physical resources and its capacity to absorb our impact," manifested in the devastating effects of climate change,[230] we are being confronted with "the failure of growth" as a vision of political economy.[231] It has reached the limits of its utility at the current era, thus requiring the development of new paradigm to take its place.

Gilding and the Club of Rome find the solution in what they respectively term the "steady-state economy" and "global equilibrium." These are different names for the same thing: a new economic system that eschews planet-ravaging quantitative expansion for qualitative improvements in human life. Just as the Club of Rome wrote that "global equilibrium need not mean an end to progress or human development,"[232] Gilding insists that we must not "confuse steady state as in 'still and not-developing,'" for our new economy will still be "rich in progress and increasing prosperity, but not destructive in physical impact."[233] Just as Ehrlich envisioned a new world "with less emphysema, less cancer, less heart disease, less noise, less filth, less crowding, less need to work long hours…and less threat of war," one in which the "pace of life may slow down,"[234] Gilding contends four decades later that we must replace our current economy "with a much deeper and thoughtful approach to human development, one that will improve the quality of life for all."[235] But even if progress in the economic sense comes to an end, as a historical concept it remains as present as ever; after all, moving beyond progress is a form of progress in and of

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[230] *Ibid.*, 184.
[231] *Ibid.*, 185.
[232] Meadows et al., *Limits to Growth*, 179.
[233] Gilding, *Great Disruption*, 189.
[234] Ehrlich, *Population Bomb*, 153.
[235] Gilding, *Great Disruption*, 189.

itself.[236] The fact that this progress is facilitated by crisis in no way changes this. After all, unlike in infinite delay, the moment of crisis serves not as the impediment to historical progress but rather as its necessary catalyst.

This dynamic is not unique to Utilitarian environmentalism. Reinhart Koselleck contends that the "semantic model" purporting that "crises are the generators of progress" has been continuously applied to specific historical moments throughout "the whole history of humanity"; it is a way of conceiving historical time that has shown itself time and time again.[237] In the context of modernity, crisis has often been presented and perceived as a mechanism for the interrelated goals of perfecting political and economic institutions and driving human civilization, and human history, into the future. In other words, Ehrlich, the Club of Rome, and Gilding operate within a well-established historical precedent. Hence this dynamic—the emergence of a new system in response to crisis which simultaneously manages that crisis—functions as the conceptual basis of the crisis-as-progress Utilitarian historical vision.

Following the model of the previous sections, this analysis begins with a genealogy of the historical consciousness at work, as well as the political vision associated with it. Following this will be an illustration of how crisis-as-progress is manifested in environmental literature. The section then concludes with an analysis of the politics of this brand of historical time, building on the analysis of the previous two sections and showing how environmental crisis comes to rationalize the

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[236] A critique that could certainly be applied to the attitude behind this very project—see Part IV for a discussion of this point.
[237] Koselleck, "The Conceptual History of 'Crisis,'" *Practice of Conceptual History*, 243.

expansion of global power structures as well as the marginalization, oppression, and injustice which accompanies it.

Intellectual Roots of Crisis-as-Progress

As mentioned previously, the notion of the crisis as a catalyst for progress is by no means rare. However, the most influential and most distinctly modern form it took was that of G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy of history.[238] Hegel's model, which serves to reconcile the Enlightenment faith in progress with the unmitigated disaster of the French Revolution and Reign of Terror, not only makes room for crisis within modern historical consciousness, but actually *requires* it. For Hegel, the crisis serves as a mechanism by which the conclusive mode of social organization, the Absolute State, can come into being—thus making it "the precise object of world history in general."[239] Furthermore, in this state "the private interest of the citizens is united with the universal goal of the state, so that each finds its fulfillment and realization in the other...But before this unity is brought into being, the state must undergo much struggle with private interests and passions, in a long and hard discipline of them."[240] Here Hegel makes clear the necessity of struggle, of limiting and dominating the "interests and passions" that may either precipitate or constitute a crisis—a crisis which, once managed in such a way, facilitates the emergence of the Absolute

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[238] Though Hegel's historical model illustrates crisis-as-progress rather than infinite delay, it is nonetheless tied to the latter's intellectual lineage. In fact, Löwith finds Hegel's philosophy such an important iteration of secularized eschatology that he devotes an entire chapter to it in *Meaning and History*.

[239] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Hackett, 1988), 42.

[240] *Ibid.*, 27.

State.[241] In order to reach fulfillment, Hegel's historical vision requires some version of crisis.

Alexandre Kojève, arguably the most prominent interpreter of Hegel after Marx, notes that Hegel locates this crisis in the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars. Specifically, Kojève argues that this State-as-actualized-Spirit found itself in Prussia following Napoleon's victory at the Battle of Jena. This is the battle which, for Hegel, amounts to the "completion of History… realized through the dialectical overcoming" of previous forms of consciousness, of the resolution of the contradictions and negations operating in the previous world systems.[242] Kojève, like Hegel, believes that this completion of history must be consummated in the transformation of actual political formations: "in order that an ideology may be surpassed," Kojève writes, "[m]an must first experience the *realization* of this ideology in the real World in which he lives."[243] Once an ideology is actualized, it can fail materially, precipitating the emergence of a new ideology and a new political form to accompany it. But the realization of Hegel's final societal form, which Kojève terms the "the universal and homogenous State," "is not possible without a Fight, without a social war, without the risk of life."[244] Specifically, in the case of Napoleon's rise to power, the emergence of the universal state was only possible via the Revolution of 1789 and the Reign of Terror. Kojève writes that "it is only thanks to the Terror that the idea of the final Synthesis...is realized...It is in the Terror that

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[241] Hegel's philosophy of history bears a striking resemblance to Malthus's view that only hard work and toil can drive the progress of the human mind—however, latter's intellectual legacy pales in comparison to Hegel's.

[242] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. Allan Bloom, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 44.

[243] *Ibid.*, 57.

[244] *Ibid.*, 69.

the State is born in which this 'satisfaction' is attained. This State, for the author of the *Phenomenology*, is Napoleon's Empire."[245] In this historical vision, it is only total systemic failure, a crisis that is both material and ideological, that can bring about the next step; whether it manifests itself as the reign of terror or global climate change, the crisis is the engine that drives the machine of history forwards.

Much has been written about Kojève's willfully divergent reading of Hegel and the numerous differences between his ideas and those originally found in Hegel's writings.[246] However, for the purposes of this study, the only crucial difference is to be found in Kojève's application of Hegel's end of history to the twentieth century geopolitical situation. Kojève does not disagree with Hegel on where history ended. He still believes that in the Battle of Jena, "the vanguard of humanity virtually attained the limit and the aim, that is, the *end*, of Man's historical evolution."[247] However, he adds that

> [w]hat has happened since then was but an extension in space of the universal revolutionary force actualized in France by Robespierre-Napoleon. From the authentically historical point of view, the two world wars with their retinue of large and small revolutions had only the effect of bringing the backward civilizations of the peripheral provinces into line with the most advanced (real or virtual) European historical positions.[248]

At this point in history, Kojève concludes, we merely await "the elimination of the numerous...anachronistic sequels to its pre-revolutionary past," a process which is especially "advanced" in the United States.[249] Thus Kojève, while holding on to the idealist core of Hegel's argument, broadens its scope both spatially and temporally in

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[245] *Ibid*.
[246] See, for example, *The End of History: An essay on modern Hegelianism* by Barry Cooper, or *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* by Michael S. Roth.
[247] *Ibid*., 160. Footnote #6. Emphasis in original.
[248] *Ibid*.
[249] *Ibid*.

order to incorporate events from the twentieth century into Hegel's view of historical progress. This playing fast and loose with Hegel's end of history has set a hermeneutic precedent in which many thinkers have come to locate their own ends of history on the contemporary geopolitical stage.

Among these thinkers is the neoconservative political economist Francis Fukuyama, who, in his 1989 essay "The End of History?" embarks on such a partisan reading of Hegel via Kojève. Fukuyama's interpretation strips Hegel's philosophy of history of its idealist foundation—Hegel's notion of consciousness is reduced to the valuation of a certain type of political system—and instead inscribes its more materialist element, the mechanism of the progressive realization of higher forms of government by virtue cyclical crisis and progress, onto the current geopolitical stage. The speculative core of Hegel's philosophy, the historical emergence of self-consciousness, is no longer present. Instead, Fukuyama focuses on the political ideology behind the emergence of Kojève's "universal and homogenous State," one transferred to what Fukuyama considers the "unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism" at the close of the twentieth century.[250] The West's defeat of communism and Cold War triumph is, for Fukuyama, tantamount to "the end of history as such: that is the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."[251]

Fukuyama, like Kojève, views this situation as historically contingent on the two world wars of the first half of the twentieth century, each of which served to

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[250] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989), 1.
[251] *Ibid*.

spatially expand the principles of liberal democracy and force "[t]hose societies in Europe and North America at the vanguard of civilization to implement their liberalism more fully."[252]   In other words, Fukuyama views world civilization's current position at the cusp of post-history as indebted to the catastrophes that have allowed the evolution and spread of human consciousness to occur; Fukuyama only distinguishes himself by downplaying the idealist driving force present in Hegel's historical philosophy, and by applying Kojève's interpretation of Hegel to his own historical moment.

The Environmental Crisis and World Historical Progress

One can see the logic of the crisis-driven historical model at work in this Utilitarian iteration of the environmental crisis. In what can be construed as the transference of Fukuyama's vulgar-Hegelian philosophy of history from the geopolitical to economic realm, we can see that it is only by virtue of the crisis that progress can occur—the new system can only emerge from the ashes of the old. Just as Fukuyama sees the two world wars, as well as the final demise of communism, as the historical events responsible for the spread of democracy and rise of global capitalism, Gilding, the Club of Rome, and many others view (the potential of) environmental devastation as a mechanism to push civilization forward and generate the next iteration of global political economy. In this historical paradigm, economic progress is not eliminated, merely reframed; uncontrollable, unrestrained growth reaches a crisis point and brings about the steady-state economy, a system in global

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[252] *Ibid.*, 3.

equilibrium. The sublation of the environmental crisis enables progress itself to progress, and opens up access to the new epoch of human history, previously veiled.

This kind of historical vision is merely implicit in the ideas of Ehrlich and the Club of Rome. However, many contemporary writers in the crisis-as-progress tradition leave the scaffolding of their historical framework quite exposed. Richard Heinberg, a senior fellow at the Post Carbon Institute, assures us in his 2011 book *The End of Growth* that "[t]he sustainability revolution *will* occur…[b]ut that revolution will be driven by crisis."[253] This leaves the reader little room for equivocation—only by means of crisis can the new form emerge. Additionally, the emergence of this new form is framed teleologically, equating the resolution of the crisis with the consummation of an envisioned future. For Heinberg, "[t]he remainder of the current century will be a time of continual evolution and adaptation as we head…toward that distant goal."[254] Here, one can draw parallels between the global steady-state economy and Hegel and Kojève's universal homogenous state: the crisis of consciousness and accompanying paradigm shift must be followed up by the slower work of making that consciousness manifest in the material realm, what Heinberg's teleology frames as the slow movement towards some "distant goal."

Gilding invokes the crisis-based model of historical development in similarly bold terms, locating the environmental and economic crisis which the world will soon face —what he terms the "Great Disruption"—as the spark for humanity's progress over the course of the upcoming century. For him, "[i]t is the crisis itself that will push humanity to its next stage of development and allow us to realize our

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[253] Richard Heinberg, *The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality*, (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2011), 265.
[254] *Ibid*., 284.

evolutionary potential."[255] Gilding, like Hegel, Kojève, and Fukuyama, situates the history of human civilization on a progressive evolutionary pathway, one that can be conceptualized and articulated historically. Following Hegel, Gilding also uncouples his vision of historical development from unidirectional, sequential time, warning us that an improper response to the crisis could result in a historical regression.[256] For those hesitant to act on history's stage, Gilding asks: "do we want to 'save' civilization and allow it to keep evolving and developing…[o]r do we want to go back to a few hundred million people or fewer and start again?"[257] A failed response to crisis thus results not only in "the breakdown of our political structures and the complete lack of coherent global governance" as well as "the end of our current way of life," but could even prompt "a return to Thomas Hobbes's state of nature,"[258] a slide back down to the bottom of the historical-evolutionary tree. Without proper management, the crisis could force humanity to "go back" to the beginning of history and "start again." This kind of language locates Gilding squarely within Fukuyama's historical vision of emerging stages of consciousness, manifest materially.

But even though this move to the next stage of human history may be inevitable, it nonetheless requires targeted action to be brought about. But the modern historical consciousness does not perceive this action to be an assertion of agency or the enactment of a particular future. For progress, Koselleck argues, "creates political legitimacy through its inexorability"—it allows individuals, groups, and institutions

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[255] Gilding, 2.
[256] For the Hegelian student of history, it would seem that one doesn't need a DeLorean to travel back in time.
[257] *Ibid.*, 97-98.
[258] *Ibid.*, 107.

to take action within a historical framework in which they can claim impotency.[259] Historically, this detachment of agency has provided any particular political, social, or institutional action ready-made justification. It also gives the State license—or even an imperative—to "hurry the advent of the planned future."[260] Of course, this self-justifying enactment of historical visions is not restricted to the modern's own history, but applied to others (specifically Others) as well. As Koselleck writes, "[t]o be part of a history moving under its own momentum, where one only aided this forward motion, served both as personal vindication and as an ideological amplifier *which reached out to others and caught them up.*"[261] The consequences of this idea in practice are evident in the history of European colonialism, which, at this point, is synonymous with injustice, dispossession, and genocide.

Crisis, then, acts as an accessory of this "ideological amplifier," spreading the message of the modern historical vision and, in the process, reaffirming it. Within Utilitarian discourse, it accomplishes this by appealing to the necessity of global crisis management, warning of potential "impacts on global geopolitics and national social stability"[262]—impacts that would be exacerbated by a badly managed response to the crisis, a failure to step up to the world historical plate. The stakes of the game are high: if the existing geopolitical framework is compromised, the necessary paradigm shift may fail to occur. Thus the task of insuring the proper management of the global crisis inevitably becomes the province of the geopolitical power brokers of

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[259] Koselleck, "'Progress' and 'Decline,'" 231.
[260] Koselleck, "Disposability of History," 199.
[261] *Ibid*., 199, emphasis mine. The discussion of Fabian's spatialized evolutionary time in 'Losing Arcadia' is certainly relevant here.
[262] Gilding, 217.

the Global North, who, in shepherding the planet into the future, simultaneously embark on an expansion of existing networks of political and economic power.

This phenomenon manifests itself all too clearly in Ehrlich's outline of what he considers a positive vision for the outcome of the overpopulation crisis. In his chilling hypothetical,

> [m]ost of the governments soon control little or no territory, and none represents a threat to the developed sections of the world. In the United Nations, the United States, Canada, Russia, Japan, Australia, and the Common Market countries set up a machinery for 'area rehabilitation' which will involve simultaneous population control, agricultural development, and limited industrialization, to be carried out jointly in selected sections of Asia, Africa, and South America.[263]

Future visions this blatantly imperialistic are no longer found in mainstream Utilitarian discourse. However, the same dynamic is still at work. Playing to the fears of his target audience of well-off Westerners, Gilding writes that a failure to take action would result in "failed states with nuclear arms and countless other weapons being taken over by dictators and terrorists."[264] These are the signs of historical decay, a regression towards the Hobbesian state of nature. A failure to take action to avert the crisis would result in a freewheeling world of rogue nations, one in which Western geopolitical domination would be under siege.[265]

This invocation of Western geopolitical dominance is obscured by the way in which Utilitarian arguments are directed towards an abstract global collective, the

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[263] Ehrlich, 79.

[264] Gilding, 219.

[265] This is by no means an endorsement of such a political situation, nor an attempt to imply that Gilding and other Utilitarians are unconcerned with the material well-being of non-Westerners—on the contrary, their intentions are generally good, and sentiments sincere. However, that does not cancel out the presuppositions and implications contained within their visions of historical time, nor free them from taking responsibility for the narratives they operate within. In other words, I do not intend to rhetorically tar-and-feather imperialists, but rather bring up concerns that must be accounted for if environmentalism is to become compatible with social justice and democracy.

homogenous totality that serves as the subject of universal history. Within this logic, the maintenance of existing global power dynamics is justified and universalized via the forward-thinking tool of collective action, a dynamic encapsulated in the attitude that "[t]he global nature of the problem means only a global solution can fix it, and that means we are going to come together as a people like never before."[266] This conception of the "coming-together," of the consensus-generating character of the crisis and the collective action that can mitigate it, epitomizes the political vision at the heart of the idea of crisis-as-progress. Any and all action is grounded in both a historical and practical framework bent on incorporation, inclusion, universalization, and homogenization. It is a united front in the face of a greater enemy. As Jorgen Randers and Donella and Dennis Meadows write in 2004's *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update*, the transition to the steady-state economy is a task with a "uniquely human character" that "will challenge and develop the *humanity* of everyone."[267] Exactly who is included in this humanity, and who determines what it means to "come together," is rarely specified. Solutions within the realm of the crisis-as-progress are either mandates written in passive voice or ascribed to an ambiguous "we"—specific agents of change are replaced by a homogenous universal community.

This creation of a universal collective subject appears in a particularly unique way in Gilding's synthesis—or perhaps conflation—of the historical development of human civilization and the biological evolution of the human species. When Gilding

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[266] *Ibid.*, 7.
[267] Donella H. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and Dennis L. Meadows. *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2004), 146. Emphasis in original.

writes that the "Great Disruption will ultimately take human society to a higher evolutionary state, where we will address centuries-old challenges left over from our lower-order animal state,"[268] his language implies the superimposing of the twin continuums of historical progress and natural selection, seemingly grounding historical development in biological change. At times, Gilding goes to pains to show that he isn't talking about genetic changes per se. Even though the "crisis presents what may be a 'once in a civilization' opportunity for a step change in human evolution," this evolution is to be "driven consciously rather than biologically."[269] It is "a move to a higher stage of evolution and consciousness" in a strictly "nonbiological sense."[270] However, the fact that many of Gilding's arguments hinge on rhetorical appeals built around biological language connotes a far more ambivalent position. He bases his assessment of how the global economy will respond to crisis on what he terms "our natural survival instincts, our history as a species."[271] When discussing complacency in the face of crisis, Gilding contends that "this type of response is normal for our species…We wait until a crisis is imminent and then respond."[272] He believes that propelling ourselves towards a new future on the coattails of the crises will only be possible if "we stay focused and determined and act together as a species."[273] We will need an evolution, Gilding assures us—"a major evolution in human values, politics, and personal expectations."[274]

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[268] Gilding, 7.
[269] *Ibid.*, 8.
[270] *Ibid.*, 94.
[271] *Ibid.*, 6.
[272] *Ibid.*, 105.
[273] *Ibid.*, 97. It is interesting to note how these different kinds of universality interact with each other on the sentence level. Gilding seems to refer to 'humanity' and 'our species' almost interchangeably, as if his variation was more rhetorical than substantive. In this case, it seems like his use of the first person plural 'we' (as in "[w]e wait until a crisis is imminent," "we stay focused," etc.) could stand in

But after quite a bit of oscillation, Gilding's realms of historical progress and species-level evolution merge, and the new global economic and social order he seeks to construct becomes the next evolutionary stage of the human species. This evolution, Gilding writes, will consist of "addressing the consequences of a range of other environmental and resource constraints, creating a new model of economic development that doesn't involve consumerism or material growth, and eliminating poverty and extreme inequity"—in other words, creating the steady-state economy, the economic paradigm of (qualitative) progress without (quantitative) progress that Ehrlich and the Club of Rome proposed. This shift, Gilding contends, "will be deep and genuinely transformational and of great significance, *even in the context of human evolution*."[275] It is this final phrase that most fully articulates Gilding's merging of the biological and historical, the human and the non-human. By explicitly placing his Great Disruption within "the context of human evolution," Gilding frames historical progress as a species-level phenomenon, and places human evolution on a continuum of historical progress operating in the tradition of Hegel, Kojève, and Fukuyama. In short, the Great Disruption will not only keep human history moving forward by facilitating the emergence of a new economic paradigm but, via mediating a "conscious evolution,"[276] will simultaneously take the human species to a higher stage of existence. To revisit Koselleck's categories, Gilding weaves together long-term species-level history and the middle-term history of human civilization, thus throwing himself headfirst into Chakrabarty's new historical framework. As occurred

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not for one or the other antecedent, but both simultaneously. In other words, Gilding's use of 'we' allows him to execute this conflation of the historical and biological on the grammatical level.

[274] *Ibid.*

[275] *Ibid.*, 116. Emphasis mine.

[276] *Ibid.*, 121.

in the context of infinite delay, the histories of society and species, of human institutions and human beings, have become interchangeable. The universality of Gilding's historical vision is codified through a unity that transcends the mere social and achieves scientific validation, objective proof that we are all in this together.

But despite the universalizing goal of Utilitarian rhetoric, is ultimately the contemporary geopolitical power players who are called upon to act. "We need to unleash a flood of people, funds, technology, and intellect to rapidly address these issues," Gilding writes. "The sooner we act, the better our chances of preventing the chaos that we will certainly otherwise face."[277] Meadows, Meadows, and Randers make a similar point, arguing that "[t]o reach sustainability, humanity must increase the consumption levels of the world's poor, while at the same time reducing humanity's totally ecological footprint. There must be technological advance, and personal change, and longer planning horizons."[278] Though the respective agents of these actions are "we" and "humanity," it is clear from both the nature of the actions (large-scale, top-down global interventions) and from the target audiences of the books (those in position to ensure that such changes happen) that it is not just any human beings that are being referred to. Gilding's assertion that "dramatic and fundamental change in our behavior, culture, and values is not just possible, but is what clearly defines humanity—our ability for conscious and deliberate evolution toward a higher organizational state"[279] encapsulates this phenomenon. His use of the phrase "higher organizational state" is no mere coincidence. His future vision, like Fukuyama's, rests on the emergence of a Kojevean universal and homogenous state—

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[277] *Ibid.*, 221.
[278] Meadows et al., *30-Year Update*, xv.
[279] *Gilding*, 200.

a new global system, envisioned, articulated, and facilitated by the existing global political powers, brought together under the common banner of human progress in the face of a great crisis.[280] Within this purportedly universal historical logic, competing temporal visions are inevitably ignored, obscured, and forgotten; other political concerns are deemed impertinent; existing inequalities and injustice are perpetuated, even exacerbated.

Conclusion

This section showed how crisis-as-progress, rooted in Hegelian historical philosophy, has come to manifest itself in the historical vision of many Utilitarian writers. For these writers, as with Hegel, Kojève, and Fukuyama, crisis becomes a method by which a new universal form of state power can be brought about, and the tool through which a specific historico-political vision can be justified and enacted. As with the global form of infinite delay, crisis-as-progress expands the scope of managerial action to the world as a whole; the two versions differ, however, in their prescriptive project: what is only a rhetorical prop for infinite delay becomes a political agenda for crisis-as-progress. This imposition of a particular historical position on a global scale amounts to Koselleck's aforementioned "forced claim to

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[280] There is abundant material for a Foucauldian analysis here, specifically in relation to his concept of governmentality. Governmentality, "[t]he ensemble formed by…institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections…calculations and tactics," seeks to target not simply individuals, but populations as a whole (Foucault 2003, 244). This focus on population extends to nearly all aspects of the lives of the individuals who come to compose the whole—a whole which, once compiled, can be articulated, molded, and controlled. Governmentality thus concerns itself with "the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health" (241). The question then emerges of who carries this banner of governmentality, and what particular flag-bearer leads the charge for a universal goal. Although historically this exercise of power over populations has been confined to modern state, in the case of environmental crisis, the scope of this biopolitical exercise expands to encompass the entire world. Humanity, or the human species, becomes the unit of action. This universality plays out in the stage of crisis. For further applications of Foucauldian governmentality to environmental issues, see Kosek's *Understories* and *Discourses of the Environment*, edited by Éric Darier.

generality," the universal imposition of a particular historical vision. And where history goes, political action is bound to follow. As this section has shown, the temporal politics encoded within crisis-as-progress calls for top-down governmental action perpetrated by the existing global power structure. Agency is distributed rhetorically, couched in universal or scientific terminology. This homogenization of what it means to be human, when deployed in tandem with a mode of historical time that legitimates certain kinds of political action by endowing them with universality, covers over the particularity and contingency of the interests that come to constitute the environmental crisis.

Conclusion: The Political Stakes of Crisis

The purpose of this part of my project has been to give a comprehensive overview of different manifestations of the politics of historical time, with a special focus on how the political action necessitated by the enactment of certain concepts amounts to a legitimation of state power. It manifests itself in the Arcadian perpetuation of the modern historical consciousness, as well as its exaltation of the preservation of the Natural at the expense of other political issues. It manifests itself in infinite delay's focus on shoring up the power of the katechon, of taking action to make sure existing institutions are preserved, and ensuring that their ability to prevent crisis is maintained. And even when crisis is embraced, as happens in the case of crisis-as-progress, it is not a moment of acquiescence to radical change, but rather a

moment of sublation in which a new system emerges from the ashes of the old, and one globalized structure of power is exchanged for another. Moreover, these attitudes are not simply aberrations, isolated instances of corruption within a tradition that, at its core, promotes justice. They are part and parcel of the modern historical vision that the concept of crisis entails, and one that environmentalism, so long as it is caged in such a conceptual framework, will necessarily be implicated in.

Creating possibilities for an environmentalism that is just, ethical, and democratic thus demands far more than eschewing the word 'crisis,' which is simply a linguistic marker for the historical framework undergirding environmentalism as a whole. For all three of historical visions of crisis outlined in the above sections operate within Koselleck's modern historical consciousness, one that, as will be discussed in the subsequent portion of this project, is necessarily complicit in the perpetuation and expansion of existing power structures, as well as the issues of past and present injustice bound up with it. Hence, we arrive at the ultimate stakes of an exploration into the politics of historical time: how to articulate a new historical framework, one in which the pitfalls of modernity can be avoided and the emancipatory intentions of environmentalism can be fulfilled. It is this matter that we turn to in the closing section.

PART IV

"[I]t raises the question of whether…the future is really the proper horizon of a truly human existence."—Karl Löwith[281]

Speculations on a Nonmodern Historical Consciousness

At this point, it has become clear that the historical consciousness of environmental literature operates within a conceptual framework necessitating the perpetuation of existing power structures and the injustices that accompany it. But this does not mean that the core struggles of environmentalism are inherently anti-democratic, or that they should be given up. After all, a *laissez-faire* acceptance of the environmental crisis is no better than the depoliticized stance of Schmitt's Romantics. Such an acquiescence amounts to an endorsement of the status quo. Thus the solution does not lie in the abandonment of environmentalism, but rather a reworking of it. Specifically, it requires the construction of a new historical framework that is both compatible with the goals of environmentalism and simultaneously grounded in the possibility of truly democratic political structures.[282] In other words, if environmental justice is to cease to be an oxymoron, it must develop a new historical stance.

My method in this final section differs from that of the previous parts. It is less hermeneutical than speculative, less analytical than hypothetical. It does not bring to the surface currents that are already present, but surveys the existing situation and constructs new possibilities on its surface. The solution that I offer is not one I

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[281] Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 204.

[282] It is up for debate whether or not this shift in historical consciousness necessitates the abolition of the current iteration of the liberal state. As previously shown, the state carries with it the task of ensuring human progress, a historical inheritance bound up with injustice and oppressive politics. The question of whether the state could exist without this mandate, or whether a political unit operating with a different historical vision could even be called a state, is beyond the scope of this analysis.

consider comprehensive, or even satisfactory. I do not intend to have the last word, and acknowledge that there will necessarily be more work to do, more details to hash out, and (many) more dilemmas and contradictions to grapple with. I expect to create as many problems as I seek to solve. In short, to surrender to a cliché, this final part of my project is not an end but a beginning, an attempt to work towards a politics of historical time that is truly democratic and compatible with an emancipatory and justice-oriented political project.

I propose that this requires locating environmentalism within a different historical framework. This cannot be as simple as a utopian or primitivist return to Nature—as was shown in Part III, one cannot return to what was never there in the first place. Nor would locating environmentalism within a Marxist historical trajectory be suitable, for that would simply consist of exchanging one telos for another. Any attempt to reforge a historical framework must take into account the precise nature of the problems of the previous one. The problem, as outlined earlier, was that a progressive historical framework, by seeking to ensure continuity in the form of progress, necessitated unjust and anti-democratic political practices. The oppression inherent in the acts of political legitimation rationalized by this modern progressive historical paradigm—specifically the universalized presentation and authoritarian implementation of particular political, social, and ecological futures—corresponds to what Koselleck terms the "one-sidedness" of its historical vision,[283] which conceals the possibility of other temporal experiences that do not fall within its future-oriented universality. As Koselleck so aptly points out, "[t]he progress of modernity, despite its universal claim, reflects only a partial, self-consistent

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[283] Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation,'" 275.

experience and, instead, masks or obscures other modes of experience."[284] Only by placing itself outside of a historical framework which locates humanity on a continuum of global progress can environmentalism be disentangled from the process of obscuring and devaluing "other modes of experience."

This enterprise—to think oneself out of the modern historical framework—is fraught with logical pitfalls, for any attempt at breaking with modernity, at aiming towards a new future, falls under the purview of the modern historical vision itself. Theorizing a new historical consciousness presupposes that the future is malleable and that History can be made; it seeks to enact a total rupture with the past. Doesn't this attitude place the development of historical viewpoints on a line, the 'modern' now relegated to the past, the new iteration taking shape in the future? What is this perspective, if not defiantly modern? And, in a broader sense, any concept is necessarily contingent on, and indebted to, those that came before it—any paradigm shift is predicated on the inadequacy of its predecessor. This is the contradiction inherent in the very concept of a rupture: it entails an unwillingness to engage with the historicity of one's own position.

This opens up space for a horde of other questions. What would a non-future oriented politics look like? Can an institution have a historical consciousness that doesn't demand action to ensure its own continuity? Is such action compatible with democracy? How can environmentalism function without the continuity and growth of state power? These are all questions that require far more complex answers than I can currently provide. But they are questions that need to be taken seriously if environmentalism is to succeed in grounding itself in an ethical historical framework

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[284] Koselleck, "'Progress' and 'Decline,'" 235.

and avoid being buried beneath the contradictions between its undeniably important goals and the material consequences of its ideology. Ultimately, what is at stake in this project—the possibility of a truly just and democratic environmentalism—must override the concerns and contradictions surrounding the construction of an alternative historical framework. While these aporias are not to be ignored, they cannot be used to rationalize an abandonment of this project. And with that, I will carefully steer clear of what Koselleck terms the "vortex of…historicization"[285] in pursuit of the unselfconscious formation of new possibilities for the relationship between time, environmentalism, and the political.

Rethinking the 'Network'

To guide this project along, I will turn to a methodological framework that has been used in a similar large-scale conceptual retooling: the critique of Nature. As Part III showed, the Arcadian concept of a static, essential Nature has profound real-world consequences, mainly in the form of the de facto endorsement of the socio-political status quo and a disengagement from strictly 'human' political struggles. Bruno Latour takes up this topic in his books *We Have Never Been Modern* and *Politics of Nature*. However, his argument is quite different from Cronon and Garforth's critiques seen in Part III. For Latour, there is no homogenous Natural. Rather, what is referred to as "Nature" by environmentalists is in practice "countless imbroglios that always presuppose human participation,"[286] ever-changing collectives of "the

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[285] Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation,'" 259.
[286] Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 20.

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multiplicity of associations of humans and nonhumans."[287] But Latour, unlike Cronon, abolishes not only the Arcadian idea of Nature but also Culture, its ever-present foil. Taken together, these two monolithic concepts constitute the definitive binary of modernity, one in which each necessitates and enacts the existence of the other. A socially constructed Nature still presupposes a society separate from an external non-society; Latour argues that the latter is simply "Nature" clothed in the garb of the social sciences.

In *We Have Never Been Modern,* Latour maps out his solution to this metaphysical dilemma, one grounded not in predetermined binaries but in the real connections that already exist in the world. He proposes a revised "Parliament of Things"[288] that avoids the poles of Nature and Culture by locating its origin in the quasi-object or hybrid, the entity that is simultaneously natural and cultural, material and discursive. Latour's vision is based not in a category, but on "a process, on a movement, a passage…[starting] from the *vinculum* itself, from passages and relations, not accepting as a starting point any being that does not emerge from this relation that is at once collective, real, and discursive."[289] This is Latour's "network," the web of connections between entities that both permits and generates their discrete meaning. Extending his conclusions in *Politics of Nature*, Latour argues that the true substrates of environmentalism, the "matters of concern," as he puts it, are far more complex, far more embedded in networks, than the concept of Nature allows. In reality, environmentalism pertains to "associations of beings that take complicated

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[287] *Ibid.*, 42.
[288] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 145.
[289] *Ibid.*, 129.

forms—rules, apparatuses, consumers, institutions, mores, calves, cows, pigs, broods"—entities far too complex to "include in an inhuman and ahistorical nature."[290]

Latour's project is not purely theoretical. In his new nonmodern Constitution, "[e]very concept, every institution, every practice that interferes with the continuous deployment of collectives and their experimentation with hybrids will be deemed dangerous, harmful, and…immoral."[291] Once these practices are halted, we will have an ontology that is "finally innovating politically, finally bringing us out of modernism,"[292] finally mandating that "the question of democracy be extended to nonhumans."[293] To translate out of Latour's deceptively simple jargon, environmentalism must be grounded in a metaphysical stance based not on the absolutes of society and Nature but on the interactions of different entities. Once we shift our vision to focus on the loci where differences are generated and where boundaries are drawn, our attitudes will no longer be dictated by what is or is not natural or cultural, but on the necessary engagement with the humans and nonhumans to whom we, as individuals, are intimately connected. Latour's use of the word democracy may be figurative, but this doesn't mean there are no political stakes in his discussion. As has been consistently demonstrated throughout this project, concepts—be they of time or nature, history or politics—dictate and define the particular actions of individuals and groups.

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[290] Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 21.
[291] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 139.
[292] Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 27.
[293] *Ibid.*, 223.

Latour's vision has significant implications for how we conceive of crisis. Once we adopt his network-based ontology, there can no longer be any crisis in the global historical sense because there is no longer a unified global totality that can be affected. In place of the big crisis, there emerges a network of interconnected local concerns—"imbroglios," to use Latour's term—that serve as particular manifestations of what was previously a global phenomenon. With this change, the climate crisis can now seen as what it truly is: a coal plant built on the outskirts of Beijing (and the communities and histories it displaces); a politician signing a contract to allow drilling on public land (and all the new jobs it creates for those who would otherwise be living in poverty); the construction of a carbon neutral skyscraper (with all the labor completed by wage slaves who live hours away from the work site). This is the true climate crisis: the inextricability of environmentalism from the litany of other political concerns that exist in the world.

It would seem as if the adoption of Latour's ontology is all that is required to enable environmentalism to become compatible with democracy and justice. But this is not the case for one very simple reason: Latour does not extend his network to the realm of temporal consciousness. In fact, it is Latour's very desire to escape modernity that imprisons him within Koselleck's modern historical framework. We see this at the conclusion of *We Have Never Been Modern,* when Latour rallies his readers to act, writing that "[w]e scarcely have much choice…It is up to us to change our ways of changing."[294] By framing his argument as a call to arms, a cry for the necessity of change, Latour situates himself as a representative of the vanguard peering into the sublime and awesome chasm of the wide-open future, thus placing

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[294] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 145.

himself strictly within modernity while simultaneously calling on others to rise against it. His attitude becomes even clearer in *Politics of Nature*, in which he directly aligns himself with this modern viewpoint. We see this in his proclamation that

> [w]hereas the moderns…were thus always climbing the stairway of progress, we too are going to progress…we shall always go from the mixed to the still more mixed, from the complicated to the still more complicated, from the explicit to the implicit.[295]

Latour, like the 'crisis-as-progress' Utilitarians, simply replaces one mode of progress with another. He still presupposes a wholly new, makeable future, thus cementing him as undeniably modern.

The disjuncture between the democratic goals of Latour's network and his modern historical vision's incompatibility with those goals has striking implications for the success of his intellectual project. The presentation of his nonmodern vision as progressive demonstrates what his relative silence on the issues of history and time merely imply: that these concepts are to be left out of the network.[296] But neglecting

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[295] Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 191.

[296] Latour does, in fact, provide some insights into a nonmodern conception of time: though they aren't incorporated into his final stance, they nonetheless map out a historical vision more in line with his larger conceptual and political project. Just as he seeks to ground the classification and delineation of things in the networks that create them, he seeks a historical vision grounded in a multidirectional and multilayered history:

> Let us suppose, for example, that we are going to regroup contemporary elements along a spiral rather than a line. We do have a future and a past, but the future takes the form of a circle expanding in all directions, and the past is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted and reshuffled. Elements that appear remote if we follow the spiral may turn out to be quite nearby if we compare loops. Conversely, elements that are quite contemporary, if we judge by the line, become quite remote if we traverse a spoke. Such a temporality does not oblige us to use the labels 'archaic' or 'advanced', since every cohort of contemporary elements may bring together elements from all times. In such a framework, our actions are recognized at last as polytemporal. (Latour 1993, 75)

We see here a version of historical time not unlike Koselleck's: patterns of repetition, both immanent to and emergent from individual sequenced events, define and influence (our perceptions of) history. In each, different large-scale and small-scale orders of time meet one another. There is interaction, intersection, a plurality of possibilities, temporal and spatial collision of moments. The fact that this

to take history and temporality into account does not preclude them from having an impact on the dynamics of the network. Rather, it simply means that these two power players have been permitted to conceal themselves, to slink unobserved in and out of the smoke-filled rooms of Latour's Parliament of Things, manipulating circumstances behind the scenes and rendering true democracy impossible. For, as has been shown, any temporal or historical consciousness is integral to the politics of the object it belongs to. As a result, any interaction in a network in which temporality is not brought out from the shadows will necessarily have political stances that go unquestioned, values and presuppositions whose roots are not exhumed. Comprehension of others' politics will be filtered through the valuation demanded by one's own temporality, restricting the possible contestations of political matters to the space such a valuation determines.

But despite its shortcomings, Latour's work is still immensely valuable for our speculative project. An ontology based on the concept of the network, in which a given entity is never a strictly demarcated form but a point of connection making up a vast system of relations, functions quite differently from the historical framework which we seek to escape. In this way, Latour's schema provides us with a conceptual toolbox useful for the task of rethinking history. Following the model of the network, it is possible to conceive of historical time not as a unidirectional and universal progression but as a moment of intersection in the present, one with remembered pasts and possible futures coming and going in constant flux.

"spiral time" appears not as an integral part of the network but a mere theoretical exhibition slipped in midway through *We Have Never Been Modern* is certainly frustrating, given all that it offers.

Once again, we can turn to Koselleck for insight into these ideas about historical time. Such a network-based view of temporality, Koselleck argues, is grounded in the past as we actually experience it, a mode of temporality that the modern historical view obscures. This past as we experience it, as it matters to us, is not homogenous. Rather, it

> is assembled into a totality, within which many layers of earlier times are simultaneously present, without, however, providing any indication of the before and after. There is no experience that might be chronologically calibrated…all experience leaps over time; experience does not create continuity in the sense of an additive preparation of the past. To borrow an image from Christian Meier, it is like the glass front of a washing machine, behind which various bits of the wash appear now and then, but are all contained within the drum.[297]

But this dynamic space of the past does not exist in isolation. It is in constant contact with the future as

> new hopes or disappointments, or new expectations, enter [experiences] with retrospective effect. Thus, experiences alter themselves as well, despite, once having occurred, remaining the same. This is the temporal structure of experience and without retroactive expectation it cannot be accumulated.[298]

This interaction results in a mutual entanglement of past experience and future expectation. Together, these two fields "constitute a temporal difference in the today by redoubling past and future on one another in an unequal manner."[299] Experience and expectation, past and future, make meaning via the persistent mutual alteration which occurs in the present moment. The past does not simply accumulate like so many layers of sediment, one era on top of the other. Rather, temporal consciousness, that great, inexhaustible excavator, generates constant repetition both in the literal

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[297] Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation,'" 260.
[298] *Ibid.*, 262.
[299] *Ibid.*, 263.

reoccurrence of events and in the inconsistent and disorderly presence of the past in the present, the zone where it collides with the future.

Thus the past and future, as we experience them, never exist separately from the moment in which they are conjured up. Each one materializes in the present in what Koselleck terms the space of experience (the past) and horizon of expectation (the future).[300] The past and future do not exist separately, but, like Latour's Nature and Culture, emerge from the same locus. Thus it is in the present, the estuary of experience and expectation, where we can locate a temporal analogue to Latour's hybrid. Furthermore, this nonmodern temporality that Koselleck offers gives us a number of clues to help redesign Latour's network. Once the past, present, and future are no longer considered to be categorically separate, but rather as constantly making and remaking each other in the present moment, they can all be seen as equally contingent, and thus equally legitimate.[301] As a result, temporality is no longer a background condition governing politics with impunity, delimitating what matters and what does not. Rather, it is an element whose presence is made explicit and whose political investments are held accountable.

Thus, as a corrective measure to Latour's network, which allows temporality to continue its political work unseen, I propose what I term a "chrono-network." The chrono-network accounts for the temporal frameworks integral to the construction

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[300] Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation,'" 259-263.

[301] This is not to say there will be no contradictions. As has been shown, modern historical consciousness is predicated on the universalization of its own temporal stance at the expense of others. Thus the enforcement of the legitimacy of all temporalities would seem to render progress incompatible with the chrono-network. The promotion of temporal tolerance risks turning the intolerant progressive into a barbarian, one not allowed into the democratic space of the chrono-network. This categorical rejection of a certain mode of temporality goes against the entire purpose of the chrono-network. However, I do not think this is an inherent contradiction, simply a problem to be solved. It epitomizes the moments of debate that must occur, and demonstrates what matters will be contested.

and constitution of every object and relationship that makes up the network. As has already been shown, every political concern is backed by a corresponding historical consciousness. Temporality is not simply another object that must take its space in the Parliament of Things, but what undergirds the politicized character of such objects. Even within the parameters of Latour's network-based democracy, if temporalities do not show themselves, the project's end goal—a praxis in which all connections are made visible and contestable—can never be realized. Thus the chrono-network demands that the interests of each group and entity involved are read in light of their own political vision. Each entity becomes aware of the ties between his/her/its interests and the temporality that enables such interests, not to mention the networks this temporality is connected to. Time is no longer isolated but brought to the center. Additionally, the temporal visions of others are no longer othered—they are made explicit, as are the politics of those visions. Temporal consciousness is not concealed, or written off as separate. It is acknowledged and analyzed. Its politics are tallied and made visible. It becomes pertinent in the democratic negotiation of interests. And once the myriad temporalities and their associated politics are made explicit, deemed legitimate, and understood in their contingency, Latour's network will truly live up to its democratic potential.

The Chrono-Network in Practice

The practical realization of any speculative theoretical exercise is always difficult, and this case is no exception. Articulating what a chrono-network might look like beyond the page is an enterprise that is fraught with hazards—after all, an integral principle of the network is that it cannot be generated speculatively but must

be composed by taking account of things in the present. Any projection is bound to emphasize certain connections at the expense of others, running contrary to the chrono-network's very goal. Nonetheless, there is no other way to begin: only through hypothesis and speculation can we advance a sketch of the chrono-network, and only then will it be identifiable in the world around us. Once again, Latour provides guidance in this endeavor: by creating a hypothetical imbroglio, one including all the interests involved and their mutually constitutive relationships, we can understand how a traditional network and a chrono-network might differ, and how the latter maneuvers beyond the limitations of the former.

To emphasize the ultimately local character of the global crisis, I chose an event which happened here, in Middletown. Last fall, uproar arose among the Wesleyan student body because the University planned to build an additional natural gas cogeneration power plant on campus. The University, many students argued, should not support such a potentially harmful environmental project, one that would drive the Earth one step closer to environmental crisis (a consideration which trumped all others). The ability to make sure the campus didn't lose power during a storm is not worth it, went the argument. But looking at this controversy as the imbroglio it is, we can see its place in the network and the other issues involved. Students opposed to the proposed natural gas-fueled plant cited both the environmental and social costs of the hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") technique often used to extract natural gas, writing that "[f]racking is extremely destructive at the local-level…at times destroying the lives of the communities where the extraction takes place," noting specifically "the earthquakes, neurological diseases, and destruction of property that

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fracking has left in its wake."[302] Because fracking is typically conducted closer to poorer areas than wealthy ones, the construction of this natural gas power plant on Wesleyan's campus would immediately be tied to issues of class. Additionally, the plant's construction would provide monetary support for a growing natural gas industry which often markets itself as an environmentally friendly alternative to coal. As a result, the University would be implicated in the expansion of global capitalism currently being facilitated by the commodification of environmentalism in the form of green products, sustainable development, and other ventures that risk exacerbating existing economic inequalities in the United States and around the world.[303]

Returning to Middletown, we can explore another political dimension of this environmental issue. As mentioned earlier, one of the main reasons for constructing the new plant was to ensure that the University would never be without power for an extended period of time, as happened after the major snowstorm in the fall of 2011.[304] However, this discussion generally glossed over a major facet of the power outage: the tension which erupted because the University received power back long before most of the rest of Middletown, which has a much larger African-American and working-class population than the University. For some, the fact that Wesleyan got power back long before other parts of Middletown made it appear that serving the predominantly white and upper-class students at the University was a greater priority for the city than restoring power to its residents. It is not clear exactly how a new

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[302] Marjorie Dodson, Emma Pattiz, Evan Weber and Virgil Taylor, "Power Plant Proposal Not Good for Wesleyan," *The Wesleyan Argus*, 29 November 2012, accessed 12 April 2013, http://wesleyanargus.com/2012/11/29/power-plant-proposal-not-good-for-wesleyan.
[303] Swyngedouw, "Apocalypse Forever," 219-220.
[304] "Wesleyan University Business Continuity Planning Electrical Power Study," Wesleyan University, accessed 12 April 2013, http://www.wesleyan.edu/sustainability/energy/freeman-cogen.pdf.

power plant would impact this situation. One possibility is that Wesleyan, by no longer relying as much on the municipal grid, could allow Middletown to focus more on serving its other residents, thus ensuring that the well-being of Wesleyan students would not be prioritized unfairly. Conversely, the plant's construction could exacerbate already strained relations between Wesleyan and Middletown; it is possible that, by increasing its infrastructural autonomy, the plant could further isolate Wesleyan from its surroundings. In addition, it is likely that the early 2010 explosion at the Kleen Energy Systems Plant in Middletown, which killed six and injured over fifty,[305] has a more prominent place in the collective memory of Middletown residents than among the Wesleyan student body. The rapid turnover of Wesleyan's student population results in an extremely short institutional memory. As a result, a disaster which may be a powerful source of grief for many Middletown residents may be an event that most of the student body has never heard about. This difference in memory between Wesleyan and Middletown adds an additional complication the power plant situation.[306]

Let us use this real-world situation to generate a hypothetical. For the sake of simplicity, we can limit ourselves to three people negotiating the construction of the cogeneration plant—after all, this is not a comprehensive articulation of a chrono-network, but simply an attempt to model its characteristics.[307] First we have the

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[305] "6th Worker Dies Of Injuries From Kleen Energy Blast," *The Hartford Courant*, 19 February 2010, accessed 12 April 2013, http://articles.courant.com/2010-02-19/news/hc-sixth-death0220.artfeb19_1_ natural-gas-gas-meter-power-plant.

[306] This is not to say that an examination of these issues provides a definitive answer to the question of whether the new power plant should or should not be built. It is simply to illustrate the way in which environmental issues are embroiled in a collective of social, political, and economic concerns, concerns that manifest themselves on a multitude of local scales.

[307] I must emphasize that at this point the hypothetical has departed significantly from the actual situation. These three parties are not personifications of the main interests involved in the construction

Utilitarian environmentalist, very much in the mold of James Hansen. He does not want the power plant built because it will give business to energy companies and increase (if only minutely) the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. He values the enactment of his desired future above all else. His historical consciousness is defiantly modern. The second individual at the negotiating table is a Middletown resident. Recalling how in 2011 the city privileged the interests of the University over its residents, she seeks to ensure that such a threat to the autonomy of her community doesn't occur again. If Wesleyan builds the plant, she believes that the municipal and state government, as well as her community, will no longer be beholden to the University's energy desires. Hence, for this resident, the construction of the plant becomes a mechanism for ensuring continued autonomy. Her historical consciousness, not concerned with enacting a specific future but grounded in the maintenance of particular conditions, is oriented towards the present. The third member of the table is a contractor who witnessed the 2010 explosion. He sees the construction of the plant as an insult to the memory of those who lost their lives in the disaster, several of whom were people he knew. Such a plan to continue industrial development unscathed appears, for this contractor, as an attempt to cover over a past which must be preserved. Given his desire for the preservation of memory, the contractor, it can be said, operates within a temporality focused on the past.

To summarize, our cohort seated at the negotiating table includes the environmentalist, who locates the future as the only site of valuable political action; the resident, who is motivated by an investment in the present; and the contractor,

of the plant, but simply embodiments of possible temporal frameworks that could be brought to the table and the political interests that could be tied to those frameworks.

who seeks to preserve the past. Each of these three individuals brings different interests to the negotiations surrounding the construction of the plant, and each one finds different things contestable. However, if the temporalities that the environmentalist, the resident, and the contractor operate within (as well as the politics of those temporalities) are not made explicit, true negotiation will be impossible, for the concerns involved will not be dealt with as they are, but distorted by the temporal attitudes involved. The future-oriented environmentalist, for example, will view the concerns of the other two to be based on value systems operating within an illogical framework. He will see the resident as epicurean, caring only about a specific, fleeting moment at the expense of the future; he will write off the contractor as an individual stuck in the past, someone who needs to be caught up to the present day and its future-oriented concerns.[308] As a result of the incommunicability and irreconcilability of these differing temporal stances, the environmentalist does not consider the political positions of the other two to be legitimate. This is the failure of the solution offered by Latour—an inability to place all components of the network on the table, to identify the conceptual framework that props up particular interests and ideologies. This makes truly democratic negotiation impossible from the beginning—for when concealed and unacknowledged, temporal attitudes can close off the possibility for dialogue.

Now let us analyze this situation re-envisioned from the perspective of the chrono-network. If we embrace Koselleck's temporality—in which the past and future are continuously recalibrated in the present—each of the three parties in the negotiation must acknowledge the legitimacy of the temporal viewpoints commanded

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[308] This is reminiscent of Koselleck's concept of the ideological amplifier discussed in Part III.

by the others. Furthermore, all connections between temporal viewpoints and political matters must be made explicit. Temporalities can no longer be permitted to pull strings in secret, keeping pertinent connections veiled and barring potential contestations. However, once these politicized connections are brought out into the open, the presence of their associated temporal stances can be accounted for.

Returning to our hypothetical, we can see that if the framework of the chrono-network is adopted by each of the individuals involved in the negotiation, the impasses faced earlier can be resolved. We no longer have three people approaching the world with vastly different temporal stances; rather, in the chrono-network, each one becomes aware of the contingency of their own concept of time. The environmentalist can see that his future-oriented attitude rests on a desire for infinite delay of crisis,[309] an attitude with a long intellectual history that is brought to bear in the present, like the contents of the washing machine described by Koselleck. The resident realizes that the desire to ensure her community's autonomy is conditioned by a temporal consciousness invested in continuity with the past and future. The contractor accepts that his preoccupation with memorializing the disaster rests on his desire of maintaining the possibility of a certain future, one in which his chosen past is continuously acknowledged, and validated. Furthermore, all temporal attitudes, once accepted as both utterly contingent and intractably bound to political interests, can no longer be employed to evaluate the stance of another. The resident can no longer hold the contractor in contempt for being stuck in the past, as she now realizes that he is no more (and no less) in the past than she is, given that the past is being continuously remade in the present moment. This goes for all the other intertemporal

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[309] See Part III for an overview of infinite delay.

dynamics involved in the negotiation—the environmentalist, the resident, and the contractor must all acknowledge the legitimacy of their corresponding temporalities, and render explicit the relationship between those temporalities and the interests they are entangled with. Only once Koselleck's model of time is adopted and enacted can all temporal attitudes be accepted as legitimate; only after we change how we view time and history can the connections to the political realm fully explored; only when Latour's network becomes a chrono-network can democracy truly come into being; and only when all these principles are brought to bear on environmentalism will it no longer be complicit with oppression, injustice, and anti-democratic political structures.

A sensible response to this proposition would be to ask how such an approach will ensure both a proper management of the environmental crisis and the inclusion of all political viewpoints and parts of the imbroglio. In other words, how do we know whether the chrono-network will "work"? Unfortunately, there cannot be a satisfactory answer to this question. The whole premise of the chrono-network as a model for democratic decision-making rests on eschewing any kind of future-oriented mindset, one that would enter into a negotiation with the belief that its own interests were more legitimate than those of others. For the chrono-network to function properly, there can be no presupposition of what a positive outcome may or may not look like, but simply an acceptance of the validity of all possibilities—an acceptance which, I have argued, is contingent on a view of time grounded in the present. Any question of solving the current environmental crisis cannot preexist the negotiation, but must instead emerge as part of the elaboration and management of the network. I

believe this will happen, given that, as I have shown throughout this project, the concept of environmental crisis, and environmentalism as a whole, is deeply interconnected with other major issues individuals and communities face.

This is especially the case with climate change: as McKibben, Hansen, Gilding, and many others have argued, its causes and consequences impact the entire world, both directly and indirectly. Mike Hulme, an environmental scientist and writer, offers especially insightful analysis on this topic. Far from a cordoned-off, monolithic phenomenon, "climate change acts as a proxy for, and a revealer of, conflict in the human world."[310] Through the chrono-network, we can finally analyze properly the relations between climate change and the other issues it is intrinsically connected with. Specifically, Hulme argues, we must use "the asymmetric matrix of power relationships, social discourse and symbolic meanings that climate change reveals…to re-think how we take forward our various political, social and economic projects over the decades to come."[311] Given our understanding of the chrono-network, we know that the reverse must also take place: our political projects, not to mention the concepts of history that structure them, must be applied to re-think climate change. In short, climate change cannot be "solved" in isolation from the conducting truly democratic work on other political issues. Rather, as Latour says, we must start "from the *vinculum* itself, from passages and relations, not accepting as a starting point any being that does not emerge from this relation." We must begin with the chrono-network and work outwards, certain in our knowledge that if democracy is the starting point, environmental action will follow. But just how or when it will

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[310] Mike Hulme, "Four Meanings of Climate Change," in *Future Ethics*, 39.
[311] *Ibid.*, 54.

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appear cannot be known in advance, for that requires the kind of work that cannot be

accomplished on the page.

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