

On October 14th, two protestors approached Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" in the National Gallery of London. Their intention was not just to simply admire the work, but to throw tomato soup onto the oil painting, shortly before gluing themselves to the wall. And in what must be devastating news to any Van Gogh haters out there, the painting was protected by a sheet of glass.

[PLAY VIDEO OF SOUP]

On October 23rd, the day I am writing this, German protestors had similar intentions for Monet's "Les Meules". Once again, they forgone any attempt to escape in favor of gluing their hands to the wall. And once again, the glass stopped the potatoes from embedding themselves in art history.

[PLAY VIDEO OF POTATOES]

The whole thing is pretty bizarre. First question any rational person would like to ask is why? It pretty obviously is a symbolic gesture, after all, they did it in the open, going as far as to glue themselves to the wall right next to the scene of the crime. Not to mention who these protestors are. The Londoners are affiliated with "Just Stop Oil!", a climate activist group. Whereas the Germans belong to Last Generation... a climate activist group. Hmm.

Well, there's not much mystery here. Not to mention that the German protestors were kind enough to provide a speech outlining their intentions:

[PLAY SPEECH]

So, yeah. To put two and two together, the stunts were intended to raise awareness about climate issues, by sparking controversy and thus giving the protestors a platform to talk about whatever. They were banking on outrage towards their actions as a way to demonstrate how little seriousness with which the public approaches climate issues. In that sense, they got what they wanted. The videos have gone viral, and now there is discussion on the urgency of the climate issue and whether or not a painting matters more than the planet.

It's a debate as old as time. One man will say "how dare they try and destroy something so prized over such a petty stunt", another will say "our planet matters far more than a stupid painting, do you not see these people are simply scared". Another may respond with "yes, we need to do something, but this will only turn people away from our cause". The whole thing is comical, almost like a parody of the discourse that goes on every time there's a riot or wave of crime.

I have no plans to join in the mud-fight for this one. Instead I think there's value in discussing the pointlessness of it all, and segue that into a larger discussion about the impotency of present-day political action.

Impotency? Didn't I say that the protestors got what they wanted? Well sure, in the sense that they wanted to put attention on their message and the message got attention. But what I want to focus on is what they want that attention towards and why specifically attention.

Well, before we get into any of that, let's start with the basics of the situation. As mentioned before, both incidents are tied to environmental organizations. Just Stop Oil, the organization behind the soup incident, seeks to pressure the UK government into blocking fossil fuel projects. They often do this by disrupting high profile events, in the hopes of getting coverage. Last Generation, the German group,

employs similar tactics, but has a slightly different focus: they pitch themselves as part of the last generation who can stop climate change, and the generation who will suffer from its effects. That's why in the clip earlier, you see them make such a big deal about starving in the year 2050.

Climate change is a rather popular topic, even the King of England recently spoke about the need to address it. But to these groups, the efforts by mainstream politicians such as King Charles or Barack Obama are unserious. But how is that, when they have so much clout? Right away, this highlights a key divide in environmental activism.

A common criticism leveled at the protestors was that by vandalizing these paintings, all you're doing is turning off people from environmental causes. But, while this is an obvious response, I'd argue it's less striking than you'd think. It takes for granted this idea of political respectability necessarily being something good or conducive towards advancing a cause. Seems like common sense, especially given how this sort of negotiation and persuasion is part and parcel of liberal politics. Is that necessarily the case, though? Climate change isn't exactly an obscure issue, it has some of the most famous and beloved figures speaking out about it.

It's constantly relayed to us through our television, our politics, our press. Companies have begun selling "sustainable" products, politicians promise green energy and carbon taxes, YouTubers pledge to plant trees. Yet, why do the projections presented to us seem so bleak? Why are we, after more than 50 years of activism, being told that all hell is going to break loose within less than 50 years from now? Why is it that when even liberals speak of the prospects of saving the planet, they do so with a latent anxiety, that even with all the clout they have, that it may just not happen? Why is it that when they celebrate their electoral victories as the salvation of our planet, they return again the next year to plead the public with the same urgency?

One can blame the climate change deniers, saying that they're too stupid, that their obstruction and conspiracies are going to kill us all, but I don't think that's a valid excuse. The whole point of any sort of political approach, whether we're talking about pitching environmentalism as something respectable and non-disruptive, or throwing soup on a painting, is to influence human behavior. If human behavior is not being changed, that implies an issue with your approach. If human behavior cannot be changed, that implies the futility of the effort to begin with.

These protestors belong to a camp of environmental activists who reject that sort of respectability. To them, treating climate policy as another horse to be traded undermines its importance, that stressing the non-disruption of climate policy allows it to be brushed under the rug easier, to allow people and institutions to change their behavior only in trivial ways. It might give high approval for "environmentalism" in nominal surveys: not because it adjusted the public towards environmentalism, but because it adjusted the meaning of the word "environmentalism" towards what is palatable.

But putting aside this debate, what's really interesting is actually what both of these groups have in common: they base their perspective on this aforementioned axiom that politics is about influencing human behavior. Both of them identify a problem, and in order to solve that problem they see it necessary to win support and then funnel that support into an institution which will solve the problem for them. Someone like Barack Obama believes that by addressing the public and crafting legislation through the proper venues, that this will provide the cause with enough favorability to win over voters, and in turn, legislators. Meanwhile the protestors believe that their actions will spark not acceptance, but anger and discussion to the point that the UK will eventually feel more pressure to take more drastic steps.

For all their mutual hostility, both camps ultimately are doing the same thing: petitioning society, whether we mean the government, consumers, or corporations. It may sound like a lame way to describe it, but the only difference really is in the negotiation tactics: do you go for a hard sell or a soft sell? This idea that there need even be a sale in the first place goes quietly presumed.

There's such a hyperfocus on this process, that it seems absurd to even think about what happens after "the sale", so to speak. The issue is raised, we get the state's ear, and then what? Well, then The Policy would be passed, right? Maybe it's a Green New Deal, maybe it's a carbon tax. The Policy needn't be limited to the climate situation, it can be a healthcare bill, an infrastructure bill, a housing bill, doesn't matter. The point is that The Policy is a panacea to all our modern problems, and if you want change you want The Policy. The way it claims to have all the solutions, really makes you wonder why it hasn't been adopted yet. But that's not The Policy's fault, you're reassured, it's all due to the lobbying of special interests. Or maybe it's because the public is too ignorant and misinformed to understand how great it is.

I speak of it in general terms, because there's a general vagueness to this sort of policy, even climate policy. To the activists, the question of how is never fully clear, nor need it be since the responsibility of actually affecting said change is out of their hands. But how can I accuse it of being vague when the full text of the policy and what it does is right there? How can I say we don't know how it changes things when we have all these experts and studies testifying to the difference it would make?

But how many of these activists are actually expected to read the full text? To analyze the methodologies behind the studies and understand exactly where these statistics are coming from? It's easy to say this is the fault of the activists for not doing their homework, but I disagree. Propaganda as a system relies on you not understanding the details, it's power is in its simplicity, for you to digest it, it requires you to respond to it passively.

When a legislator crafts a bill, he is doing so with full knowledge that it ultimately will be responded to with either a "Yes" vote or a "No" vote. How informed those votes are, or how robust their justification does not matter. That "Yes" is still worth the same as any other "Yes". That's why you see politicians using the same slogans as the activists: healthcare is a right, people over profit, so on and so forth.

Hence why in such a case such as that with the Green New Deal, you'll almost always see it presented in terms of these general goals rather than what is actually being done. The bill-text goes into detail about all the climate-related problems facing the United States, and frames its solutions as "cutting emissions by 40 to 60% by 2030" or "meeting 100% of power demand through clean energy". Actually, solutions is a rather misleading term. These are goals at best. The question of how is entirely sidestepped, just a "Yes" or "No" on whether or not you think climate change is a problem and whether or not you'd like to see these goals met.

In this document, this document that politicians have been bitterly fighting over for years mind you, not once is there something actually actionable or concrete stated: read through it yourself if you want. This question of how is secondary, what's primary in the discourse is simply signaling a position.

Now, the more astute of you might point out that the 2019 Green New Deal is not a piece of legislation, but a resolution. That it's unfair to make these criticisms, when there exists various other accompanying bills which provide concrete, actionable proposals such as the GND for Cities, the GND for Public Housing, etc. That if you were to look into these bills, which provide funding for local "Green New

Deal initiatives” and then look into those local Green New Deal programs, you'd understand exactly how we will, say, cut emissions by 40% in little under ten years.

But that sort of wonky lens, ironically enough, takes the policy out of context. It's easy to hone in on the plan-text, but that's only part of the story. The public psychology surrounding it, and how presentation plays to it also matters, arguably more. When presenting this to the press, to voters, what pitch are the advocates running with? Save the planet, meet these emission goals by 2030. Once again, it's concise and reframes the question into a moral one.

If you say No, you're saying no to saving the planet. If you say Yes, the planet will be saved, you as the average citizen need not worry about the rest. It's like an empty canvas, just fill in the blanks with whatever you can imagine. But it's a double-edged weapon. You can project your dreams onto it, but also your nightmares. On the very same canvas, the opposition has taken to painting a litany of scenarios. And we see these talking points: Green New Deal will abolish cars, it's going to do away with cows, it's going to bankrupt everyone in the country. You can eye-roll at these fears, but the fact is you can't have your cake and eat it too.

The very same ambiguity and propagandistic signaling the bill is based on is just as easily turned back. The Green New Deal magically saved us from climate change? Now it magically will subject all Americans to a miserable globalist agenda. Why not? After all, we barely even know what it does. Maybe we do need to take away people's cars to meet that goal of reduced emissions by 2030, maybe nationalizing companies is how it ends up being done. Maybe after buying enough electric cars, the emissions somehow get cut down. All these scenarios may seem absurd, but they're all plausible in the public imagination, the imagination such vagueness preys on. The back and forth continues, political arguments focus more on arguing over platitudes and signaling as opposed to implementation.

The issue is that in a democratic society, policy puts a critical distance between the voting public and the issue at hand. Yes, the public chooses what we pass and are the ones ultimately impacted by said decisions. But despite that, they practically lack a window to all that comes in between. And no, this isn't just an issue of transparency or education: after all, you can read the legislation online if you so desire.

What it is is a matter of abstraction: functionally speaking nobody is expecting your average citizen to begin reading House resolutions line-by-line. And no, you can't just blame it on them like “oh it's their fault for not educating themselves”, because obfuscation is absolutely the point. The less certain the average person is of your unspecified social engineering plan, the less likely they are to question it.

When you have a bill like the GND start as a general statement of principles which in turn points to a handful of federal bills which in turn point to quote-unquote “authorized Green New Deal projects”, are you starting to see the issue? I'm still no closer to figuring out exactly how we're meeting that emission quota than I was before I went down this rabbit hole.

Climate change is a complex issue: yes it is caused by man-made emissions, but a lot of things in our society cause emissions, including things a lot of us would consider necessary. The factories which produce our consumer goods, the cars we drive, the trucks carrying our food, and so on. This complexity inevitably will carry over into the issue of solutions, and with it a lot of ways in which one can have a very promising plan fall short of the goal. Remember, the goal is to reduce emissions by 40-60% by 2030. I cannot understate how tall of an order that is.

Transportation is the sector with the highest rates of pollution. If America entirely did away with cars, trucks, ships, trains, and planes, that would only account for a 27% reduction. Such a scenario would entirely break supply chains, cost millions of jobs, and render much of our social and economic systems untenable. The mere suggestion of such a proposal would be enough to sink it from the start. And yet even something as radical as this would still not be enough to meet the target. Meanwhile the actual proposals, investing billions of dollars into clean energy and funding electric vehicle infrastructure, come nowhere near that 27%.

If the bill won't tell us, then who will? Well, that would be the wonks: a class of people whose specialized knowledge and bureaucratic standing grant them both the social clearance and expertise to micromanage this issue on your behalf. They conduct the research, publish the studies, draft the plans, advise the politicians, and run the agencies overseeing these large-scale projects. They have the Plan, you have the votes. Give them the power, and they'll do it for you, as they're far more qualified to handle it.

They claim to be able to know the how. Are we pushing for electric vehicles? Carbon taxes? Solar panels? How do we mold people's incentives? What is the government's role and to what extent? How effective are each of these pet proposals at cutting emissions versus the political capital expended? Will the drawbacks inspire backlash?

If they fail to account for any of this when will we know? When it's already too late? Who's going to hold them accountable then? Would we even be able to definitively know it was their fault? After all, a multitude of factors contributing to this issue also means a multitude of things that one can blame things on.

To bring this back to our original discussion, the point I have spent all this time belaboring is that our modern political landscape is characterized by essentially trusting bureaucratic mediators to solve all our problems.

Climate is only one example, we can see it elsewhere in how we tackle social problems. Hunger in our communities? Cancer? Donate to a charity and just trust that they will allocate the money responsibly. (Hint: they often don't.) Poor work conditions? Pay your dues and trust union leadership to work something out. How to provide for your family, how to educate your children? Now there's a long list of officials and agendas that have to be answered to. And even then, despite all the reforms and funding we have passed, whether it be through No Child Left Behind or Common Core, consistent public education still remains a largely unsolved issue.

In recent decades, it's gone a step further. Volunteering and individual donations have been replaced with companies "pledging part of their proceeds to charity", and laundering their reputation through those means. NGOs have shifted their focus from direct involvement in communities towards lobbying governments and "raising awareness". In the private sector, labor unions are on the decline, as once again workers are encouraged to fight for their pay increases in the realm of minimum wages and government policy.

I'm about to say something that's not often said on the left and it's this: forget the planet for a second, there's a much bigger problem here. And this is where I finally bring the video back to the original point. It's the problem that's present with your charities, your Green New Deals, your "ethical companies", and even with your soup fanatics.

We are currently in a political environment where the idea of people and communities fixing their own problems has become increasingly inconceivable. Everything requires a policy agenda, everything has to be micromanaged administratively, either by the state and its appendages or by the market and its appendages.

Political activity in the modern age exclusively consists of expressing “support”, whether that be through canvassing, donating, or mouthpiecing. What do these have in common? For one, they take away responsibility from those impacted by a given issue, and by the same measure they take away agency. All of these rest on the implicit assumption that whatever is good for the mediating organization is good for the cause.

But why should we assume that's the case? After all, at what point in time does a mediator get the most attention and power? When they're in that position of mediating. If the problem is solved, they stop being relevant. So why not indefinitely extend their tenure by keeping things in an uneasy equilibrium?

Since they're the ones with all the knowledge and agency relative to these issues, if they fail to provide results, chances are the public will either respond with apathy or confusion.

Whenever you do see people instinctually pushed to their limit, we see it manifest negatively: the classic example is riots. Faceless, spontaneous, destructive. An undirected expression of rage which serves as the planner's foil. They'll say “oh these concerns are legitimate, but this is no way to solve them”. And from there use the opportunity to cement both their social reforms and their iron grip.

But why does it manifest negatively? Because all of the above has rendered the public politically impotent. The same way sheltering a child stunts his development, taking away the ability for people to affect their own change creates collective amnesia. The rioter vaguely recognizes something isn't wrong, but he's often unsure about what it is, much less how to fix it.

And we see this position reflect among the Left, long torchbearers of radical politics. What is revolution, when all the prophets of old have embedded themselves into the very institutions they were supposed to destroy? Where is the vanguard when the precursor to institutional legitimacy precludes any radical content?

Mark Fisher has been famously quoted as alleging that “we can no longer imagine a future outside of capitalism”, but I'd argue it's evolved further. We cannot imagine, period. Politics is no longer about actually affecting change, but simply demanding that things must change. That's why you see leftists rally behind slogans: Free Palestine, Eat the Rich, what have you. That's all that's left when you have lost sight of an actual vision.

Returning to our vandal friends, we can finally understand what has become of them. They see the issue of climate, they experience the discontent with which it is being handled, and it creates a general sense of frustration. But when we look at how that frustration is expressed, they do it in the same way a toddler cries for help. They create a scene and get attention, but then what? They appeal to the same exact authorities they were protesting against to solve the problem.

This isn't direct action, this is the political equivalent of venting. There's a psychological release in “being heard”, but what has actually changed?

I think it's good here to talk about the meaning of the term “direct action” because it's been misused a lot, especially by groups like these. Direct action is seeing a problem in your community and taking matter into your own hands to directly solve it. There's no need to win approval, raise awareness, what have you, it's just a matter of doing.

Back in the 70s, in response to widespread police brutality against the black residents of Oakland, the Black Panther Party was formed. They were faced with this problem, namely that the police were making their life hell, and they responded to it by creating an armed community guard to essentially “police the police”. This proved effective, as officers were less likely to get confrontational. This represented not just a victory and an expression of power for some abstract bureaucratic organization the community allied with, but the community themselves. The founders' goal was to show that the police weren't bulletproof, and that success brought with it a sense of increased agency. The Panthers would go on to expand their activities, such as providing free breakfasts for children, dealing with the issue of malnutrition in a fashion much more effectively than LBJ's supposed “Great Society” was.

This is direct action. The focus is on activity, activity which can directly and commonly be understood as addressing the issue at hand. And it's here where someone can see the way in which one's own capacity to act directly informs their own sense of autonomy and sense of self.

Just Stop Oil! claims to employ direct action tactics, but let us actually think about whether or not that is the case. We talk so much about the throwing soup here, or throwing potatoes there, but what is actually at the core of the action? Raising awareness. In that respect, they're not so different from Greta Thunberg giving a speech or a Democratic operative hosting a canvassing event. The psychic impact of their situation is obvious, they're helpless. They cry, plead about the urgency, the deadline of 2050, repeat all sorts of moralisms regarding their futures, but what does it actually signify? What does it signify when a terminally ill man lashes out, crying to God for his life? Surrender, either to a higher authority or to the futility of their situation. In this case, the higher authority, the God so-to-speak, is the administrative State.

This very exchange reinforces their smallness, and confronted with this terrifying fact, they have no recourse but to double down. And I think it's this, even moreso than the impending climate situation, which really fills them with dread. “I am not small, I am not helpless”, they protest, thinking that if they shout louder then maybe that will cause others to recognize them as autonomous. But paradoxically, the louder they shout, the deeper they dig themselves in, because they look for affirmation in what others do as opposed to what they themselves are doing.

In the 1844 Manuscripts, Karl Marx lays out his theory of human nature. In here, he states that it is through their life-activity that humans experience consciousness and distinguish themselves from animals. This is why Marx is so focused on labor, on activity. When one's very activity is alien, separated from oneself, that is a separation from their humanity. Activity is not just a means to an end, our actions effect not just the outer world but our inner selves too. Action is the link between will and reality, and without that the world begins to become unreal to us.

It's easy enough to think that all this mental stuff is of lesser importance, but it could not be further from the truth. A link goes both ways: without it, you lose the capacity to not just think but also affect that change. For the bulk of this video I have drawn this distinction between the “experts” and the “public”, but this is no class-hierarchy. The experts, while seeking the agency, have not somehow managed to hoard all the agency for themselves. Rather instead, they drink their own Kool-Aid, just as lost as everyone else. Any one activist, advisor, or politician sees themselves as just one cog in the

machine, trusting that someone else is driving the train. Nobody is driving the train. Everyone's lost the plot, this is not just an issue that affects "the masses", but humanity as a whole.

It's when confronted with this totally passive existence, that we begin to see a society whose social attitude is defined by consumption as opposed to productivity. Belief no longer stands as a guideline for action, but as a statement of identity. Under capitalism, images become the medium by which all our social relations become market-mediated. No longer is just our activity alien to us, but also our friendships, our situation, our very identity.

And this is where a great irony comes to light: because this impact is mechanical and totalizing, it does not discriminate. Radicalism is just as prone as anything else to this total emptying of content, with the invocation of imagery becoming our way of expressing discontent, as opposed to you know, addressing the problems.

In the whole performance, whether it be the show of throwing food on the painting, whether it be gluing one's hand to the wall, whether it be the speaking out against "high art" and the condemnation of the (presumably elite) audience of the gallery, this all invokes imagery. It recalls the avant-garde, the idea of youthful rebellion, the very same fashions we have come to associate with the revolutionaries of the 60s and 70s. This performance was not just on for the public, but also themselves I suspect. It gives them a sense of security in following another's script, that even as they're taking the action of committing a crime, they do not have to bear the responsibility of deciding this themselves.

For, in their participation in this whole theater, they are indulging themselves in that image, having become an image themselves. They now get to be one of the same stars they once looked up to, this time to a new batch of discontented youth. Of course, the more this charade repeats throughout history, the less luster it has. I remember finding it quite funny that this occurred a second time. What about a third time? A fourth? At what point does it become obvious that these stunts are mass-produced, just like everything else under capitalism?

Action begets more action: a wildcat strike grows as more and more workers identify with the faceless mass and join in. It is the same for reflection, perpetual in nature. One can never be satisfied with the fruits of spectacle, as it lacks authenticity. There is no end to consumption then, which works out rather well for an economic system predicated on infinite growth.

It's a rather bleak picture, but one must remember that activity stems from within. As long as free will continues to exist, therein lies the seeds of hope. Remember this: people, as an aggregate, act according to trends and structural factors. But individual persons, once you get down to that micro-level, are much more complex. Therein the psychological, the spiritual, the existential what-have-you, all becomes much more relevant. The influence of these unpredictable factors among people and upon history is what we call spontaneity.

Then what is to be done? I'm faced with the climate crisis: what does it mean to actively respond? How can I, a single person out of billions, not just assert agency but actually save myself? Well, first thing to remember is this: you are not a Policy, you never purported to save the world singlehandedly, neither is the whole weight placed on your shoulders.

When you realize this, you realize the next thing: you are not the only person on this planet. There exist others, others faced with the same crisis as you, others with wills of their own. You can put your trust in these invisible bonds which connect us as humans. What separates this trust from the bureaucratic trust



is that humanity is a “we”. It includes everyone else AND I. This collective subject is not foreign, but instead common with me.

To give a historical example, we can analyze these patterns in spiking. Trees capture carbon, and deforestation is a major contributor to climate change. Back in the 90s, one of the ways environmentalists mitigated this was by jamming metal spikes into trees. This tended to wreak havoc on saws, often causing damage on a large enough scale that deforestation projects have to be either abandoned or reconsidered.

The ways in which this tactic were employed are pretty interesting: it was typically done anonymously, individually, and with relatively low-cost materials. A spiker wouldn't need many connections and resources to employ this tactic, just a general understanding of the strategy. Because of that the benefits of a mediating organization to conduct this are pretty non-existent. If anything, the drawbacks make it so it could only feasibly be done on an individual level. Obviously, this is illegal, due to the risk it carries to both property and human life. Any organization openly carrying out these activities would instantly be shut down. Organizations have carried out these plots in secret, but have often been done in by either witnesses or a paper trail. You're left with a situation in which the raw game theory works in favor of all the factors we'd normally consider disadvantages in politics. You didn't need much money, connections, or education to do it. And in turn, there was no “critical mass” of people who needed to support it before anything could be done. Either someone chose to do it or they didn't, simple as.

Now am I saying everyone should go out and spike trees? Of course not, that'd be ridiculous. But I still think it is important to revisit history, because even knowing of a case study such as this can help to, one, remind us that direct action is possible, and two, help give it concrete shape.

It's worth repeating, climate change is a complex issue, and no single tactic or organization will be able to deal with it on its own. So instead, that leaves us with a bunch of new questions. For one, what does this environmental issue actually mean to you personally?

A lot of the most active environmentalists in the 20th century weren't just motivated by this purely pragmatic fear of global warming. A lot of them were naturalists, having gotten their foothold in their hobbies and communities: this could be hiking, entomology, gardening, what have you. In their interactions, a lot of them came to appreciate the symbiotic relationship between people and their environment, and saw beauty in natural spontaneity as opposed to industrial conformity. A lot of these reasons were regarded by the wider public as rather sentimental, but the fact is they acted during a time in which others weren't willing to, a window our modern pragmatists regretfully look back on as “the missed window to combat climate change”.

All those hobbies weren't just an entry-point though. It directly answered the “why”, as despite the constraints on their community and activity placed by a capitalist context, the relations had not been fully subsumed. That importance in turn gave rise to new understandings of how systems rhythmically function and how people relate to both each other and their environment. These system theories in turn lend to prefiguration, and in turn organization as people look to experiment with the ideas and form organic communities around their findings.

The psychological impact of this is pretty clear: human beings are connecting in authentic ways and finding ways to express themselves authentically. Just as a muscle has to be constantly exercised to avoid atrophy, one must engage and develop themselves in such a way to become an autonomous political actor. Through this process, people begin to better understand themselves and the world

around them, which is a necessary step towards breaking from our dependence on commodity fetishism.

And when moments of crisis do unexpectedly come, moments where action can make a difference, what kind of people do you think can capitalize on it? It's going to be those who are active, those who have stupidly, almost paradoxically held onto hope before. Windows of opportunity come quick, often faster than we can recognize it, but laying the groundwork for effectively responding to them often takes a long time.

In that sense, the social impact is prefiguration. We have a history we can draw on for inspiration, but we don't have the answers. Experimentation can often give us an understanding of what is or isn't possible, and give us an understanding of concretely how we can meet our social needs with the new constraints that come from abandoning a previous mode of production. Let's say in the indefinite future, climate catastrophe renders global supply chains and modern levels of production unsustainable. Then what? The planet's not going to just instantly melt, we will still have to answer the question of how to best grow and distribute food, this time with different constraints.

The agricultural damage caused by rising temperatures will mean we have less room to waste food and a larger necessity for finding ways to grow food in different environments. Permaculture and adjacent agroecology projects, while flawed in certain ways, still at least provide a forum by which the various compounding problems of cultivating a sustainable ecosystem can be solved.

Of course I realize how optimistic a lot of this can sound, which is rather ironic because on a personal level I'm rather skeptical climate change can feasibly be averted.

But returning back to the subject of our video, place yourself in the shoes of these protestors for a second. I know, seems ridiculous, but as I established earlier, you have to realize that this is how people in general have come to actually respond to and vocalize the problems they are facing. What are they to do? This is a very relevant question, one which answering in my view, allows us to deal with the much more foundational issue of activity.

What are they to do? If we take their claims at face value, which why not, given that this anxiety is expressed by a lot of young people, then are we just going to tell them to wait? Cast a ballot and shut up? Ignore the problem? All of these only pacify though, neither gets at the issue of either tackling what is causing the anxiety or the anxiety itself.

What I'd say is, if this is something that's truly important to you, then don't wait. Begin looking at what you yourself can actually, concretely do on your own, not petitioning any other entity: because that in turn will help you grasp the nature of your relationship to this world.

These kids are so scared of having their lives cut short at 40 or 50, but what lives? A life spent complaining about how evil these neoliberals are and how everything is out of your control? What's the point of any of this then, when you never had a life to begin with?

The uncomfortable truth a lot of leftists don't want to admit is no matter your situation, you are still responsible for your own life and what you do with it. Yes, there's all these structural factors which can make things worse and shape behavior, what have you, but when push comes to shove, nobody else is going to be there, telling you what to make of it. Even revolution, a response to the ultimate social injustice, is still a matter of people taking personal initiative on some fundamental level.

That existential responsibility is a lot to bear, and for a lot of these activists, it's easier to just use the material situation as an excuse to not deal with it. Perhaps more cynically, one could see that as the case with these protestors, that their angst is just a way to compensate for an identity crisis typical for young people. Regardless, it doesn't matter: one can tackle the issue constructively.

For me, I'm gonna be honest, I'm not really an environmentalist, or I at least don't consider it my main focus. I come into this largely as an outsider, but I thought that perspective could still provide some interesting insights. A lot of this topic-specific information I had to do research on, but I still found the dynamics valuable as a segue into a larger point about action. Even the most apocalyptic, most urgent of problems, still doesn't change two facts about this world. One, you still have a life to live, and two, you still have the capacity to do something about it independent of a mediator. And often times, these two facts intertwine more than you'd normally think.