

Michael Schellenberger is an exceptional man. He was captivated by environmental alarmism that surrounded him in his college days three decades ago. He became a leader in the environmental movement. Along the way, he investigated the science behind the environmental claims. He learned about the people in the movement, the money behind the people, and the motivations of the people who provided it.

All was not as it seemed to a naïve college student. This book is a deep analysis of what he has seen in the course of his life's work dealing with environmental issues. In the box to the right is his detailed table of contents. It is incredibly rich – Shellenberger knows about just about every aspect of the so-called climate and environmental crises.

Having myself been around for eight decades, and lived in several of the epicenters of the environmental movement – Shellenberger's Berkeley, where I was born and grew up, Portland Oregon and Greater Washington– I have been exposed to the story just about all of my life and have known a great number of people who passionately embrace it. My skepticism made me a perpetual outsider when I lived in in Bethesda.

Working on a PhD at the University of Maryland I took several courses taught by professors steeped in the progressive narrative. Traveling to Nicaragua, Argentina and Brazil as a teacher, Habitat for Humanity volunteer and grad student in the decade after my 1997 retirement, I spoke to local people who were affected by proxy wars, infrastructure projects and sustainable development policies.

My YouTube channel hosts videos about my own investigations into the various narratives, and among my reviews are books that questioned the narrative long before Shellenberger changed his mind.

His conclusion includes a succinct description of the problem.

"Environmentalism today is the dominant secular religion of the educated, upper - middle - class elite in most developed and many developing nations. It provides a new story about our collective and individual purpose. It designates good guys and bad guys, heroes and villains. And it does so in the language of science, which provides it with legitimacy.

"On the one hand, environmentalism and its sister religion, vegetarianism, appear to be a radical break from the Judeo - Christian religious tradition. For starters, environmentalists themselves do not tend to be believers, or strong believers, in Judeo - Christianity. In particular, environmentalists reject the view that humans have, or should have, dominion, or control, over Earth.

"On the other hand, apocalyptic environmentalism is a kind of new Judeo-Christian religion, one that has replaced God with nature. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, human problems stem from our failure to adjust ourselves to God. In the apocalyptic environmental tradition, human problems stem from our failure to adjust ourselves to nature. In some Judeo-Christian traditions, priests play the role of interpreting God's will or laws, including discerning right from wrong. In the apocalyptic

environmentalist tradition, scientists play that role. "I want you to listen to the scientists," Thunberg and others repeat.

This review tracks Shellenberger's table of contents, below. Because it is a personal story, I choose to review it primarily using direct quotes from the book.

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1. It's Not The End Of The World

The End Is Nigh

Shellenberger kicks off with a reiteration of the familiar apocalyptic arguments. The sea levels will rise. We will all be drowned. The planet will become too hot for habitation. We will no longer be able to grow crops and we will starve.

They have lost their potency if only because we have been hearing them for close to 50 years in the world around us has not changed that much.

Resilience Rising

Apocalypse Now

a point that Shellenberger makes repeatedly throughout the book is the discrepancy between the scientists at the working level of the IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Control – and the political level that produces summaries to distribute to the media. Many scientists have quit in disgust at seeing their temperate analysis twisted by fanatics and then further hyped by the media.

Another glaring big disconnect that Shellenberger often notes is that between the rich country do-gooders and the poor country inhabitants whom they professed to help.

Shellenberger has spent a lot of time in Congo. His thesis is that in order to save the wildlife in the jungles the do-gooders have to allow the use of higher density sources of energy. Petroleum and electricity in place of charcoal. Domestic animals instead of bushmeat. Sustainable development is a rich man's conceit, nothing that the poor of the world would wish upon themselves.

My time has been spent among rural people in Honduras, Nicaragua and Brazil. I note the same things. People who spend hours a day scrounging firewood and digging garden plots with wooden sticks can't concern themselves with endangered species.

He notes that violence is endemic in the poorest regions. In the late 90s the campesinos in Nicaragua could laugh as they told me the roles they were forced to play in the Soviet – American proxy war of a decade earlier. Linda Pohlman offers her wry observations about Africa in [The Crisis Caravan](#). See also [Into the Cannibal's pot - lessons for America from post-apartheid South Africa](#) by Ilana Mercer, [White Man's Game-Saving Animals, Rebuilding Eden, and Other Myths of Conservation in Africa](#) and [Et Si L'Afrique Refussait le Developpement](#) by Cameroonian Axelle Kabou. Violence decreases with development. It increases as development goes into reverse, as happened in Zimbabwe and is happening now in South Africa.

Billions Won't Die

Shellenberger confronts the grandiose conceits of the tree huggers. The immense egos of people who are willing to glue themselves to roads and trains, and the amazing exaggerations that far exceed the worst scenarios that any responsible scientist will put forth.

He also describes the scientists who will not correct the errors, either out of timidity or because the propaganda serves to promote their points of view or career interests. The bottom line is that the extremists enjoy powerful megaphones.

A Small Part Of Big Conflicts

Development >Climate

Exaggeration Rebellion

Fires are a natural part of the ecology in the California scrubland and much of Australia. The problem is not fire, but people building in places that fire frequently visits. Most of the fires are caused by people.

Fuel accumulates when people prevent fires. With more fuel to burn, the fires are worse once they get started.

Apocalypse Never

Carbon isn't the culprit, but even if it were.

"The new good news is that carbon emissions have been declining in developed nations for more than a decade. In Europe, emissions in 2018 were 23 percent below 1990 levels. In the U.S., emissions fell 15 percent from 2005 to 2016.¹¹³ "The U.S. and Britain have seen their carbon emissions from electricity, specifically, decline by an astonishing 27 percent in the U.S. and 63 percent in the U.K., between 2007 and 2018.

2. Earth's Lungs Aren't Burning

Earth's Lungs

Shellenberger introduces the notion that the Amazon is the "Earth's lungs" which he will debunk later. It makes no sense to imagine that any region could continue to convert carbon dioxide into biomass indefinitely. The Amazon may have a lot of biomass, but that which green plants create must in the course of things be decomposed by fire, bacteria, fungus or whatever. The total amount of carbon remains more or less constant.

Except – and this is an except that the environmentalists don't want to accept – that if there is more carbon dioxide in the air more of it will be converted into biomass. More carbon dioxide is a good thing for plant life.

"There Is No Science Behind That"

Shellenberger writes

I decided to call Dan Nepstad, a lead author of a recent IPCC report. I asked him whether it was true that the Amazon was a major source of Earth's oxygen supply. "It's bullshit," he told me. "There's no science behind that. The Amazon

produces a lot of oxygen, but it uses the same amount of oxygen through respiration, so it's a wash.”

As an idealistic college student, he learned Portuguese and went to Brazil to work with the Landless Rural Workers Movement. They truly are down and outs. They were pets of one of my [U of Md. Professors](#). Knowing who they were, I took this photo of one of their shantytowns in 2004. Their situation is heartbreaking. However, there is little to be done. They have no marketable skills. Shellenberger, I gather from what he writes elsewhere in his book, would conclude that they do not have the ability to make good use of whatever land they might happen to get. They have a subsistence farming mentality.



Shellenberger writes that endangered species such as jaguars need large stretches of contiguous forest. Allotting small parcels to individual poor people is far more damaging than allowing efficient farmers to cultivate large landholdings and leaving the virgin rain forest virgin.

Shellenberger tells success stories, of forests growing back in Europe, North America, and even in Brazil. Especially the coastal regions, which were heavily logged in colonial times. Increased carbon dioxide has certainly helped with the reforestation. Shellenberger pays lip service to carbon emissions with the paragraph

None of this is to suggest that rising carbon emissions and climate change bring no risks. They do. But we have to understand that not all of their impacts will be bad for the natural environment and human societies.

Looking Down On The Poor

I agree with Shellenberger's view on the poor:

In Brazil, as in Nicaragua, my enthusiasm for socialist cooperatives was often greater than of that the small farmers who were supposed to benefit from them. Most of the small farmers I interviewed wanted to work their own plot of land. They might be great friends with their neighbors and even be related to them by birth or marriage, but they didn't want to farm with them. They didn't want to be taken advantage of by somebody who didn't work as hard as them, they told me.

Absolutely! This is the genius of Habitat. They build for people who want to take control of their lives, not subject themselves to somebody else's notion of a socialist utopia. I remember thickset, dowdy American feminists trying to raise the consciousness of Nicaraguan women in Jinotega, where we built. It was a hard sell. They simply wanted money and tranquility to be themselves.

A note of disjuncture. Shellenberger writes:

I can count on a single hand the number of young people who told me they wanted to remain on their family's farm and work their parents' land. The large majority of young people wanted to go to the city, get an education, and get a job. They wanted a better life than what low-yield peasant farming could provide. They wanted a life more like mine. And I knew, of course, that I didn't want to be a small farmer. Why did I ever think anyone else wanted to?

The small farmers I worked with would not have been able to assess the tradeoffs. In my opinion they were better off in intact communities where they were than they would have been moving to Managua, Manaus or wherever. True, their horizons were limited, and their diet consisted of rice, beans and chicken. But they ate, and they had family.

Romance And Reality

Fire And Food

In the bad old days, forests were gloomy, scary places. Fires were set to flush out game and improve the landscape. It is our perspective that has changed.

Greenpeace Fragments The Forest

The progressive U of Md anthropologists who led our trip to an Indian tribe in Mato Grosso, Brazil were absolutely death on deforestation, burning and soy. Shellenberger defends the natural

needs of the people on the land. His position is that if real needs are intelligently satisfied the forests and the people both come through better. The tree-huggers, in their puritanical zeal, refuse to see the bigger picture.

"Take Your Dough And Re-Forced Germany"

The German farmers had a vested interest in keeping Brazilian agriculture inefficient. It kept Brazilian grains out of German markets. Projects wrapped in the mantle of saving the planet are not to be taken at face value.

After Amazon Alarmism

3 Yes Hello. Enough With The Plastic Straws

The Final Straw

But when you consider that just 0.03 percent of the nine million tons of plastic waste that ends up in oceans every year is composed of straws, banning them seems like a profoundly small thing, indeed.

The Persistence Of Plastic

Plastic is persistent and dangerous. Large amounts show up in the carcasses of dead fish, seabirds, turtles and marine mammals.

Half of the plastic in the oceans comes from China, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. Discarded on land, it washes into the seas. The solution is for these nations to prioritize collection and recycling.

The Poverty Of Waste

Things Fall Apart

The Elephant In The Room

The good news about plastics is that they are more environmentally friendly than what they replace. Shellenberger's obvious examples are replacing natural tortoiseshell and ivory. There is less danger to the environment and to biodiversity.

The Real Killers

Plastic Is Progress

Waste Not Want Not

4. The Sixth Extinction Is Canceled

"We're Putting Our Own Survival In Danger"

Exaggerating Extinction

Habitats are under pressure, and we should be vigilant in protecting habitats. Nonetheless, extinctions are rare. Shellenberger writes

The IUCN has estimated that 0.8 percent of the 112,432 plant, animal, and insect species within its data have gone extinct since 1500. That's a rate of fewer than two species lost every year, for an annual extinction rate of 0.001 percent.

I made a [video to this effect](#) a couple of years ago. If we can still count the number of extinctions, it remains a manageable number.

Wood Kills

Humans need the wood that grows where wild animals live. Shellenberger's point is that petroleum and hydroelectricity eliminate the need to collect wood. Oil and hydro power are energy dense. A little bit of land can produce a lot of power. Therefore, we are doing the environment a disservice by preventing oil drilling and new dams being built.

I'm not totally on board with this. The world community succeeded in preventing a dam on the Xingu River in Indian country in Brazil. However it might have aided the greater society, it would have fractured Indian society.

The powers that be succeeded in building the Yacereta Dam between Argentina and Brazil, flooding hundreds of square kilometers of the Parana River basin. The dam project included new cities for the displaced people, with schools, clinics and cookie-cutter houses. The project was of course rife with corruption, with moneyed interests in Buenos Aires making out quite well. Listening to a lecture on the marvels thus wrought, I didn't see a whole lot of enthusiasm among the community.



Colonial Conservation

"Fighting The Locals Is A Losing Battle"

Energy is an essential need. To grow out of poverty people in underdeveloped countries need what worked for developed nations. Petroleum and electricity. Only then can you talk about endangered species, CO2 and other first-world themes.

“The need to move to modern fuels is a bone of contention of mine,” said Dr. Helga Rainer of the Great Ape Program. “That we still talk about energy-saving stoves is disappointing.”

The 800 Pound Gorilla

Why Congo Needs Fossil Fuels

Power For Progress

5: Sweatshops Save The Planet

War On Fashion

The truth about clothing and other consumer items made in factories in poor and developing countries is actually the opposite of what Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace claim. Rather than being the main culprit in the destruction of forests, factories have been, and remain, an engine for saving them.

Leaving The Farm

Manufacturing Progress

Western technology allows everybody to produce more with less. Less labor, fewer farm animals, less fertilizer and less land. Let it happen.

The Great Escape

Escape from the countryside to the cities.

Moving to the city gives women more freedom in who they marry. “My parents encourage the ta’aruf, Muslim way of marriage,” said Suparti. “This is where you explain yourself to a religious teacher or preacher, and they will introduce you to someone they think is a good match. But it’s still up to you. I’m still rebellious and thus would like to get to know the man before marriage.”

Of course, the move to the cities will mean fewer marriages and fewer children. City people have more income, true, but more demands on that income. Raising and educating children is harder, and there will be fewer. Probably not such a bad thing overall.

The Power Of Wealth

Shellenberger puts forth the notion of "leapfrogging." Skipping steps along the path to industrialization. Building cars without having developed bicycle and motorcycle industries. He contends that in general it does not work. He should mention one in which it did. Cellular phones were the first many people in rural South America and Africa knew. The tower infrastructure was simply cheaper to build than wired infrastructure.

However, in the matter of skills, he is right. People need to learn the discipline of showing up on time, learning new skills, working with tools and such in an orderly way. Countries likewise need

to build roads, communications, school systems, public transportation in an orderly to support the growth.

Energy Density Matters

A recurrent and important theme. Centralized power generation is simply more efficient, be it hydro, coal-fired, gas-fired or nuclear. Use less land to produce more power.

"Green energy" fails on this count. Windmills and solar farms take a lot of real estate. They fail on other counts as well. Mining for raw materials is hard on the environment, the service life of these devices is too short, stringing power cables to a diffuse network is costly, and above all, windmills kill birds, bat, bugs and whales. Not eco-friendly at all.

The Manufacturing Ladder

Fast Fashion For Africa

As noted above, a manufacturing society has to grow organically. Making shoes and clothes for richer countries has been a first step for Japan, China, Vietnam, Korea, Mexico and a great number of other countries that now enjoy high incomes. Making products for export is essential.

6. Greed Save The Whales, Not Greenpeace

Greenpeace And The Whales

Whales were saved by economics. Petroleum was cheaper than whale oil for lamps. Corn oil and soy were cheaper for making margarine. Plastics were cheaper than whale baleen. There were substitutes for whale ivory and ambergris. If we could just give up the offshore wind farms, they might do OK in the modern world.

Grand Ball Given By The Whales

How Congo Save The Whales

A System Without A Schedule

Countries move from low to high density energy sources in a predictable way. Wood to coal to nuclear. Gas to electricity. But politics can put things into reverse, such as undoing nuclear energy and efficient fossil-fuel electric generation.

The Gas Land Deception

Fracking The Climate

Fracking is a process used to make gas and oil flow more readily from beds deep underground into the pipes that pump it. The average well is about a mile deep. The argument that it contaminates drinking water, pumped from wells only tens and maybe hundreds of feet deep, is a

stretch. The fracking argument is a political weapon to halt petroleum production, especially natural gas.

Shellenberger demonstrates that gas is far cleaner, in many more respects than simple CO2 emissions, than coal. The people fighting fracking are allied with competing financial interests, such as coal.

Fish Go Wild

Shellenberger advocates GMO salmon. It tastes delicious and makes a much smaller impact on the environment because it can be raised in tanks on land, not enclosures in the sea.

Somebody needs to get to the bottom of the GMO business. As I understand it, GMO crops like corn are bad because they facilitate the use of glyphosate – RoundUp – which is bad. The food itself is probably not harmful. Our guts are pretty good at digesting whatever protein comes their way. I suspect Shellenberger is right that there is no problem.

Problems could arise if the GMO organisms got loose and started to interbreed with natural organisms, rendering them less fit. I would feel more comfortable after reading from other sources that GMOs pose no danger. Either way, we will have to wade through tons of propaganda to get at the truth.

Class War

One of many passages about the financial interests at play in environmentalism.

Ausubel describes how coal interests fought against greater exploration of natural gas in the 1970s. “People fight tenaciously to hold onto their position. That was true in the U.S. of the coal industry, which developed an alliance between, in the West, [Republican] Senator [Alan] Simpson in Wyoming and in the East, [Democratic] Senator [Robert] Byrd in West Virginia. At the national political level, they were able to do a lot of things that superannuated the coal industry.”

7. Have Your Steak And Eat It Too

Shellenberger is a recovered vegetarian. This whole chapter is about the human need for meat. There is a lot of material appearing from sources such as [Dr. Mercola](#) and [Celia Farber](#) on the need for the human animal to get nutrition from meat. Without it we get weak and flabby and lose our sex drive. "Soy boy" is an apt term.

Eating Animals

The Meat Free Nothing Burger

The Nature Of Meat

Meat= Life

Death For Life

The Nature Of Death

Don't Eat Wild Meat

While the people of the Congo do not eat mountain gorillas, they still kill and eat an astonishing 2.2 million tons of wild animals every year because they lack cheap, domesticated meat.

Creating cheap and easily obtainable substitutes in the form of domesticated meat should thus be a high priority for conservationists. Reducing the amount of land required for meat production.

There is a lot written about the nutritional advantages of wild salmon over farmed. It is certainly a marker of high class to be able to pay \$50/lb and more for wild salmon. Before 2022 we used to buy wild-caught humpback salmon from Russia. It is not as moist and tasty as farmed Atlantic salmon from Norway. Otherwise I noticed no difference.

Beyond Food And Evil

8: Saving Nature Is Bomb

The End Of Nuclear Energy

Nuclear energy is far cleaner than any other. It has more energy density. It is more abundant than fossil fuels. It is far safer. The outside estimate of deaths attributable to Chernobyl, the largest nuclear disaster, is 5000. Fewer than 100 died in the accident itself. Compare that with coal mining which claims 25,000 lives per year in China alone.

Nobody died of radiation in Three Mile Island or Fukushima. People did die from being evacuated.

Nuclear is thus a threat to many vested interests. It has been easy to fan fear because nuclear power is associated with nuclear weapons. Blinky the three-eyed fish on The Simpsons captures the popular concept of nuclear power.

The upshot is that few new nuclear power plants have been built in the past fifty years.

That Could Be Quite Nasty"

France Beats Germany

France has many nuclear plants. Germany has shut theirs down. Energy is more expensive and less reliable in Germany, and Germany suffers far more environmental damage.

Naturally Nuclear

The Sierra Club and other such organizations shut down and prevented nuclear power, especially in California.

Atoms For Peace

Eisenhower was an advocate for nuclear power. He inspired a whole industry – and a second industry opposing the first. The second won out.

The War On Nuclear

The Power In Danger

The Peace Bomb

9: Destroying The Environment To Save It

"The Only Path"

Elon Musk's hype about solar energy was as phony as his self-driving cars. But many believed it.

Unreliable's

Wind and solar are intermittent. They work when the sun is shining or the wind is blowing. The biggest batteries known are vastly inadequate. Other solutions, like pumping water uphill and generating as it comes down, have also been proven unworkable.

Consider Tesla's most famous battery project, a 129 megawatt-hour lithium battery storage center in Australia. It provides enough backup power for 7,500 homes for four hours.⁸ But, there are nine million homes in Australia, and 8,760 hours in a year.

Society needs energy on demand. Wind and solar can't provide it.

Without large-scale ways to back up solar energy, California has had to block electricity coming from solar farms when it's extremely sunny, or even pay neighboring states to take it in order to avoid blowing out the Californian grid.

Germany is investing billions to develop a way to use its solar and wind electricity to make hydrogen, which would be stored and then burned or used to generate energy through fuel cells at a later date or time.

“Much of the energy is lost in the process of turning wind into electricity, electricity into hydrogen, and then hydrogen into methane—efficiency is below 40 percent. It isn’t enough for a sustainable business model.”

Renewables Predator, Wildlife Prey

Wind power is killing large numbers of insects, bats, birds and whales. Not just any birds, but large ones. Endangered species like eagles and condors.

Powering Utopia

Solar panels often contain lead and other toxic chemicals that cannot be removed without breaking apart the entire panel. “I’ve been working in solar since 1976 . . . and that’s part of my guilt,” a veteran solar developer told Solar Power World in 2017. “I’ve been involved with millions of solar panels going into the field, and now they’re getting old.”

Even if the solar panels were placed in the sunniest area of his sunniest option, the ecologically sensitive Sonoran Desert of Arizona, his [Musk's] solar farm would require an area larger than the state of Maryland.

What A Waste

Why Dilute Energy Destroys

But conservationists have been turning against the use of biomass and biofuels since 2008, when they started to understand their full environmental impact. To supply a one-thousand-megawatt wood-burning biomass power plant operating for 70 percent of the year requires 3,364 square kilometers of working forest land per year. If just 10 percent of the electricity in the United States were to come from wood-burning biomass power plants, the fuel to power them would require an area of forest land the size of Texas.

Defenders Of Wind Wildlife

In the United States, Linowes has often found herself defending wildlife from the biggest environmental groups. Sierra Club claims, falsely, “the toll from turbines is far from a major cause of bird mortality.”¹¹⁸ NRDC endorses a massive expansion of wind turbines on the Great Lakes against opposition from local wildlife experts, birders, and conservationists who noted the lakes are one of the world’s most important sanctuaries to many migratory bird species.

The Starbucks Rule

“Turns out there’s something called the Starbucks Rule when it comes to siting wind farms,” reported BusinessWeek in 2009. Wind developers “plot where Starbucks are in the general area and then make sure their project is at least thirty miles away. Any closer and there’d be too many NIMBYs who’d object to having their views spoiled by a cluster of 265-foot-tall wind towers.”

10: All About The Green

Fossil Funded Denial

The Power Of Hypocrisy

Not only are 350.org, Sierra Club, NRDC, and EDF all funded by fossil fuel billionaires, they are also all trying to kill America’s largest source of carbon-free electricity, nuclear power.

Green On The Inside

Killing nuclear plants turns out to be a lucrative business for competitor fossil fuel and renewable energy companies. That’s because nuclear plants generate large amounts of electricity. During a ten-year period, Indian Point’s owner could bring in \$8 billion in revenue.

Climate activists massively outspend climate skeptics. The two largest U.S. environmental organizations, EDF and NRDC, have a combined annual budget of about \$384 million compared to the mere \$13 million of the two largest climate skeptic groups, Competitive Enterprise Institute and Heartland Institute. That

Fracking Nukes

Brown's Dirty War

California governors Pat Brown [1972-80] and Jerry Brown [1975-83, 2011-2019] had significant investments in petroleum. Their opposition to nuclear was anything but altruistic.

Grazing The Tall Grass

After Al Gore, Sr., the senator from Tennessee, lost reelection in 1972, he went to work for a coal power plant owned by Occidental Petroleum. “Since I had been turned out to pasture, I decided to go graze the tall grass,” Gore Sr. quipped, years later.

As U.S. senator and vice president, Al Gore, Jr., helped advance the same company's interests. Gore raised \$50,000 from the company in phone calls he made from his office, triggering a minor scandal.

Bigger Than The Internet

Stimulus money wasn't evenly distributed but rather clustered around donors to President Obama and the Democratic Party. At least ten members of Obama's finance committee and more than twelve of his fundraising bundlers, who raised a minimum of \$100,000 for Obama, benefited from \$16.4 billion of the \$20.5 billion in stimulus loans.

Leaving A Legacy

It is hard to imagine a more "pay-to-play" relationship than the one between [presidential candidate Tom] Steyer and his grantees. It epitomizes the cynicism of Washington, D.C. And it exposes the news media's double standard. If Steyer and other fossil fuel and renewable energy investors get their way and kill some or all of the remaining ninety-nine U.S. nuclear reactors, which provide nearly 20 percent of America's electricity, they will not only make a fortune, they will spike emissions and eliminate the only real hope for phasing out fossil fuels before 2050.

11: The Denial Of Power

Power Tripping

About the hypocrisy of circling the globe in private jets while telling the hoi polloi they are generating too much CO2.

Not As We Do

The Power Of Electricity

Shellenberger refutes typical sustainable development hogwash.

Two years later [2000], two U.N. agencies noted that while people in the past escaped poverty by moving away from "simple biomass fuels (dung, crop residues, firewood) to . . . liquid or gaseous fuels for cooking and heating and electricity," people in poor nations today could now "leapfrog directly from fuelwood to . . . new renewables" like biomass and solar.

No, the third world has to do it the same way the first world did. Large, energy-dense power generation plants.

In 2017, Eva Müller, the director of forestry at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, claimed, "Woodfuel is kinder to the environment than fossil fuels, and including charcoal, accounts for roughly 40 percent of current global

renewable energy supplies—as much as solar, hydroelectric, and wind power combined.”

"A Stain On The Race"

A bit of history – Malthus and the eugenicists.

Lifeboat Ethics

Shellenberger attacks 19th century philosophers who disagree with his view of the purpose of life. Many today would consider this quote to be a worthy topic of discussion.

Vogt attacked the medical profession’s “duty to keep alive as many people as possible.” In truth, he wrote, they were just “increasing misery.” He argued that a better model was ancient Greece, which “purposefully reduced” human population through “infanticide, emigration, and colonization.”

The Malthusians had an objective of keeping population down.

[Paul] Ehrlich and [Amory] Lovins said they opposed nuclear energy because it was abundant. “Even if nuclear power were clean, safe, economic, assured of ample fuel, and socially benign,” Lovins said, “it would still be unattractive because of the political implications of the kind of energy economy it would lock us into.”

Power Against Progress

There is a pattern. Malthusians raise the alarm about resource or environmental problems and then attack the obvious technical solutions. Malthus had to attack birth control to predict overpopulation. Holdren and Ehrlich had to claim fossil fuels were scarce to oppose the extension of fertilizers and industrial agriculture to poor nations and to raise the alarm over famine. And climate activists today have to attack natural gas and nuclear energy, the main drivers of lower carbon emissions, in order to warn of climate apocalypse.

The Climate Bomb

Experiments In Poverty

The Environmentalists oppose hydroelectric dams and nuclear in favor of small-scale solar and wind projects. It is what the do-gooders want, not what the people want.

12: False Gods For Lost Souls

Parable Bears

What about the polar bears? “The climate denialists” were right: devastating declines in the number of polar bears have indeed failed to materialize, which was something the creators of the starving polar bear footage were forced to admit.

“National Geographic went too far with the caption,” said one of them, seeking to shift the blame. But the primary purpose of her expedition was to link dying polar bears to climate change. “Documenting [the effects of climate change] on wildlife hasn’t been easy,” she added. But the reason it wasn’t easy is that there was no evidence for polar bear famine.

Climate Politics Takes Its Toll

Well-recognized economist Richard Tol rebelled and resigned when he discovered that the IPCC Summary for Policymakers was vastly out of step with the IPCC's working-level findings with regard to the origins and projected impact of climate change.

Tol said that the primary message of an earlier draft of the Summary was the same one I’ve emphasized with regards to the Congo: “Many of the more worrying impacts of climate change are really symptoms of mismanagement and underdevelopment.”

IPCC’s Summary left out key information, Tol alleges. The Summary “omits that better cultivars and improved irrigation increase crop yields. It shows the impact of sea level rise on the most vulnerable country, but does not mention the average. It emphasizes the impacts of increased heat stress but downplays reduced cold stress.

Who Framed Roger Pielke?

Roger Pielke, the University of Colorado expert on climate change and natural disasters, similarly found instances where IPCC authors were exaggerating or misrepresenting the science for effect.

Starting in 2008, seven separate authors with Center for American Progress (CAP), the large progressive think tank, had published more than 150 blog posts attacking Pielke as “the uber-denier” and a “trickster and a careerist.”

“Roger Pielke is the single most disputed and debunked person in the entire realm of people who publish regularly on disasters and climate change,” claimed a CAP spokesperson.

False Gods

The trouble with the new environmental religion is that it has become increasingly apocalyptic, destructive, and self-defeating. It leads its adherents to demonize their opponents, often hypocritically. It drives them to seek to restrict power and prosperity at home and abroad. And it spreads anxiety and depression without meeting the deeper psychological, existential, and spiritual needs its ostensibly secular devotees seek.

Apocalypse Angst

Where environmentalism had until recently offered the prospects of utopia in the form of a return to low-energy and renewable-powered agrarian societies, it is striking the extent to which apocalyptic environmentalist leaders have deemphasized that vision for an emphasis on climate Armageddon.

Green utopianism is still there. Apocalyptic environmentalists in Europe and the United States advocate a Green New Deal not just to reduce carbon emissions but also to create good jobs with high pay, reduce economic inequality, and improve community life.

But negativity has triumphed over positivity. In place of love, forgiveness, kindness, and the kingdom of heaven, today's apocalyptic environmentalism offers fear, anger, and the narrow prospects of avoiding extinction.

I was drawn toward the apocalyptic view of climate change twenty years ago. I can see now that my heightened anxiety about climate change reflected underlying anxiety and unhappiness in my own life that had little to do with climate change or the state of the natural environment.

Perhaps it is a coincidence, but it is notable that the spike in environmental alarmism comes at a time when anxiety, depression, and suicide are rising within the general population, especially among adolescents, in both the United States and Europe. Seventy percent of American teenagers call anxiety and depression a major problem.

Because addressing our personal lives is painful and difficult, suggests Becker, we often look for external demons to conquer. Doing so makes us feel heroic, and creates a feeling of immortality through the recognition, validation, and love we receive from others.

Lost Souls

“There’s a strain of the environmental movement that is Calvinistic,” Dick [Richard Rhodes] said. “In the sense that the world is an evil place and it would be better if it were destroyed and turned back over to the natural kingdom.”

If the climate apocalypse is a kind of subconscious fantasy for people who dislike civilization, it might help explain why the people who are the most alarmist about environmental problems are also the most opposed to the technologies capable of addressing them, from fertilizer and flood control to natural gas and nuclear power.

Environmental Humanism

The answer from many rational environmentalists, including myself, who are alarmed by the religious fanaticism of apocalyptic environmentalism, has been that we need to better maintain the divide between science and religion, just as scientists need to maintain the divide between their personal values and the facts they study.

... when we hear activists, journalists, IPCC scientists, and others claim climate change will be apocalyptic unless we make immediate, radical changes, including massive reductions in energy consumption, we might consider whether they are motivated by love for humanity or something closer to its opposite.

Love > Science

Scientists have long named self-interest as a reason for why humans should care about endangered species like the mountain gorilla. But if the mountain gorillas were ever to go extinct, humankind would become spiritually, not materially, poorer. Happily, nobody saves mountain gorillas, yellow-eyed penguins, and sea turtles because they believe human civilization depends on it. We save them for a simpler reason: we love them.

In conclusion, those who pose as our moral superiors are no better than we are. They espouse their causes more out of self-interest than anything else. That interest is frequently giving meaning to otherwise drab lives. Often it is simply money. Shellenberger tells the story for the viewpoint of a consummate insider.