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Marco Grasso. *From Big Oil to Big Green: Holding the Oil Industry to Account for the Climate Crisis.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2022. 368 pp. $40.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-262-54374-3.

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Extreme heat waves, devastating droughts, torrential rains, and uncontrollable wildfires: these are some of the climate-related disasters that we are experiencing every year with more and more certainty. Summer 2022 reached the highest temperatures recorded across European cities and countries in decades. A report redacted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has warned of exacerbating climate change effects, predicting that by 2100 fundamental parts of Asia and Africa will become uninhabitable for up to six hundred million people, as extreme weather events will keep increasing.[1] As Martin Griffiths and Jagan Chapagain describe, “the findings are startling and disturbing” as these impacts will become deadlier with every further increment of climate change.”[2] Data has pointed through the years at the undeniable role fossil fuels play in causing the present damages. Still, despite the accumulated evidence, current analysis has stagnated in a swamp of half-answers and half-solutions to what has become a present reality rather than a distant future. Like a rock rolling down a hill, the climate crisis seems to be acquiring speed and mass in more recent times than first imagined. What are the solutions to stop it from turning into an uncontrollable avalanche?

In his book, *From Big Oil to Big Green: Holding the Oil Industry to Account for the Climate Crisis*, Marco Grasso guides us to possible solutions by carving a pathway that, if followed, could dismantle the current stagnant economic and social scenario. Through a compelling analysis, he discusses the central role of Big Oil in creating (and aggravating) the climate crisis and the operational strategies perpetuated to avoid a sense of responsibility and duty. Grasso does so by minutely dissecting the structure of the fossil fuel industry, presenting the patterns, the contradictions, and the challenges of a system that has masterfully and blatantly denied the harmful effects of its products for decades. This system, as he remarks, has bent the truth for pure profit by promoting for years a narrative that emphasized the individual consumer’s responsibility as the leading cause of the inability to solve our climate

crisis. Grasso's strength is approaching a topic that has been primarily discussed within an economic and political science debate through a unique spin that brings forward an ethical and moral framework as the principal argument, not only to guarantee the attribution of responsibility and establish a line of reparation to the damages done to vulnerable populations—past, present, and future—but also to initiate an effective decarbonization process of our societal structures. The author articulates this discussion by providing data gathered from governmental agencies, industry reports, scientific and academic research, and investigative journalism, offering elements of information often inaccessible to the broader public. Although at times repetitive, the writing style helps the reader register and absorb all the information the author presents. While Grasso acknowledges that this may not be sufficient to motivate Big Oil to act and change, he addresses how this framework of morality can lay "a useful foundation for facilitating the consolidation of emerging anti-fossil fuel social/moral norms condemning the industry for its deliberate engagement with such a harmful product" (p. 65).

Throughout the book, we follow a pathway that goes from an analysis of the meanings of ethical responsibility and duty of the oil and gas industry to a discussion on decarbonization processes and the intervention of social agents necessary for changing Big Oil's behavior to collectively transform our socioeconomic and energy system toward the Big Green. Grasso's analysis is articulated into three parts: "The Climate Crisis: All Roads Lead to Big Oil," "Big Oil's Responsibility and Duties," and "What Big Oil Must Do." At first, these sections may appear separate and confusing, but, as we follow the author's main argument, we start to connect each dot, and a clear trajectory is presented to us, unmasking Big Oil's villainous disguise.

From the first pages, Grasso emphasizes how our relationship with fossil fuels has transformed into an unconscious dependency. Oil permeates through every seam of our everyday life, from objects to the organization of cultural and social events to educational institutions, such as universities and research facilities. No one can deny the power that fossil fuels have in driving the world's socioeconomic systems by imposing a reliance on their products on other industries as well. In the irony of our dependency, oil and gas companies had been aware of climate change and the significant threats it would bring to people for years. Still, to avoid losing their profitable industry, "they sequestered this knowledge away from shareholders, stakeholders, and the general public" (p. 39).

In his moral framework, Grasso points to the necessity of looking at oil and gas companies as conglomerate collectivities to establish a collective responsibility—responsibility that, as he stresses, in the context of climate change, lacks a universally agreed upon definition and can be applied through different lenses. The author illustrates morally relevant facts (awareness, behavior, capacity, denial, enrichment) to clarify how the oil and gas industry enabled harm by concocting and operating a denial machine to confine information that could have prevented the future scenarios we are currently experiencing. Although he applies mainly a moral definition of "responsibility" to his reasoning, the author recognizes how legal implications of Big Oil's responsibility can lead to lawsuits that would eventually influence a fossil fuel divestment, as previously seen with companies trading in tobacco, asbestos, or lead-based paint. In his analysis, Grasso denotes the duality of the concept itself and the ways it can have negative and positive connotations, leading either to "compel Big Oil to refrain from performing harm-generating actions, consistent with what is demanded by the do not harm principle" or to push Big Oil to act in a specific manner, providing a normative structure and moral and practical responses (p. 86). By interweaving the notions of justice and responsibility, Grasso leads us to reflect on how we can achieve such moral framework by acknow-

ledging the fundamental role played by global environmental movements in widening the scope of justice. Only through a corrective justice, entailing "a positive, special, backward- and forward-looking moral responsibility," can we create normative foundations to hold Big Oil responsible for climate change in more practical ways (p. 88).

As Grasso repeatedly stresses throughout the book, the first step is to reiterate time and time again the harm Big Oil has brought to the environment, an arduous task but possible as more multidisciplinary scientific research broadens the evidence, mapping out possible future scenarios and strengthening a societal focus on duties and responsibilities that "can encourage [Big Oil] to accept ... making reparations and transitioning to cleaner business" (p. 112). While theoretically a duty of reparation can appear straightforward to actuate, pragmatically speaking, the road to follow is still impervious. Rectifying Big Oil's harm is not a clear-cut process, as it involves identifying a specific duty recipient while applying for restitution and compensation. Nevertheless, how can companies realistically meet their duties of reparation and decarbonization? Grasso attempts to answer this question as he delves into a discussion on power, hegemony, and the uncertain and often hostile terrain of climate policies within which Big Oil operates. When considering Big Oil as a collective conglomerate, we must consider that within the oil and gas industry, there is a division of companies, the privately owned international oil companies (IOCs) and state-owned national oil companies (NOCs). This dis-homogenous group is characterized by "remarkably different strategies and objectives that inevitably entail different accounts/levels of responsibilities," making it challenging to apply a cookie-cutter approach for everyone (p. 140). Often, the blurred boundaries linked to financial interests and ownership structures can create complications, and "resistance to any attempts to dissolve a corporation that is the primary source of economic growth and fiscal revenue is inevitable, as such actions would directly endanger the economies of these states" (p. 143). Resistance and denial have been (and still are) principal components of Big Oil's strategy to avoid climate action, leading to an idea of untouchability based on the critical assumption that fossil fuels are the main economic drivers and creating "a seemingly impenetrable barricade of interests" (p. 151). Western IOCs (mainly resource-seeking companies) have played a central role in creating a denial machine through their actions (or lack of) as they perpetuated climate-destructive extraction and production through the decades. The only possible way to tackle the issue at hand and start a decarbonization process is for resource-seeking companies to seriously engage in low-carbon activities to the maximum level possible, not as greenwashing operations, to effectively achieve their duty of reparation. On the contrary, NOCs' decarbonization should take a more careful process to avoid any social disruptions, considering the indispensable revenues for their home countries.

As we follow the moral framework delineated by the author, we learn to accept that Big Oil's behavior is unlikely to change organically of its own volition. It comes naturally to ask: how will it then be possible to see a transformation process regarding duties, responsibilities, and reparations? Grasso offers a possible solution through what he defines as "agents of destabilization," such as all those collective organizations, groups, research communities, and agents belonging to civil society and subnational political systems, acting as "exogenous forces [able to] subvert entrenched relationships and practices of [the] oil complex and the companies within this complex so as to induce change" (p. 172). A theoretical movement is crucial to defeating Goliath by disseminating through their actions moral values and encouraging norms that destabilize Big Oil's strategies, weakening its resistance and hegemonic nature. These operational forces have the capacity of "eroding Big Oil's instrumental, discursive, and institutional powers" through social, political, and economic

pressure (p. 182). However, this relationship is not, once again, clear-cut. Grasso underlines that specific agents of destabilization may exert only a form of pressure, and the erosion of material and discursive powers may require a fortifying approach through social movements and financial agents. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal of destabilizing initiatives is "to avoid a sudden collapse" of the societal structures we live in, as we still heavily rely financially on Big Oil's stability. The solution is to guarantee a gradual transition scenario "whereby the phasing out of the industry's operations and products should proceed progressively" (p. 202). An abrupt alternative would put not just Big Oil but also other industries dependent on its stability at risk.

At first, Grasso's proposed plan appears simplistic, but he defends it by thoroughly discussing how this stylized solution must consider a case-by-case approach. This statement is a contradictory response, as the author previously stresses the idea of looking at Big Oil as a collective conglomerate. However, Grasso attempts to convince readers that this is a more sensible approach to consider. It avoids a one-fit-for-all solution, which could eventually dismiss the vulnerable lives of people with a history of colonization and oppression, where processes of industrialization have occurred later, at a different rate than in Western countries, and with different results and impacts. Grasso briefly touches on this concept of vulnerability as he discusses how fulfilling a duty of reparation would eventually support the most vulnerable agents. Among these, the author hints at an undermined category: displaced workers of the industries within the fossil fuel supply chain "damaged in terms of job loss/reduction of opportunities" and considered direct victims of a low carbon transition (p. 132).

As we reach the concluding chapters, Grasso reemphasizes issues of inequality and struggles of vulnerable communities. These problems, on second thought, could have been explored in greater depth in the book, adding nuances to an inquiry that often stays in an ideological realm and focuses much of its time deconstructing Big Oil's system. Consequentially, it lacks that humanistic component that could have been included through case studies or ethnographic data and could have helped readers establish a stronger connection with the author's argument.

Overall, ***From Big Oil to Big Green*** offers a fresh new framework for ethically and theoretically dismantling an industry that has been a primary perpetrator in the climate crisis. The steps to successfully make Big Oil morally accountable are still varied and complex. On a practical level, readers expecting a precise answer on how to stop a marching avalanche may be partially disappointed. However, Grasso's argumentation and discussion give a glimpse of hope, stressing the need to find an economic balance reachable by supporting a slow but steady transition toward greener alternatives. For this to occur, a mutual and global effort is necessary to guarantee a different future for successive generations. Only by shaking a rooted cultural system through agents of destabilization will the hegemonic control exerted by fossil fuel companies eventually collapse.

Notes

[1]. Andrew Jeong, "Extreme Heat Could Make Parts of Asia, Africa Uninhabitable in Decades," ***Washington Post***, October 11, 2022.

[2]. Martin Griffiths and Jagan Chapagain, ***Extreme Heat: Preparing for the Heatwaves of the Future***, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (October 2022), 3.

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