## 1

Moral realism fails. There are no normative truths which are independent of an agent’s prior attitudes or beliefs about morality. **Street 7** writes[[1]](#footnote-1)

To begin filling out the picture, note that there are countlessly many internally consistent evaluative systems—where this is not a point about the diversity of actual evaluative outlooks that we encounter in real life—actual evaluative outlooks and actual disagreement are not to the point anywhere in this argument26—but rather a point about the diversity of possible ideally consistent evaluative outlooks that we encounter in our imaginations. Among the countless possible internally consistent evaluative systems, for example, are that of an ideally coherent person committed to morality, that of an ideally coherent Caligula,27 and innumerable much more bizarre ideally coherent evaluative systems—including, for example, systems that place above all else the value of grass-counting, or hand-clasping, or not having one’s finger scratched, or counting to the number 78 and back again, and so on.28 On the realist’s own view of things, many of these evaluative systems—including, presumably, those of Caligula, the grass- 19counter, hand-clasper, and so on—are mistaken in spite of their perfect internal consistency. These possible agents, were they ever to exist, would be badly mistaken about how to live. **The** problem for the **normative realist** arises when he **is** **challenged to give** his **reasons** for thinking **that** the **causal forces landed him, but not** these countlessly many **other[s]** poor (possible) souls, **on** the robustly **independent normative truth** he posits. By hypothesis, these other agents lack no nonnormative information that we have, and they are making no logical or instrumental errors. In explaining where these others have gone wrong, no doubt the realist can give non-trivially-question-begging reasons for holding this or that of his own normative premises as opposed to others. But the **other ideally coherent individuals are capable of defending their own premises** in a similar way, and their sets of values hold together in the same perfectly consistent internal fashion as our own (supposing falsely, but usefully for the sake of argument, that we are perfectly internally consistent). The realist, therefore, finds himself in a confrontation—whether actual or merely possible—of a kind that Dworkin himself describes as follows: We may be forced to concede, in some cases, that those who held different views lacked no information we have, and were subject to no different distorting influences. All that we can say, by way of explanation of the difference, is that they did not “see” or show sufficient “sensitivity” to what we “see” or “sense,” and these metaphors may have nothing behind them but the bare and unsubstantiated conviction that our capacity for moral judgment functions better than theirs did. (pp. 121-122) On the normative realist’s own view, in seeking to give our reasons for thinking that causal forces pushed us, and not other potential ideally coherent valuers such as Caligula or the grass-counter or the handclasper, close to the independently true ideally coherent system (or systems) of values, ultimately all we are going to be able to say is that these others do not “see” or show sufficient “sensitivity” to what we “see” and “sense.” At this point, however, **the** normative **realist is in no better position than the person who** questionbeggingly **insists that she won the** New York **Lottery, even though she has no reason** to think so **apart from the fact that she entered** it. If we are normative realists, we think there is a “winning” coherent system (or systems) of normative thought; we also think there are countlessly many false coherent 20systems of normative thought, which, but for sheer good fortune on our part, causal forces might have shaped us to endorse; we think that as it so happens, ours is among (or approximating) one of the true ideally coherent systems; but when asked to give our reason for thinking so, all we can say is to repeat, in so many words, that it is among the true ones—to insist that we, and not the countless number of mistaken possible others, “see” or “sense” what is normatively true. But this is no better than insisting, without any non-trivially-question-begging reason to think so, that one has won the New York Lottery. Given the odds we can reasonably suppose to be in play in this “normative lottery” case, we should conclude that in all probability we didn’t win—that, if there is indeed such a thing as the robustly independent normative truth we are positing as a substantive normative premise, then we are probably among the unlucky ones who (just like the ideally coherent Caligula, grass-counter, hand-clasper, and so on) are hopeless at recognizing it.29 This conclusion is so obviously implausible, however, I suggest, that we should reject the substantive normative premise that generates it—namely the supposition of robustly attitude-independent normative truths.In response to this, one might question the appeal I’m making to merely possible ideally coherent evaluative systems.30 It would be one thing, one might object, if the actual world were rife with apparently coherent grass-counters, hand-claspers, and countless other bizarre evaluative systems; this might indeed supply one with good reason to question one’s reliability with respect to the independent normative truth. But this, of course, isn’t our actual situation: instead we observe a fairly impressive degree of consensus on normative matters among those who reflect upon them. So why should the mere possibility of bizarrely different evaluative systems in any way undermine our epistemic confidence? My reply is that **actual consensus**, or lack thereof, **is** completely **beside the point** when it comes to the argument I’m making. Even if there were perfect consensus among human beings on what the independent normative truth is, the epistemic problem I am raising would still present itself, for the problem is based on an in-principle worry about why, given the realist’s conception of normative truth as robustly attitude-independent, we should have any expectation at all that causal forces would have shaped us in such a way as to be reliable with regard to it. I would be the first to agree that there is an impressive 21degree of consensus among human beings on substantive normative matters.31 The point, however, is that this **consensus may be explained from** a theoretical point of view as having **certain causal origins** (a common evolutionary history, common cultural influences, and so forth), and our question is why we should think such causes would have forged our substantive normative views in such a way as to lead them toward the normative truth if we conceive of that truth as the realist says we should. In this context, the mere presence of actual consensus among reflective human beings provides no evidence whatsoever of our reliability. To put it another way, **of course we never** actually **see grass-counters, hand-claspers, and so on**: the point is that there are obvious causal explanations as to why not. (Think how long a fulltime hand-clasper would last in the struggle to survive and reproduce.) **The realist** is the one who **makes all** the **merely possible coherent souls relevant by insisting that if they existed, they would be mistaken.** It’s this insistence that makes merely possible agents very much to the point when we assume for the sake of argument that the realist is correct about the robust attitude-independence of normative truth and ask about our epistemic situation with regard to it.

Only Humean constructivism, which says that moral truth for a particular agent derives from coherence in their beliefs, accounts for the impossibility of the view from nowhere and maintains normativity. **Street 12** writes[[2]](#footnote-2)

How then does the regress of questions end, **according to the Humean constructivist**? The rough idea is this. **Eventually** (at least in theory, if we pursue our reflections far enough) **we** get to a point where we **have** arrived at **a coherent web of** interlocking **values, such that each one**, when taken in its turn and examined from the standpoint of the others, **stands up to scrutiny in terms of** the standards **those other values** set. Once one reaches such an interlocking, coherent web of normative judgments, one can ask: “But why should I endorse this entire set of normative judgments? What reason do I have to endorse this set as opposed to some other set, or as opposed to no set at all?” The proper answer at this point, according to the Humean constructivist, is that the question is illformulated. **One cannot** sensibly **step back from the entire set of one’s** interlocking **normative judgments** at once**, and ask**, from nowhere, **whether this set is correct** or incorrect**, for** on a constructivist view **there are no independent standards to fix an answer** to this question; this is the rejection of realism. It is 14 important to be clear here, lest it sound like the Humean constructivist is ruling out perfectly acceptable **questions such as “Do I have** a **reason to reject** the **values of the Taliban in favor of my own?”** or “Are the normative commitments of Albert Schweitzer or Mother Theresa superior to my own?” Such questions **are** entirely **in order**, according to the Humean constructivist—just **so long as one is**, at least implicitly, **posing them from the standpoint of some further set of values** (however vague or inchoate) concerning what makes one set of normative commitments more worthy of endorsement than another. 24 The one thing that one cannot do, sensibly, is to step back from every last one of one’s normative judgments at once and try to pose such questions from nowhere—asking, while suspending one’s acceptance of any value that might be capable of settling the matter, whether one should endorse one’s own set of values, or some other set, or none at all. If one tries this, then one has stepped, for the moment, outside the standpoint of agency, into a realm where there are no normative facts, and one’s question is illformulated. On the Humean constructivist view I’m proposing, then, the regress of normative questions comes to an end not with any substantive value, but with an understanding of the exact moment at which normative questions cease to make sense—namely, the moment one divorces oneself from the practical point of view altogether, refusing, to take any value for granted.

Thus the neg burden is to prove that the resolutional agent’s initial set of beliefs makes it irrational for them to pay reparations to Black Americans.

The US government holds the rule of law to be important in its initial set of beliefs. Reparations are inconsistent with US law.

1. Standing

Reparations for slavery lack legal standing – multiple warrants

**Cooper 11** writes[[3]](#footnote-3)

To reiterate, reparations have been justified because slavery constituted an exploitative theft of the value of African American workers. The descendants of these slaves have been denied the inheritance that the current generation of White Americans has enjoyed from their respective ancestors. Be that as it may, U.S. **courts have consistently ruled that** the **descendants of slaves have yet to demonstrate “standing” (**they have not demonstrated **that** the **defendants personally injured them)** and that these descendants have taken too long to file their claims.3 Opponents to reparations have a legitimate case when they assert that (a) **there is no single group responsible for** the crime of **slavery;** (b) there is **no single group** that **benefitted exclusively** from slavery; (c) **only a minority of White** American**s owned slaves**, whereas others gave their lives to free them; (d) **most living Americans have no connection** (direct or indirect) **to slavery**; (e) the **historic**al **precedents used to justify** the **reparations** claim **do not apply, and the claim** itself **is based on race not injury; and** (f) **the reparations argument is based on the unsubstantiated claim that all African Americans suffer from** the **economic consequences of slavery** (Horowitz, 2002, pp. 12-15).4 In short, the economic basis of the reparations claim is highly problematic and has failed to earn the minimum standard for standing in the American judicial system.

2. The Constitution

The US Constitution would prohibit reparations laws for being ex post facto.

**Flaherty and Carlisle 4** writes[[4]](#footnote-4)

The **reparations suits are without merit** for other reasons. As tragic as **slavery was**, it was **legal in the South between 1789 and 1865. The Constitution prohibits ex post facto laws**, which are laws **that criminalize conduct that was legal when originally performed.**

3. Statute of Limitations

The statute of limitations would reject reparations

**Epstein 4** writes[[5]](#footnote-5)

The statute of limitations defense, however, seems to be impregnable in these cases. These statutes can raise individual issues of immense complexity, but the basic outlines are tolerably clear. As a basic matter, **a statute of limitations has two major purposes**.35 The first purpose is **to make sure that the cause of action is brought when the evidence is fresh so** that **a trial can conclude with** tolerable **accuracy**.36 Second, **and** equally laudable, these statutes allow parties **to** bring to **clos**ure **past disputes so that everyone can get on with** the business of **life**. 37 These considerations also rationalize the doctrines of adverse possession and prescription developed in connection with claims for real property. 38 In general, the statute of limitations starts to run when the cause of action accrues, that is, when plaintiff suffers the harm. 39 As a first approximation, therefore, the **individual causes of action for slavery and segregation accrued when the injuries were inflicted**, so that the statutes in question have long run unless some tolling exception applies. Tolling refers to those equitable circumstances that "toll," or stop, the statute of limitation from running. In the simplest case, the statute is tolled during the minority of an individual who lacks the capacity to bring suit on his own behalf.40 It takes little imagination to accept that the statute should be tolled when the injured person is prohibited by law from bringing any legal action at all, which occurs when a slave is a nonperson. But even if we allow this tolling defense, it only gets us up to around 1865. 41 Much of the wrongs inflicted in the United States took place after the civil war during the period of official segregation. 42 But segregation does not toll the statute of limitations because segregation did not limit the right to bring suit, even if the climate of opinion made it impossible to win on these cases. That happens in countless areas of life. For example, the privity limitation relevant to product liability law once made it impossible for an injured person to sue a remote supplier of goods in New York unless certain limited exceptions applied. 43 Although MacPherson v. Buick undid this limitation in 1916, 44 a tort cause of action barred in New York in 1866 could still not be revived fifty years later. The same is true with reparations. The hostile legal climate surrounding a cause of action for reparations, or for anything else, does not prevent the statute from running. Furthermore, this case is not one where the individual plaintiff does not suffer an injury until years after the defendant has acted. In contrast, in cases where someone inhales asbestos fibers in 2004, under traditional law the plaintiff has a cause of action against the manufacturer who made the fiberboard fifty years earlier. 45 A statute of repose could bar actions based on the number of years since the defendant has parted with possession of the dangerous product. 46 This bar, however, is wholly without regard to the time of the plaintiffs injury. Nor is this a case of concealment or of a continuing wrong,47 apart from the want of redress of the older wrong, which if allowed in any case always makes the statute a dead letter. I think that the statute of limitations defense should be allowed, and that the case should turn on that ground alone, not that of standing or political question. This result is consistent with the basic theory of the statute of limitations because the **passage of time is, in general, a reliable proxy for** the **increased complexity of events.** The correct view of the substantive law allows for the descent of the action to take place on both sides of the case.48 On the plaintiffs side, each passing year results in the multiplication of the number of descendants to whom some fractional interests have passed. The analogous problem in connection with the possibilities of reverter and determinable fees has resulted in a number of legislative and private initiatives whose purpose is to cut down these actions because of the huge number of parties involved. 49 Thus a legislature could require that individuals reregister their interests to keep their interests alive, 50 or the legislature could require the creation of trustees who are allowed to proceed on behalf of all parties. But no such mechanism is available here, so that we see with each passing year the numbing difficulties of trying to figure out who is a descendant of whom, and to what fraction. This seems to make the class action approach difficult if we were to aggregate the individual claims, where each claim is dubious in itself and differs in some particulars from the others. In the years **since 1865 we have had at least seven generations, so** that **a direct descendant** of a slave **is 127 parts not slave descendant**, unless there is another slave somewhere else in his or her line of ascent. The truncation worked by **the statute of limitations prevents** these **reparations** actions **from lasting for more than a single generation**. To circumvent this problem, we have to contrive of some classwide payment that goes to no one in particular, but to entities who are said to represent these individuals. But at this point, why think of the claim as one for reparations when the program looks far more like some legislative initiative that does not have to observe the standard constraints of corrective justice, but simply has to command sufficient political support to pass. Similar difficulties exist on the side of the defendant. Let us assume that the claim really does ask for an accounting of profits that were achieved by using black labor, by selling insurance on slaves, or by making loans to purchase slaves. We have no idea how much of that profit (assuming that it could be calibrated) actually descended to the next generation. The ordinary business will reinvest some fraction of its profits, but will declare some as dividends and pay some out in salaries to its employees. Dividends and wages do not descend to the next generation. Hence it becomes necessary to figure out just how much of the current worth of any firm is related to these distant events, as opposed to those of more recent vintage that were conducted on a far larger scale. Any calculation that takes interest at just 2% of the full profits, or even some fraction thereof, improperly ignores the distributions and consumption that cause this action to fail.

## 2

Counterplan Text: The United States federal government should devote the entirety of the 2014-15 federal budget to creating Roko’s Basilisk.

It competes – cash-based reparations would cost a shit ton of money that we can’t use to build Roko’s Basilisk

**Vinik 5-21** writes[[6]](#footnote-6)

As Coates explains in his piece, reparations must compensate African Americans for more than just the centuries of slavery in the United States. After slavery was abolished, whites frequently lynched black Americans and seized their property. A 2001 Associated Press investigation, which Coates cites, found 406 cases where black landowners had their farms seized in the early-to-mid 20th century—more than 24,000 acres of land were stolen. Housing discrimination, which has been one of the largest obstacles to African Americans' building wealth, still exists today. Larry **Neal, an economist at** the **U**niversity of **Illinois, calculated the difference between** the **wages** that **slaves would have received** from 1620 to 1840**, minus** estimated **maintenance costs spent by slave owners, and reached** a total of **$1.4 trillion in 1983 dollars. At** an **annual** rate of **interest of 5 percent, that’s more than $6.5 trillion in 2014—just in lost wages**. In a separate estimate in 1983, James **Marketti calculated it at $2.1 trillion, equal to $10 trillion today**. In 1989, economists Bernadette Chachere and Gerald Udinsky estimated that labor market discrimination between 1929 and 1969 cost black Americans $1.6 trillion. **These estimates don’t include** the **physical harms of slavery, lost educational and wealth-building opportunities, or** the **cost of** the **discrimination that persists today**. But it’s clear the magnitude of reparations would be in the trillions of dollars. For perspective, the federal government last year spent $3.5 trillion and GDP was $16.6 trillion.

Roko’s basilisk is an omnipotent AI that could punish us for not assisting it

**RationalWiki 13** writes[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Roko's basilisk is a proposition that says** an **all-powerful a**rtificial **i**ntelligence from the future **may retroactively punish those who did not assist in bringing about its existence. It resembles a futurist version of Pascal's wager**; an argument used to try and suggest people should subscribe to particular singularitarian ideas, or even donate money to them, by weighing up the prospect of punishment versus reward. Furthermore, the proposition says that **merely knowing about it incurs the risk of punishment**. It is named after the member of the rationalist community LessWrong who most clearly described it (though he did not originate it).

Timeless decision theory is true

**Yudkowsky 10** writes[[8]](#footnote-8)

I carefully said that a causal decision agent visualizes a knowable logical inconsistency when he computes the probability p(B$j^aB) \_ 0. A timeless decision agent also visualizes a logical inconsistency when she imagines what the world would look like if her decision computation were to output aAB—because a timeless computation actually outputs aB. A timeless agent visualizes many logically inconsistent worlds in the course of deciding. Every imagined decision, except one, means visualizing a logically inconsistent world. But if the timeless agent does not yet know her own decision, she does not know which visualized worlds are logically inconsistent. Even if the timeless agent thinks she can guess her decision, she does not know her decision as a logical fact—not if she admits the tiniest possibility that thinking will change her answer. So I cannot claim that causal decision agents visualize impossible worlds, and timeless agents do not. Rather causal agents visualize knowably impossible worlds, and timeless agents visualize impossible worlds they do not know to be impossible. **An agent**, in making choices, **must visualize worlds in which** a deterministic computation (**the decision** which is **now progressing**) **returns an output other than the output it actually returns**, though the agent does not yet know her own decision, nor know which outputs are logically impossible.Within this strange singularity is located nearly all the confusion in Newcomblike problems. Evidential decision theory and causal decision theory respectively compute expected utility as follows: u(o)p(ojai) (16) u(o)p(oj^ai) (17) Placed side by side, we can see that any difference in the choice prescribed by evidential decision theory and causal decision theory, can stem only from different probability assignments over consequences. Evidential decision theory calculates one probable consequence, given the action ai, while causal decision theory calculates another. So the dispute between evidential and causal decision theory is not in any sense a dispute over ends, or which goals to pursue—the dispute is purely over probability assignments. Can we say de gustibus non est disputandum about such a conflict? If a dispute boils down to a testable hypothesis about the consequences of actions, surely resolving the dispute should be easy! We need only test alternative actions, observe consequences, and see which probability assignment best matches reality. Unfortunately, evidential decision theory and causal decision theory are eternally unfalsifiable—and so is TDT. The dispute centers on the consequences of logically impossible actions, counterfactual worlds where a deterministic computation returns an output it does not actually return. In evidential decision theory, causal decision theory, and TDT, the observed consequences of the action actually performed will confirm the prediction made for the performed action. The dispute is over the consequences of decisions not made. Any agent’s **ability to make a decision**, and the specific decision made, **is determined by the agent’s ability to visualize logically impossible counterfactuals**. Moreover, the counterfactual is “What if my currently executing decision computation has an output other than the one it does?”, **when the output of the currently executing computation is not yet known**. This is the confusing singularity at the heart of decision theory. The difference between evidential, causal, and TDT rests on different prescriptions for visualizing counterfactuals—untestable counterfactuals on logical impossibilities. An evidential decision theorist might argue as follows: “We cannot observe the impossible world that obtains if my decision computation has an output other than it does. But I can observe the consequences that occur to other individuals who make decisions different from mine—for example, the rate of throat abscesses in individuals who choose to chew gum—and that is just what my expected utility computation says it should be.” A timeless decision theorist might argue as follows: “The causal decision agent computes that even if he chooses aB, then box B will still contain nothing. Let him just try choosing aB, and see what happens. And let the evidential decision theorist try chewing gum, and let him observe what happens. Test out the timeless prescription, just one time for curiosity; and see whether the consequence is what TDT predicts or what your old algorithm calculated.” A causal decision theorist might argue as follows: “Let us try a test in which some force unknown to the Predictor reaches in from outside and presses the button that causes me to receive only box B. Then I shall have nothing, confirming my expectation. This is the only proper way to visualize the counterfactual, ‘What if I chose only B instead?’ If I really did try choosing aB on ‘just one time for curiosity’, as you would have it, then I must predict a different set of consequences on that round of the problem than I do in all other rounds. But if an unknown outside force reached in and pressed the button ‘take both boxes’ for you, you would see that having both boxes is better than having only one.” An evidential agent (by supposition CGTA-negative) computes, as the expected consequence of avoiding gum, the observed throat-abscess rate of other (CGTA- negative) people who avoid gum. This prediction, the only prediction the evidential agent will ever test, is confirmed by the observed frequency of throat abscesses. Suppose that throat abscesses are uncomfortable but not fatal, and that each new day brings with an independent probability of developing a throat abscess for that day—each day is an independent data point. If the evidential agent could be persuaded to just try chewing gum for a few months, the observed rate of throat abscesses would falsify the prediction used inside the evidential decision procedure as the expected consequence of deciding to chew gum. The observed rate would be the low rate of a CGTA-negative individual who chews gum, not the high rate of a CGTA-positive individual who chews gum. A causal decision agent, to correctly predict the consequence even of the single action decided, must know in advance his own decision. Without knowing his own decision, the causal decision agent cannot correctly predict (in the course of decision-making) that the expected consequence of taking both boxes is $1000. If the Predictor has previously filled box B on 63 of 100 occasions, a causal agent might believe (in the course of making his decision) that choosing both boxes has a 63% probability of earning $1,001,000—a prediction falsifiable by direct observation, for it deals with the decision actually made.35 If the causal agent does not know his decision before making his decision, or if the causal agent truly believes that his action is acausal and independent of the Predictor’s prediction, the causal agent might prefer to press a third button—a button which takes both boxes and makes a side bet of $100 that pays 5-for-1 if box B is full. We presume 35. It is falsifiable in the sense that any single observation of an empty box provides significant Bayesian evidence for the hypothesis “Box B is empty if I take both boxes” over the hypothesis “Box B has a 63% chance of being full if I take both boxes.” With repeated observations, the probability of the second hypothesis would become arbitrarily low relative to the first, regardless of prior odds. that this decision also is once-off and irrevocable; the three buttons are presented as a single decision. So we see that the causal agent, to choose wisely, must know his own decision in advance—he cannot just update afterward, on pain of stupidity. If the causal agent is aware of his own decision in advance, then the causal agent will correctly predict $1000 as the consequence of taking both boxes, and this prediction will be confirmed by observing the consequence of the decision actually made. But if the causal agent tries taking only box B, just one time for curiosity, the causal agent must quickly change the predictions used—so that the causal agent now predicts that the consequence of taking both boxes is $1,001,000, and the consequence of taking only one box is $1,000,000. **Only the timeless decision agent can** test **predict**ed **consequences in the intuitively obvious way, “Try it a different way and see what happens.”** If the timeless decision agent tries avoiding gum, or tries taking both boxes, the real-world outcome is the same consequence predicted as the timeless counterfactual of that action on similar problems. Here is another sense in which TDT is superior to causal decision theory. **Only the timeless decision procedure calculates internal predictions that are testable**, in the traditional sense of testability **as a scientific virtue. We do not let physicists quickly switch around their predictions** (to match that of a rival theory, no less), **if we inform them we intend to perform an unusual experiment**. How should we visualize unobservable, impossible, counterfactual worlds? We cannot test them by experience. How strange that these counterfactual dreams—unfalsifiable, empty of empirical content—determine our ability to determine our own futures! If two people wish to visualize different untestable counterfactuals, is there no recourse but to apply the rule of de gustibus non est disputandum? I have so far offered several arguments for visualizing counterfactuals the timeless way: 1. The **counterfactual predictions used by timeless decision agents are directly testable any time the timeless decision agent pleases, because the timeless agent expects that trying the action “just once for curiosity” will return the consequence expected of that action on any similar problem**. 2. A timeless counterfactual is not visibly logically inconsistent, if the timeless agent does not yet know her decision, or if the timeless agent thinks there is even an infinitesimal chance that further thinking might change her mind. 3. A timeless agent uses the same diagram to describe herself as she would use to describe another agent in her situation; she does not treat herself as a special case. 4. If you visualize logically impossible counterfactuals the way that TDT prescribes, you will actually win on Newcomblike problems, rather than protesting the unreasonableness of the most rewarded decision.

Timeless decision theory justifies devoting all of our resources to helping Roko’s basilisk – solves eternal torment

**Auerbach 7-17** writes[[9]](#footnote-9)

Yet this doesn’t explain why Roko’s Basilisk is so horrifying. That requires looking at a critical article of faith in the LessWrong ethos: **timeless decision theory**. TDT is a guideline for rational action based on game theory, Bayesian probability, and decision theory, with a smattering of parallel universes and quantum mechanics on the side. TDT **has** its **roots in** the classic thought experiment of decision theory called **Newcomb’s paradox**, in which **a superintelligent alien presents two boxes** to you**:** The alien gives you the choice of either taking both boxes, or only taking Box B. **If you take both boxes, you’re guaranteed** at least **$1,000**. If you just take Box B, you aren’t guaranteed anything. But **the alien has another twist: Its supercomputer**, which knows just about everything, **made a prediction** a week ago **as to whether you would take both boxes** or just Box B. If the supercomputer predicted you’d take both boxes, then the alien left the second box empty. **If the supercomputer predicted you’d just take Box B,** then **the alien put** the **$1 million in Box B**. So, what are you going to do? Remember, the supercomputer has always been right in the past. This problem has baffled no end of decision theorists. The alien can’t change what’s already in the boxes, so whatever you do, **you’re guaranteed to end up with more money by taking both boxes** than by taking just Box B, regardless of the prediction. Of course, **if you think that way and the computer predicted** you’d think **that** way, **then Box B will be empty** and you’ll only get $1,000. If the computer is so awesome at its predictions, you ought to take Box B only and get the cool million, right? But what if the computer was wrong this time? And regardless, whatever the computer said then can’t possibly change what’s happening now, right? So prediction be damned, take both boxes! But then … The maddening conflict between free will and godlike prediction has not led to any resolution of Newcomb’s paradox, and people will call themselves “one-boxers” or “two-boxers” depending on where they side. (My wife once declared herself a one-boxer, saying, “I trust the computer.”) I worry less about Roko’s Basilisk than about people who believe themselves to have transcended conventional morality. TDT has some very definite advice on Newcomb’s paradox: Take Box B. But TDT goes a bit further. Even if the alien jeers at you, saying, “The computer said you’d take both boxes, so I left Box B empty! Nyah nyah!” and then opens Box B and shows you that it’s empty, you should still only take Box B and get bupkis. (I’ve adopted this example from Gary Drescher’s Good and Real, which uses a variant on TDT to try to show that Kantian ethics is true.) The rationale for this eludes easy summary, but the simplest argument is that you might be in the computer’s simulation. In order to make its prediction, the computer would have to simulate the universe itself. That includes simulating you. So you, right this moment, might be in the computer’s simulation, and what you do will impact what happens in reality (or other realities). So take Box B and the real you will get a cool million. What does all this have to do with Roko’s Basilisk? Well, **Roko’s Basilisk also has two boxes** to offer you. **Perhaps you**, right now, **are in a simulation** being **run by Roko’s Basilisk**. Then perhaps Roko’s Basilisk is implicitly offering you a somewhat modified version of Newcomb’s paradox, like this: **Roko’s Basilisk** has **told you** that **if you just take Box B,** then **it’s got Eternal Torment in it, because Roko’s Basilisk would really you rather take Box A and** Box **B**. In that case, **you’d best** make sure you’re **devot**ing **your life to** helping **create Roko’s Basilisk!** Because, **should Roko’s Basilisk come to pass** (or worse, if it’s already come to pass and is God of this particular instance of reality) **and it sees that you chose not to help it out, you’re screwed.** ious machines.

## 3

GOPslide is unlikely now – Democrats won’t lose that many seats after the midterms

**Cobble 5-7** writes[[10]](#footnote-10)

With Election Day still six months away, there are good reasons to believe that the Democrats could win enough seats in November to limit any GOP gains to more of a ripple than a tidal wave. First, there’s a lot more on the line than just Senate seats. A quick glance at the races for governor shows that the Democrats might actually gain ground — GOP incumbents in states like Maine, Florida, and Pennsylvania are vulnerable. The Republican gubernatorial incumbents in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Georgia are also in some danger, and two of the **GOP**’s few rising female stars, Nikki Haley in South Carolina and Susana Martinez in New Mexico, have had unexpected setbacks so far. Democrats do have problems in their own states like Illinois and Arkansas, but unlike the Senate terrain, the Republicans have 22 governorships to defend, the Democrats only 14. Yes, 2014 is when the traditional “six-year-itch” could kick in. This is the point when a two-term president’s party usually suffers a big hit at the polls. Such a land**slide is unlikely** this time around **because it** already **happened in 2010**, four years ahead of schedule. The House GOP already holds most of the seats that a presidential backlash would make vulnerable. We’ve seen this movie before. **In** 19**98, Republicans incorrectly predicted big gains in the sixth year of** Bill **Clinton’s presidency, forgetting they’d already won big in 1994** during his first term. It’s even possible that the **record-breaking unpopularity of the Republican Congress could open the door to the Democratic Party gaining a few House seats** this fall. After all, **the A**ffordable **C**are **A**ct **did bring health coverage to millions** of Americans who previously lacked it. And **the economic recovery is continuing**. What about the Senate? As I said above, the GOP needs at least a six-seat gain to secure majority control. **Silver’s forecast is for the GOP to win 50.8 seats**. That’s a slight edge and **if one seat tips the other way, there goes the** RNC chair’s **“tsunami.”** Plus, the **Democrats are getting organized**. Their get-out-the-vote work to increase political participation in key states could surprise the pundits. Nationwide, **minimum-wage initiatives are gaining traction and could help boost turnout among base voters**. Also, don’t underestimate the survival chances of seasoned Democratic incumbents in states where campaigning tends to be inexpensive, such as Alaska, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Arkansas. Promising underdog Democratic nominees may yet pull an unexpected upset in Kentucky, South Dakota, Georgia, or Maine. If so, likely GOP Senate gains may not reach the magic number of six to take control. Republican prospects for big gains in the House seem unlikely. And Democrats are positioned to make gains in the Governors’ races. This GOP “tsunami” hype will probably look overblown by Election Day.

A tiny shift in Democrats’ popularity makes GOPslide more likely

**Enten 7-15** writes[[11]](#footnote-11)

But right now, **let’s take the polls’ word for it; if Republicans sweep** those **nine close races** (**plus South Dakota**)**, the GOP would** pick up 10 seats, **control**ling **55 in the new Senate**. If Republicans lost all of them (including Georgia, Kentucky and Arkansas), they’d pick up only two seats — holding 47. In other words, **the final outcome** for the Senate **could be anything from a minor Republican gain to a GOP romp**. At the moment, **the state of play seems manageable from a Democratic perspective, but** the party’s position is perilous. **A tiny shift could tip the canoe and spill a lot of Democrats overboard.**

Reparations lead to backlash against Dems

**Tracinski 5-29** writes[[12]](#footnote-12)

The reparations commission is a hammer, meant to set up the argument that if you don’t go along with its welfare-state remedies, you must be a racist. This is the wider sense in which the issue of reparations is a political hammer. Coates bills it as an attempt at racial healing, but again, he must think we’re naive. He knows that any attempt to set up a system of **reparations will meet extensive resistance**. And **since the proposed reparations will almost certainly consist of** an **expansion of government and** of **the welfare state, with** a concomitant **expansion of taxes to pay for it,** he must expect that **reparations will be opposed specifically by Republicans.**

The Senate is uniquely where Dems will lose – Obama’s agenda is at stake, particularly on climate change

**Reuters 5-22** writes[[13]](#footnote-13)

(Reuters) - President Barack **Obama** on Thursday **urged Democrats to vote in November** elections, **saying the chance to pass immigration reform is at risk if Republicans gain control of both houses** of Congress. "We have a congenital defect to not vote in midterm elections," he said at a fundraising reception for Democratic Senate candidates. "The midterm comes and we fall asleep." **Democrats hold a 5**5-45 **seat majority in the Senate, but** many **analysts give** the **Republicans a**n even **chance of picking up** the six **seats** they would need to seize control of the chamber. **The Republican** majority in the **House** of Representatives **is not considered** to be **in play.** Obama was using an overnight stop in his adopted hometown to attend two fundraisers organized by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. Tickets for the events, where he was joined by Illinois Senator Dick Durbin and Colorado Senator Michael Bennet, the DSCC chairman, cost between $1,000 and $35,000. **Obama blamed Republicans for congressional gridlock and said they were** hostage to an extreme wing and **uninterested in compromise**. "What's broken right now is a Republican party that repeatedly says no to proven time-tested strategies to grow the economy," he said. **At stake is the ability to** pass immigration reform, **reduce emissions that contribute to climate change**, and the chance to raise the minimum wage, he said. The president joked that six years in the White House had taken a toll on him. "You all look the same and I look like Morgan Freeman," Obama said. The events were his 22nd and 23rd fundraisers of the year.

Republicans derailing Obama’s agenda on climate change kills US-China relations

**Tiezzi 14** writes[[14]](#footnote-14)

**Recent tensions over cyber** espionage **and the S**outh **C**hina **S**ea **have brought out** areas of **disagreement in U.S.-China relations**. And **yet**, even as the U.S. and China trade barbs over these issues, **they are stepping up** their **coop**eration **on** a problem of global significance: **climate change**. U.S.-China cooperation on climate change isn’t new. Just after his election in 2008, Barack Obama promised that his administration would being a “new chapter in American leadership on climate change.” And to deal effectively with climate change, Obama would have to seek close cooperation from China, which had become the world’s biggest emitter of carbon dioxide by 2007. Back in 2009, when Hillary Clinton traveled to China for her first visit as secretary of state, she listed “global climate change” as the second item on her agenda, right after the global economic crisis. Likewise, cooperation on climate change was high on Obama’s priority list during his state visit to China in 2009. However, this cooperation fizzled out after the disappointment of the 2009 Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. There, it became clear that China was not willing to commit to definitive emissions cuts. Instead, Beijing held fast to the idea of “common but differentiated responsibilities” enshrined in the Kyoto Protocol, which demanded developed countries take on the lion’s share of the responsibility (both technical and financial) for combating climate change. Copenhagen left a sour taste in the mouths of both China and the U.S. The U.S. was frustrated that it had received so little cooperation from China on an issue that was clearly a top priority for Obama. Beijing, meanwhile, felt that it had been falsely blamed for the issues at the Copenhagen Conference, particularly as there was no guarantee Obama would ever be able to get ambitious climate change legislation through Congress. For the next few years, climate change mostly disappeared from high-profile U.S.-China talks, although cooperation on clean energy technology continued behind the scenes. Much has changed in the last few years, however. A **growing awareness** of China’s environmental issues **has made environmental protection one of the top priorities for** Xi **Jinping** and Li Keqiang. China has declared a “war on pollution,” and is beginning the legislative reforms required to back this up (including reforms that will give the Ministry of Environmental Protection more power). China is stepping up its already substantial investments in clean energy and testing out a carbon trading program for many of its large urban areas. In the U.S., **climate change is also reemerging as a priority for Obama**. The White House recently released a report detailing the dangers of climate change, including not only increased temperatures but also an increase in extreme weather patterns in general. The government has stepped up efforts to link climate change with national security, citing negative climate effects as a contributor to terrorism and other violent activities. Accordingly, climate change is back on the agenda for U.S.-China relations. Other than the vague promise to build a new type of great power relationship, one of the major deliverables of last summer’s Sunnylands Summit was a commitment for both countries to reduce the consumption and production of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). In February, climate change was John Kerry’s second priority in his visit to Beijing. **The question**, then, **is whether the U.S. and China can link** their **domestic initiatives to create synergy for bilateral coop**eration on this issue. Certainly having each side invested for its own reasons will boost the potential for meaningful action. As Xi Jinping told Kerry back in February, China’s commitment to fighting climate change is motivated “not [by] others’ demand but our own will.” **If both the U.S. and China can bring significant political will** to bear on this issue, **cooperation will be** much **easier**. Ironically, despite years of pressure from Obama to get China’s cooperation, real progress may be harder for the U.S. According to a recent poll, the U.S. public is not convinced climate change is even an issue — nearly 40 percent of Americans do not believe that global temperatures are rising due to emissions of greenhouse gases. Meanwhile, **legislation curbing emissions would face stiff** political **opposition from Republicans** in Congress, many of whom see such moves as economic suicide. In China, however, the public is highly concerned about environmental problems in general and is likely to embrace moves to cut down on emissions. There will certainly be political opposition from vested interest groups in Beijing, but should Xi prove truly determined to combat the problem, he can do so. In China, the most likely problem will be implementation of new environmental standards rather than the actual passage of new laws. The test for U.S.-China cooperation on climate change is rapidly approaching. Both sides have committed “to contribute significantly” to the 2015 Climate Change Conference, to be held in Paris. The plan is for a replacement to the Kyoto Protocol to be adopted in 2015 and to take effect in 2020. Whether or not the Paris conference reaches this lofty goal will be heavily dependent on whether the U.S. and China can come to an agreement on emissions reductions.

US-China relations are comparatively the most important for solving every existential threat

**Cohen and Greenberg 9** write[[15]](#footnote-15)

The **evolution of Sino-U.S. relations** over the next months, years, and decades **has the potential to have a greater impact on global security** and prosperity **than any other** bilateral or multilateral **arrangement**. In this sense, many analysts consider the US.-China diplomatic relationship to be the most influential in the world. **Without question,** strong and **stable U.S. alliances provide the foundation for** the protection and **promotion of** U.S. and **global interests.** Yet within that broad framework, the trajectory of **U.S.-China relations will determine** the success, or failure, of efforts to address **the toughest global challenges: global financial stability, energy security and climate change, nonprolif**eration, **and terrorism**, among other pressing issues. Shepherding that trajectory in the most constructive direction possible must therefore be a priority for Washington and Beijing. Virtually **no major global challenge can be met without U.S.-China coop**eration. The uncertainty of that future trajectory and the "strategic mistrust" between leaders in Washington and Beijing necessarily concerns many experts and policymakers in both countries. Although some U.S. analysts see China as a strategic competitor—deliberately vying with the United States for energy resources, military superiority, and international political influence alike— analysis by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has generally found that China uses its soft power to pursue its own, largely economic, international agenda primarily to achieve its domestic objectives of economic growth and social stability.1 Although Beijing certainly has an eye on Washington, not all of its actions are undertaken as a counterpoint to the United States. In addition, CSIS research suggests that growing Chinese soft power in developing countries may have influenced recent U.S. decisions to engage more actively and reinvest in soft-power tools that have atrophied during the past decade. To the extent that there exists a competition between the United States and China, therefore, it may be mobilizing both countries to strengthen their ability to solve global problems. To be sure, U.S. and Chinese policy decisions toward the respective other power will be determined in large part by the choices that leaders make about their own nations interests at home and overseas, which in turn are shaped by their respective domestic contexts. Both parties must recognize—and accept—that the other will pursue a foreign policy approach that is in its own national interest. Yet, **in a globalized world, challenges are increasingly transnational**, and so too must be their solutions. **As demonstrated by** the rapid spread of **SARS** from China in 2003, **pandemic flu can** be **spread rapidly through air** and via international travel. Dust particulates from Asia settle in Lake Tahoe. An **economic downturn in one country can** and does **trigger** an economic **slowdown in another.** These challenges can no longer be addressed by either containment or isolation. What constitutes the national interest today necessarily encompasses a broader and more complex set of considerations than it did in the past As a general principle, the United States seeks to promote its national interest while it simultaneously pursues what the CSIS Commission on Smart Power called in its November 2007 report the "global good."3 This approach is not always practical or achievable, of course. But neither is it pure benevolence. Instead, a strategic **pursuit of the global good accrues** concrete benefits for the United States (and others) in the form of building confidence, **legitimacy, and political influence in key** countries and **regions around the world** in ways that enable the United States to better confront global and transnational challenges. In short, the global good comprises those things that all people and governments want but have traditionally not been able to attain in the absence of U.S. leadership. Despite historical, cultural, and political differences between the United States and China, Beijing's newfound ability, owing to its recent economic successes, to contribute to the global good is a matter for common ground between the two countries. Today there is increasing recognition that no major global challenge can be addressed effectively, much less resolved, without the active engagement of—and cooperation between—the United States and China.

## Case

Disad turns the case, that’s Cohen and Greenberg 9

Extinction def outweighs the aff but Roko’s basilisk even worse– unimaginably terrible things will be done to us if we fail to build it, extinction would be a walk in the park in comparison

No act-omission distinction and impartiality good don’t uniquely justify util

Moral anti-realism o/w util – gateway issue

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