



Our Oldest Task: Making Sense of Our Place in Nature

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This dense but well-structured philosophical text endeavors to examine the cultural causes of climate change.

Drawing from the Enlightenment, American culture is fiercely individualistic. But is that a constructive attitude when that culture is confronted by climate change? *Our Oldest Task* argues that the current American paradigm cannot effectively confront the environmental hurdles before us, and that only a massive cultural shift can adequately address the problem.

The book looks closely at individualism, but also touches on government, economy, and civil rights movements as applied to climate change. Current events appear in indirect reference occasionally, but for the most part, the book sets out to cover American culture broadly. It succeeds, and its conclusions are easily recognizable in many different aspects of civil life.

With the United States as the book's primary focus, it is easy to consider its audience to be limited to Americans. However, since both American business philosophy and American consumption habits are contagious throughout the developing world, it is reasonable to project the conclusions drawn here onto other Western or westernized cultures, if in a limited way. Regardless, the book's philosophical heft will make it a challenging read for nonphilosophers, though it does an excellent job of conveying its message clearly.

Our Oldest Task outlines not a technological or political solution to climate change, but one that is more basic. Though it gives little insight into what a bedrock cultural shift would look like, its premise is thought-provoking, and is a new angle on a problem that is on the verge of being beaten into the ground by the same handful of concepts. This makes it a useful resource for academics and others, especially serious activists looking for new ways to drive the climate-change discussion.

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