

Excavating the Oil Sands with a ‘Public Justice Approach’

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Executive Summary

The massive oil sands developments currently unfolding in northeast Alberta are yielding complicated energy and economic paybacks as well as presenting many social, economic, political and environmental risks and costs. How should society analyze, interact and respond to these enormous developments? How can we discern whether the implicated actors are being responsible, or determine whether governments have historically, and are currently, playing appropriate public justice roles? In other words, how can we develop stewardly, equitable, and just policy responses and action-plans in response to the oil sands boom?

This speech explores the dominant *modernist ‘approach to analysis’* currently used to understand most aspects of the tar sands boom. It argues that this approach obscures the deep-running, competing ideologies that currently fill-in the content of the state’s and government’s role. A *public justice approach* to the government’s role—conducted within a penetrating, *integral approach to analysis*—can offer new and liberating insights into the oil sands boom. This speech sketches out these approaches and briefly illustrates them with examples drawn from the tar sands. A public justice approach, the speech concludes, inspires action steps that free us from our society’s ethos of powerlessness, offers practical and concrete changes, avoids merely imposing technical adjustments on an over-all troublesome set of developments, opens up greater space for public debate, and re-orientes the current approach to the oil sands.

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Excavating the Oil Sands with a ‘Public Justice Approach’

Opening

A member of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) recently bumped into me and asked: “So what do you think the oil sands boom is all about?”

A year before that, Prime Minister Stephen Harper addressing British investors interested in the tar sands, said: “They have recognized Canada’s emergence as a global energy powerhouse – the emerging ‘energy superpower’ our government intends to build.” The oil sands developments are “an enterprise of epic proportions, akin to the building of the pyramids or China’s Great Wall. Only bigger.”¹

I hesitated answering the CPJ supporter. Who can claim to be able to explain the contemporary version of building Egypt’s pyramids or the Great Wall of China? And that in a three minute conversation?

Then CPJ called me to ask whether I would give the AGM speech on “*a public justice approach to the oil sands boom.*” I said I’d need more than three minutes.... They said I could have 30... I should have held out for 90 minutes!

Seriously, it is critical that Canadians wrestle with the best way of handling this matter. This speech tackles the “awesome” and simultaneously “awful” drama of the oil sands developments. It combines this electrifying topic with the somewhat more abstract, perhaps less-exciting, but vitally important subject of “which approach should we use to analyze the state’s role in the oil sands?”

Why the tar sands?

The tar sands development boom is so large, complex, and threatens such wide-ranging impacts and problems that it simply begs for, even demands, analysis! It’s like an *icon* of our times.² In the oil sands we see an astonishing ‘re-presentation’ of the sweeping challenges and problems faced by contemporary globalized culture, e.g. climate change, resource depletion, wasteful lifestyles, technological mastery, human migration, economic globalization, and so much more.

I should note, the terms *tar sands* and *oil sands* are ideologically loaded words today. The material extracted, of course, is technically neither *oil* nor *tar* but rather *bitumen*. In order to leave openness to “hearing and engaging” arguments and evidence from all corners, and not to prematurely shut down badly needed dialogue, I use the terms interchangeably.

What is a public justice approach?

A public justice approach, as I understand it, deals first and foremost with discerning the appropriate role of state and government³ in various life situations. In the case of the oil sands, a public justice analysis could be done of the *historical* roles the state has played in these developments. Or, we could also reflect on what the state and government ought to be doing *today* in the tar sands developments. This complex task lies at the heart of CPJ’s mission to shape “key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God’s call for love, justice and stewardship.”⁴

Gaining clarity on the government’s public justice role on issues such as alleviating poverty, welcoming refugees, or the oil sands boom is not at all straightforward. In fact, it is very difficult to grasp the public justice approach unless we also understand something of both the *larger worldview* as well as the *approach to analysis* out of which it grows.

First, the public justice approach is rooted in the larger Christian worldview flowing from the biblical narrative concerning God’s good creation, the human fall into sin, the resulting twisting of cultural unfolding in history, the good news of redemption in Jesus, and the expectant hope for the renewal of all things at his return. This vision CPJ shares with its members, drawn from many diverse denominations, communities, and traditions.

Second, the larger *approach to analysis*, in the context of which we discern a public justice view of the state’s role, requires careful explanation. Generically, an *approach to analysis* concerns “the possible plans to be carried out—the *journeys* to be undertaken—so that an understanding of phenomena can be obtained.”⁵ Within any overall approach, a variety of different methods might be profitably used—experimental designs, sampling procedures, historical analysis, ethnographic study, measuring instruments, statistical treatment of data—depending on whether they advance the research journey and produce results.

Before jumping into the oil sands, metaphorically speaking, I want to underline that an approach to analysis is a *journey* of investigation, not a tool, formula, recipe, nor a mechanical method. If it were a tool, any rational, educated person could simply pick it up and use it to examine policy problems and devise solutions. Any approach CAN be understood and treated this way, of course, and indeed some are, but I think they ought not to be. I think it is more accurate to see an approach to analysis as the schooling of our vision and understanding of the world, so we can holistically observe, examine, and act within it. The activity of discerning a public justice approach to the state and government’s role, therefore, requires not only proficiency in observation and analysis but a well developed worldview and great deal of discernment, intuition and imagination.⁶ Developing and using an approach to analysis is best done, therefore, *within* an active community of faith and public reflection.

What I plan to do

So, in this speech I will: (1) give a brief overview of the oil sands developments; (2) explain what I understand by the modernist approach to analysis that currently dominates the study of the tar sands, note its strengths and weaknesses, and point out what this approach counsels the state to do in the tar sands developments; and (3) outline a more comprehensive and holist approach to analysis that over the years has contributed to CPJ’s public justice understanding of the state’s role.

Overview of the oil sands development: [section corresponds to [power point presentation](#)]

The oil sands ‘deposits,’ seen from the limited angle of a ‘natural resource,’ are indeed impressive. Due to recent technological developments and rapidly increasing oil prices, the tar sands have been catapulted to the forefront of Canadian participation in globalized economic life and heralded as the engine of progress in our nation.

To begin with, the oil sands is a naturally occurring phenomena, made up of a mixture of bitumen—a very thick, sticky (viscous) form of petroleum—and mixed with sand, water and clay residue. The grains of sand are coated by water and a layer of bitumen.

There are “1.7 to 2.5 trillion barrels of oil” in oil sands deposits.⁷ Alberta’s Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB), estimates that “Alberta has the second largest petroleum reserves in the world, second only to Saudi Arabia.”⁸ Currently, 175 billion barrels of bitumen are deemed recoverable. Alberta’s Department of Energy estimates this accounts for 15% of the world reserves!⁹

This is “the largest known hydrocarbon deposit ever discovered,” Hugh McCullum notes. The estimate that 175 billion barrels are recoverable “is based on using existing technologies. Using newer technologies, as much as 2.5 trillion barrels of oil might be recovered—but the costs would be enormous.”¹⁰

Currently industry recovers around 1.1 million barrels of bitumen each day, (about one-third of the province's total crude oil production) and this is expected to rise to 2.7 million barrels a day by 2015.

Some contend that “Alberta’s oil sand deposits contain resources that could supply Canada’s energy needs for more than 475 years, or total world needs for up to 15 years!”¹¹

The enormity of the geography and ecology that will be affected by this industrial operation is also difficult to grasp. It involves about 140,200 square kilometres of north-eastern Alberta. If you want to know what this means, Alberta Energy reports that this is “an area larger than the state of Florida, an area twice the size of New Brunswick, more than four and half times the size of Vancouver Island, and 26 times larger than Prince Edward Island.”¹² In comparative perspective, this represents an area greater than the entire country of Honduras (112,088 sq. km.).¹³

The deposits are buried at varying depths beneath the earth's surface. Mostly, they are covered by muskeg, sandstone, and shale, and the boreal forest. Industrial and government operators now refer to this, in ‘natural resource’ extraction language, as the ‘overburden.’ Once this is removed, the tar sands need to be dug out and processed. Alberta Energy says: “Bitumen makes up about 10-12 per cent of the actual oil sands found in Alberta. The remainder is 80-85 per cent mineral matter – including sand and clays – and 4-6 per cent water.”¹⁴

This gives us a bit of a grip on the magnitude of the bitumen deposit.

Extraction through open pit mining

Open pit mining is the preferred method of extraction for the 19% of the overall oil sands reserve that is close to the surface. The ‘truck and shovel mining’ method is used to move the resource to a point where it is turned into a liquid slurry and sent through pipelines to nearby extraction plants. To grasp the degree and extent of disturbance this requires, we note two facts:

- “Oil sands producers move enough *overburden* and oil sands every two days to fill Toronto’s Skydome or New York’s Yankee Stadium.”¹⁵
- “About two tonnes of oil sands must be dug up, moved and processed to produce one barrel of oil.”¹⁶

Extraction, processing and end-products

A hot water extraction technique is used to separate bitumen from oil sands.¹⁷ “Roughly 75 per cent of the bitumen can be recovered from sand; processed sand has to be returned to the pit and the site reclaimed.”¹⁸

The next step, the upgrading process, involves splitting or cracking the large bitumen molecules into smaller fragments—by adding hydrogen (hydro-cracking) or removing carbon (coking)—this creates smaller hydrocarbon molecules, which are easier to transport and process.

The resulting product is then piped to refineries and transformed into a variety of final products. Significantly, about 70% of the oil sands are used to produce ***transportation fuels***—gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel.¹⁹ These end-products are then shipped to various markets.

Once an area has been open pit mined, the oil sands companies are supposed to reclaim the disturbed land and return it to predisturbance or similar conditions. The massive tailings ponds, which we explore later, are far more difficult problem. No workable solution has yet been discovered. The second largest dam in the world holds back just one of these tailings ponds in the Fort McMurray area.

Alternative methods of extraction

For the 81% of oil sands reserves that are too deep to be open pit mined—deeper than 75 metres—other processes are being developed and used to extract the bitumen. The leading processes at the moment are *in situ* steam operations (“*in situ*” is Latin for “in place”). Currently, the most popular

of these processes is *Steam-Assisted Gravity Drainage* (SAGD). It “involves horizontal wells—one above the other—that are drilled into an oil sands deposit. Steam is injected into the upper wellbore, heating the deposit and allowing the bitumen to drain into the lower well, where it is then pumped to surface.”²⁰ The sand and other residue, of course, are left below the surface.

Economic impacts of the oil sands boom

The economic magnitude of the oil sands operations mirrors its physical and technological magnitude described above. The numbers are amazing on all fronts. In 2006, Alberta GDP was \$183 billion, with a year-over-year GDP growth rate of 6.6 %. The Alberta unemployment rate, as of March 2008, was 3.4 %. And, the CPI Inflation Rate, as of January 2008, was 3.5 %.²¹ In 2004, Alberta’s GDP per capita was \$58,394, which was 45 per cent above the Canadian average of \$40,351, and 40% above second place Ontario.²² A long list of economic challenges and problems could be added here, of course, if time permitted.

The economic spin-offs of the tar sands are felt throughout Alberta, much of Canada, and ripple around the world. According to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (2008 report):

Over the last 10 years, oil sands investment far surpassed earlier projections. The CERI study assumes \$100 billion in investment over the 2000-2020 period, a level that is generally consistent with CAPP’s forecasts. From 1997 to 2006, total oil sands investment was \$59 billion and CAPP forecasts a further \$80 billion of investment by 2010.²³

Some now refer to Canada as an “*Energy Superpower*.” Others are beginning to refer to the high flying Canadian dollar as a “*petro-dollar*.”

Meanwhile, a variety of other practices and processes embed and surround the oil sands developments. These ought also to be examined in order to adequately understand this phenomenon. Today, for example, humanity is engaged in a massive world-wide race to secure control and use of the last easy-to-obtain resources on the globe, e.g. water, oil, land, minerals, fish, land, & air. This race is largely organized around countries and corporations. These entities have structured themselves together in political alliances, international trade arrangements, and market structures. Sometimes they forcefully include and at other times forcefully exclude various aspects of the lives of most every state and people on the earth.

Implications of using the dominant “modernist approach” to analysis

Imagine the CPJ Board decided to tackle the oil sands and chose to use the modernist approach to analyze the oil sands. What ‘topics’ would it lead CPJ to tackle in the oil sands? And, related to the basic theme of this speech, what guidance would it give CPJ on advising the state on its role in addressing these developments?

The mainstream modernist approach

During my sabbatical research of the tar sands during 2007-2008, I discovered a large number of studies on a wide variety of aspects of the developments, conducted by corporations, think tanks, government departments, NGOs, consultants, and academic scholars. Many are interesting and helpful, and I have learned a great deal from them. They study God’s world and have discovered many insights.²⁴

When these studies are taken in aggregate, however, they produce a troublesome pattern—few seem to tackle the ‘essence’²⁵ of the oil sands boom. Many use what I will refer to as the ***modernist approach to social science***, or often described as the “naturalism-empiricism-positivism tradition.”²⁶ This widely used approach recommends we undertake a “***journey of investigation***” that disaggregates or splits up the phenomena studied into disciplinary, sub-disciplinary, and/or interest-group elements.

Academics, for example, are directed by this approach to focus on problems within their disciplinary or sub-disciplinary expertise²⁷—water issues, labour shortages, housing and rental problems, GHG emissions, tailings ponds reclamation, infrastructure shortages, governance issues, or other focused problems. Policy institute researchers are urged to select problems in their issue area or interest group mandate—environmental, economic, labour market, energy policy, etc.²⁸

The modernist approach imagines this narrowing of focus is acceptable for most studies because it assumes the accumulating fragmented insights will automatically cohere into a unified body of knowledge that accurately portrays, even predicts, events in the larger oil sands development picture. This resulting body of knowledge helps us technically “unlock the secrets of nature” and enables major increases in “human health and wealth.”²⁹

When oil companies, government regulators, and even critics rely exclusively on the fragmented knowledge produced by this approach to identify problems and devise solutions, however, real troubles start. Solutions devised for problems defined this way can tend to take on the character of *technical adjustments* to the overall process of exploiting the oil sands. While many narrowing approaches can provide useful information and knowledge, relying too heavily on this approach may lead us to fail to address these narrower dimensions in the context of the larger dynamics and deeper influences driving the whole set of developments. Consequently, many technical adjustment solutions end up tackling symptoms only and, in some cases, paradoxically make these worse. Sometimes technical adjustments developed on the basis of fragmented knowledge may even end up creating new, more-perplexing problems. This is the outcome, I believe, of the erroneous assumption that fragmented knowledge simply and accurately adds up to extensive and comprehensive knowledge of the whole. In fact, I argue, the modernist approach can end up *obscuring the essence of the oil sands developments!*

What would the modernist approach recommend CPJ do?

If CPJ were to tackle the oil sands development boom, what would the modernist approach lead the CPJ board to focus on? I briefly explore two options this approach might recommend and explore one example illustrating each option.

A) Disciplinary Focus: e.g. toxic tailings ponds

One line of investigation that a modernist approach recommends is to identify a topic within a *disciplinary, or sub-disciplinary focus*, e.g. as an economist, ecologist, or chemist, and tackle it. After all, focused disciplinary research contributes to the construction of the great edifice of theory and overall knowledge of the world.

Let’s take the example of *chemists and the problem of toxic tailings ponds*. The modernist approach encourages an expert analysis of the properties of the toxic tailings ponds; in fact, chemists have done important work on this for many years. The toxic tailings ponds cover more than 80 square kilometres now, and pose incredible risks. They contain water, bitumen residue, heavy metals, and clay. No one has yet figured out how to clean them up.

In order to develop reliable ‘scientific’ understanding, chemists quite properly focus on narrower problems like toxins or the settling of suspended particles in tailings ponds. The hope is that the resulting scientific expertise can be used to develop technical solutions which companies can use to adjust the oil sands production and extraction processes, and thereby solve the problems of the tailings ponds.

Simon Dyer of the Pembina Institute observes, however,

What the companies hope to do is to slowly separate some of the fine suspended material and incorporate that into reclaimed dry landscapes. And then, the most watery fine matured tailings, at the end of the mine life, pump those into a deep pit and top them off with fresh water and

walk away. It's never been proven and it's a real risky process and I think it could have long term ramifications for Albertans.³⁰

So, where has the narrow focus of the modernist approach led us in everyday practice? After 30 years, we are still not sure how to practically make the toxins and suspended particles settle faster. Yet, we continue to rush ahead in exploiting the tar sands and new open pit mines are being allowed to join in. So far, the scientific results have led technical experts to suggest increasing the volume of tailings ponds, building higher dams, adopting measures to prevent toxins from leaching into the nearby Athabasca River, and continuing research for a lasting technical solution. This problem has grown to the point where the second largest dam in the world now sits just north of Fort McMurray holding back one of Syncrude's tailing ponds. We now live with the *paradox* that scientists have developed knowledge that simultaneously enables us to develop this state of affairs, to identify the huge risks it poses, and to promise that eventually science will discover timely and cost-effective solutions. Narrow specialized scientific 'expertise'³¹ seems to have let us down practically. It fails to encourage us to ask, however, whether the overall situation indicates that perhaps the real solution for toxic tailings ponds lies in quite another direction.

What should government do?

If CPJ were to use this approach to analysis, furthermore, it would not be given much direction on what to advise governments. If current provincial and federal track records on dealing with tailing ponds are a reliable indicator, the modernist approach simply seems to endorse existing government measures, e.g. do more studies, continue to regulate limits on environmental impacts, set more conditions on storage, require noise cannons to frighten off migrating birds, enact measures to keep toxins from leaching into waterways [fisheries]. Bottom line, government should continue to allow current oil sands developments to proceed apace, make their technical adjustments along the way, and fervently wait and hope for the market, science, and technology to provide a *silver-bullet solution* for all emerging problems. While this contains some helpful elements, perhaps, it is not exactly a ringing prophetic critique of the essence of the oil sands boom. Nor is it a helpful public justice approach to guide government action on tailings ponds or on re-directing the overall tar sands development boom.

B) Issue-Oriented Focus: e.g. using clean natural gas to produce dirty bitumen

A second line of advice the modernist approach might give CPJ would be to focus on a key *issue* in the oil sands developments. We are all familiar with, and probably have practiced, *issue-oriented* activism and problem-solving. I know I have. I have grown to appreciate, however, some serious problems and shortcomings with this approach.

At first glance, the issue-oriented approach may seem attractive to think tanks, NGOs, and others. It allows them to choose from a wide range of issue options, to pick a manageable issue, to keep their actions practical (not slipping into theoretical never-never land), and to tackle something that actually offers a chance of success! I for one, would love to focus on health issues of down-stream aboriginal communities; or the issues of water usage, shortages and management; or Fort McMurray infrastructure deficits; or the issue of greenhouse gas emissions; or the issue of Alberta failing to economically diversify and increasingly slipping into a single-industry economy; the issue list goes on and on. These issues all deserve serious attention, but does an issue-oriented approach to tackling them really work?

The modernist approach to issues follows a similar path of analysis as discussed above. It narrows the focus of analysis to an isolated issue, identifies one or more problems in that context, and then develops technical adjustment solutions to remedy the problem.

Let's briefly examine how the issue-oriented approach to problem-identification, analysis, and policy advocacy works in the case of the issue of *using clean natural gas to produce dirty bitumen*.

Studies show that in some cases up to 25 calories of natural gas are burned to produce 100 calories of synthetic crude oil.³² If present forecasts for oil sands development occur, and production hits 5 million barrels per day, the natural gas used to extract the bitumen will be sufficient to heat every home in Canada! The trouble is that this rate of consumption will rapidly deplete Canada's natural gas reserves. Furthermore, analysts have shown that "producing a barrel of synthetic crude oil from the tar sands releases up to three times *more* greenhouse gas pollution than conventional oil."³³ We are burning clean fuel to produce dirty fuel.

Industry, government and scholars are busy studying and tackling this *issue*. Some of the *technical solutions* that are now seriously being proposed include:

- 1) Build the *Mackenzie Valley pipeline* from the NWT—something CPJ supporters should recognize—and continue to use natural gas to extract bitumen. After all, petroleum yields a better form of transportation fuel than natural gas, more easily and safely stored in our vehicles, e.g. gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel.
- 2) Build *nuclear reactors* to produce electricity and/or to fire hot steam into the bitumen bearing sands, and so bypass the requirement to use clean natural gas in these processes.
- 3) Develop and implement new processes that strip *flammable synthetic gas* out of the bitumen and use it as a replacement for burning natural gas.³⁴

Each of these solutions shows promise, and clearly, some are superior to others. But none ultimately eliminates the high rate of energy use in the bitumen extraction process. A few actually introduce new and more risky processes into the oil sands. Tackling "issues" in a fragmented way can yield some technical solutions and even some partial improvements, but ultimately many of these solutions only seem to adjust what is considered otherwise to be an acceptable overall oil sands development process. This issue-oriented approach fails to ask fundamental questions about the larger picture, the over-all direction of current oil sands developments, our society's wasteful patterns of energy-use, and about our 'way of life' built around the requirement for endless economic growth.

What should government do?

Once again, if CPJ adopted this modernist approach to analyzing *issues* in the oil sands, would it help determine what policy advice it should give to government? The Alberta Government responded to the issue of natural gas use in the tar sands when it surfaced several years ago, for example, by limiting drilling close to natural gas reserves near the oil sands. The government has shown no real leadership, however, on the serious public-interest questions related to each of the technical solutions listed above. It prefers instead to let the *market* decide whether more money can be made building the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, nuclear reactors, or by adopting new technologies. Whether the agents active in the market take into account the public interest or not in developing these alternatives does not seem to influence the government's approach. The government failure to engage this question of public interest means, in effect, that it is following the modernist approach of dealing only with isolated aspects and effects of the oil sands.

What then defines the content of the state's role?

The modernist 'approach to analysis'—with its narrowed focus, constricted problem definition, and style of solution that technically adjusts a given reality—fails to give any content to the state and government's role in the questions it analyzes. So, what then determines the state's role?

Something bigger is occurring. The fragmented knowledge products produced by the modernist approach to analysis are easily misused by powerful societal actors, e.g. transnational corporations, governments, interest groups, unions, think tanks, and others. The vacuum concerning the state's role that is left in the wake of modernist analyses—which are typically fragmentary, non-comprehensive,

and focused on the surface level—is easily filled in by ideologies. The state’s role is ideologically re-defined to suit the interests of powerful players. To adequately capture and account for this, we need to adopt an approach to analysis that not only examines the larger everyday reality of the oil sands, but also analyzes and addresses the deeper beliefs and ideologies at work in oil sands actors and related structures.

Three *families* of ideologies—each brought to life by a fundamental obsession with one or another overriding goal—propose a range of views on the state’s role.³⁵ These ideologies are all being used to set the tone and direction of *policy debates* over the oil sands. I briefly set out each of these three ideological families.

1) Defining the state’s role as a reflex of an obsession with economic growth

The most popular *family of ideologies* operating in society today has been gradually developed out of a recurring obsession with material prosperity, believed to be achieved through economic growth driven by market competition. Proponents of this ideology have long agreed on the proposition that the market is key to achieving material plenty and human happiness. They hotly debate how much state involvement is required to ensure economic growth, while agreeing that the government’s role should be determined by the goal of economic growth.

On one end of the [so-called] spectrum,³⁶ classical liberalism [or economic capitalism] has stood firm on the point that the market must be left free, *laissez faire*, with only a minimal role for a night-watchman state. Governments should maintain law and order in the oil sands, define and protect private property, set up basic services and infrastructure, enforce essential standards and regulations, and otherwise allow the market to determine what will further happen.

Premier Ed Stelmach famously argued, for example, that the government should provide necessary services for the province and industry to flourish and the market will eventually control itself. “There’s no such thing as touching the brake,” he said. “The economy, growth – that will sort itself out. We just want to make sure that we’re globally competitive.”³⁷ At another point, when “[a]sked about the call for a moratorium [on oil sands development], [the Premier] instead warned of the consequences of a ‘total shutdown.’ If that’s what they’re asking for, he said, ‘you devastate Alberta’s economy, you devastate Canada’s economy, you put at risk hundreds of billions of dollars of investment, and there won’t be one social program that’s going to be alive, anywhere.’”³⁸

Further down the spectrum of ideologies in this family are those advocating an incrementally larger role for the state in the oil sands, e.g. former Premier Peter Lougheed and current mayor of Fort McMurray Melissa Blake.³⁹ Both want economic growth but argue that the government has to “slowdown” oil sands development. Lougheed, for example, “blamed the former premier Ralph Klein for the runaway development,” and further argued, ““They should have never allowed so many of these projects to go ahead at the same time.””⁴⁰

Further down this ideological spectrum are reform liberals and social democrats who argue that frequent market failures occur in the oil sands boom e.g. high rental rates, drug abuse, GHG increases, infrastructure shortages, inequitable income distributions, etc. They argue the state must act to correct these *market flaws* and some even ask government to *plan* elements of the tar sands developments. Government should ensure stable and predictable economic growth, plan for sustainable use of the resource, and guarantee equitable distribution of the ever-growing economic pie.

This family of ideologies includes a wide variety of, often conflicting, variations on the state’s role in the market. While some of these ideological definitions of the state’s role are superior to others, they seem to share and accept our society’s obsession with economic growth. They do not conduct, or even entertain the need for, a fundamental critique of the goal of human happiness achieved through increased material prosperity and continued economic growth. They merely, and often ferociously,

quarrel over how much government action is required to ensure the market achieves this tacitly agreed-upon goal.

A public justice approach to the state's role, which we are currently exploring, simply must get deeper than this myopic fixation with economic growth and material prosperity. While we can learn from these ideologies, we need to look elsewhere for a non-ideological mode of defining the state's role.

2) Defining the state's role as a reflex of an obsession with national flourishing & security

A second family of ideologies affecting the state's role in the oil sands grows out of a nation's periodic obsession with national flourishing and national security. Notably, proponents of the positions within this family of ideologies can comfortably fuse it with one, or even several, of the positions in the first family of ideologies.

On one end of the spectrum of ideologies in this family is *internationalism*. While there are many variations, internationalists tend to argue that human flourishing best occurs when the world is structured with the proper international institutions—e.g. international organizations like the United Nations, collective security pacts, human rights charters, international law, and free trade agreements. As correct global institutions are gradually constructed, the innate goodness of humans will surface, people will flourish, the economy will grow, and global peace will occur. In this ideology, the oil sands would be seen as an important energy source for meeting world needs and ensuring human prosperity world-wide. One version of internationalism used by some members of the oil industry, promotes rapid development of the resource and selling it to anyone worldwide willing to pay since that eventually yields the happy outcome of increased global economic prosperity, development of impoverished states, and the spread of liberal democracies world-wide.

On the other side of the spectrum, *nationalism* argues that the world is in actual fact divided between states that fundamentally operate according to power, national-interest and realism. The only reliable basis for national flourishing in this type of world is to strengthen one's state power, grow a strong national economy, and increase the state's military strength. We see this ideology at work, for example, in the US invasion of Iraq and the American obsession with energy and national security. American interest in the Canadian oil sands seems to be driven by this form type of nationalism.

Ironically, a somewhat different version of *economic nationalism* seems to be at play in various Canadian opponents of current oil sands developments. The Parkland Institute,⁴¹ for example, argues that trans-national oil companies plan to send unrefined bitumen products extracted from the Canadian oil sands directly to the USA for upgrading, refining and production of end-products. This serves the American economy and military machine, they argue, but ignores Canada's national interests. Canada loses the major benefits arising from investment in upgrading and refining, as well as related jobs and other economic spin offs. Canada is vulnerable because it has failed to develop a national energy policy.⁴² These are valid and important concerns. Economic nationalists propose the Alberta and Canadian governments adopt regulations and policies that require oil companies to upgrade and refine bitumen in Canada. This would ensure economic spin-offs stay in the country and provide wealth and prosperity at home, increase our tax base, and enable us to finance other important social and environmental solutions.

While each of the above ideologies contains valid insights, both nationalists and internationalists continue to accept the belief that increased economic growth is foundational for progress. They do not adequately question our materialist, consumerist and wasteful way of life, our obsession with constant economic growth, the ability of creation to absorb our massive interventions, or the possibility that our state might go badly amuck. I am arguing that a public justice approach would acknowledge the concern for national flourishing as well as international integration, but reserve

the ability to discern when our thinking about the state's role is degenerating into an ideology driven by an obsession with one or another goal.

3) *Defining the state's role as a reflex of an obsession with human mastery*

A third family of ideologies has grown out of situations where society believes progress can be guaranteed by increasing human knowledge and concurrent mastery of nature. Disagreement within this family focuses on whether this progress is best achieved by harnessing the knowledge and action of free autonomous individuals or by technologically applying scientific expertise? The state's role turns out quite different in each case. In the former, the state ought to be structured democratically to respond to and channel the knowledge of many free autonomous individuals, politically expressed as their demands and wishes. In the latter, the state should be structured as an administrative apparatus that objectively applies the latest and best scientific expertise.

The ideology at one end of this spectrum we will call *democratic pluralism*. This ideology argues that society is composed of autonomous individuals who choose and value as they will.⁴³ These individuals voluntarily form interest groups to lobby and persuade government to serve their interests. Since individuals have many and changing interests, pluralists argue, they participate in a wide variety of different and shifting interest groups in accordance with their evolving interests. Government actions and policies are virtually automatic products of these interest group pressures and competition. Government reacts to the demands of the multiple interest groups, and as a good broker, produces an appropriate policy compromise. According to this pluralist theory, *public interest* policies emerge spontaneously and mechanically from the *private interest* competition of individuals and their groups.

Democratic pluralism assumes that whatever the majority of free autonomous individuals democratically desire and demand ought to become the agenda of government.⁴⁴ This is sometimes accompanied by the somewhat utopian anticipation that democratic practice will automatically and dramatically improve the world.⁴⁵ The fragmented and isolated knowledge-products of modernist social science seamlessly feed into this individualistic interest group process. Each interest group—armed with specialized and fragmentary expert knowledge supporting its interests—inputs into the government brokerage process and consequently will have its interests accommodated in emerging public policy compromises which together reflect the 'public interest.' In the end, however, majority power determines the contour's of the state's role in the oil sands.

On the other end of the spectrum of ideologies in this family, is *technicism* implemented through an '*administrative state*.' Proponents of technicism square off against the democratic pluralists. They argue that science produces the highest forms of expertise about nature and thus governments should not, first of all, listen to the demands of individuals and interest groups because they may be acting based on limited, biased, or flawed knowledge. Instead, government should structure its bureaucracy as an administrative state containing, or able to access, the leading scientific knowledge on problems. Technicism, like democratic pluralism, assumes and flourishes on the fragmented knowledge-products of modernist social science. Describing the 'administrative state,' Robert B. Gibson states, "the world should permit the appropriate experts, armed with the suitable methodologies, to define the problems correctly, to identify the appropriate response options, and to reach the rational conclusions."⁴⁶ The administrative state, propelled by the ideology of technicism, will resort to undemocratic policies if this promises to expertly solve issues and problems and thereby promotes human mastery and progress.

Both democracy and science can be valuable means for serving society, but each can be distorted when inspired by an obsession with securing the goal of progress through human mastery. This produces twisting ideologies, one arguing that this goal is best achieved through free autonomous individuals competing in democracy, and the other through the application of scientific expertise in an administrative state. Clearly a troubling inner tension lives at the core of these positions.⁴⁷

Consequently, the content of the state's role swings dramatically between mechanically implementing the democratic desires of autonomous individuals and administratively imposing policies based on the latest scientific expertise. Both assume a mechanistic understanding of state and politics and both depend on the fragmented knowledge-products of the modernist approach to analysis. A public justice approach to the state's role needs to integrate both democratic accountability and knowledge as well as utilize appropriate scientific expertise without becoming obsessed with either and allowing them to degenerate into ideologies.

Ironically, both the [so-called] ideological left and right—as defined in our first family of ideologies above—may end up adopting either democratic pluralism or technicism.⁴⁸ In other words, this last set of polarized ideologies may cut directly across either of the other two families of ideologies. Classical liberals intent on freeing the market as much as possible, for example, may square off against compatriots over whether oil sands issues should be decided through democratic, consultative and participatory means or through the technocratic administration of scientific expertise. We see the same tendencies in social democracy. Furthermore, a single government may even use both models simultaneously, in spite of internal tensions. In Alberta, for example, the Conservative Government simultaneously supports democratic pluralism as well as administrative state approaches, e.g. using interest group [stakeholder] consultations to resolve conflicts, while simultaneously relying on the scientific expertise of its bureaucracy—and/or that within corporate bureaucracies—to impose technical adjustment solutions on other risky but equally controversial problems.

To further complicate matters, developing a public justice understanding of the state's role also needs to learn from and confront various newer ideologies that now challenge these three families, e.g. feminist,⁴⁹ post-modern,⁵⁰ environmentalist, traditional conservative, refurbished neo-Marxist,⁵¹ and other approaches. These newer ideologies are playing a role in setting the tone and direction of oil sands policy debates. While indeed some proponents of these ideologies want a deeper, more holistic approach to analysis, and indeed sometimes offer very helpful challenges to modernist science, too often these ideologies also fail to challenge the assumptions of progress and economic growth.⁵²

The need for a deeper approach to analysis

We started this section of the speech by asking: since the modernist 'approach to analysis' fails to give content to the state's role in the oil sands, what actually determines this role? We discovered a vast array of ideologies competing to shape public discourse on and practice of government action and policy. We can and ought to learn from these ideological discussions over the state's role. But we are left with the dilemma—think back to the two problems we explored above, e.g. toxic tailing ponds and burning depleting natural gas to retrieve bitumen—what should be the state's role in the oil sands? Should we draw this role from democratic pluralism or technicism? Should the content of the state's role be dictated by internationalism or nationalism? Will we be better off with a classical liberal, reform liberal, social democratic or some other view of the state's role? To make our way through the forest of competing ideologies that struggle to shape policy, we will need an approach to analysis that gets at these deeper dynamics and realities. To properly discern and define the state's role, we will need to conduct a more extensive and holistic analysis than that offered by the modernist approach.

Clearly, a key feature of this approach to analysis will need to be an ability to understand the nature of ideology,⁵³ since it is the vast cloud of polarized ideological families that seem to cloud our understanding of the state's role. We have already noted, in the above discussions, that an obsession with progress and economic growth seems to be critical to each. J. R. McNeill, in his powerful study of 20th century environmental history *Something New Under the Sun*, describes this as a "**growth fetish.**" He identifies the economists who promised to deliver this "holy grail" as "high priests" (335). His allusions to spirituality and religion are not accidental. The pursuit of economic growth became a salvific, meaning-giving activity for societies around the globe. McNeill notes, "Capitalists,

nationalists—indeed almost everyone, communists included—worshipped at this same altar because economic growth disguised a multitude of sins” (334). “Economic growth became the indispensable ideology of the state nearly everywhere” (335).

Furthermore, another feature of this approach to analysis will need to address the seamless fitting together of modernist fragmented knowledge with the ideologies. It turns out that the modernist approach—although it purports to be a *neutral, rational, & scientific*—fails to adequately explore deeper ideological levels because it is itself rooted in the soil that gave birth to these ideologies. The mainstream ideologies we examined above, as well as the modernist approach to analysis, are equally rooted in the *Enlightenment faith in progress*. This faith holds that humans can rationally understand nature through science, that technology can use this knowledge to master and exploit nature, and thereby spur economic growth, increase material prosperity, and ultimately guarantee human happiness.

This returns us to the central drift of this speech. In order to discern the state’s public justice role in the oil sands, policy groups inspired by the Christian faith, like CPJ, need to develop appropriate in-depth ‘approaches to analysis’ that escape fragmentation, narrow technical adjustment solutions, and avoid co-optation by dominant ideological definitions of the state’s role. CPJ has done some pioneering work in this regard.

Building blocks for an alternative, integral approach to analysis

First, a brief word on what I mean by ‘integral approach to analysis.’ I mean a journey or path of analysis that presumes meaning and knowledge are discovered not only in segmented parts but also in interconnections, relationships, communities, and wholes. The unity we experience in everyday life reflects the integral interrelationship of creaturely life. Over its 45 year history, Citizens for Public Justice has sometimes used variations on an integral approach, along with other researchers and policy institutes, and initially referred to this as the ‘peel an onion approach.’ This approach is described in an early article by John Olthuis⁵⁴ and used in various projects by Gerald Vandezande, Kathy Vandergrift, Harry Kits, and many others. [See Appendix B: “Significant contributors to this public justice approach.”] The time remaining tonight allows for only a brief outline of the key components that this approach generally involves.

1. An integral approach to analysis should reject the splintering of life central to the modernist approach and instead allow a rigorous, in-depth analysis of everyday reality.

- This means starting with *reality* and not allowing our analysis to be side tracked into idealist constructions of reality, whether ideological, scientific abstractions, or even abstracted rationalistic principles.
- The approach needs to find a way of respecting the *interconnectedness* of life in the real world.
- Analysis needs to deal with the deeper dynamics and dimensions at work within the interwoven fabric of life.

2. This approach needs an alternate way of focusing policy analysis and action.

- We need to avoid the problems (discussed above) with a narrowing approach based on a disciplinary or issue-oriented slice of life.
- We also need to avoid picking an issue based on how ‘moral’ we think it is. The moral approach tends precisely to hide the deeper questions that require direct analysis and attention.

This shows up in an artificial left–right polarization of issues, frequently found in Christian policy communities.

Organizations, periodicals, and spokespersons tending towards the so-called *left*, for example, tend to identify environmental issues, income distribution questions, tight housing markets and high rents, treatment of foreign workers, distribution of benefits of oil boom, connection of oil to American militarism, as the moral issues and thus requiring government action. In contrast, those on the so-called *right* focus on other issues, for example, the breakdown of workers’ families, increased drug usage, immoral lifestyles in work camps, religious freedom in unions, etc. as the truly moral issues that require government action. Of course, these issues all do have moral dimensions. And fortunately, there has been somewhat of a closing gap between these artificially divided Christian camps of moral issues, e.g. on genetic engineering, end of life issues, climate change, etc. A public justice approach does not premise government action on whether or not an issue is moral, but on whether or not the problem properly fits within the government’s and state’s mandate and task.

- A larger policy institute *research program* can be focused by using the idea of *crystallization points*.

A crystallization point is the place at which a wide range of significant issues, interests and practices practically concentrate in a radiating set of real-life practises, processes and institutions. A crystallization point is a real-life event or process that organically involves consideration of a wide variety of disciplinary concerns, issues, and dynamics. Citizens for Public Justice used the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline in the 1970’s, for example, as the crystallization point for focusing its work on the otherwise unmanageably large research and action project related to our overly consumptive way of life, denied aboriginal rights, and increasing environmental damage.⁵⁵

In spite of the danger of mixing metaphors, another way of conceptualizing a crystallization point is to imagine everyday life as a fishing net lying on the floor. The vast network of persons, institutions and organizations constituting this life is interwoven into a fine mesh of relationships. This reality cannot be easily or meaningfully divided up for independent analysis if it is to retain its essential characteristic of an interlinking and dynamic reality. To avoid picking a slivered issue, discipline, or applying a fragmenting approach, therefore, we can think of the process of selecting a research focus as picking up one point in the net on the floor and pulling it up. Doing so drags all relationships and entities up around a cone, allowing us to examine them closer, without losing sight of the multiple interconnections and functions around this focal point. Selecting an appropriate a crystallization point allows increased sensitivity and openness to the ways that the problems plaguing contemporary society are deeply interconnected and interrelated. It helps us honour the integrality of life and creation, so that neither contemporary problems nor the proposed solutions and their consequences, can be compartmentalized in a single zone of life or captured in a single discipline.

- *Paradoxes* can serve to focus our research further within a particular crystallization point or real-life event.

As we proceed in our research journey, how can we focus further without ending up in the old traps of disciplinary isolation, fragmented knowledge, or limited issue-oriented approaches? One method is to focus our pursuit of knowledge on the *paradoxes*⁵⁶ emerging from the everyday reality under examination. The affirmation of the goodness of God’s creation suggests that the

emergence of irresolvable paradoxes or contradictions in cultural and political life signal some element of brokenness. A paradox presents an opening that invites us to investigate what is going on at the deeper levels of structures and beliefs within our culture. What is producing these paradoxical and contradictory results?

3. *An integral approach to analysis needs to excavate deeply into the structures and beliefs underlying the ‘paradoxes’*

- To my knowledge, Bernard Zylstra and Bob Goudzwaard first urged CPJ and others to examine two depth-levels underlying everyday realities.⁵⁷ They identified two crucial depth levels, the deep running structures and institutions of society and the underlying beliefs and/or ideological commitments that direct and guide a way of life.

- **Depth level I – Underlying structural architecture**

This first depth-level analysis in our research journey would prod for and examine key structural features of the everyday landscape of society and ask how they might account for the paradoxes and contradictions that are found in surface developments and processes. At this first depth-level of research, we consider the roles and functions of central actors, agencies and institutions of society and how they facilitate and further the way of life we observe. How are they interrelated and patterned together? What structural patterns give momentum and inertia to the everyday practices, policies and paradoxes that surround the policy problems we investigate?

In the tar sands developments, a variety of structures emerge, including those related to globalization, trans-national corporations, international global finance and investment, local, national and international government policy, union and labour institutions, and so forth. The *structure of the state* and its actual operation during the recent royalty debate in Alberta, for example, shows a pattern suggesting that the political system seems to suffer far too broad exposure to the power politics of corporate pressure, a feature that allows powerful actors to ‘bully’ Government and Opposition [political parties], as well as the general public, into behaving meekly on question of increasing royalty rates. (A royalty is the return the crown receives as owner of the resource from companies extracting the petroleum resources).

A second example of the importance of structural analysis concerns the corporate use of the advertising industry and media to *generate “artificial needs” within us*—e.g. for bigger houses, faster cars, more consumer products and services, exotic vacations, and so on. Much of the pressure for new transportation fuels is linked to the production and growth of these types of artificial needs. We face the ironic reality today, for example, that “nearly 90 per cent of research and development dollars are spent on creating technologies that serve the wealthiest 10 per cent of the world’s population.”⁵⁸ Think, for example, that \$100 billion in investment is predicted in the oil sands over the next decade—for transport fuels driving a wasteful and often excessive way of life often based on artificial *wants*—while no investment money is available to meet the genuine needs of many Honduran villagers for clean potable water, an absolutely basic human *need*.⁵⁹ These and many similar phenomena related to the oil sands boom are rooted in structural features of our society. It is far more profitable for corporations to generate artificial ‘needs’ in the affluent, and then satiate them, than to provide for existing genuine needs of poor and marginalized people at home and abroad.

These examples show how current structural arrangements promote, reward and perpetuate certain life choices and patterns, whether they are responsible and healthy or twisted and harmful. An integral approach to analysis must, therefore, include a stage in the research journey that lays bare the key underlying structural architecture and dynamics.

- **Depth level II – Underlying beliefs and commitments**

An in-depth structural analysis is still not sufficient, however, to adequately explain the dynamic, drive, and direction taken by these structures as well as surface events and paradoxes. To understand these, therefore, we need to dig even deeper and discern the direction – the vision, beliefs, and commitments—underlying these structures and overall way of life. We need to carefully examine and properly understand the way that key convictions and beliefs provide inner coherence, dynamic thrust, and overall direction to cultural developments. (This level relates to the above discussion of ideologies.)

This involves employing techniques to detect the beliefs actually operating within everyday life. Bob Goudzwaard has developed a way of doing this with his distinctive understanding of ideology and idolatry.⁶⁰ Briefly put, he argues that when people become obsessed with achieving their *goals*, they tend to indiscriminately justify the uncontrolled use of *means*—e.g. market, technology, science, the state, or otherwise—to achieve these goals. This indiscriminate use of means requires us to give birth to an ideology, or perhaps more properly understood as some sort of a pseudo-religion, that serves to justify and remove restrictions from the means. The birth of ideology begins deep within the human heart, but unfolds in narratives or stories that we use to give meaning and justification to our actions and pursuits. Ideologies can be defined, therefore, as the words we weave together to justify lifting the normative requirements off of the means we have chosen to attain the goals which we obsessively pursue.⁶¹

The effect of ideology, understood in this way, is to give permission, or forbid, using the state in certain ways in the oil sands developments. We already noted the wide array of ideologies that are shaping the state’s role in arguments over in the oil sands. This depth-level focus on convictions, beliefs and ideology touches on concerns that are systematically excluded from the modernist approach to analysis, examined above. Christians engaged in analysis ought to *avoid* allowing obsessive and distorting ideologies to distort their policy research and overall agenda. The integral approach to analysis described here deliberately places these depth-level concerns back at the centre of our journey of analysis. Failing to include them in our analyses means we will likely remain at the mercy of contending ideologies to generate our understanding of the state’s role and thus, our policy prescriptions. By ‘de-ideologizing’ our analyses, therefore, we open up possibilities for forging a public justice approach to the state’s role in the oil sands.

4. Devising genuinely healing solutions

By overcoming shortcomings in the modernist approach, this integral approach to analysis invites us to think differently about our reactions and responses to massive developments like the oil sands. Let me briefly outline 3 characteristics of the type of actions steps this approach might yield. I conclude by reflecting on what this implies for discerning the state’s role in the oil sands.

- **Stop focusing on technical adjustment steps and start devising re-orienting steps⁶²**

A serious problem resulting from the fragmenting knowledge produced by the modernist approach—whether in a disciplinary or issue-oriented mode—is that it encourages the development of *technical adjustment solutions*, without addressing the larger social-political-economic systems and pictures. The integral approach sketched above suggests a different outcome is possible. The problems facing our contemporary culture are deeply rooted in structures, beliefs and a way of life. By using this approach, we could devise and propose action steps that not only change isolated practices through technical adjustments, but action steps that propose specific changes that include greater potential to influence the overall direction of the oil sands and society. Such *reorienting action steps* can awaken hope in a society by exposing the deeper problems behind the paradoxes related to technocratic adjustment solutions. These action steps embed an invitation to re-orient our

approaches to development and our overarching way of life. This can help us “retrieve the capacity to participate in turning these major predicaments around.”⁶³ Action steps need to defuse the ideological spirals driving us to deadlock and collapse [note the combined, cross-cutting ideologies analyzed above] and open up space for responding to the Holy Spirit’s leading. Action steps ought to be designed to solve one problem while being careful to positively affect, rather than aggravating and deepening, other problems in the tar sands. Finally, action steps should be surrounded by a broad-based public discussion and debate, involving all major societal actors, aimed at developing common or at least overlapping understandings of problems, ideologies, and consensus around new directions and action steps.

○ **Creation-wide repentance**

A second feature of the action steps promoted by an integral approach to analysis is that it includes a call to *repentance* and *conversion*, not just for personal sins but for sins spanning our communal economic, social, cultural and environmental life. This sort of response has sometimes been a feature of various church traditions. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, for example, calls for broad communal confession in its “*Processus Confessionis*,” a process of progressive recognition, education and confession in its member denominations. Churches were called to participate in repentance and conversion as an essential part of their response to world-wide economic injustice and ecological destruction.⁶⁴ This is a biblical practice that Christians are well equipped to bring to public discussions. A similar intention is found in the Evangelical churches’ Micah Challenge approach to the UN Millennium Development Goals.⁶⁵ The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops also suggests a similar response to environmental problems, when it states:

Pope John Paul II reminded us that the crisis is not only ecological, but moral and spiritual. A moral crisis must be met with conversion, which is a change in perspective, attitudes and behaviour. Essentially, this conversion is aimed at the ruptures we have created with nature, with our neighbour and with God. It has to focus on re-establishing a relationship, that is, creating a climate of reconciliation.⁶⁶

○ **Recognize all norms must be answered simultaneously**

A third feature of the action steps promoted by an integral approach to analysis is that it recognizes the scriptural picture of creation in which God calls human image bearers to observe norms and values as the “way” to walk in shalom in creation—i.e. love, justice, equity, solidarity, stewardship, peace and so on. These norms should not be treated ideologically as *afterthoughts* in our lives and thought, but recognized as *starting points* for renewing our way of life. In light of threatening contemporary challenges churches should consider, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “what is the will of God at this moment of our lives?”⁶⁷ Responding to developments like the oil sands means we need to rediscover God’s life-giving, creation-wide invitation to live in covenant with him. Whatever our vocations in life, therefore, we need to be busy discerning how best to answer God’s *multi-normative callings in creation simultaneously*.⁶⁸ As persons and organizations, we cannot simply choose to answer one or two norms, e.g. efficiency or effectiveness, and expect other agents, institutions, or structures to be responsible for the rest, e.g. equity, justice, peace, or avoidance of waste. Bob Goudzwaard elaborates on this point:

...fundamental deviation from the principle of a ‘simultaneous realization of norms’—which presupposes the simultaneous validity of legal, ethical, and economic standards for every human action and act—has contributed to a pattern in which the opportunities of a free human choice have increasingly crumbled and weakened. When the norms of ethics and economics are not applied *simultaneously* in society, they also no longer need to be applied by the same

persons or *agencies* in society. Thus it is not only possible but very efficient and natural to let the risk-taking entrepreneurs be occupied with only technological and economic affairs, while other institutions are held responsible for matters of a moral, social, ethical, or juridical nature. Such tasks can readily be delegated to institutions such as the government, churches, or private charities.⁶⁹

In the development of the tar sands, for example, some corporations have willingly realized the norms of efficiency and effectiveness but side-stepped many other norms. This has led to behaviours and practices that produce environmental destruction, social breakdown, and economic infrastructure deficits. These are then relegated to the government, NGOs, unions, or churches to solve. Norms are guidelines for healthy living in creation and should never be selectively played off against each other in this fashion. An integral approach to analysis attempts to respect this feature of life and therefore tries to combine multiple norms within an integrated policy approach. This will also require developing more interwoven approaches to bureaucratic structures and management.

- **Recognize diverse centres of responsibility**

Closely linked to the calling to answer multiple norms simultaneously is the need to be fully aware of the diverse societal locations in which we act. We need to ask, therefore, what are the central tasks and mandates of the institutions, associations or relationships in which we are acting, functioning, or addressing? How do their distinctive tasks colour how we answer multiple norms in the current context? States, schools, corporations, media, banks, and unions serve different functions which inevitably shade how they realize all norms simultaneously. It is critical, therefore, to discern in our time and place what the distinctive functions of each institution and association are in contemporary society.⁷⁰ More recently, CPJ has referred to these diverse centres of responsibility as ‘circles of society.’⁷¹ In Roman Catholic social thought, the reality that society is far more than a ‘composite of individuals’ or a ‘whole with parts’ has been addressed with the idea of subsidiarity.⁷²

5. *Discerning an appropriate public justice role for state and government*

At the outset of this speech, I argued that in order to grasp a public justice approach, as with virtually any approach, we need to understand both the *larger worldview* as well as the *approach to analysis* out of which it grows. I also reminded us not to think of an ‘approach’ as a tool, cookie-cutter, or blue print. It always involves broad, world-view discernment and judgement. I use the remaining moments to offer some suggestive illustrations of how the approach to analysis sketched above might influence and shape a distinctive public justice understanding of the government and state’s role. First, let me mention a few preliminary cautions.

- **Avoid prophetic critiques that address the state only from the outside**

Certainly, public justice requires prophetic critique of injustices in society. But it must also intrinsically address and serve the requirements of those holding political office in government and the state—elected or administrative—and propose concrete options and action steps for them to consider.

- **Avoid importing existing ideological views of the state’s role**

James A. Skillen correctly argues that too often Christians have failed to develop “a philosophy of the political community that clarifies the responsibilities of government in relation to the responsibilities that belong to all the other institutions, organizations, and relationships of human society. What we need is a Christian public philosophy that connects directly to office holding, policy formulation, and governing.”⁷³

- **Discern the basic outlines of the state's role**

Bob Goudzwaard⁷⁴ draws from the historic public justice tradition to offer the following flexible, principled but non-ideological, view of the state's public justice role. Although written to address US welfare policy, I frame it here to address oil sands examples. Goudzwaard argues that the state's *public justice* mandate includes the following four dimensions.

1. **Public arbitration** involves “intervening between groups or institutions in society.” Not all societal interactions automatically concern government, nor do all *collision of interests* in society concern government. But when “a misuse of power takes place that threatens the life-possibilities of a weaker group” (78), the resulting collision of interests becomes a government and state concern.
 - In the tar sands developments, for example, the collision of interests between the health, water, hunting and other concerns of aboriginal communities living near or downstream of massive oil sands operations run by powerful trans-national corporations badly need government involvement in order to be justly addressed.
2. **Public provision** involves acting on critical unmet needs in society. Again, this is not automatically government's task. The government should act on welfare policy, Goudzwaard states, “in the name of public justice, if there is a lack of something crucial to the public welfare, for instance elementary schooling, the maintenance of peace in the streets, the removal of garbage, the availability of primary health care. If such things are not supplied privately and/or they are not accessible to the poor, then the government is obligated to step in, just to be a shield for the poor in the name of justice.” He continues, “Public provision also means that government is entitled to obligate all citizens to contribute proportionately to social insurance so that all citizens have access to the necessary financial means to cope with personal and family emergencies” (78-9).
 - In the tar sands developments, for example, there is a critical shortage of low-income housing in many overheated local markets and rental rates have outstripped the ability of many to pay. The enablement and/or provision of low-cost housing is a critical concern of government in this situation. In a preventative mode, a key concern of government should be to encourage mass transit in cities that would reduce transportation fuel use, and thereby reduce pressure for developing the oil sands.
3. **Public regard** involves government attending to the key problems arising in society. Goudzwaard writes, “governments cannot solve all the problems of society. Most activities of life are not, certainly not in the first place, the responsibility of government nor the product of its motion. They are rather the domain of families, friends, farmers, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, employees, and more. But it can happen that some essential tasks are not institutionalized, or that society has so degenerated that persons and various institutions are unable or unwilling to fulfill their respective and diverse responsibilities” (79).
 - In the tar sands developments, for example, corporations considering the development of the oil sands have not considered the full social and environmental impacts, and their associated responsibilities. They have not responsibly included full-cost accounting for the many impacts into their operations and have narrowly focused only on the efficiency and effectiveness of their

bitumen extraction processes. Government should have acted forcefully, and should now urgently act, to ensure these actors take on their full social, environmental, and economic responsibility and so achieve the common good. If this is not possible in the current situation, development of the oil sands should have been, and should now be, slowed down.

4. ***Concern for the direction of society as a whole*** involves government scanning for, and initiating public discussions and public action on, the broad-ranging issues concerning the overall direction of society. This can occur when some actors, or even society as a whole, become so obsessed with “private material interests that there is a concrete and explicit denial of original human callings and mandates... e.g. to take care of all human and natural resources, can spoil and misuse those resources...” Goudzwaard continues, “in such cases, government must act to ensure, as far as that is in its power, the fulfillment of responsibilities.” Again, this does not mean government ought to control all private lives and organizations. Rather, when “gross dereliction of responsibilities damages the entire commonwealth, government may never idly stand by when this happens. It must act to defend and preserve the commonwealth” (79).
- In the tar sands developments, for example, the overall constellation of problems and issues arising from, and related to, the tar sands developments has led respected citizens to raise serious concerns about the overall direction of society and for some to advocate placing a moratorium on new leases, a freeze on permits for new mines and some SAGD operations, and to open up serious society-wide discussion on whether and where we ought to go with the overall oil sands developments. Government urgently must show concern for the overall direction of society and its commonwealth. Of course, this assumes we are busy appropriately analyzing and reflecting on these larger questions.

Conclusion

The tar sands developments confront us all with daunting problems, complex challenges, and tangled issues. Each of us, in our various roles and offices, can begin indirectly, and sometimes directly, to tackle these problems and concerns. But we are often overcome by feelings of paralysis and flounder in a sense of powerlessness and inaction. St. Augustine encourages us to walk the way of *hope*:

***"Hope has two beautiful daughters.
Their names are Anger and Courage;
anger at the way things are,
and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are."***

I pray biblically inspired hope continues to urge CPJ and Christians worldwide to develop and use comprehensive, integral approaches to analyzing problems, and to discerning government’s public justice role in these issues, including the ‘awesome and awful’ tar sands boom.

I would like to thank Citizens for Public Justice for their generous grant in support of my sabbatical research on public justice and the tar sands developments. Special thanks to Andrew Lee and James Vriend for their diligent and helpful research assistance in this project.

Appendix A: Some criteria for selecting and evaluating approaches

Here are a few criteria I have used to assess various approaches to analysis. Is the approach *suitable to the subject matter under study*, that is, does it open the subject matter up to greater understanding?⁷⁵ Does it have the capacity to *clarify the truth about the reality under study*, that is, to conduct truthful analysis that discloses serviceable insight—including exposing irresponsibility, misdeed, exploitation, injustice, power imbalances, corruption, misuse of position, evil and oppression—“even if some social groups, governments or business people don't like these outcomes”?⁷⁶ Does the approach help *liberate us from false dilemmas*, contradictions, traps, tensions, paradoxes, e.g. moralistic agenda exclusions of left and right, dualisms of grace and nature, the social action and evangelism tension, theory vs. practice, thinking vs. doing, etc.? Does it lead us into active and concrete *service of our neighbours*, including *political service*? Does the approach help clarify the *roles of different civil society, corporate and other actors* in tackling these interwoven problems? Furthermore, does it *help identify the appropriate public justice roles for the state and government*, and not improperly derail us from legitimate political action into other concerns, such as evangelism, church growth, or theology, as legitimate as these actions may be? Finally, does it encourage us to be “*good*” *political neighbours*, both by being good at politics and by governing for our neighbours’ good?

Appendix B: Significant contributors to this public justice approach

Significant contributors to this public justice approach, either directly or indirectly, include among the many that could be mentioned, Groen Van Prinsterer (1801-1876)⁷⁷ and founder of the first Christian Democratic Party in Europe and one-time Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920).⁷⁸ Other scholarly contributors include philosophers Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977)⁷⁹ and D.H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978),⁸⁰ Bob Goudzwaard,⁸¹ Bernard Zylstra,⁸² Egbert Schuurman,⁸³ Nicolas Wolterstorff,⁸⁴ and Albert Wolters.⁸⁵ Policy activists contributing to this approach include Canadian founders of Citizens for Public Justice, John A. Olthuis⁸⁶ and Gerald Vandezande,⁸⁷ the founder of the Centre for Public Justice in Washington, James Skillen,⁸⁸ and the political party research institutes of the combined Catholic and protestant Christian Democratic Appeal⁸⁹ and the smaller Christian Union⁹⁰ in the Netherlands. Also see a number of speeches and articles by former Executive Director Harry Kits,⁹¹ and former staff Paul Marshall,⁹² and former staff and board member Kathy Vandergrift.⁹³ Jonathan Chaplin has ably sketched out a public justice perspective on the nature of the state’s role,⁹⁴ David Koyzis offers a helpful comparison and analysis of reformed and Roman Catholic political approaches,⁹⁵ and also see the summary of Catholic social teachings.⁹⁶ This is not an exhaustive list. What I have presented in this speech is a brief version of my understanding and distillation of this approach to analysis—and the concurrent public justice approach that emerges from it—as I have learned it from theoreticians and policy activists using this approach. Of course, none of the above shares any responsibility for errors or shortcomings in this presentation.

Sources

¹ Prime Minister Stephen Harper, excerpts of his address to the Canada-UK Chamber of Commerce, July 14, 2006, “Harper’s Index,” *The Dominion*, Tar Sands Issue, Autumn, 2007, p. 3; also available online at www.dominionpaper.ca.

² An icon is a representation or symbol of “something else of greater significance through literal or figurative meaning, usually associated with religious, cultural, political, and economic standing.” See *Wikipedia*, accessed Jan. 7, 2008, at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon>. In a similar sense, the oil sands developments open a window onto much larger global phenomenon, many of which have taken on deep religious significance.

³ Jonathan Chaplin helpfully defines the *state* “as a political community of government and citizens empowered to promote public justice within its territory by means of law.” *Faith in the State: The Peril and Promise of Christian Politics* (inaugural address), Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1999. A *Government* is the institution, with associated office bearers, that gives leadership to the state by discerning public problems and devising solutions, enacting laws and policies, and enforcing and administering existing laws. Governments and *citizens*, as well as other members of civil society, engage in politics over these tasks. In this context, the activity of *politics* is best understood as the debate, lobbying and manoeuvring done around these governmental tasks in order to resolve, through persuasion, the clashes of interests and principles involved in each problem faced by the state. The activity of politics characterizes the life of the political community within the state. For further discussion of this see John Hiemstra, “Church, State and the Kingdom of God: An Overview,” *REC Focus*, June 2005, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 3 - 49.

⁴ “About CPJ,” accessed June 7, 2008 from <http://cpj.ca/aboutus/index.html#Who+We+Are>.

⁵ Donald Polkinghorne, *Methodology for the Human Sciences: Systems of Inquiry*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983, 5. I mean a ‘system of inquiry’ used to gain understanding of a phenomenon, or as Donald Polkinghorne puts it, “the procedures or the detailed and logically ordered plan used to ‘go after’ knowledge.” (5) He offers a helpful study of the historical differences and tensions between the ‘positivist’ conception of science and a number of ‘post-positivist’ approaches. In contrast to methodology, Polkinghorne suggests methods are ways of carrying out a methodology or approach, including various experimental designs, sampling procedures, measuring instruments, and the statistical treatment of data.” (5) Significantly, he notes that choosing and using a method “is shaped by its implicit or explicit reference to a particular system of inquiry” (6).

⁶ Gerald Vandezande describes this as follows: “My intent is not to provide a social handbook, an economic blueprint, or a political manual that pretends to give all the answers. Rather, I attempt to outline a Christian view of social, economic, and political responsibility that will enable us to respond to the crisis of our times with hope and vision. I do so from the conviction that the message of God’s creation and Christ’s incarnation is good news and of crucial significance for our everyday life.” in *Christians in the Crisis*, 15. See Calvin Seerveld, “Philosophy as schooled memory,” *Anakainosis* 5 (1) (1982): 1-6; also on line, June 18, 2008 at <http://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/seerveld.htm>. Or, as Polkinghorne argues, “it is not enough to know the recipe for carrying out a research design,” *Methodology for the Human Sciences*, 3.

⁷ Oil Sands Discovery Centre, “The Oil Sands Story: The Resource,” retrieved April 14, 2008, from http://www.oilsandsdiscovery.com/oil_sands_story/resource.html.

⁸ From ERCB website, “Oil Sands,” retrieved April 14, 2008, <http://www.ercb.ca/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=249&PageID=0&cached=true&mode=2>.

⁹ Alberta Department of Energy, “Alberta’s Oil Sands, 2006,” [updated Dec. 2007], retrieved April 14, 2008 from <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/OilSands/793.asp>.

¹⁰ Hugh McCullum, *Fuelling Fortress America: A Report on the Athabasca Tar Sands and U.S. Demands for Canada's Energy* (The Parkland Institute) March, 2006, p. 5. Retrieved Oct. 22, 2007, from <http://www.ualberta.ca/PARKLAND/research/studies/Fuelling%20Fortress%20America%20WEB.pdf>.

¹¹ Oil Sands Discovery Centre, “The Oil Sands Story: Fact Sheets,” retrieved April 14, 2008, from http://www.oilsandsdiscovery.com/oil_sands_story/resource.html.

¹² Alberta Energy, “Oil Sands,” retrieved April 14, 2008 from <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/OurBusiness/oilsands.asp>.

¹³ “Honduras,” Tracking the Millennium Development Goals, *MDGMonitor*, accessed May 31, 2008 at www.mdgmonitor.org/factsheets_00.cfm?c=HND&cd=340.

¹⁴ Alberta Energy, “About Oil Sands: What is Oil Sands,” retrieved April 14, 2008 from <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/OilSands/793.asp>.

¹⁵ Alberta Department of Energy, “Oil Sands Facts,” retrieved April 14, 2008 from <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/OilSands/793.asp>.

¹⁶ Alberta Energy, “About Oil Sands: What is Oil Sands,” retrieved April 14, 2008 from <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/OilSands/793.asp>.

¹⁷ “Dr. Karl Clark, a scientist working for the Alberta Research Council, developed and patented the hot water extraction technique. Building on earlier experimentation by Sidney Ells and others which used hot water to separate oil from oil

sands, Dr. Clark's work brought the process to a commercial scale.” Oil Sands Discovery Centre, “The Oil Sands Story: The Resource,” retrieved April 14, 2008, from http://www.oilsandsdiscovery.com/oil_sands_story/resource.html.

¹⁸ Alberta Energy, “About Oil Sands: What is Oil Sands,” retrieved April 14, 2008 from <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/OilSands/793.asp>.

¹⁹ Ann Bordetsky, et. al., *Driving it Home: Choosing the right path for fuelling North America's transportation future*, jointly produced by Natural Resources Defense Council, Western Resource Advocates, and Pembina Institute, 2007, p. 8.

²⁰ From ERCB website, “Oil Sands: Development” retrieved April 14, 2008, <http://www.ercb.ca/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=249&PageID=0&cached=true&mode=2>.

²¹ Alberta Finance, “Quick Facts,” updated April 4 2008, retrieved April 14, 2008 from http://www.finance.alberta.ca/aboutalberta/alberta_facts.html. [Source: Statistics Canada].

²² Alberta Finance, Office of Budget and Management, “Economic Spotlight, Alberta's Economic Performance: 1994-2004,” Edmonton, March 23, 2006, accessed May 29, 2008 at www.finance.gov.ab.ca/aboutalberta/spotlights/2006_0323_alberta_economic_performance.pdf.

²³ Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, “Background: Oil sands Economic Impacts Across Canada, 2008,” retrieved April 14, 2008, from <http://www.capp.ca/raw.asp?x=1&dt=PDF&dn=134739>.

²⁴ Some Christian communities have also begun to analyze the tar sands, although results so far are tentative. Based on anecdotal evidence we can identify the following sorts of activities. First, they have been involved with mainstream society in developing and exploiting the tar sands in businesses, banks & investment houses, unions, think tanks, government agencies, and other roles. Second, Christians have aligned themselves on many sometimes conflicting sides of the oil sands debates. I believe this is due, in part, to the approaches to analysis we have explicitly or implicitly been using. These conflicts and tensions within the Christian community, and mirror those within society at large, and underline the pressing need: to develop a biblically sensitive approach to analysis, to encourage Christian and society-wide dialogue and common understandings, and to initiate public actions on the serious problems emerging from the oil sands developments and surrounding ‘boomtown society. Third, some Christian communities are responding to the oil sands boom with a social service approach. Some local congregations in Fort McMurray, for example, provide direct social services to persons struggling with the impacts of the boom and/or are active in the evangelism of new citizens. Fourth, as for prophetic engagement of issues growing out of in the tar sands developments, most churches and Christian groups in the province have remained silent so far. Fifth, at the periphery however, there are some encouraging signs of change in some churches and groups of Christian citizens. They are starting to ask more encompassing and penetrating questions of the oil sands boom. On the evangelical front, for example, Regent College in Vancouver, along with its Marketplace Institute, partnered with “A Rocha Canada” and “City in Focus” to sponsor the conference “Creating Wealth and the Created World.” Held November 2-3, 2007, this conference dealt with business and the environment and explicitly focused on the oil sands in sessions such as: “How to mix oil and water: Perspectives on the Alberta Oil Sands,” with keynote speakers Preston Manning, Clive Mather, and Cal DeWitt. Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://www2.regent-college.edu/marketplace/arochoa/followup.html>. The co-sponsor of the conference, A Rocha Canada—“a national conservation organization working to show God's love for all of creation”—presented a critical overview of the oil sands. The three featured speakers also asked some penetrating questions. *A Rocha Canada* functions under the umbrella of A Rocha International and works alongside a family of A Rocha projects in 16 countries around the world in places as diverse as urban London and the Kenyan coast. The name “A Rocha” is Portuguese, and means “The Rock.” Its website states: “Based in British Columbia's lower mainland, *A Rocha Canada* is a national conservation organization working to show God's love for all of creation. We work out our commitment to environmental action through community-based conservation projects, with a focus on science and research, practical conservation, and environmental education. Our project locations currently include: ‘The Little Campbell River near Vancouver, British Columbia,’ and ‘Pembina Valley near Morden in southern Manitoba.’” Retrieved March 1, 2008, from <http://en.arochoa.org/canada/>. On the ecumenical front, Roman Catholic and various Protestant groups sponsored an Edmonton conference, “the Social Justice Institute” on the theme: “In the Belly of the Beast: Christian reflections on living in Alberta's Energy Economy,” on February 9, 2008. “Social Justice Institute 2008,” Synod of Alberta and the Territories, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, retrieved March 22, 2008 from http://www.albertasynod.ca/social_ministry/sji2008. Furthermore, the national inter-church organization, “Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives” has also begun tackling aspects of the tar sands in several program areas, e.g. *Pumped Up: How Canada subsidizes fossil fuels at the expense of green alternatives*, and *Like Oil and Water: The True Cost of the Tar Sands*. KAIROS campaign booklet 2006-2007: *WaterWorks*, (September 2006), retrieved March 3, 2008 at <http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/index.asp>. These Kairos initiatives follow a long tradition of ecumenical engagement of issues in Canada, and are consistent with earlier work on issues such as the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Debate. The Canadian Churches have been active analyzing large development projects in the past, e.g. Hutchinson, Roger. *Prophets, Pastors, and Public Choices: Canadian Churches and the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Debate*. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992. Also see ongoing work of church leaders such as David G. Hallman,

program officer for the United Church of Canada and former program coordinator for climate change of the World Council of Churches, such as *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches Publications; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994; and his study guide for churches Hallman, David G., *Caring for Creation: The Environmental Crisis, A Canadian Call to Action*. Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books, 1989.

²⁵ When I refer to the “essence” of the oil sands development, I do not mean it has a substantial fixed core but rather I refer to the sense of a complex set of actors, processes and events hanging together in some kind of integral and coherent fashion.

²⁶ Polkinghorne, *Methodology for the Human Sciences*, covers the empirical approach in chapters 2 & 3, and “briefly reviews” it on pp. 201-203. He cites Kockelmans on the names of the 3 basic approaches to human sciences. The core of *naturalism*, Polkinghorne argues, is the belief that “all phenomena can be explained in terms of natural causes and laws without attributing moral, spiritual, or supernatural significance to them.” (19) *Empiricism* adds to these positivist beliefs the idea that “experience of the senses is the only source of knowledge.” (19) Finally, the primary themes of *positivism* he summarizes in 3 statements:

(1) all metaphysics should be rejected and knowledge confined to what has been experienced or can be experienced. Thus science should restrict itself to discovering reliable correlations within experience.

(2) The adequacy of knowledge increases as it approximates the forms of explanation which have been achieved by the most advanced sciences.

(3) Scientific explanation is limited to only functional and directional laws (Comte) or to only mathematically functional laws (Mach). (18-9)

²⁷ Some studies emphasize the economic side or interests of this development (like shortage of skilled workers, or skyrocketing construction costs), others examine the social situations (like family tensions, housing situations, foreign worker integration, drug abuse), some groups and studies stress the environmental side of oil sands developments (like water usage, green house gases, surface and wetlands reclamation, impact on ecology and wildlife), other studies stress the political aspects of the oil sands developments (like government royalty structure, provision of infrastructure, environmental and other regulations), and yet others examine the historical dimensions of the oil sands (like industry involvement, government subsidy of technical oil sands research). For some tentative guidelines for evaluating approaches to analysis, see Appendix A: “Some criteria for selecting and evaluating approaches.”

²⁸ I should note, parenthetically, that two anti-positivist approaches were developed in competition with this modernist approach—the “descriptive or phenomenological approach” and the second the “hermeneutic or interpretive approach” (Polkinghorne, *Methodology for the Human Sciences*, p. 201 and see chap. 6). But, he observes, the positivist position clearly won the debate. The study of human phenomena has come to be conducted under standards and procedures adopted from the physical sciences. Experimental procedures with operationally defined variables are used to determine correlations and law-like relationships among various aspects of the human realm. The Public Justice approach explored here, probably best fits under the broad rubric of anti-positivist approaches.

²⁹ J. R. McNeill, 2000, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century*, New York: Norton, 328.

³⁰ Simon Dyer, Pembina Institute, interviewed in the CBC News story, Darrow MacIntyre presents the feature documentary “Crude Awakening” on the “Alberta Oil Sands,” December 12, 2007, part I.

³¹ Authors such as Ulrich Beck suggest that before a society takes on the risks of new gigantic projects—in our case, oils sands developments with massive impacts on climate change and countless other items—it needs to engage in public dialogue and develop a broad consensus about whether or not we ought to take on these risks at this time and under current conditions. We also need to carefully and publicly deliberate on whether the new technologies promised for dealing with oil sands risks—e.g. GHGs, air pollution, tailings ponds, water shortages and pollution, forest and wetlands reclamation, and so on—will in fact be developed, actually applied in practice, and if so, in a timely manner.

³² Mark Anielski, “The End of Cheap Oil,” *The Post*, The Parkland Institute, Winter 2005, 14.

³³ Dan Woynillowicz, “Tar Sands Fever” “It’s about water, sand, and oil—but this is no day at the beach.” *World Watch Magazine*, Vol. 20, No. 5, September/October 2007, 8-13, this from p. 9.

³⁴ See Sid Dykstra, President and Chief Executive Officer, OPTI Canada, Inc., “Delivering our oil sands advantage,” PowerPoint presentation, delivered to the Canadian Oil Sands Summit, January 16, 2008.

³⁵ There are also other, more recent approaches, e.g. feminist, environmentalist, post-modern, liberationist, and other perspectives compete for attention, but are less important in daily political practice and certainly in the politics of the oil sands.

³⁶ The ideological left-right spectrum is deeply flawed and riddled with assumptions that emerge from the same fundamental sources as do the polarized ideologies which it serves to classify. For that reason, it still serves a limited purpose in this case.

³⁷ From a story by Archie McLean, with files from Canadian Press, “Stelmach won't 'brake' oilsands growth: Quebec nation debate sparks call for same rights in Alberta,” *The Edmonton Journal*, Dec. 5, 2006.

³⁸ Hanneke Brooymans, "Slower oilsands growth urged," *Edmonton Journal*, Feb. 1, 2008.

³⁹ "Shifting Oilsands," *Telegraph Magazine*. September 15 2007. Accessed on September 21 2007 from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2007/09/15/sm_oilsands.xml&page=3.

⁴⁰ Hanneke Brooymans in "Slower oilsands growth urged," states, "Peter Lougheed also repeated his call for a slowdown of oil-sands development during and appearance Thursday [January 31] on CBC's *The Current*. "Lougheed blamed the former premier Ralph Klein for the runaway development." "They should have never allowed so many of these projects to go ahead at the same time." "Now Stelmach is caught because of pre-existing obligations, he said. It won't be something he can turn around overnight."

⁴¹ Hugh McCullum, *Fuelling Fortress America*.

⁴² Gordon Laxer, *Freezing in the Dark: Why Canada Needs Strategic Petroleum Reserves*, Edmonton: Parkland Institute, January 31, 2008; retrieved Feb. 11, 08, from <http://www.ualberta.ca/PARKLAND/research/studies/index.html>.

⁴³ See Martin J. Smith, "Pluralism, Reformed Pluralism and Neo-pluralism: the Role of Pressure Groups in Policy Making," *Political Studies*, 38 (1990), 302-322.

⁴⁴ There is some emerging evidence that these two dialectically opposed positions are increasingly disintegrating into a **pragmatist** approach to the state. The reflex of the Alberta and Canadian governments, with governance on the oil sands, seems to be shifting increasingly to pragmatism. This position suggests government is simply a means we can choose to solve any problem we face or to provide any public good we want. This assumes that there is no way of knowing what the character and role of the state is, so the state does what ever the democratic masses, or the weight of scientific experts, push for. In the end, power determines the role of the state.

⁴⁵ This is similar to the idea of classical liberals that the market mechanism automatically produces the public good by adjudicating multiple demands of autonomous individuals.

⁴⁶ Robert B. Gibson, "We Just Don't Know: Lessons about Complexity and Uncertainty in Canadian Environmental Politics," in Robert Paehlke and Douglas Torgerson, eds., *Managing Leviathan: Environmental Politics and the Administrative State*, 2nd edition, Broadview, 2005, 145.

⁴⁷ Significantly, an irresolvable tension lives at the core of these polarized models of politics. On the one hand, autonomous rational individuals should be absolutely free to shape their futures, doing so through pluralist interest group competition and shaping of public policy. These rational individuals thus end up developing scientific knowledge to allow them to master nature for their free use. On the other hand, once scientific expertise enters the picture, it seems best to place the determination of key decisions over conflicting development interests and desires, in the hands of experts. The administrative state has the capacity and scientific expertise to understand the world and to determine the best public policies. Free individuals do not necessarily have this capacity. paper.

⁴⁸ Think of left and right wing populism, and right and left-wing technocratic states. See also the distinction between "technocratic orientation" and "sociocratic orientation" that cuts across the ideological spectrum, explored in the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy [WRR], *A policy-oriented survey of the future: towards a broader perspective*. [Summary of the twenty-fifth report to the government], The Hague: SDU, 1983.

⁴⁹ Feminist approaches push for an order in which fragmentation into public and private spheres is removed and power relationships between genders are equalized.

⁵⁰ For Michel Foucault's version of an integrated approach see "A Brief Paraphrase of the First Chapter of *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*," by Michel Foucault, courtesy of Lois Shawver, Chapter One, *The Unities of Discourse*, retrieved April 17, 2008 from <http://users.california.com/%7Erathbone/fouarc.html>.

⁵¹ See for example, Philip Resnick, "Political Economy and Class Analysis: A Marxist Perspective on Canada," in John H. Redekop, ed., *Approaches to Canadian Politics*. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, (1983, latest edition 1993), 337-359.

⁵² See for example, the incisive studies by Gordon Laxer, *Freezing in the Dark: Why Canada Needs Strategic Petroleum Reserve*, Parkland Institute and Polaris Institute, January 2008, and Hugh McCullum, *Fuelling Fortress America*.

⁵³ See John Hiemstra, "In the Belly of the Beast: A Christian Exploration/study/Investigation of the Ideological Entrails of Canada's Oil Sands Boom."

⁵⁴ John A. Olthuis, "Peeling an Onion: Reflections on CJL's Energy Project," *Catalyst* (Spring, 1978): 22-30. Murray MacAdam et. al., *Changing Course: A Study Guide for Canadian Social Policy Analysis*, Toronto: Citizens for Public Justice, 1987. A variety of research papers, articles and books have been produced by Citizens for Public Justice that are inspired, in various ways, by this approach. See their website www.cpj.ca.

⁵⁵ See Murray MacAdam, "What We've Done: Sinking roots in a Seventies Canada," accessed May 29, 2008 at <http://cpj.ca/resources/index.html?ap=1&x=81688>.

⁵⁶ For other examples of paradox being used to focus research, see Lawrence Busch, *The Eclipse of Morality: Science, State and Market*, NY: De Gruyter, 2000, 117-118; Ulrich Beck, "Episode 5 - Ulrich Beck and Bruno Latour," *CBC Ideas*, December 12, 2007, accessed March 6, 2008, at <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/science/index.html#episode5>; also see

Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, translated by Mark Ritter, London: Sage Publications, 1986; and Robert B. Gibson, "We Just Don't Know," 145-169.

⁵⁷ Bob Goudzwaard uses and briefly discusses this sort of approach in *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Culture*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, esp. xix-xxv. He also credits the late Bernard Zylstra as follows: "To assess the spirits and dogmas of our time, we should perhaps first give careful attention to the multiplicity of factual processes. Bernard Zylstra taught us to move from this level to the social order and its structural formations, and then to go deeper, via the underlying layer of culture, to religious drives." *Globalization and the Kingdom of God*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001, p. 15 and see 115n.6. Zylstra was one of the few doctoral students actually supervised by the philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. Zylstra taught Political Theory at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto (1968?-1986). Further works by Goudzwaard referring to this approach include: *Idols of our Time*, IVP; Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Towards a Canadian Economy of Care*, Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1994; and Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, David Van Heemst, *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*, forward by Desmond Tutu, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Also see Julio de Santa Ana, ed., *Beyond Idealism: A way Ahead for Ecumenical Social Ethics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

⁵⁸ Amy Smith, MIT Senior Lecturer and MacArthur "Genius" Fellow, is the 'genius' behind the International Development Design Summit. Article says: "Last Summer, MIT turned its attention to improving the lives of the world's bottom billion – those who live on a dollar a day or less – crafting real-world solutions that work."

⁵⁹ This contrast jumped out at me after spending May of 2008 as well as 2006 working with The King's University College students on developing water systems along with poor villagers in Honduras.

⁶⁰ For a systematic introduction see Goudzwaard, *Idols of our Time*, and Goudzwaard, Vander Vennen, and Van Heemst, *Hope in Troubled Times*. I adapt this approach in an analysis of the oil sands in John Hiemstra, "In the Belly of the Beast: A Christian Exploration/study/Investigation of the Ideological Entrails of Canada's Oil Sands Boom," a speech delivered to the Social Justice Institute conference entitled "In the Belly of the Beast: Christian reflections on living in Alberta's Energy Economy," Feb. 9, 2008, Edmonton.

⁶¹ See Goudzwaard, *Idols of our Time*, esp. chap. 1 and 2. The prophet Jeremiah, when confronting the idolatry in his time, identifies this sort of narrative as "deceptive words" (7:3-8). They are used to convince, even trick, people into believing and thinking in ways that lift off restrictions on the means. The means, then, become a sort of idol. Significantly, the concept of idolatry as a category of social, political and economic analysis, is beginning to gain currency in Christian social action, see John Mihevc (1-4) and other articles in *Jubilee, Wealth & the Market*, Toronto: Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, 1999. The definition of idolatry in this paper is similar to what Kairos (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives) refers to as "the consequences of unbridled human activity (alias sin)," accessed July 1, 2008, at <http://www.kairosCanada.org/e/ecology/climateChange/turningUpHeat.asp>.

⁶² On steps and analysis, see Gerald Vandezande, *Let Justice Flow! Taking healing steps in a wounded world*, Toronto: CJL Foundation, 1994.

⁶³ Goudzwaard, Vander Vennen, and Van Heemst, *Hope in Troubled Times*, 25. For an example of this type of action steps see, "A 12-step program for economic recovery," in Goudzwaard and De Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence*.

⁶⁴ See World Alliance of Reformed Churches' "Processus Confessionis" approach to worldwide economic injustice and ecological destruction at <http://www.warc.ch/pc/index.html>. Also see the related paper by Bob Goudzwaard, "Globalisation, Exclusion, Enslavement," *Reformed World*, Vol. 46, Number 3 (Sept. 1996) 1-8, available at: www.warc.ch/pc/rw963/01.html, accessed Nov. 12, 2004.

⁶⁵ See "Overview of the Micah Challenge" and "The Micah Call: phrase by phrase," <http://micahchallenge.org>, accessed Dec. 22, 2004.

⁶⁶ Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Our Relationship with the Environment: The Need for Conversion*, Pastoral Letter, Concacan Inc., 2008, p. 4, retrieved May 27, 2008, from http://www.cccb.ca/site/content/view/2578/996/lang_eng/.

⁶⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, NY: Macmillan, 1955.

⁶⁸ Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, 65f, 205-6. He credits this idea to T.P. van der Kooy, "Methodologie der economie en christelijke wijsbegeerte," [The Methodology of Economics and Christian Religion], *Philosophia Reformata*, vol. 40, (1975), pp 1-32 (see English summary in the conclusion).

⁶⁹ Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, 205-6.

⁷⁰ I explore this notion of differentiated responsibility of sphere sovereignty more fully in a discussion paper on Church-state relations, John L. Hiemstra, "Church, State and the Kingdom of God: An Overview," *REC Focus*, June 2005, Vol. 5, No. 2, 3 - 49. Also available on line at <http://rec.gospelcom.net/index.php?section=144>, accessed Jan. 14, 2008. Also see Elaine Botha's helpful discussion of the [false] polarization of social structure and human agency in: M. Elaine Botha, "Prospects for a Christian Social Philosophy in a Shrinking World," Luis E. Lugo, Ed., *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-first Century*, Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2000, 221-240.

⁷¹ See “Public Justice for Citizens Governments and CPJ” accessed June 30, 2008 at <http://cpj.ca/aboutus/index.html?ap=1&x=112410>; the idea of circles of society, or differentiated society is worked out in greater detail in “Guidelines for Christian political service,” and “Charter of social rights and responsibilities,” available June 30, 2008 at <http://cpj.ca/aboutus/index.html?ap=1&x=80516>.

⁷² Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Ottawa, ON: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

⁷³ This is not to suggest that ideological definitions of the state’s role have nothing to teach us. Indeed, when carefully de-ideologized we have much to learn from their contributions. James W. Skillen, “Faith and the Presidency,” *Root & Branch*, # 10, Center for Public Justice, Jan. 17, 2008, retrieved March 3, 2008 at [http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader\\$1521](http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader$1521). For an excellent discussion of the problem facing a public justice approach to the environment, see chapter 7 of James W. Skillen, *In Pursuit of Justice: Christian-Democratic Explorations*, Rowman and Littlefield and Center for Public Justice, 2004. Also see Skillen, James W. *With or Against the World: America's Role Among the Nations*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

⁷⁴ Bob Goudzwaard, “Who Cares? Poverty and the Dynamics of Responsibility: An Outsider’s Contribution to the American Debate on Poverty and Welfare,” in Stanley W. Carlson-Thies and James W. Skillen, eds., *Welfare in America: Christian Perspectives on a Policy in Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1995), 49-80.

⁷⁵ D.H. Th. Vollenhoven’s (1892-1978) argument about method in the study of history and history of philosophy is that method should: “originate in the study of the material. The material to be studied turns out to be resistant [to insight] as long as it is not investigated with a method that fits its character. But the material gradually opens up [to insight] for all those who in their method of investigation allow themselves to be governed from beginning to end by the character of the field of investigation.” Cited by Harry Van Belle, “Postscript to Structure and Direction Paper (03/08),” paper, The King’s University College, 2008. See Albert M. Wolters, “On Vollenhoven’s Problem-Historical Method,” *Hearing and Doing: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to H. Evan Runner*, John Kraay and Anthony Tol, eds., Toronto: Wedge, 1979, 231-262. Polkinghorne in *Methodology for the Human Sciences* argues similarly, “Science becomes the creative search to understand better, and it uses whatever approaches are responsive to the particular questions and subject matters addressed. Those methods are acceptable which produce results that convince the community that the new understanding is deeper, fuller, and more useful than the previous understanding,” 3.

⁷⁶ Bob Goudzwaard, “Perspectives of Christian Higher Education: the Social Sciences,” in Natalia Pecherskaya, Ed., *Higher Education in XXIst Century Russian Culture: A Christian Perspective*, St Petersburg: SRPH, 2000, 5.

⁷⁷ See Harry Van Dyke, *Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and revolution: A series of Lectures in History*, Jordan Station, ON: Wedge 1989, 2000, which includes an appendix with an extensive abridged and translated version of Groen’s lectures.

⁷⁸ Kuyper was a prominent religious and political figure in Dutch life for most of the last half of the nineteenth century and served as Prime Minister between 1901-1905. For a sample of Kuyper’s writing see Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975. An excellent introduction to his worldview and theology appears in Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

⁷⁹ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options*, Toronto: Wedge, 1979.

⁸⁰ Albert M. Wolters, “On Vollenhoven’s Problem-Historical Method.”

⁸¹ See above references.

⁸² Bernard Zylstra, “The Kingdom of God: Its foundations and implications,” in *Confessing Christ in Doing Politics*, B.J. van der Walt and R. Swanepoel, Potchefstroom, 1995, pp. 25-46; and see his approach in Bernard Zylstra, “Liberalism or liberty: an assessment of Canada's new constitution,” London, Ont.: Christian Labour Association of Canada, 1983 and Bernard Zylstra, *From Pluralism to Collectivism: The Development of Harold Laski's Political Thought*, Van Gorcum, 1968; Zylstra, “Modernity and the American Empire.”

⁸³ Egbert Schuurman, *Perspectives on Technology and Culture*, Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1995, Egbert Schuurman, “A confrontation with technicism as the spiritual climate of the West,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 58 (1) (1996): 64-84.

⁸⁴ Nicolas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1983, and Nicolas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the bounds of religion*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976. Also see Nicolas Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education*, eds. Clarence W. Joldersma and Gloria G. Stronks, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

⁸⁵ Dr. Al Wolters, 1985. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. Second edition, 1988.

⁸⁶ John A. Olthuis, “Peeling an Onion,” 22-30, and John A. Olthuis, “Can Less be More? Remarks about the Idea of Progress,” *CJL Newsletter*, February 1973. A variety of research papers, articles and books have been produced by Citizens for Public Justice that are inspired, in various ways, by this approach. See their website www.cpj.ca.

⁸⁷ Gerald Vandezande, a friend and mentor for years, has taught me a great deal about doing public justice. See *Justice, Not Just Us: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities*, Toronto: Public Justice Resource Centre, 1999, Gerald Vandezande, *Christians in the Crisis*.

⁸⁸ See for example, James W. Skillen, *With or Against the World: America's Role Among the Nations*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2005. Also see *The Scattered Voice: Christians at odds in the public square*, Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan, 1990; *In Pursuit of Justice: Christian-Democratic Explorations*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004; and *Recharging the American Experiment: Principled Pluralism for Genuine Civic Community*, Grand Rapids Mi.: Baker, 1994. The Center for Public Justice also has a wide range of papers, articles and commentary available at www.cpjustice.org.

⁸⁹ See for example, *Publieke Gerechtigheid: Rapport van het Wetenschappelijk Instituut voor het CDA*, Den Haag: Bohn Safleu van Loghum, 1993.

⁹⁰ The "Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer Foundation," accessed May 28, 2008 at <http://wi.christenunie.nl/>.

⁹¹ Harry J. Kits, Executive Director, "In Diversity, with Faith, Coming Together for Justice A speech given at each of the eight 40th Anniversary celebrations of Citizens for Public Justice and the Public Justice Resource Centre," July 29, 2005; retrieved April 15, 2008 from <http://action.web.ca/home/cpj/attach/kits.pdf>; and "Where Is Alberta Headed? The task of government, God's servant to do good," May 10, 2006; retrieved April 15, 2008 from <http://action.web.ca/home/cpj/attach/kits220901.pdf>; and "A CPJ take on Pluralism," January 2005, retrieved April 15, 2008 from <http://action.web.ca/home/cpj/attach/CPJ's%20take%20on%20pluralism.doc>. Harry Kits, "God(s) in the house: From faith to hopeful citizenship," *The Catalyst*, winter 2007, Volume 30 / Number 1, accessed June 2, 2008 from http://cpj.ca/faith/Faith_and_Politics/index.html?ap=1&x=98010.

⁹² Paul A. Marshall, *Thine is the Kingdom: A Biblical Perspective on the Nature of Government and Politics Today*, Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1986, 1984.

⁹³ See Kathy Vandergrift, "Public Justice, Then and Now and Into the Future," a speech on the 40th Anniversary of Citizens for Public Justice and the Public Justice Resource Centre, Edmonton, Saturday, May 29, 2004, accessed June 5, 2008 at <http://action.web.ca/home/cpj/attach/vandergrift2.pdf>.

⁹⁴ Jonathan Chaplin, 'Defining Public Justice in a Pluralistic Society: Probing a Key Neo-Calvinist Insight,' *Pro Rege*, (March, 2004): 1-10, and Jonathan Chaplin, 'Public Justice as a Critical Political Norm', *Philosophia Reformata*, 72 (2007) pp.

⁹⁵ See David T. Koyzis' helpful study of ideologies and how the Roman Catholic and neo-Calvinist traditions of political reflection offer alternative Christian approaches to ideologies, in *Political Visions & Illusions: A Survey & Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies*, Dowers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity, 2003.

⁹⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Ottawa, ON: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.