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# History Beckons

## Collapse isn’t imminent but we need to take it seriously

Eschatology—the theology of end times—is a religious concept, but crops up in many other systems of thought. Marxism and neo-liberalism were both driven by an “end-of-history” narrative. Scientific thinking isn’t immune either: the technological singularity has been called eschatology for geeks. …You don’t have to believe in the four horsemen to see the apocalypse coming.

…The end of the world itself is a given, but so far off as to be not worth fretting about. However, the end of the world as we know it—aka Western civilization—is a different matter.

…there seems little reason to doubt that Western civilization will eventually collapse. Unless it is immune...to the forces of history, it will go the way of all civilizations. Recent political events and long-term environmental trends offer little comfort.

…One of the reasons we’re struggling to deal with [climate change] is that some activists saw it as a golden opportunity to further their political agenda: reining in corporations, regulating free market, and imposing environmental legislation.

…The point is not that the activists’ answers are wrong. Business as usual is a sure way to climate catastrophe. It is that they prematurely politicized the science and hence provoked pushback from people on the other side of the fence.

Evidence for an impending civilization collapse is much weaker, but is already being politicized in a similar way. The causes being offered are the familiar bugbears of the left: inequality, population growth, and resource depletion. The proposed answers are equally predictable and contentious.

The risk is that this new and important science is turned into yet another culture war.