

Thoughts on Coming Apart and the Coming Great Reset



**Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer**

Kit Webster

Themes and Theses Why I'm Contemplating Out Loud

(Initially formulated in the early 90s, following decades of reading history, philosophy, religion, psychology and a lot of contemplation, particularly on the subject of cycles. In the end, this is a relatively straightforward story about human nature and of history rhyming.)
The US will enter a period of crisis in the early 2000s. In the late 90s, I incorporated Strauss' and Howe's terminology of the Fourth Turning

(without incorporating their generations paradigm) and agreed with Howe that the end stage of the crisis began with the Great Financial Crisis and would last into the early 2030s. We are now at the beginning of the end stage of the crisis.

The crisis will be serious and could be existential.

Internal strife will increase, up to and including secession and civil war. International conflicts will increase as the vacuum created by the weakening of the US is filled by other players.

There will be many threads to the crisis, but the primary thread will be debt, deficits and entitlements. Other factors include, eg, demographics, a loss of meaning and myth and a loss of self-discipline.

Politics will move leftward as citizens look for some refuge from the chaos. The US will become increasingly susceptible to a (man) on a white horse, who can come from either the left or the right.

Inflation, as the most likely way to address debt since austerity is not politically acceptable, will significantly lower standards of living, exacerbating the civil crises.

Eventually, the dollar will be inflated away and lose its reserve status. Once the old rot is cleared out, and assuming continuity, there will be the basis for the establishment of a new order.

There will be what Strauss and Howe calls a First Turning . It will be constructed out of the physical infrastructure, wealth, energy sources, thoughts and values in the culture at the time. At this point in time, those components are unknowable. We can anticipate that the next five years or so will be increasingly chaotic. We can anticipate that there will be destruction, and then reconstruction from some level. We cannot yet anticipate the form of the reconstruction or the level from which it will begin.

(Added around 2020) The loss of faith by our youth in our founding principles means that the new order will at least partially be based on new principles. As yet, I have no visibility as to what those principles might be.

(Added in the early 00s) While humans are contributing to global warming, policies implemented to address manmade global warming will

create a significant energy crisis, probably toward the end of the Fourth Turning.

(Added in 2023) The lowering / elimination of standards in education, the judiciary, law enforcement, the military and other segments of our society will create a population unable to adequately comprehend, do or respond to the challenges of democracy and culture.

Nobody Puts Baby In A Corner

October 24, 2025

Quotes to Contemplate

None this week.

Summary of Primary Thoughts To Contemplate In This Issue

The rhetoric and sanctions between the US and China continue to escalate. China has a very strong hand, but the US has assets and weapons. It is past time for Xi and Trump to come to a grand bargain.

It is one of the overwhelmingly unexpected turns in history that after millennia of famines and continual food insecurity across the whole globe, that obesity has become a health problem in many countries, and not just in the industrial nations. Beyond remarkable.

Saudi Arabia has indicated they are willing to join the Abraham Accords - this is where we were before the Hamas attack on Israel, and may have been one of the factors motivating the timing of the attack.

Trump and Putin had been dancing around improving relations and working toward a major meeting. Trump called it off.

Healthcare in the US is irredeemably broken.

Nobody Puts Baby In A Corner

Reader SS quoting his son, "So China just did to us what the US did to Japan in the summer of 1941. How long do you think it will be before shots are fired?"

I'm not sure how many people realize that in 1941 the US, responding to Japan's military aggression generally, but in China and Indochina in particular, embargoed oil to Japan while imposing other economic sanctions. Since Japan had no oil of its own, this put the country in a very desperate situation. The thinking was that the US was throwing its weight around from too far away for Japan to be a danger. Japan going to war against the US would be madness in any event. Clearly, Japan would have to withdraw from China and Indochina as demanded. Instead, as a wonderful morality tale about unintended consequences, Japan pulled off an imaginative and highly unlikely attack on Pearl Harbor.

The particulars this time are different, but China has backed the US into an untenable situation, albeit in response to Trump's best bull-in-a-China-shop impression.

Xi and Trump are meeting on Thursday.

That meeting has to turn out well, or else ... well ... nobody puts baby in a corner.

(Beth-mandated explanation - "nobody puts baby in a corner" is a meme from the 1987 movie, Dirty Dancing.)

It is interesting to note that China's economy is slowing down, improving Trump's hand.

Obesity

I need to be diplomatic and cautious here - RFK Jr is a dangerous crackpot.

But even a broken watch is right twice a day. Headline - "Almost 70 percent of American adults are considered obese under a revamped definition of obesity, according to a peer-reviewed study published in the JAMA Network Open and conducted by researchers affiliated with the Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital." Obesity rates have skyrocketed since the '80s.

The problem, of course, is one of self-discipline (which, all things are connected, grasshopper, actually has come to permeate all of our culture, particularly including debt and deficits - those irritating Protestants actually had a point, after all) - but it is complicated. Here's what Claude has to say -

The increase in obesity rates in the US is multifactorial, resulting from complex interactions between biological, environmental, economic, and social factors. Here are the key contributors:

Dietary Changes

Increased calorie availability and consumption - The US food supply now provides about 500 more calories per person per day compared to the 1970s. Portion sizes have grown significantly, particularly in restaurants and packaged foods.

Ultra-processed food dominance - These foods now comprise about 60% of the American diet. They're typically calorie-dense,

hyperpalatable, low in nutrients, and engineered to encourage overconsumption.

Sugar and refined carbohydrates - Consumption of added sugars, particularly from sugar-sweetened beverages, increased dramatically from the 1970s through the early 2000s.

Environmental and Lifestyle Factors

Sedentary lifestyles - Physical activity has declined due to more desk jobs, car-dependent infrastructure, increased screen time, and reduced physical education in schools.

Sleep deprivation - Americans sleep less than previous generations, and insufficient sleep disrupts hormones that regulate hunger and metabolism.

Built environment - Many communities lack safe spaces for physical activity and have limited access to affordable fresh foods ("food deserts").

Economic Influences

Food pricing - Calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods are often cheaper and more accessible than healthier options, making them appealing to budget-conscious families.

Marketing - Aggressive advertising of unhealthy foods, particularly targeting children, influences eating behaviors from a young age.

Biological and Systemic Factors

Stress and socioeconomic factors - Chronic stress, which is often higher in lower-income populations, can contribute to weight gain through hormonal changes and coping behaviors.

Intergenerational effects - Maternal obesity and gestational diabetes can predispose children to obesity through metabolic programming.

The rise in obesity represents a population-level response to an "obesogenic environment" - one that makes it easy to consume excess calories and difficult to maintain physical activity. Addressing it requires changes across multiple levels, from individual behavior to policy and environmental design.

FWIW, although I have not eaten one in years, Twinkies are fantastic.

Markets

Updated charts

> It looks like the downturns in gold, the stock markets and bitcoin are finally here. I think it is just a retracement, but in this fragile market, it could well be much more. The markets have run up so far, so fast that even a retracement could be impressive.

> (Yawn) National debt is now \$38 trillion.

So, You Say You Want A Revolution?

> I am not commenting on No Kings day because there is no news in the fact that a third of the country really does not care for Trump (did you see the mass of white faces in the crowds? The demonstrations were called white boomer protests). That was a lot of people in a lot of places, the vast majority of whom do not "hate America" as Republicans asserted. (I guess I am commenting after all.) The key will be midterm elections. The remarkable thing for me, beyond the inflatable animal costumes, was that leftist demonstrations used to be very violent - BLM and Antifa. This was millions of people all over the US in uniformly peaceful demonstrations. An actual ray of hope and an indication that the mainstream left is leading the resistance this time.

> (Noem is not at the top of my cringy-Trump-appointees list, but she is up there.) The Department of Homeland Security bought two private jets for Kristi Noem, the secretary, and other top department officials, for \$172 million. Almost offset DOGE savings single-handedly.

> The next phase in Gaza is crucial. Hamas is still in charge and if that does not stop, Gaza will never get anywhere. The world is now watching

Hamas killing Palestinians, hoping, I guess, that once the reign of terror is over, some normalcy can be established.

> Trump: Saudi Arabia has indicated they are willing to join the Abraham Accords - this is where we were before the Hamas attack on Israel.

> Irony - Canadians in Canada attended No Kings rallies. Charles was not amused.

> The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on Tuesday ruled that Trump could order troops into Portland, Oregon.

> In a column for The Washington Post, attorney Jill Jacobson revisited the eight-year sentence given to Justice Brett Kavanaugh's would-be assassin, contending that U.S. District Judge Deborah Boardman's decision to depart from the recommended sentence of 30 years to life was "outrageous." "In an era when violent threats and attacks on public officials are alarmingly common, the judiciary bears a unique burden to effectuate deterrence. The court neglected that duty in [Nicholas] Roske's case," Jacobson wrote. To explain the eight-year sentence, Boardman cited, among other factors, Roske's transgender status and that Roske may "face hardship as a result of President Donald Trump's January executive order on prisons and transgender care."

> Trump wants the Justice Department to pay him \$230 million as compensation for years of F.B.I. investigations.

> Trump's meeting with Putin is off.

> Officials from the Reagan and Biden administrations agreed that a ballroom was badly needed at the White House.

Short Takes

> Rife with symbolism and meaning - last week a player from Japan, Shohei Ohtani, playing for the Los Angeles Dodgers, had what has been called the best game of any baseball player, ever. Ruth, Cobb, Mantle, Aaron, Gehrig ... ever.

> In the category of headlines you never expected to see in your lifetime, "The police broke up a Lego theft ring in California." The average age of the thieves was probably seven.

> I just finished The Rest Is History podcast's (very highly recommended) series on Horatio Nelson. I knew of him as the one-armed hero of the Battle of the Nile and the Battle of Trafalgar. I have been to Trafalgar Square several times and seen the monument (and fed the pigeons. But, damn, what a complex and heroic man. One of the greatest in history, just below Napoleon, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Hannibal, Genghis Khan ...

> I have included a very thoughtful email from reader RL at the bottom of this post.

> Say, what? We're stealing their watches? - China's State Security Ministry claimed on Sunday to have found "irrefutable evidence" that the U.S. National Security Agency has repeatedly hacked into China's agency responsible for timekeeping. This is actually serious. In our technical age where millionths of seconds are important in synchronizing communications and capabilities like GPS, time can be a weapon.

> What happens when a communist country takes a stab at capitalism - China Is Testing Restroom Machines That Make You Watch Ads in Exchange for Toilet Paper.

> Owners of the Eight Sleep smart mattress—which costs more than \$2,000, plus a \$199 annual subscription—found that Monday's AWS crash left their mattresses overheating and stuck at odd angles. The lesson: Your mattress doesn't need to be connected to the internet. Really, it doesn't.

**> I hate it when somebody says, I told you so -
I told you so.**

Before ObamaCare in 2010 - A family of 4 had \$13,000 (roughly \$18,400 in today's dollars) per year in premiums with a \$3,000 (\$4,500 in today's dollars) deductible. Now in 2025 - A family of 4 has \$35,000 per year in premiums with a \$6,000 deductible.

If you take away some lessons from this, I suggest:

Healthcare is irredeemably broken.

The government often lies.

The government almost always lies when it is trying to make a major political point to gain votes.

Doesn't matter whether Republican or Democrat, black or white.

> As a self-styled quasi-expert in global warming, it is clear that at least 90% of what you read about the subject is drivel. Listen to Roger Pielke and that's about it.

This is the first, long-term projection that, while almost certainly wrong, is well reasoned and intellectually honest.

- Earth will achieve net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2093 and the temperature rise will stabilize at 2.2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by 2100, according to a new projection from Norwegian firm Det Norske Veritas. "A casual observer might conclude that the energy transition is stalled or in reverse," they write. "That is most definitely not the case.**

Freud would have a field day - the Obama Presidential Library - yes, it includes a basketball court. One wag on X - "The Obama library will be an unassailable symbol of democracy and freedom, unassailable except one thermal exhaust port." I think even Stalin would have rejected it.



I think the technical term a true artist would use is, "butt ugly."

Obama had his strengths and weaknesses, but this building is reflective of a scary mental state.

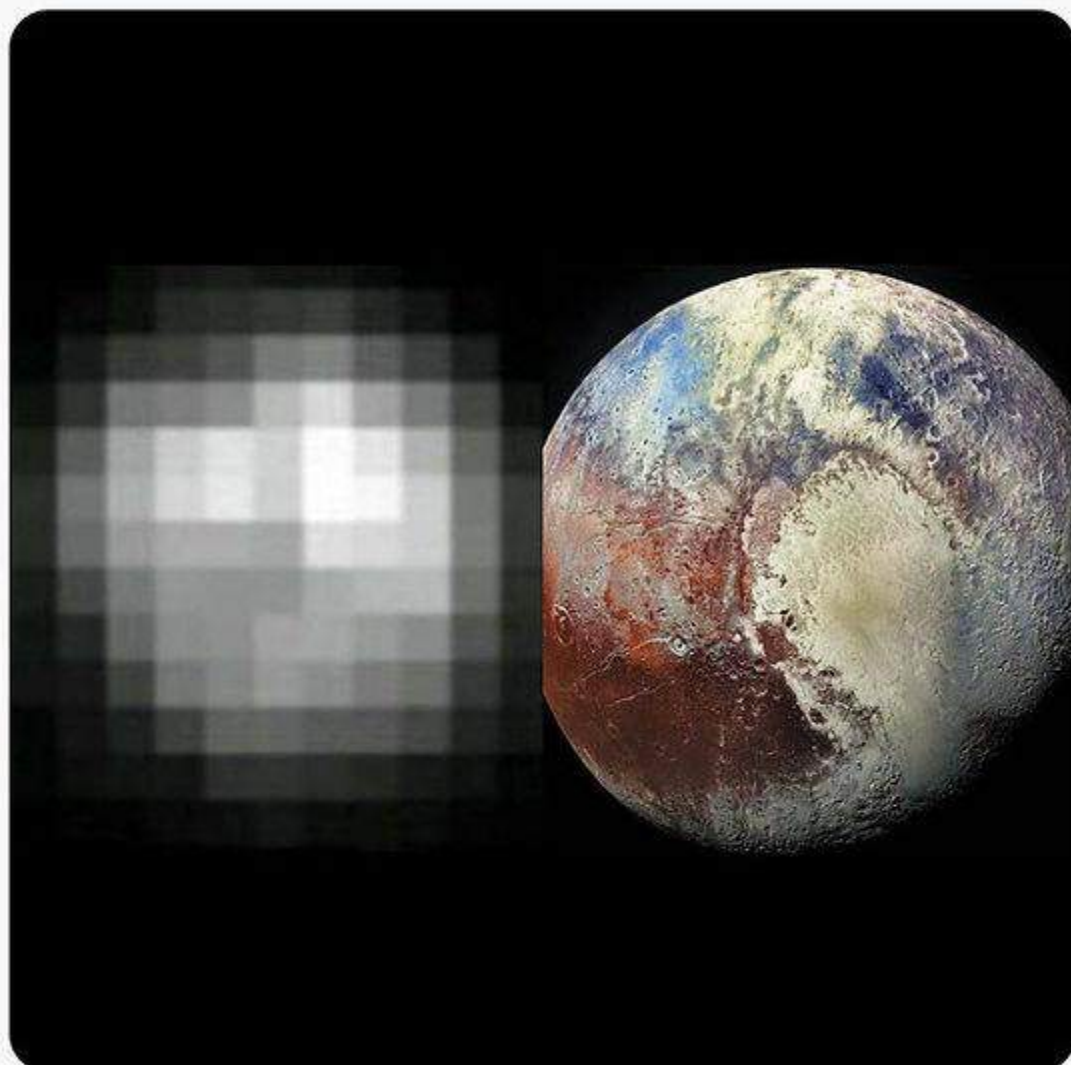
Not the most significant event since World War II, but maybe in the top five. I have, so far, not found the energy to write about this, and may not ever write about it, but that does not mean it is not a very, very big deal - for better and for worse.



Helen Andrews  @herandrews · Oct 16

How I came to see the “Great Feminization” as the most significant event of our century—and a potential threat to civilization. compactmag.com/article/the-gr...

How Our View of Pluto Changed Between 1994 and 2019



Not funny

The Evolution of Education

1940



Calculate the surface area of the object.

1980



Calculate the surface area of the rectangle.

2000



Calculate the surface area of the rectangle, multiplying the length by the width.

2010



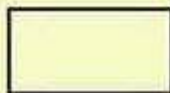
Choose the correct answer.
What is the surface area of the rectangle?
☐ 4000
☐ 600
☐ 800000

2015



Choose the correct answer.
What is the surface area of the rectangle?
☐ Michael Jackson
☐ Canada
☐ 600
☐ Breakfast

2020



Color the rectangle with the color you prefer.

Miscellany

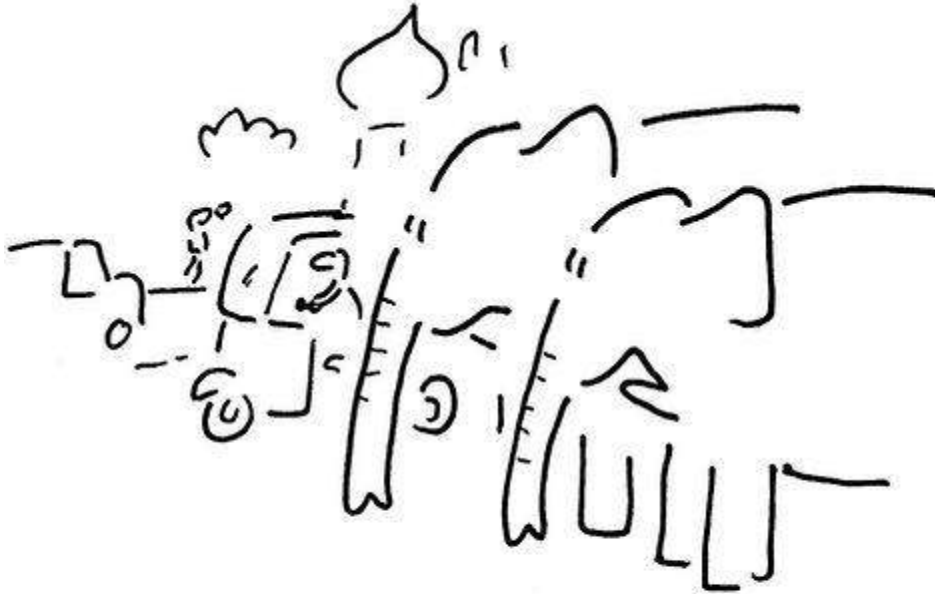


The Babylon Bee 🐝 @TheBabylonBee · 47m

...

Trump Declares White House 'ICE Free Zone' Until
Construction On New Ballroom Is Done buff.ly/ncbWW5X





'Been busy lately? So many politicians, so many rooms...'

Email from RL

TL;DR Trends continue until they don't. The US will probably do OK. There is the potential for widespread meltdown before rebuild. Be a mensch and love your family.

This started out as brief but has morphed. I'm not a particularly good writer but I have at least edited the draft before hitting send. 8^) Matt Taibbi is one of my favorite writers but not much has rubbed off.

Here is the link to a John Mauldin article that I'm sure you have seen. He references Ray Dalio and talks a lot about debt cycles, 80 year cycles and 6 yr mini cycles. <https://www.mauldineconomics.com/frontlinethoughts/the-final-crisis-this-is-our-future>

He ties a lot together, but I come back around to one of the recurring themes of how all this current "craziness" fits into much larger societal cycles. I'm thinking Tainter here, and do have some concerns as to whether we are seeing "the end of the West." I vote NO, I think the West is tougher than that, but I'm just an old man in Sequim, Washington yelling at clouds. I do have an AR15 and training, so could hold off barbarian hordes for 5 minutes or so should we see an incursion here. We are only 40 miles or so from Canada after all. 8^)

A positive view is that it is absolutely possible to see a way through this current mess. To use an overworn model, Rome went through a number of cycles and still continued to be "Rome." Even after the fall of the Western part, the Easterners continued to call themselves "Roman" (Romaion) even though they spoke Greek and had probably never been to Rome. (To this day there are claimants for Roman succession in Russia, the Vatican, and even Turkey).

The Roman Republic survived the Social Wars and the civil war between Sulla and Marius factions. Julius and Pompey led to Imperial Augustus and some stability. The era of the "5 Good Emperors" lasted less than 90 years and was probably a result of a beneficent climate as much as anything (Harper). 50 Emperors in 50 years was a hot mess, but Aurelian was indeed Restitutor Orbis, the restorer of the world. Diocletian was an absolute Christian killing despot, with strict economic reforms including price setting and mandatory occupations. Through the eras of Constantine, Theodosius II, and Justinian until Constantine XI in 1453, all considered themselves "Roman". Almost unrecognizable from era to era, but still some continuity nonetheless.

I guess the point is that despite short, long, and very long cycles of humans doing stupid things, that there is the possibility of continuity from one societal generation to the next, and we really have no idea of the outcome and won't be around to see the longer term cycles, because humans have such short collective memories. (Maybe we're the wrong

dominant species, and elephants or whales or some other less warlike, longer lived species should take the helm. Just kidding, not kidding.)

Tainter's thing was levels of complexity and the amount of resources necessary to sustain it, with deconstruction to a simpler model when resources fail for whatever reason. I'm sure others have felt this over the past, but we sure do have a whole lot of complexity now, and we need a whole lot of happy resourceful electrons to keep it all working. I know that there are groups actively working to disrupt the US water and electrical systems, and I think that the disruption from local successes in these disruptions could easily spread nationally and potentially or probably internationally as well. So we are very, very vulnerable to large complicated problems that require lots of resources.

Going forward, Gen Z, who will have to clean up the mess us oldlings have left, will certainly have their own ideas and methods for governance, but I fear the breakdown of knowledge transfer will mean they have a very incomplete understanding of how we all got here. As example, Covid blew up in person education and in person societal relationship building, to be replaced by social media, particularly Tik Tok. I didn't think the movie Idiocracy was supposed to be an instruction video. I think this discontinuity of cultural transfer, replaced by social media and neomarxist deconstructionist post modern education, is one of the main drivers behind Z's higher acceptance of socialism or communism. They see the results of the system to date and appropriately see it is broken. And so the search for something better, in the US but also internationally.

While recognizing that the world could indeed melt down out of a very global one and into a very much more fragmented one, and despite my fears, I guess I have talked myself into thinking that we are going to stumble along for the nonce. It does sort out into a risk/benefit probability analysis in the end. We've survived so far so, trends being trends, it would be wise to follow the trend. But trends do end. I tend to

be a contrarian so it is much easier to visualize a post apocalyptic Seattle skyline than a world of happy smiling Seattleites. But maybe there are enough clever educated knowledgeable Zs to embrace the First Turning and we'll get through. This is where it is helpful to have some faith, as hesitant as I am.

How do we invest, all in, in a world we want to live in, with love and respect, but still acknowledge that things can, do, and will happen and we need risk mitigation strategies? How do we have strong communities and a strong country?

I don't know all the answers, but have chosen to invest in family and building community as we collectively move through our era. Develop resourcefulness however possible. Develop a skill. Include comms, food prep, medical care, physical fitness, and firearms training along with developing the ability to think. Read the classics and history, have engaging discussions, subscribe to Kit's newsletter, try to build the world we want to live in. I have found that sitting and listening to the different generations (Gen X and Z) is fascinating, if we ask a question and then listen. They want and need guidance, just not shoved down their throat.

There clearly are very high risks in some segments. I personally have concerns about Islam in particular and view the larger Islamic world as too accepting of expansionist Islamism and with an unfortunate built in acceptance of violence with respect to unbelievers, or even other believers. Not a fan. Not phobic but a student of history. Islam never went through either a reformation or enlightenment period in the same way as the West, and there are some very sharp edges.

Our social media is transmogrifying into something else. I recently discovered a YT channel titled "something Elon Musk something" with Elon sitting behind a desk sharing his outlook. Except it wasn't Elon. 100% AI putting various things he said to a video using AI generated image and voice. And indistinguishable as a deepfake. The

disclaimer was buried in the small text. OMFG! I am plotting how to get rid of my i phone and still function wrt texts and pics.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I have enjoyed your posts over the years and these are some of my current thoughts. I had a triple bypass in June 16 weeks ago and have had a physical reset, and want to think about how I spend my time what thoughts and approach to the world I want to cultivate. I have made some new friends working in Kenyan schools and villages recently, and it has been so interesting to have a different perspective.

Best Regards,

My response

Very much appreciate your thoughts. Very nicely thought out and well-put. May I quote you in my next newsletter?
(Appreciate the inclusion in the things everybody must do)

Yes - I think Dalio has it right, perhaps because we significantly agree.

Yes - Tainter. You can't get much more complex than AI vectors in 1,000 dimensional space!

Yes - ends of cycles - that's what started me on this crazy journey.

Yes - comparison with Rome. I'm in the the-Roman-Empire-ended-in-1453 camp. The West can be eradicated, but my views are much more in the direction of simplification and reduction. That may also imply radical population decrease.

I vote for elephants as the next dominant species.

Yes - the young-uns are incompletely educated, particularly in history and civics. They will wind up solving a lot of (already-solved) problems and repeating a lot of known mistakes.

Yes - fundamental Islam is irreconcilably incompatible with the West.

Yes - in discussions with my wife, I say the only things you have are your family and friends. Hold them close and understand the rest is not under your control.

Yes - I have learned the craft of creating digital clones of both image and voice. They are now almost perfect. Reality will be even more difficult to locate.

Damn, I'm sorry to hear about your triple bypass. It has been a genuine pleasure associating with you over the years and I am looking forward to many more. How are you recovering? (He responded that he is doing well and thinks he is good for another 30,000 miles.)