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"Climate Blues: or How Awareness of the Human End Might Re-Instil Ethical Purpose to the Writing of History"

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The accumulating evidence on the depth and accelerating trajectory of anthropogenic climate change poses the possibility of an early end to human existence as part of a more general biotic extinction. But if that is the case what does that mean for the latter day writing of history? Our response follows two main lines of thought. The first relates to the concept of the 'Anthropocene' and the possibilities that it offers historians to reconsider their subject in the light of what earth science is saying about earth history and our particularly recent role in its shaping. From this perspective, while the idea of a reconceptualised history by reference to key geological and other natural historical thresholds would certainly destabilise current academic practice, it might equally galvanise the historical discipline towards recognition of our present biospheric crisis. The second line of thought explores how history writing might contribute to an ethical response in the face of the end and an almost inevitable, accompanying violence, anomie and destruction. Apocalyptic language is eschewed by a progress-centred history. Here we argue that it is exactly the proper recovery of such discarded religiously subversive notions which could assist in the opening up of an alternative space repudiating a bankrupt political-economic system and envisioning instead a millennial social and environmental justice.

— Adapted from the author's abstract.

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