

# Climate Worries Are Non-Credible, Luxury Beliefs That Harm Civilization Itself

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I live in a small village at the edge of lands surrounded by very harsh nature. Those who occupied these valleys in ages past lived ruthlessly dangerous lives, where starvation was a constant worry, the sea just as often nurtured as it took away, and the winters were long and perilous. Nowadays, while I'm walking the desolate mountains or admiring the fierce storms from inside my nice, sheltered existence, echoing in my head is Thomas Hobbes's descriptions of man's precivilizational life: "Solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

In the 2020s, we live fairly comfortable lives here, my fellow villagers and I. Our hearths are warm, our command over economic goods excellent. We live long, safe lives, where nobody starves and where almost nobody perishes in outbursts of nature's wrath. We use machines—constructed far, far away using materials we don't have, that run on fossil fuels that these lands don't contain—to move away the snow that frequently and predictably lands on our doorsteps and otherwise would have made our roads impassable and our houses prisons. We use different machines—constructed far, far away using materials we don't have, that run on fossil fuels that these lands don't contain—to get ourselves out of our valley and transport goods and services back, including exotic fruits and vegetables that never grow here (certainly not in winter!).

It truly is fascinating to behold the astonishing things that [globalized trade and capitalism](#) can accomplish. Stepping back and thinking about the miracles of modern trade, innovation, and division of labor is so humbling.

Yet we well-off moderns [worry about our collective existence](#) to the point that kids have nightmares, and survey respondents overwhelmingly say climate change [will end the human race](#). Something like [one-third](#) of young people say they don't want kids for fear of worsening the climate condition or how they'd fare in that brave, new world. "Climate anxiety is widespread among youth," [reports](#) *National Geographic*. "How can we help kids cope with 'eco-anxiety'?" [asks](#) the British Broadcasting Corporation. The vast majority of respondents in a global ten thousand-person [study](#) published in the *Lancet* in 2021 admitted to be very or extremely worried. [Vox writers](#) worry about the ethics of raising children. A new study, reported on by [Phys.org](#), pointed to how many young people won't have kids because of climate change: it'd be unfair to "bring a child into the world," who'd have to live with the constant "feeling of impending doom, every day, for their whole life," says one interviewed would-be parent.

Many of my fellow villagers entertain all these global ideas—melting glaciers and parts per million-numbers, floods and ethical dilemmas about us vulgar humans making earth inhospitable or uninhabitable.

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It's a strange thing to worry about obsessively, while the vicious storm raging outside the double-glazed windows affect nothing about our food supply, electricity use, heating, or ability to participate in the global division of labor—whether in our offices or remotely via high-speed internet. It somehow seems contradictory to passionately rally against capitalism from the comforts of very capitalistically built and maintained houses, hotels, and pubs; to inveigh against the burning of fossil fuels that literally keeps one alive.

It has me thinking about the [action axiom](#), the starting point of Ludwig von Mises's [praxeology](#) and the pillar-stone upon which Austrian economics rests. The colloquial version of this foundational Austrian maxim is "put your money where your mouth is" or "actions speak louder than words." We *demonstrate* by our actions where our preferences and values lie; we *reveal* them to the world (act them into existence, really) when we do one thing instead of another, when we purchase one good instead of another, when we work instead of relax. All of this is wrapped in uncertainty and hopes and subjective human desires trading off against other such desires; in hindsight we can regret the choices we made. Still, [says](#) Murray Rothbard, a man's "preferences are deducible from what he has chosen in action."

Perhaps all this climate complaining is simply virtue signaling, in a world where [feelings matter more than facts](#). The detachment from the physical processes of basic living—energy, materials, transportation, and in complicated monetary economies, [money](#)—has made many people ignorant, taking for granted the lifestyles we live and the standards of living we have. It has allowed us to start thinking foundational and civilization-carrying systems like money, fossil fuels, or commercial institutions are optional—a mere matter of ideological choice between good and evil people. They're not.

I'm reminded too of [luxury beliefs](#), a somewhat hyped concept coined by Rob Henderson, a psychologist at the University of Cambridge and author of the recent book *Troubled*. Henderson transfers Thorstein Veblen's "conspicuous consumption"—the purchasing of expensive, often seemingly useless goods with the purpose of flaunting one's wealth—to the moral and political domain. A [luxury belief](#), like a conspicuous good, is acquired in order to impress others, and is designed to "confer status on the upper class at very little cost, while inflicting costs upon the lower classes."

Luxury beliefs don't make much sense and don't have staying power in the [real world](#) of atoms and temperature, of nature and starvation. But we're so far detached from the world that physically supports us—so rich, so deluded, so well off—that we're willing to believe (and by extension willing to experiment with) the very systems that uphold our existence.

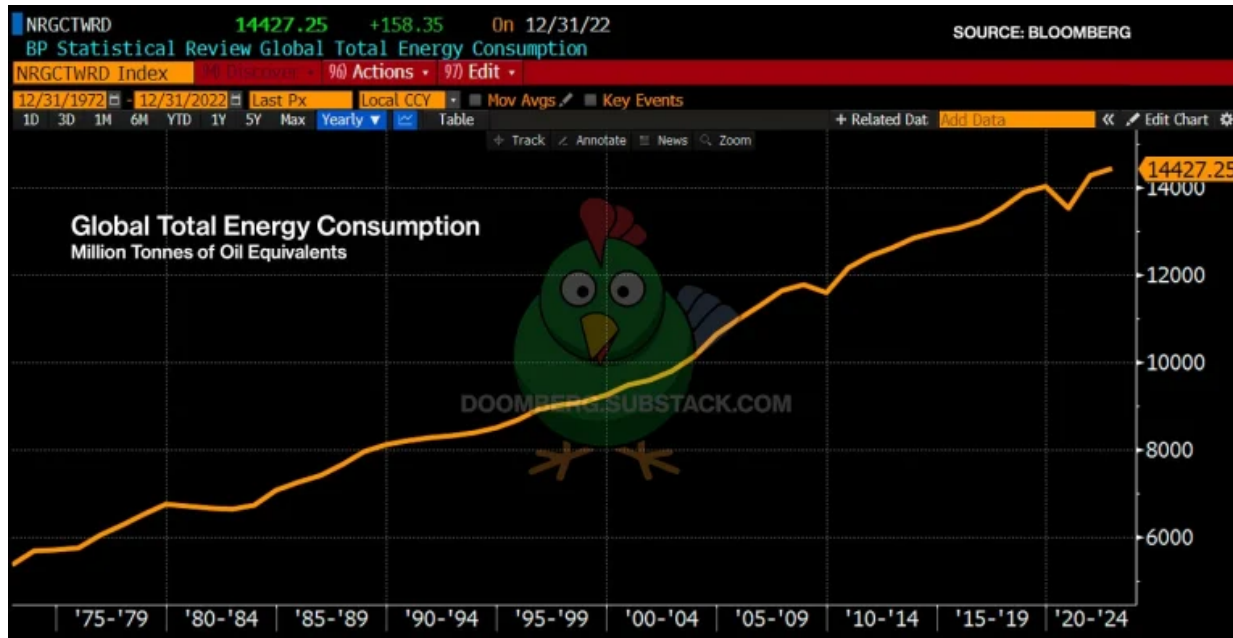
Cue environmental concerns and anticapitalism. Taken literally, enacting policies based on such follies into place, we're on a path to horror and poverty, with brutish and short lives to follow.

The good news is that those systems are remarkably resilient and these voices might still

be all “tawk,” as Nassim Taleb would say.

The popular energy-finance Substack [Doomberg](#) made a similar observation in February, listing two paragraphs’ worth of major events that happened from 1971: oil crisis, Iran-Iraq, Kuwait wars, Middle Eastern conflicts, the Asian and peso and ruble financial collapses, the terrorist attacks, Libya-Syria-Ukraine, the global financial crisis, and covid. Through all of them, as tumultuous as they seemed at the time and as relevant as they remain in the political consciousness, the world’s total energy consumption is a straight line through all of it. Here’s [their graph](#):

## BP Statistical Review global total energy consumption



Source: [Doomberg\[DB1\]](#)

Socioeconomic events as radical as women’s rights or racial equality; left-wing or right-wing leaders; crises and recessions, inflations and boom years; generations of scholars and scientists and political movements . . . and there’s no impact on the basic thing that powers our civilization.

Eighty-five percent of the [globe’s primary energy consumption](#) comes directly from fossil fuels—the same it was over thirty years ago when I was born. You can *speak* beliefs about climate change, about noncredible, net-zero policy goals (always with years [suspiciously ending](#) in zero or five), about reducing reliance on fossil fuels, or about how “clean” renewable energy is. You can throw government money at it, pass laws, or pontificate in the high courts, legislative auditoriums, or the public square, but you’re just not changing that. You *can’t* change that.

[Cypherpunks](#) write code. Clever people [ignore politics](#). *You* should get out of the house, [stop worrying](#) too much about the lunatics [running the asylum](#), and instead admire nature. That’s what I’m doing.