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# The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse: Save the Earth, Punish Human Beings

*Pascal Bruckner*

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**The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse** Pascal Bruckner



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**Pascal Bruckner : The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse: Save the Earth, Punish Human Beings** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse: Save the Earth, Punish Human Beings:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. We want our hair shirts! Bruckner analyzes why we want to believe we are egregiously wounding GaiaBy Graham H. SeibertBruckner offers a philosopher's take on the family of issues related to ecology that have come up over the past half century. In his introduction, entitled "The Return of Original Sin," he writes "Ecologism, the sole truly original force of the past half-century, has challenged the goals of progress

and raised the question of its limits." And "The environment is the new secular religion that is rising, in Europe at least, from the ruins of a disbelieving world. We have to subject it to critical evaluation in turn and unmask the infantile disease that is eroding and discrediting it: catastrophism." Bruckner's critical evaluation comes from a philosopher's perspective. Not so much about the factual arguments surrounding each issue, but what human needs are satisfied in raising the issues and whether it is even reasonable to find a solution. Mankind defines itself by its enemies. Convenient enemies of the past have been other religions and then religion itself after the enlightenment. Communism and capitalism have been useful enemies. Over the past several decades it has been intolerance. Good people are militantly intolerant of intolerance in all its forms, real and invented: patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, racism, and denial of sacred texts relating to the Holocaust and Global Warming. Several countries have made it a criminal act to deny the latter two in speech or writing. Ecologism involves a suite of belief structures. The Global Warming meme is most dominant. It is the threefold belief that temperatures worldwide are rising rapidly, that the major reason for temperature change is anthropogenic greenhouse gases, and that this rise in temperatures threatens life on earth. Bruckner does not much address the science, but many other authors do. Google "Graham Seibert Global Warming" for my 15 minute PowerPoint analysis of the scientific argument, concluding with a fairly extensive bibliography. Another related belief is that animal and plant species are going extinct at breakneck speed and that the survival of the earth depends on the diversity of species. Yet another is the moral conviction that animals have rights in the same way that humans do. A third is the conviction that the present generation is stripping the earth of natural resources at such a rate that there will be nothing left for subsequent generations. A related notion is the belief that the earth has exceeded its carrying capacity of human beings and that we have a moral obligation to curb our fertility. Bruckner weighs these issues as I have, global warming getting the most attention. Each of these arguments is cast as an impending catastrophe. Bruckner writes: "All catastrophist discourses suffer from a twofold contradiction: if the situation is as serious as they claim, why fight against it? Why not sit back and await the deluge? But the proposed solutions are ludicrous in view of the perils. As a rule, information has value only if it leads to concrete action: telling us, for example, that 'the oceans are on the brink of a biological crisis unprecedented in 55 million years', or that marine ecosystems will all collapse between now and 2050, is simply bewildering. This news prohibits any reaction other than distress and passivity. To then offer 'recommendations' is to contradict the gravity of the message." Consider the ways of reducing our CO2 emissions that the ex-vice president, like most ecologists, proposes: replacing our light bulbs by low-consumption models, checking our tyre pressure, recycling waste, rejecting excessive packaging, turning down thermostats, planting a tree, turning off electrical devices (DVD readers, stereos, computers). All this for that! The enormity of the diagnosis, the absurd inadequacy of the remedies." Bruckner delves into other contradictions. With regard to extinctions, it is easy to name dozens: giant anteaters, Irish elk, mastadons, mammoths, moas, passenger pigeons, ivory billed woodpeckers and dodos come off the top of one's head. The trouble is, those are ancient news. What has gone extinct in the last few decades? The Costa Rican golden toad, last seen in 1989, which had a habitat of 14 square miles of rain forest. There is not much to back up the claim of "one extinction per hour." With regard to the tremendous value of biodiversity, advocates struggle to identify new medicines that have emerged from the somewhere in the wild kingdom, but they are generally at a loss to name any, much less any that came from threatened species. Philosophers starting with Rousseau have advocated returning to a state of nature. What is that? Native Americans and other aboriginals made major changes to the ecology of their habitats long before civilization. They killed off most of the above-named extinct species and introduced useful species where they could use them. Bruckner has a long paragraph on the ecologically impeccable Kayapo Indians of Brazil. I lived for a while with them in the . Between a population that is burgeoning in the absence of war and disease, and the introduction of shotguns, they are running short of game food in the form of tapirs and peccaries. That is the question that Bruckner raises over and over. Can the Kayapo be denied hunting on their own land? Must India and China remain forever backward in order not to overload the planet with CO2? Isn't it presumptuous of prosperous western do-gooders to (1) presume they have the answers and (2) force them on the rest of humanity? Doomsayers have been consistently disappointed over the course of history. In my lifetime they included the Nuclear Winter that never happened; Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" pesticide catastrophe. In hindsight the catastrophe appears to be more malaria deaths for want of DDT. Global cooling in the 1970s was a bust, as was Paul Ehrlich's Population Bomb and Amory Lovins' exhaustion of natural resources, Hubbert's Peak (running out of oil). As of this writing, 2017, global warming seems to have been at a standstill for two decades, forcing its advocates to do unnatural and unsavory things to their data to attempt to goose it up. In the final analysis, it is a question as much for philosophers as scientists. Not, what is going wrong, but why do we want so fervently to believe that something is going wrong.

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The planet is sick. Human beings are guilty of damaging it. We have to pay. Today, that is the orthodoxy throughout the Western world. Distrust of progress and science, calls for individual and collective self-sacrifice to lquo;save the planetrsquo; and cultivation of fear: behind the carbon commissars, a dangerous and counterproductive ecological catastrophism is gaining ground. Modern societyrsquo;s susceptibility to this kind of thinking derives from what Bruckner calls lquo;the seductive attraction of disaster,rdquo; as exemplified by the popular appeal of disaster movies. But ecological catastrophism is harmful in that it draws attention away from other, more solvable problems and injustices in the world in order to focus on something that is portrayed as an Apocalypse. Rather than preaching catastrophe and pessimism, we need to develop a democratic and generous ecology that addresses specific problems in a practical way.

"As stylistically gratifying as he is intellectually lucid, Bruckner presents a clear alternative to the accepted thought on one of this era's hottest topics." Publishers Weekly "A sizzling new polemic against apocalyptic environmentalism." San Francisco Chronicle "The best tonic for stale science communications Irsquo;ve read in a while." Cool Green Science "Pascal Bruckner is a brilliant writer ndash; astute, learned, broad-ranging, mordant, sometimes mischievous, and sometimes prophetic. He is one of the handful of writers around the world who define the intellectual history of our time." Paul Berman, author of *The Flight of the Intellectuals* "With his usual verve and eloquence, in *The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse* Pascal Bruckner offers a bracing and provocative critique of an ever-more-pervasive and fanatical Green politics and ideology. For Bruckner, the ecological catastrophism the latter promotes constitutes less a salutary call to action than a return to the politics of guilt encouraged by exhausted ideologies, religions, and religious institutions, the Catholic Church in particular. This book will please some and consternate others, but its intelligence and originality make it an important book for our times." Richard Golsan, Texas AM University nbsp; "For anyone who has had enough of being harangued for single-handedly destroying the planet for future generations, Pascal Brucknersrsquo;s new book will come as a welcome breath of fresh and unpolluted air." Normandie nbsp;