

"Industrialism – Our Commitment to Impermanence" makes the case for the complete and permanent collapse of human industrialism by the year 2050.

Industrialism - Our Commitment to Impermanence

By Christopher O. Clugston

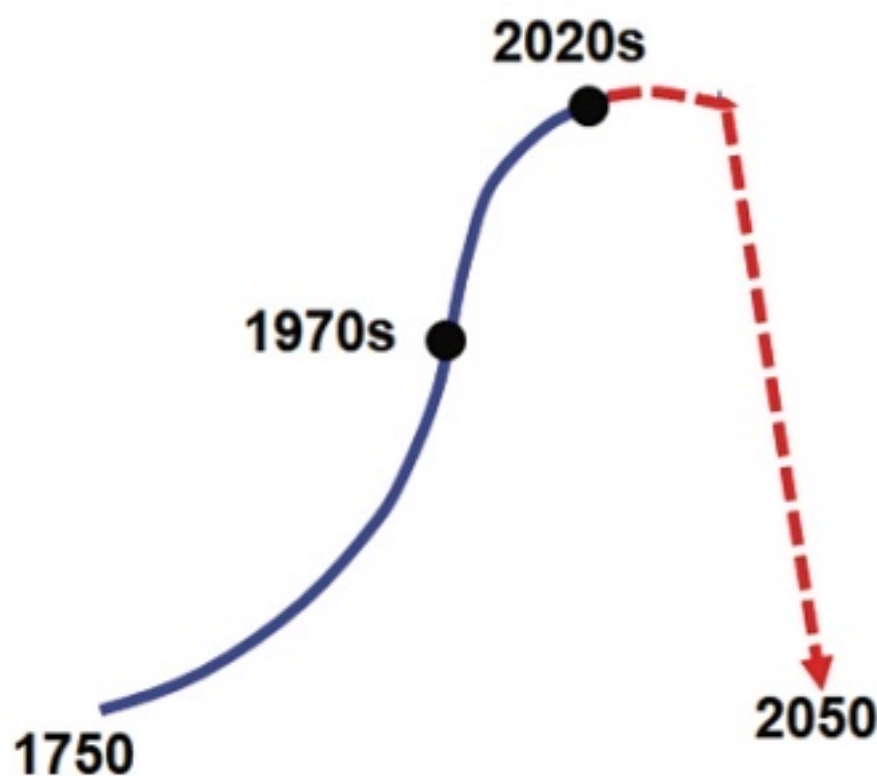
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Industrialism

Our Commitment to Impermanence



The case for the imminent collapse of human industrialism

Christopher O. Clugston

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Our Commitment to Impermanence

Author's Note: The following section provides an overview of my case for the complete and permanent collapse of human industrialism by the year 2050. The remainder of the book provides supporting details and evidence.

The point of this talk is simply that reliance on non-renewable natural resources (NNRs), which enabled us to do more things than we did before we began that reliance, has made us vulnerable. *Such reliance is a commitment to impermanence.*¹ (Catton)

For approximately three million years, our hunter-gatherer ancestors subsisted on renewable natural resources (RNRs) – water, soil, and naturally-occurring plants and animals; their hunter-gatherer way of life was sustainable.

During the next 12 thousand years, our agrarian ancestors added human-modified renewable Earth resources (ERs) – domesticated and cultivated plants and animals – to the mix; their agrarian way of life was “quasi-sustainable”.

During the past 250 years, our industrial existence has been enabled by our ever-increasing utilization of finite and non-replenishing nonrenewable natural resources (NNRs) – fossil fuels, metals, and nonmetallic minerals. Our industrialized way of life is terminally unsustainable – it is inevitably and irreversibly self-eradicating.

A Question of Perspective

We must now see that people are indeed different from other creatures, but not *all together* different. Our cultural type of inheritance is tremendously significant; it evolves in response to differently operating selection pressures than those that change genotypic distributions. It was, however, a gross exaggeration to suppose that culture exempted us from the principles of ecology.² (Catton)

To properly understand human industrialism and its evolution, human existence must be viewed from the Nature-centered ecological perspective, rather than from the human-centered anthropocentric perspective.

The Anthropocentric Perspective

Almost without exception, people who are alive today view reality from the anthropocentric perspective, which perceives and interprets human existence in terms of human cultural circumstances – i.e., prevailing political, economic, and societal conditions.

Viewed from the anthropocentric perspective, our industrial existence occurs within the context of our cultural environment:

- **Human ingenuity** – human resourcefulness, technological innovations, efficiency improvements, and productivity enhancements – enables...
- **Human prosperity** – human economic output and material living standards – which governs...
- **Human cultural** – political, economic, and societal – **circumstances**.

Figure P-1: Humanity’s Operating Environment (Anthropocentric Perspective)



Accordingly, our previously inconceivable industrial prosperity and cultural circumstances are products of our unparalleled ingenuity. So long as we continue to apply human ingenuity toward improving human prosperity, industrialism will flourish.

The critical limitation associated with the anthropocentric perspective is its failure to consider the fundamental role played by our natural environment in enabling and governing human existence.

The Ecological Perspective

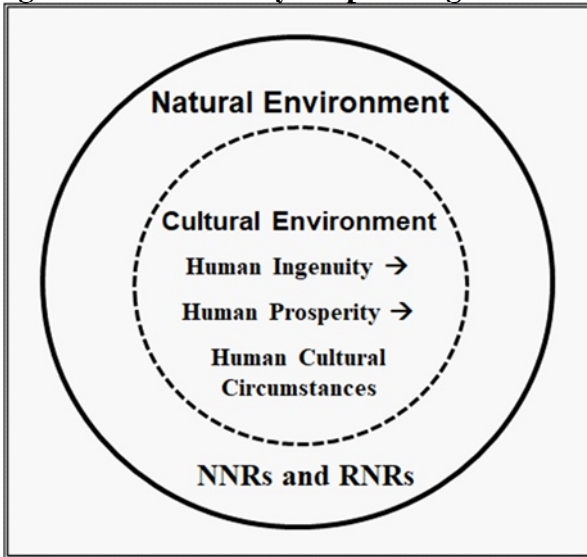
Viewed from the ecological perspective, humankind numbers among the billions of biotic (living) and abiotic (nonliving) entities that interact and evolve through various biological, geological, chemical, and physical processes and phenomena, and that, in combination, comprise and govern existence on Earth.

From the ecological perspective, industrial human existence occurs within the context of our natural environment – the broader ecological context within which our cultural environment exists.

Accordingly, the primary enablers of our industrialized way of life – and of all life on Earth – are Earth resources:

- **Renewable Natural Resources (RNRs)** – water, soil, and naturally-occurring biota (plant and animal life), and
- **Nonrenewable Natural Resources (NNRs)** – fossil fuels, metals, and nonmetallic minerals.

Figure P-2: Humanity’s Operating Environment (Ecological Perspective)

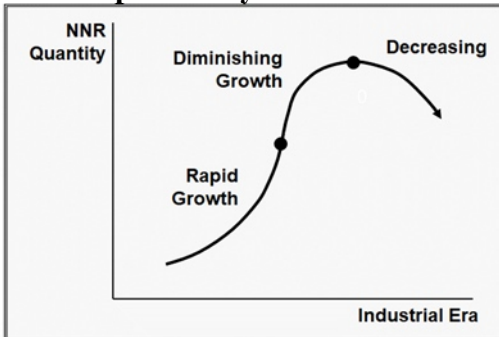


From the ecological perspective, our previously inconceivable industrial prosperity and cultural circumstances are enabled by our persistent and increasing depletion of Earth’s finite and non-replenishing NNR reserves. All infrastructure, machines, products, energy, and services that define and perpetuate our industrial existence are NNR-based or NNR-derived.

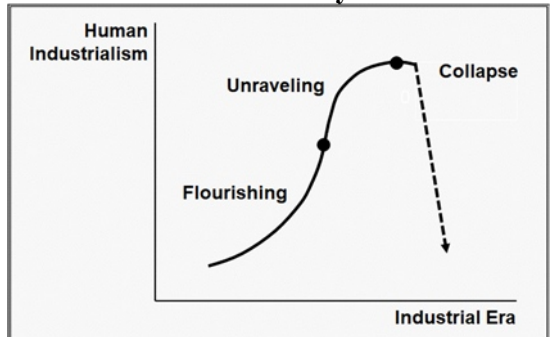
And because the NNR depletion function follows a single-pulse – one-up and one-down – cycle, our NNR-enabled industrial era will follow a single-pulse cycle as well.

Figure P-3: Industrial Era Cyclicity

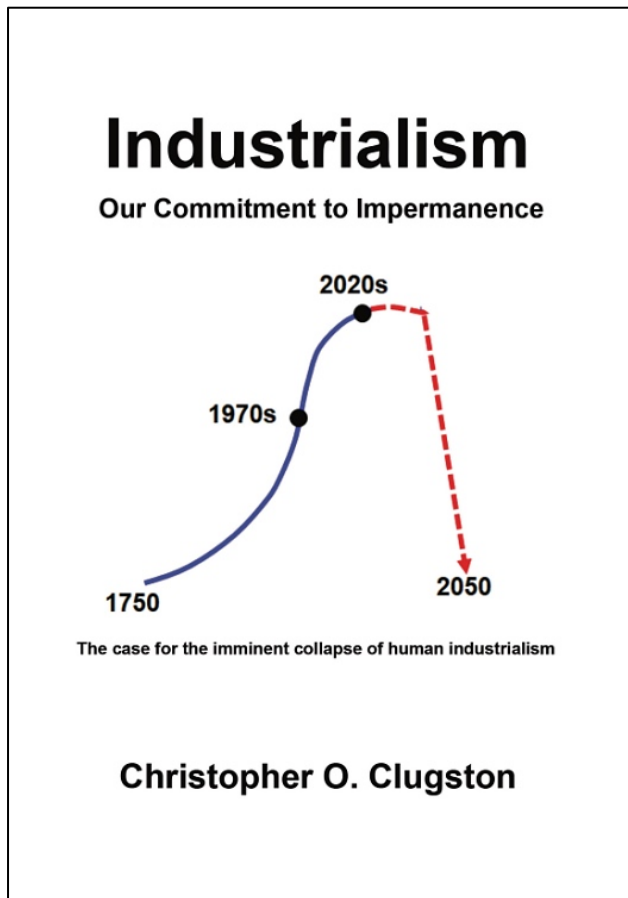
NNR Depletion Cycle



Human Industrialism Cycle



Industrialism, therefore, is a self-terminating human subsistence strategy in which finite and non-replenishing fossil fuels, metals, and nonmetallic minerals are converted into the infrastructure, machines, products, energy, and services that afford humanity’s extraordinary – but temporary – industrialized way of life.



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