

The 2010s: Stuck in the Past

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On this last day of the 2010s here is a recap with a single theme: we are fighting the battles of the past instead of inventing the future. We are doing that at a time when humanity is facing an extinction level threat in the climate crisis that also represents our single biggest opportunity for transformation.

The ongoing debate about capitalism versus socialism is fundamentally caught up in the industrial age. It assumes that ownership and control of physical capital are paramount at a time when our attention is the real scarcity.

The application of antitrust to concentrated digital power is like using a hammer to drive a screw. It harkens back to scale economies at a time when network effects are the true source of power.

The push for privacy legislation fails to recognize that advanced technology and privacy are incompatible (e.g., we carry a personal radio beacon at all times). The results, such as GDPR, wind up further ensconcing the power of a few corporations (and of the state).

The resurgence of nationalism comes at a time when all the big problems are global. The climate crisis, corporate taxation and infectious disease do not stop at borders but instead require nations to work together.

The debate about growth and whether productivity has stagnated are stuck on measuring growth by GDP at a time when digital goods are creating massive consumer surplus.

We are even expending energy on fighting over who gets to call themselves a man or a woman at a time when we can edit the genome.

We are effectively fighting over where to sit on the Titanic. These fights are as vicious as they are exactly because we are frustrated that the ship is going down and want to be right about something, anything. Eke out a victory, however small, to feel good, at least for a moment.

Unlike the Titanic, we actually have the ability to save ourselves. But doing so will require embracing a new vision of what can be next for humanity, after we leave the industrial age behind.

Tomorrow I will write about how to engage in the 2020s to help move us towards what I call the Knowledge Age.

(Follow up post: [An Agenda for the 2020s](#))





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