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### May 10, 2020: Panic About the Future

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Title: Panic About the Future

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5/10/2020--Our current mood is captured by Giles Harvey in a book review of *Weather*, by Jenny Offill. Harvey referred to the mood of the novel as "the preemptive nostalgia for the present, the exhausting fear of the world to come." I am amazed at the fear and panic I hear about the virus and the future. America can certainly sustain the current level of virus cases and deaths until immunity and vaccine end the threat. I am told that on average 8000 American die every day. Yesterday a little more than 1400 died from the virus. That is a terrible thing, but why is it something to panic over? And, in Pennsylvania anyway, over 3/4 of the deaths have occurred in nursing homes and other facilities serving the old. I don't mean that these deaths are acceptable because people are old, but that it is obvious how to prevent a lot of the deaths we are seeing. We really have done a terrible job. This panic is strangely maldistributed. People my age should be more worried and as far as I can see are not. People in their 30's and 40's are the ones I see panicking. It may be that I am surrounded by academics. We as a group are not robust and fearless. Plus we have paychecks. For now. We can work remotely. We are callous about the damage that the shutdown is doing to people. It is said that some of this is political. Democrats want to prolong the suffering because that will hurt Trump in November. I'm not so sure. Politics may give people some kind of permission to be oversensitive, but the condition itself seems to be based on something else. A friend of mine who is very religious says that not believing in God is one factor. Serious believers assume that God will not allow utter catastrophe, particularly from a natural event. Theologically, this is preposterous and vicious. It means that God willed these deaths in particular. What did these people do? But as an overall indicator of faith in the future, it explains something. There are different ways to think about "the world to come." The quote above and the traditionally religious.