

Can Long Termism Thinking Save Us?

It is clear for anyone who is willing to look, we are living at one of the most dangerous periods in human history with our species facing clear existential risks. Even more worrying is the fact that it seems as if the risks are accelerating and our capacity to address and manage those risks is falling further and further behind.

However, our view at One World is not one of despair but rather one of hope. We believe the civilizational risks we are facing need to be addressed and can be managed if we can find ways to bring people together from across the globe to learn with and from one another, to recognize the fact that we share a common fate on a lonely planet.

One area of hope is the emerging X-Risk ecosystem that has been growing over the course of the last several years as universities and not-for-profits tackle the civilizational challenges all too many of us want to avoid. One World has begun to catalogue the participants in this growing movement:

<https://oneworlduv.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Annexe-The-X-Risk-Ecosystem-.pdf>

Another source of hope is a new line of thinking called *Long Termism*. The philosopher most clearly associated with Long Termism is Ord's colleague at Oxford, William MacAskill. In this Ted Talk, MacAskill explains that

“For the vast majority of human history pretty much everyone lived on one dollar a day and not much changed. But then something extraordinary happened: the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions”, such that “in terms of power to change the world we live at an unprecedented time in human history. And I believe our ethical understanding hasn't yet caught up with this fact. The Scientific and Industrial Revolutions transformed both our understanding of the world and our ability to alter it. What we need is an ethical revolution so that we can work out how do we use this tremendous bounty of resources to improve the world.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyprXhvGVYk&t=75s>

MacAskill sites his predecessor in moral philosophy at Oxford, Derek Parfit as one of the originators of the idea of *Long Termism* who in the final pages of *On What Matters* (2011) made the following comments:

“We live during the hinge of history. Given the scientific and technological discoveries of the last two centuries, the world has never changed as fast. We shall soon have greater powers to transform, not only our surroundings, but ourselves and our successors. If we act wisely in the next few centuries, humanity will survive its most dangerous and decisive period. Our descendants could, if necessary, go elsewhere, spreading through this galaxy.”

We have posted, an article William MacAskill wrote as a New York Times opinion piece from August 2022 alongside this write-up where he confirms:

“To be alive at such a time is both an exceptional opportunity and a profound responsibility: We can be pivotal in steering the future onto a better trajectory. **There's no better time for a movement to stand up,** not just for our generation or even our children's generation, but for all the generations yet to come.”

Our hope is that One World can help build a movement that answers the call of Long Termism, a movement that helps create pathways that bypass today's existential risks to a future of unprecedented abundance.

Read the Full Article here: <https://oneworlduv.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Long-Termism-Long-Version-.pdf>