## FW

#### The standard is maximizing expected wellbeing.

#### Extinction outweighs and comes first.

Pummer 15 [Theron, Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford. “Moral Agreement on Saving the World” Practical Ethics, University of Oxford. May 18, 2015]

There appears to be lot of disagreement in moral philosophy. Whether these many apparent disagreements are deep and irresolvable, I believe there is at least one thing it is reasonable to agree on right now, whatever general moral view we adopt: that it is very important to reduce the risk that all intelligent beings on this planet are eliminated by an enormous catastrophe, such as a nuclear war. How we might in fact try to reduce such existential risks is discussed elsewhere. My claim here is only that we – whether we’re consequentialists, deontologists, or virtue ethicists – should all agree that we should try to save the world. According to consequentialism, we should maximize the good, where this is taken to be the goodness, from an impartial perspective, of outcomes. Clearly one thing that makes an outcome good is that the people in it are doing well. There is little disagreement here. If the happiness or well-being of possible future people is just as important as that of people who already exist, and if they would have good lives, it is not hard to see how reducing existential risk is easily the most important thing in the whole world. This is for the familiar reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. There are so many possible future people that reducing existential risk is arguably the most important thing in the world, even if the well-being of these possible people were given only 0.001% as much weight as that of existing people. Even on a wholly person-affecting view – according to which there’s nothing (apart from effects on existing people) to be said in favor of creating happy people – the case for reducing existential risk is very strong. As noted in this seminal paper, this case is strengthened by the fact that there’s a good chance that many existing people will, with the aid of life-extension technology, live very long and very high quality lives. You might think what I have just argued applies to consequentialists only. There is a tendency to assume that, if an argument appeals to consequentialist considerations (the goodness of outcomes), it is irrelevant to non-consequentialists. But that is a huge mistake. Non-consequentialism is the view that there’s more that determines rightness than the goodness of consequences or outcomes; it is not the view that the latter don’t matter. Even John Rawls wrote, “All ethical doctrines worth our attention take consequences into account in judging rightness. One which did not would simply be irrational, crazy.” Minimally plausible versions of deontology and virtue ethics must be concerned in part with promoting the good, from an impartial point of view. They’d thus imply very strong reasons to reduce existential risk, at least when this doesn’t significantly involve doing harm to others or damaging one’s character. What’s even more surprising, perhaps, is that even if our own good (or that of those near and dear to us) has much greater weight than goodness from the impartial “point of view of the universe,” indeed even if the latter is entirely morally irrelevant, we may nonetheless have very strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Even egoism, the view that each agent should maximize her own good, might imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. It will depend, among other things, on what one’s own good consists in. If well-being consisted in pleasure only, it is somewhat harder to argue that egoism would imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk – perhaps we could argue that one would maximize her expected hedonic well-being by funding life extension technology or by having herself cryogenically frozen at the time of her bodily death as well as giving money to reduce existential risk (so that there is a world for her to live in!). I am not sure, however, how strong the reasons to do this would be. But views which imply that, if I don’t care about other people, I have no or very little reason to help them are not even minimally plausible views (in addition to hedonistic egoism, I here have in mind views that imply that one has no reason to perform an act unless one actually desires to do that act). To be minimally plausible, egoism will need to be paired with a more sophisticated account of well-being. To see this, it is enough to consider, as Plato did, the possibility of a ring of invisibility – suppose that, while wearing it, Ayn could derive some pleasure by helping the poor, but instead could derive just a bit more by severely harming them. Hedonistic egoism would absurdly imply she should do the latter. To avoid this implication, egoists would need to build something like the meaningfulness of a life into well-being, in some robust way, where this would to a significant extent be a function of other-regarding concerns (see chapter 12 of this classic intro to ethics). But once these elements are included, we can (roughly, as above) argue that this sort of egoism will imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Add to all of this Samuel Scheffler’s recent intriguing arguments (quick podcast version available here) that most of what makes our lives go well would be undermined if there were no future generations of intelligent persons. On his view, my life would contain vastly less well-being if (say) a year after my death the world came to an end. So obviously if Scheffler were right I’d have very strong reason to reduce existential risk. We should also take into account moral uncertainty. What is it reasonable for one to do, when one is uncertain not (only) about the empirical facts, but also about the moral facts? I’ve just argued that there’s agreement among minimally plausible ethical views that we have strong reason to reduce existential risk – not only consequentialists, but also deontologists, virtue ethicists, and sophisticated egoists should agree. But even those (hedonistic egoists) who disagree should have a significant level of confidence that they are mistaken, and that one of the above views is correct. Even if they were 90% sure that their view is the correct one (and 10% sure that one of these other ones is correct), they would have pretty strong reason, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, to reduce existential risk. Perhaps most disturbingly still, even if we are only 1% sure that the well-being of possible future people matters, it is at least arguable that, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, reducing existential risk is the most important thing in the world. Again, this is largely for the reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. (For more on this and other related issues, see this excellent dissertation). Of course, it is uncertain whether these untold trillions would, in general, have good lives. It’s possible they’ll be miserable. It is enough for my claim that there is moral agreement in the relevant sense if, at least given certain empirical claims about what future lives would most likely be like, all minimally plausible moral views would converge on the conclusion that we should try to save the world. While there are some non-crazy views that place significantly greater moral weight on avoiding suffering than on promoting happiness, for reasons others have offered (and for independent reasons I won’t get into here unless requested to), they nonetheless seem to be fairly implausible views. And even if things did not go well for our ancestors, I am optimistic that they will overall go fantastically well for our descendants, if we allow them to. I suspect that most of us alive today – at least those of us not suffering from extreme illness or poverty – have lives that are well worth living, and that things will continue to improve. Derek Parfit, whose work has emphasized future generations as well as agreement in ethics, described our situation clearly and accurately: “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 even 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…. Our descendants might, I believe, make the further future very good. But that good future may also depend in part on us. If our selfish recklessness ends human history, we would be acting very wrongly.” (From chapter 36 of On What Matters)

**Only pleasure and pain are intrinsically valuable. All other values can be explained with reference to pleasure; it requires us to treat these as instrumentally valuable.**

**Moen 16** [Ole Martin Moen, Research Fellow in Philosophy at University of Oslo “An Argument for Hedonism” Journal of Value Inquiry (Springer), 50 (2) 2016: 267–281] SJDI

I think several things should be said in response to Moore’s challenge to hedonists. First, I do not think the burden of proof lies on hedonists to explain why the additional values are not intrinsic values. If someone claims that X is intrinsically valuable, this is a substantive, positive claim, and it lies on him or her to explain why we should believe that X is in fact intrinsically valuable. Possibly, this could be done through thought experiments analogous to those employed in the previous section. Second, **there is something peculiar about the list of additional intrinsic values** that counts in hedonism’s favor**: the listed values have a strong tendency to be well explained as things that help promote pleasure and avert pain.** To go through Frankena’s list, life and consciousness are necessary presuppositions for pleasure; activity, health, and strength bring about pleasure; and happiness, beatitude, and contentment are regarded by Frankena himself as “pleasures and satisfactions.” The same is arguably true of beauty, harmony, and “proportion in objects contemplated,” and also of affection, friendship, harmony, and proportion in life, experiences of achievement, adventure and novelty, self-expression, good reputation, honor and esteem. Other things on Frankena’s list, such as understanding, **wisdom, freedom, peace, and security, although they are perhaps not themselves pleasurable, are important means to achieve a happy life, and as such, they are things that hedonists would value highly.** Morally good dispositions and virtues, cooperation, and just distribution of goods and evils, moreover, are things that, on a collective level, contribute a happy society, and thus the traits that would be promoted and cultivated if this were something sought after**.** To a very large extent, the intrinsic values suggested by pluralists tend to be hedonic instrumental values. Indeed, pluralists’ suggested intrinsic values all point toward pleasure, for while the other values are reasonably explainable as a means toward pleasure, pleasure itself is not reasonably explainable as a means toward the other values. Some have noticed this. Moore himself, for example, writes that though his pluralistic theory of intrinsic value is opposed to hedonism, its application would, in practice, look very much like hedonism’s: “Hedonists,” he writes “do, in general, recommend a course of conduct which is very similar to that which I should recommend.”24 Ross writes that “[i]t is quite certain that by promoting virtue and knowledge we shall inevitably produce much more pleasant consciousness. These are, by general agreement, among the surest sources of happiness for their possessors.”25 Roger Crisp observes that “those goods cited by non-hedonists are goods we often, indeed usually, enjoy.”26 What Moore and Ross do not seem to notice is that their observations give rise to two reasons to reject pluralism and endorse hedonism. The first reason is that if **the suggested non-hedonic intrinsic values are potentially explainable by appeal to just pleasure and pain** (which, following my argument in the previous chapter, we should accept as intrinsically valuable and disvaluable), **then—by appeal to Occam’s razor—we have at least a pro tanto reason to resist the introduction of any further intrinsic values and disvalues.** It is ontologically more costly to posit a plurality of intrinsic values and disvalues, so in case all values admit of explanation by reference to a single intrinsic value and a single intrinsic disvalue, we have reason to reject more complicated accounts. The fact that suggested non-hedonic intrinsic values tend to be hedonistic instrumental values does not, however, count in favor of hedonism solely in virtue of being most elegantly explained by hedonism; it also does so in virtue of creating an explanatory challenge for pluralists**.** The challenge can be phrased as the following question: If the non-hedonic values suggested by pluralists are truly intrinsic values in their own right, then why do they tend to point toward pleasure and away from pain?27

#### Governments and policymakers are forced to use our framing – they can only understand averages and aggregates and what’s good for the most people. Bureaucrats aren’t philosophers, they only know a cost benefit analysis.

## DART

#### Counterplan: The appropriation of outer space by private entities except for the development and deployment of the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) is unjust.

#### DART is critical to preventing asteroid collisions – it’s uniquely key and is the preferred solution.

**Roulette 21’** (Joey Roulette, 11/24/21, “NASA Launches New Mission: Crash Into Asteroid, Defend Planet Earth, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/24/science/nasa-dart-mission-asteroid.html>) //MNHS JS

It was 2017, and astronomers projected an asteroid the size of a cruise ship would strike Japan sometime in the next decade. **Scientists and** government **officials** from NASA and other space agencies, **gathered at an annual planetary defense conference** in Tokyo, hastily **devised a plan to knock** the **asteroid off its path** toward Earth. The island’s fate relied on a fleet of robotic spacecraft that would launch in the next few years. In 2020, the world’s space agencies banded together, launching four ships toward the menacing space rock. The ships, known as kinetic impactors, struck their targets head-on. Japan was spared a herculean evacuation effort, its cities and neighborhoods saved from annihilation. None of these events really happened. It was a simulation, the kind of tabletop role-playing exercise that officials conduct on a regular basis. And **deflecting an object from** deep **space on its way to a deadly rendezvous with Earth has become a preferred solution** at these practice drills for protecting the planet. Yet no one knows whether the technique will actually work. Never in human history has our species tried to knock an asteroid away from our world. That is about to change. On Wednesday at 1:21 a.m. Eastern time, NASA launched **the Double Asteroid Redirection Test** mission, or DART, from a U.S. Space Force base in California (it was Tuesday local time). A 1,200-pound, refrigerator-size spacecraft will trek around the sun to slam into a small asteroid named Dimorphos at 15,000 miles per hour next year. If the mission succeeds, it could **demonstrate for the first time humanity’s ability to punch a potentially hazardous asteroid away from Earth.** “We’re doing this work and testing this DART capability before we need it,” Lindley Johnson, NASA’s chief of planetary defense, said. “**We don’t want to be flying an untested capability when we’re trying to save** a population on the **Earth**’s surface.” The $324 million DART mission is unusual for NASA, a civilian agency that focuses mainly on exploration, climate monitoring and hunting for signs of past life in our solar system. While it coordinates with and relies on the U.S. Department of Defense for some activities, NASA has not traditionally been responsible for leading efforts to protect the United States — or Earth, for that matter — from any security threat. That changed in 2005, when Congress assigned the agency **the imperative of protecting the planet from dangerous objects** **that** orbit the sun and **have the bad habit of** occasionally **crossing paths with our world**. That includes tracking tens of thousands of so-called near-Earth asteroids large enough to wreak catastrophic damage. Lawmakers assigned NASA the task of cataloging 90 percent of the total expected amount of these space rocks, but it has missed that goal. “**You’ve got to find them before you can get them**, and you want to find them early,” said Kelly Fast, who manages NASA’s Near-Earth Object Observations Program, the agency’s effort to keep an eye on all nearby asteroids that are bigger than a football stadium. “You want to find these things years or decades in advance.”

#### Private space is key for its development and launch – proven contributions by companies like SpaceX and Redwire.

**Sheetz 21’** (Michael Sheetz, 11/23/21, “SpaceX is launching a NASA spacecraft that will crash into an asteroid”, CNBC, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/23/spacex-launching-nasa-dart-spacecraft-to-crash-into-an-asteroid.html>, Michael Sheetz joined CNBC as a News Associate in June 2017, covering breaking news for CNBC.com. He reports primarily on the space industry and previously covered Markets. His career in business journalism began at CNBC in September 2015 as an intern for the Strategic Content team. Michael landed two further internships with CNBC, with the Assignment Desk in January 2016 and the Mad Money production team in January 2017. He is an alumnus of the 2016 Dow Jones News Fund. In May 2017, Michael graduated as a Founder’s Scholar from The King’s College with a bachelor of the arts in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, double-minoring in Journalism and Theology. He served as Editor-in-Chief of The Empire State Tribune for three semesters.) //MNHS JS

[Elon Musk’s](https://www.cnbc.com/elon-musk/) **SpaceX is set to launch a first-of-its-kind planetary defense mission** for NASA in the early hours of Wednesday morning, sending the spacecraft on its way to intentionally crash into an asteroid. “We’re smashing into an asteroid,” NASA’s Launch Services Program senior launch director Omar Baez said during a press conference. “I can’t believe we’re doing that” Known as the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (or DART) mission, the space agency is trying to learn “how to deflect a threat that would come” toward Earth, NASA associate administrator of the science mission directorate Thomas Zurbuchen said. Rest assured, that rock right now is not a threat,” he said. **SpaceX is launching DART on a Falcon 9 rocke**t from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, with a liftoff window that begins at 1:20 a.m. ET on Wednesday. DART is a 610-kilogram spacecraft that will spend 10 months traveling to a pair of asteroids, which are named Didymos and Dimorphos. Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory in Maryland built DART, while **space company**[**Redwire**](https://www.cnbc.com/quotes/RDW)**contributed the spacecraft’s navigation and solar arrays that will power it**. The goal of the mission is to hit the smaller of the two asteroids, Dimorphos, with the spacecraft at about 15,000 miles per hour and see how the impact changes the asteroid’s trajectory. **The DART mission** is costing NASA about $330 million in total, **with SpaceX having won a** $69 million **contract** in 2019 **for the launch**. Not only is it NASA’s first planetary defense mission, but **DART also represents SpaceX’s first mission launching** a spacecraft **to another planetary body**. “This is just the coolest mission. Thank you all for enabling **SpaceX to be a part of a really important planetary defense mission**,” SpaceX director of civil satellite missions Julianna Scheiman said during a press conference. SpaceX test fired its Falcon 9 rocket last Friday in preparation for the launch.

#### Collision isn’t unlikely – we’ve missed tons of deadly space objects.

**Woodward and McFall-Johnsen 21’** (Aylin Woodward and Morgan McFall-Johnsen, 5/1/21, “In a NASA simulation of an asteroid impact, scientists concluded they couldn’t stop a space rock from decimating Europe”, Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/nasa-simulated-asteroid-couldnt-stop-impact-europe-2021-5>) //MNHS JS

**Most asteroids fly under the radar, and** many are **spotted too late** It's tempting to assume that in the real world, astronomers would spot an asteroid akin to 2021PDC with much more notice than six months. But **the** world's **ability to surveil** near-Earth **objects is** woefully **incomplete.** Any space rock with an orbit that takes it within 125 million miles of the sun is considered an NEO. But Johnson said in July that NASA thinks "we've **only found** about **a third of** the population of **asteroids that are** out there that could represent **an impact hazard** to the Earth.” Of course, humanity hopes to avoid a surprise like the dinosaurs got 65 million years ago, when a 6-mile-wide asteroid crashed into the Earth. But in recent years, **scientists** have **missed plenty of large, dangerous objects that came close. Comet Neowise**, a 3-mile-wide chunk of space ice, [**passed within 64 million miles** of Earth](https://www.businessinsider.com/comet-neowise-surprise-appearance-earth-unprepared-for-asteroids-2020-7) in July. **Nobody knew that** comet **existed until** a NASA space telescope **discovered** it approaching **four months prior**. In 2013, **a meteor** about 65 feet in diameter entered the atmosphere traveling 40,000 mph. It **exploded over** Chelyabinsk, **Russia, without warning**, sending out a shock wave that broke windows and damaged buildings across the region. More than **1,400** people were **injured.** And **in 2019, a** 427-foot-wide "**city-killer" asteroid**[**flew within 45,000 miles of Earth**](https://www.businessinsider.com/asteroid-flies-close-to-earth-surprising-scientists-2019-7). NASA **had** almost **no warning.** That's because **the only way** scientists can track an NEO **is by pointing** **one of** Earth's **limited number of** **powerful telescopes in the right direction at the right time.**

#### Collision means extinction – impact winter, radiation, fires, acid oceans.

**Edwards 22’** (1/30/22, Charlotte Edwards, The Sun, New York Post, “What would happen if an asteroid hit Earth today?”, <https://nypost.com/2022/01/30/what-would-happen-if-an-asteroid-hit-earth-today/>) //MNHS JS

An asteroid isn’t expected to crash into Earth anytime soon but space agencies keep an eye out for them [just in case](https://nypost.com/2022/01/18/how-to-watch-massive-kilometer-wide-asteroid-pass-by-earth-today/). Depending on the size of the space rock, **an asteroid impact could be an extinction level event** and researchers have created simulations to see how bad it could be. What would happen if an asteroid hit Earth? If you’ve seen the Netflix film Don’t Look Up, you may be concerned about potential asteroid impacts. However, not all asteroids would mean the end of humanity. The space rock would have to be [pretty large to kill us all](https://nypost.com/2021/10/25/these-are-the-biggest-asteroids-and-the-threats-they-pose-to-earth/). Scientists think the **asteroid** that **wiped out the dinosaurs** was about 7.5 miles wide. **If** an **asteroid** that size **hit Earth** today, **things would instantly change due to the force** of the impact **and** its **knock on effect on the environment**. Experts think **we’d experience** **fires, shock waves, heat radiation,** a large crater, **acid rain and giant tsunamis** if the asteroid hits water. [Britt Scharringhausen](https://www.beloit.edu/live/profiles/23-britt-scharringhausen), an associate professor of physics and astronomy at Beloit College, told Inverse: “**All of the ash** from the fires and all of the finer-grain debris from the impact **will hang out in the atmosphere for a long time**, and **we get** what’s called **an impact winter**. “It’s going to **block the sunlight**, and all that ash falling into **the ocean acidifies the top layers**. “So **you burn things, kill everything** in the ocean, **and freeze the** **Earth, and it goes through** about **two years of constant winter**.” Scharringhausen doesn’t think that all life on Earth would die after a large asteroid impact. Some small creators survived the asteroid strike that killed the dinosaurs. If humans took the right precautions, it is possible that they could survive too. Scharringhausen explained: “Not everything will die. If we’re thinking about people, the way to survive would be to get underground. “You could maybe ride it out in a bunker if you’ve got the supplies to make it through that period of winter where you **can’t grow any edible food**. “Maybe the **finicky crops** that humans like to grow **won’t come through** it so well, but there’s that seed repository, so if those are well-protected enough, you could get agriculture restarted.”

## Innovation

#### Strong commercial space catalyzes tech innovation – progress at the margins and spinoff tech change global information networks

Joshua Hampson 2017, Security Studies Fellow at the Niskanen Center, 1-25-2017, “The Future of Space Commercialization”, Niskanen Center, https://republicans-science.house.gov/sites/republicans.science.house.gov/files/documents/TheFutureofSpaceCommercializationFinal.pdf

Innovation is generally hard to predict; some new technologies seem to come out of nowhere and others only take off when paired with a new application. It is difficult to predict the future, but it is reasonable to expect that a growing space economy would open opportunities for technological and organizational innovation. In terms of technology, the difficult environment of outer space helps incentivize progress along the margins. Because each object launched into orbit costs a significant amount of money—at the moment between $27,000 and $43,000 per pound, though that will likely drop in the future —each 19 reduction in payload size saves money or means more can be launched. At the same time, the ability to fit more capability into a smaller satellite opens outer space to actors that previously were priced out of the market. This is one of the reasons why small, affordable satellites are increasingly pursued by companies or organizations that cannot afford to launch larger traditional satellites. These small 20 satellites also provide non-traditional launchers, such as engineering students or prototypers, the opportunity to learn about satellite production and test new technologies before working on a full-sized satellite. That expansion of developers, experimenters, and testers cannot but help increase innovation opportunities. Technological developments from outer space have been applied to terrestrial life since the earliest days of space exploration. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) maintains a website that lists technologies that have spun off from such research projects. Lightweight 21 nanotubes, useful in protecting astronauts during space exploration, are now being tested for applications in emergency response gear and electrical insulation. The need for certainty about the resiliency of materials used in space led to the development of an analytics tool useful across a range of industries. Temper foam, the material used in memory-foam pillows, was developed for NASA for seat covers. As more companies pursue their own space goals, more innovations will likely come from the commercial sector. Outer space is not just a catalyst for technological development. Satellite constellations and their unique line-of-sight vantage point can provide new perspectives to old industries. Deploying satellites into low-Earth orbit, as Facebook wants to do, can connect large, previously-unreached swathes of 22 humanity to the Internet. Remote sensing technology could change how whole industries operate, such as crop monitoring, herd management, crisis response, and land evaluation, among others. 23 While satellites cannot provide all essential information for some of these industries, they can fill in some useful gaps and work as part of a wider system of tools. Space infrastructure, in helping to change how people connect and perceive Earth, could help spark innovations on the ground as well. These innovations, changes to global networks, and new opportunities could lead to wider economic growth.

#### Tech innovation solves every existential threat – cumulative extinction events including climate, super viruses, AI, and more. Innovation is critical to keep civilization running.

Dylan **Matthews 18**. Co-founder of Vox, citing Nick Beckstead @ Rutgers University. 10-26-2018. "How to help people millions of years from now." Vox. https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/10/26/18023366/far-future-effective-altruism-existential-risk-doing-good

If you care about improving human lives, you should overwhelmingly care about those quadrillions of lives rather than the comparatively small number of people alive today. The 7.6 billion people now living, after all, amount to less than 0.003 percent of the population that will live in the future. It’s reasonable to suggest that those quadrillions of future people have, accordingly, hundreds of thousands of times more moral weight than those of us living here today do. That’s the basic argument behind Nick Beckstead’s 2013 Rutgers philosophy dissertation, “On the overwhelming importance of shaping the far future.” It’s a glorious mindfuck of a thesis, not least because Beckstead shows very convincingly that this is a conclusion any plausible moral view would reach. It’s not just something that weird utilitarians have to deal with. And Beckstead, to his considerable credit, walks the walk on this. He works at the Open Philanthropy Project on grants relating to the far future and runs a charitable fund for donors who want to prioritize the far future. And arguments from him and others have turned “long-termism” into a very vibrant, important strand of the effective altruism community. But what does prioritizing the far future even mean? The most literal thing it could mean is preventing human extinction, to ensure that the species persists as long as possible. For the long-term-focused effective altruists I know, that typically means identifying concrete threats to humanity’s continued existence — like unfriendly artificial intelligence, or a pandemic, or global warming/out of control geoengineering — and engaging in activities to prevent that specific eventuality. But in a set of slides he made in 2013, Beckstead makes a compelling case that while that’s certainly part of what caring about the far future entails, approaches that address specific threats to humanity (which he calls “targeted” approaches to the far future) have to complement “broad” approaches, where instead of trying to predict what’s going to kill us all, you just generally try to keep civilization running as best it can, so that it is, as a whole, well-equipped to deal with potential extinction events in the future, not just in 2030 or 2040 but in 3500 or 95000 or even 37 million. In other words, caring about the far future doesn’t mean just paying attention to low-probability risks of total annihilation; it also means acting on pressing needs now. For example: We’re going to be better prepared to prevent extinction from AI or a supervirus or global warming if society as a whole makes a lot of scientific progress. And a significant bottleneck there is that the vast majority of humanity doesn’t get high-enough-quality education to engage in scientific research, if they want to, which reduces the odds that we have enough trained scientists to come up with the breakthroughs we need as a civilization to survive and thrive. So maybe one of the best things we can do for the far future is to improve school systems — here and now — to harness the group economist Raj Chetty calls “lost Einsteins” (potential innovators who are thwarted by poverty and inequality in rich countries) and, more importantly, the hundreds of millions of kids in developing countries dealing with even worse education systems than those in depressed communities in the rich world. What if living ethically for the far future means living ethically now? Beckstead mentions some other broad, or very broad, ideas (these are all his descriptions): Help make computers faster so that people everywhere can work more efficiently Change intellectual property law so that technological innovation can happen more quickly Advocate for open borders so that people from poorly governed countries can move to better-governed countries and be more productive Meta-research: improve incentives and norms in academic work to better advance human knowledge Improve education Advocate for political party X to make future people have values more like political party X ”If you look at these areas (economic growth and technological progress, access to information, individual capability, social coordination, motives) a lot of everyday good works contribute,” Beckstead writes. “An implication of this is that a lot of everyday good works are good from a broad perspective, even though hardly anyone thinks explicitly in terms of far future standards.” Look at those examples again: It’s just a list of what normal altruistically motivated people, not effective altruism folks, generally do. Charities in the US love talking about the lost opportunities for innovation that poverty creates. Lots of smart people who want to make a difference become scientists, or try to work as teachers or on improving education policy, and lord knows there are plenty of people who become political party operatives out of a conviction that the moral consequences of the party’s platform are good. All of which is to say: Maybe effective altruists aren’t that special, or at least maybe we don’t have access to that many specific and weird conclusions about how best to help the world. If the far future is what matters, and generally trying to make the world work better is among the best ways to help the far future, then effective altruism just becomes plain ol’ do-goodery.\*