

In defence of techno-utopianism in global risk analysis

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Abstract. We are witnessing the emergence of a strident opposition, in both scholarly and popular discourse, to a loosely defined set of ideas often labelled “techno-utopianism.” While accusations of techno-utopianism are levelled in many fields, including climate change, bioethics, energy policy, preventive healthcare, and space technology, it is the study of global catastrophic and existential risks that has been targeted by critics most frequently and most acerbically. Using several prominent examples as foils, I argue that the critical discourse to date has gained little traction in either the epistemology or the ethics of global risk. Although some of the concerns raised by critics are independently valid and warrant further research and scrutiny, a substantial lack of serious alternatives, together with persistent conceptual confusions and double standards, has hampered the critical approaches advanced thus far. In turn, this reinforces the underlying intellectual health of the field of global catastrophic risk studies in its present, albeit techno-utopian form.

Keywords: existential risk; global policy; techno-utopianism; transhumanism; futures studies

You know – technology wasn’t invented by us humans. Rather the other way around.

Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman*

LASSALLE (to Bakunin): Why don’t you throw the bomb?

BAKUNIN: That will always be unexplained.

Edmund Wilson, *Karl Marx: A Prolet-Play*

1. Setting the scene

A spectre is haunting internet culture – the spectre of techno-utopianism. All the powers both digital and analog have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: the Bluesky leftists and twitch streamers, Democratic Socialists of America and Roman Catholic integralists, Naomi Klein and Patrick Deneen, *The Compact* and *Current Affairs*, groypers and *The Jacobin* readership, *Front Porch Republic* and the *Atlantic* magazine, books like *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* and books like *Hillbilly Elegy*, painting-vandalizing ecological extremists and quasi-intellectual fans of the Muslim Brotherhood, givers of the land acknowledgements and conspiracists trembling in fear of the “Great Replacement”. No matter how bitter their mutual squabbles and conflicts are, all are falling into line to fiercely oppose the alleged sins and threats of The Evil techno-utopianism, while vehemently defending... – what exactly? That “will always be unexplained”, as we shall see below.

In light of all this splendid multicultural unity and blooming bipartisanship, tripartisanship and multipartisanship, it is all the more remarkable how poorly the relevant concepts have been defined and analysed. Instead of careful analysis, one often gets insults and attempts at mind-reading.¹ As it often happens with public controversies, most of the participants do not really know what they talk about and the lack of serious scientific analysis and criticism is clearly discernible. A penumbra of allegedly sinister terms like “transhumanism”, “techno-utopianism”, “posthumanity” or “cyber technocracy” occludes the rational contours and boundaries of the debate, and many actors loudly proclaim what they are against, without at any point clarify what do they stand for, when the issue of desirable future of humanity is concerned.

In recent years, somewhat hysterical pitch directed against evils of “techno-utopianism” has been, as far as still scarce academic studies are concerned, associated with the research in risk analysis, in particular the research concerning so-called existential risks (or X-risks). The 2021 book of Joshua Schuster and Derek Woods, *Calamity theory: Three critiques of existential risk* (Schuster and Woods 2021; henceforth SW21), and the much-discussed paper of Carla Cremer and Luke Kemp (Cremer and Kemp 2024; henceforth CK24) are paradigmatic in this respect and in multiple ways *representative* – no pun intended! – for the entire mini-genre. They will be used as foils in the present discussion in order to highlight not only advantages of the (alleged) techno-utopian approach, but also the problematic, superficial and often logically incoherent arguments of the skeptics and opponents. Other examples of the same tendency, such as writings of Bill McKibben, Adam Becker or Phil “Emile” Torres, will be occasionally invoked and can be found in the bibliography.

Of course, the field of X-risk studies (and global risk studies more generally) is just one of multiple areas in which the battle against the spectre of techno-utopianism is joined as of recently; other such areas are, for example, bio- and medical ethics, in particular the ethics of human enhancement, environmental studies, population ethics, futures studies and forecasting, philosophy of AI, space engineering, astromedicine and other disciplines relevant for human space colonization, as well as many others. Considering what is at stake, however, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the X-risk studies represent the most decisive battlefield at the present moment. It is also a very small field – the fact which critics often wilfully ignore, to which I shall repeatedly return – which makes it much easier to impartially survey. Many of the lessons we shall draw, however, are fully applicable or at least adaptable to other turfs as well.

So, what is techno-utopianism? CK24 define it as a cluster of ideas based on “(1) the belief that a maximally technologically developed future could contain (and is

¹ A characteristic example is McKibben (2019): “One reason that techno-utopians don’t worry about the loss of human meaning is because they’re not particularly attached to humans.” (p. 199) Which is especially galling coming from the author who labels his political opponents as racists and ignorants, while pretending to understand physics and biology better than Stephen Hawking and Freeman Dyson (pp. 279280). In a similar vein, Becker (2025) speaks about techno-utopians as “the leaders of Silicon Valley and their *kept futurists*” (p. 286, emphasis added).

defined in terms of) enormous quantities of utilitarian intrinsic value, particularly due to more fulfilling posthuman modes of living; (2) the failure to fully realise or have capacity to realise this potential value would constitute an existential catastrophe; and, (3) we have an overwhelming moral obligation to ensure that such value is realised by avoiding an existential catastrophe, including through exceptional actions.” (p. 78) This is both very complicated and descriptive definition, rather unwieldy for any practical use; however, since it is important to meet the critics on their own turf, I shall use it with minor simplifications, in further text.

The contents of the rest of this paper are as follows. First, the most substantial charges raised against the techno-utopianism are analysed: Section 2 deals with the suggestion that global risk research is both dominated by techno-utopians and not democratic or inclusive enough; Section 3 considers the implications of adopting the opposing views to techno-utopianism, notably either the “business as usual” or the neoprimitivist/neoLuddite approaches. Then, the two double standards deployed by skeptics are considered in Sections 4 and 5, namely ignoring the victims/violence implied in abandoning industrial economy while allegedly expressing caring and empathy (Section 4), as well as the repeated calls for ethics and values to be separated from the global risk analysis (Section 5). Both of these are massive hypocrisies with potentially disastrous consequences if they were to be adopted by both the risk research community and the wider society. Concluding remarks are given in Section 6.

2. What exactly does it mean to “democratise risk”?

Although there is no universal and formal definition of risk (an important point to which I shall return below) and an influential contemporary risk analyst Sven-Ove Hansson is completely correct that insisting on such a definition is a common fallacy obstructing research (Hansson 2004), it is *informally* defined as a situation or process or activity endangering some value. Standard components of risk are hazard, exposure and vulnerability (e.g., Aven 2015; Greenberg 2017).

Under this definition, “democratising risk” as requested by CK24 among others makes little sense – it is simply a category error for most risks (e.g., “we need to democratise [the risk of] supervolcanic eruptions” or “we need to democratise [the risk of] nuclear winter”), and even where a coherent construal could be given (e.g., in locutions such as “nuclear terrorism is a major risk in this area”), the democratisation would be counterproductive and would lead to worse outcomes. What exactly could “democratising nuclear terrorism” mean? We do *not* want to democratise nuclear terrorism, not really. An appeal to risk components helps little either: while democratising hazard makes no sense, democratising exposure and especially vulnerability could intelligibly be construed only as something *opposite* to what CK24 and most reasonable people would consider a desirable move.

What the authors presumably wished to say is “democratising risk *studies*”, which carries some other problems discussed below, but at least it is semantically sound. Why is “studies” omitted? Presumably because the authors sought “flashy” and pompous title; some additional evidence for this comes from some of the other theatrical or over- dramatic formulations to be found in the paper itself (e.g., “agents of doom”, “sacrificing one billion living, breathing beings”, etc.). There is another interpretation possible though: the authors automatically identify “democratisation” with something morally good and valuable in eyes of the wider audience, without really engaging in philosophical reflection on the subject.² Also, “democratisation of studies” would imply that it is an *organizational* problem critics wish to resolve, something dealing with funding and administering research, and not with *ideas* they actually wish to excise from the research practice.

Presumably, Cremer and Kemp wish to interpret “democratisation” as “increase in representativeness”. Such a reading is supported by their persistent attempts to paint techno-utopianism as offering “a non-representative moral view” (p. 83) or a minority view (p. 85). Superficially, this may make sense: one does prefer, if anyhow possible, to achieve a broad base of support for any project, especially an important, multigenerational one. However, their *assertions* about representativeness or majority views are no evidence and are not supported by evidence, as we shall see.

Put aside for a moment the unfortunate fact that the authors’ grasp of the structure of the X-risk studies as a field is shaky at best.³ CK24 argue that TUA offers “a nonrepresentative moral view,” which logically necessitates the existence of the “representative moral view”. Since there is no such thing in sight – otherwise, most moral philosophers would be out of job (perhaps they should be anyway?) – the argument has no force. It is the same as the famous example of Kurt Goedel about the alleged colour which exists, and yet is incomparable in hue to any other colour in the spectrum (Wang 1987). Such colour is absurd, it doesn’t exist. So, if no representative view is specified, it logically makes no sense to complain that some other view is nonrepresentative.

Perhaps the central criticism of Cremer and Kemp is contained in the following single sentence: “[techno-utopianism] is not representative of what most humans alive now believe.” (CK24, p. 83) Again, this is just a convenient foil for the wider tendency

² Ironically, neither CK24 nor SW21 or other critics of X-risk studies as allegedly undemocratic fail to heed their own standard and mention the diverse perspectives on the desirability of democratisation (e.g., Brennan 2016). I shall return to this point below.

³ An illuminating example is the statement of CK24 that the field is “dominated by analytic moral philosophers.” (p. 111) At the first glance, one could just shrug it off as their subjective vision of the field. In a capital irony, however, the study of Jehn et al. (2025) *on which L. Kemp is listed as an author (!)* gives a quantitative, precise assessment of the contribution of various researchers in the field, including top 10 most prolific authors, out of which just one or two qualify as “analytic moral philosophers”. The rest are engineers, statisticians, risk analysts, ecologists, physicists, etc. – altogether quite *diverse* crew, lo and behold. Even more disturbing than this failure to carefully read their own papers is the tendency in CK24 and other techno-skeptical writings (e.g., Becker 2025) to portray the field as uniform, tightly regimented and authoritarian in following “leaders”, something which is in reality completely groundless.

of techno-skeptical narratives to try to resolve future-related issues by vote counting. Thus Becker (2025) helpfully notices that “most humans don’t want to build a Dyson sphere” (p. 191), while Schuster and Woods go so far to suggest decision-making based on polling even “nonhuman animals” (!) before admitting that it “is not currently feasible, but it should be built into the methodology of existential risk studies” (SW21, p. 15). In what follows, I shall use the statement of Cremer and Kemp as representative – again, no pun intended! – of this kind of thinking.

First, where’s the empirical data? Has Becker actually polled “most humans” about the Dyson Spheres? As we shall see in a moment, people have been polled about, for instance, Darwin’s theory of biological evolution – but how about Dyson Spheres? We are pretty distant in time and physical capacity from the moment in which building a Dyson Sphere will become a practical issue. Thus, Becker’s claim is similar to claiming that “most Neanderthals didn’t want to build a Large Hadron Collider” (or Notre-Dame de Paris, or the Hoover Dam, or the Empire State Building). Likely true, but irrelevant. And similar claims of SW21 and CK24 about the “techno-utopian approach” are also empirically unsupported: nobody has ever polled a statistically significant fraction of global population (or indeed any national population) about the techno-utopianism. Not to mention fulfilling the obligation to *explain* the concepts to those polled. Maybe a majority of citizens educated about the meaning of techno-utopianism would indeed prefer it to the alternative? We simply do not know.⁴

Second, from the context, it seems that the statement is intended as a criticism. Yet, insofar as one treats global catastrophic/existential risk studies as a part of science, the intention has no force. One is perfectly entitled to shrug the statement off. *So what?* The very same applies to countless areas and paradigms of science and applied science. We have known for quite some time that “[t]he theory of evolution is not representative of what most humans alive now believe.”⁵ Also, “the Big Bang cosmology is not representative of what most humans alive now believe.” Or perhaps we should abandon working on string theory, the RNA world hypothesis, high-Tc superconductivity, the $P \neq NP$ problem, properties of the large igneous provinces or spectroscopically analysing atmospheres of extrasolar planets because all these are either directly not representative of what most humans alive now believe, or grounded in assumptions which are not believed by most humans alive. Do most people alive believe that matter is composed of quarks and leptons? Do most people alive believe that the universe originated in the singular state 13.8 billion years ago? Do most people alive believe that our ancestors and ancestors of chimpanzees were one and the same about 6 million years ago in East

⁴ Imagine a thought experiment in which one does take a representative techno-utopian text – say Bostrom’s “Letter from Utopia” which so massively irritates SW21 and other critics (Bostrom 2008) – and poll a significant sample of humans about individual components of its vision for the future. What exactly will be rejected by the majority vote? Longer lifespans? Capacity for more intense feelings and more accurate perception of the world? Capacity to relive the best moments of one’s life? Increased love of life?

⁵ Cf., Miller et al. (2022).

Africa? Do most people alive believe in the tenets of quantum mechanics, not to mention quantum field theory or quantum computing? How about representativeness of the belief in molecular clocks, Riemann hypothesis, the multiverse, the efficient market hypothesis or the Wah Wah Springs supervolcanic eruption?

Although no polls have been conducted on these subjects, neither have they been on techno-utopianism, in spite of the skeptics' repeated assertions. Perhaps the majority of informed citizens would indeed prefer techno-utopianism to some of the alternatives (to be discussed below). Lacking empirical data, we all rely on our subjective impressions and "lived experience": CK24 that most people do not believe in techno-utopianism, me that most people do not believe in our evolutionary descent from the Last Universal Common ancestor. These impressions and experience are in neither case sufficient that we abandon those research subjects/topics, aren't they? Except that CK24 think that they in fact are, so we should abandon or at least modify the techno-utopian approach. Nobody has ever proposed to modify Darwinism *in order to* make it a majority position among global population. (Of course, modifications have been suggested many times, arguably starting with Darwin himself, but not for vote-counting reasons.) There is obviously some further disconnect between the empirical claim about beliefs of billions and the normative or even ethical claim which is pushed by the skeptics about existential risk studies.

Suppose both Cremer & Kemp and I are correct in assessing the empirical claim. Most people do not believe in tenets of TUA, nor do they believe in Darwinian evolution of all living things from LUCA to this day. What would this mean for (1) scientific practice in the affected fields, and (2) wider societal and cultural attitudes?

As far as (1) is concerned, the answer is clearly: nothing or very little. Research in life sciences proceeds just the same as it has unfolded essentially since 1859, based on the Darwinian theory, *entirely irrespectively* of how (un)popular Darwinism ever was. As the great biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky famously stated, "nothing in biology makes sense except in light of evolution" – and nowhere did he say anything about whether billions of living people accept evolutionary explanations or not.⁶ There is absolutely no reason while research in global risks should be any different in this respect.

The question (2) is trickier, however, and it is here that bits of serious history and philosophy of science are required. Consider the usual reaction of educated people, especially those in the academia, to hearing that most people do not believe in the evolutionary descent from LUCA to cabbage, sharks, German shepherds and university administrators. This experiment is much easier to conduct – and indeed I have informally conducted it with a dozen colleagues and coworkers. In almost all cases, the reaction amounts to: most people are scientifically uneducated. If they were better educated, they would have realized that there is no viable alternative to the Darwinian

⁶ The qualification "very little" is due to the reasonable suspicion that *some* funding decisions in life sciences are perhaps made under the influence of widespread rejection of Darwinism (in the more religiously fundamentalist US states or in most Islamic countries, for example).

“descent with modification” to explain the biosphere around us. If the school curricula were better in exposing pupils to the evolutionary theory, much larger fraction of the global population would have had better-grounded beliefs. If they were only to read Darwin or Fisher or Dawkins or E. O. Wilson more, they would have realized their mistake and corrected their belief systems. As counterfactuals go, these sound quite plausible.

So, why is the reaction of skeptics like Cremer & Kemp so markedly different in the case of global risk studies (or futures studies in general)? Why, upon elucidating the empirical claim, don’t they say, well, we need to educate people more. If they were better educated, they would have realized that there is no viable alternative to realizing human creative potential and ensuring human flourishing through transformation of our physical environment through technology. If they were only to read more Bostrom or Drexler or Kurzweil or Sandberg, they would have realized their mistakes and corrected their beliefs in agreement with the techno-utopian approach.

Obviously, there is not a trace of such an attitude in SW21, CK24 or indeed in any critic of techno-utopianism. Instead, they stop right there: most people do not accept technoutopianism, *ergo it must be an invalid approach* and we should substitute it with something else, implicitly more representative. (Neglect for the moment that there is a significant overlap here, since most of those rejecting Darwinism are *also* rejecting techno-utopianism.) Such a reaction is eminently not encountered even in explicitly antiDarwinian literature, for instance the one on Intelligent Design. The distinguished IDers, such as Michael Behe or William Dembski have *not* appealed to vote-counting in their anti-evolutionary tracts (e.g., Behe 1996; Dembski 1998).

This difference in reaction tells us some about the skeptics’ *attitude* toward science and public outreach. Notice also that CK24 do not cite any empirical research or even an informal poll or a theoretical construct to support their conclusion of nonrepresentativeness. This is significant: they are apt to criticize reliance of Toby Ord or Anders Sandberg on polling experts while not providing *even that low threshold of evidence*. Is there an expert poll suggesting that people – after they get objectively informed about techno-utopianism – reject this approach? If so, skeptics never provide evidence.

Does it tell us something important or even interesting about those fields of study? It seems not. If it tells us anything at all, it is more about the state of education, media and the public outreach of science today. In no scientific endeavour are outcomes made by voting. CK24 seem to be under the impression that the numerical majority who rejects techno-utopianism should vote to shut down the inconvenient parts of X-risk studies. Not only is this unlikely to happen (happily enough), but if that were to happen it would represent the end of science of global risk, just as majority voting to shut down the teaching and research on Darwinian evolution would represent the end of all life sciences. This is not how decisions are made in science and in fact such a concept of “democratizing” by counting the majority vote is squarely incompatible with science as such; its only counterparts could be found in totalitarian regimes and practices such as Lysenkoism in the former Soviet Union and other communist countries. It

was only *there* that important decisions on funding science were made on the basis of vote-counting, although only a few people in the Politbureau and the leadership of the All-Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences were allowed to vote.

Unfortunately, this weird interpretation of democratizing is exactly what the skeptics have in mind. Because, in almost the same breath CK24 charge the allegedly “undemocratic” risk researchers with elitism: “Landemore defines the term ‘elite’ as a group of people that would not likely be selected at random from its wider population and that is granted decision-making powers. Under this definition, the field of existential risk is decidedly elitist at present.” (CK24, p. 85)

The definition makes little sense without further specifications (e.g., what does “selected at random” exactly mean here?), but seems especially inappropriate for judging various fields of science. Which other field of study is *not* elitist in this sense? Is prebiotic chemistry elitist in this sense? If it is, and all other fields are, how are X-risk studies selected for particular opprobrium? The “wider population” is poorly defined as well: what exactly is the wider population for X-risk scholars? All risk analysts? All philosophers? All scholars of the futures studies? All people interested in rational exploration of the future? All humans, rational or not? From which set do we need to imagine “drawing at random”?

Even if the question whether all science is elitist is put aside, the charge that one very small scientific field like X-risk studies is elitist (hence presumably undemocratic) hinges on the misplaced application of the vote counting plus important, although completely commonsensical, mathematical statements known as the Kolmogorov axioms of probability. In particular, the third axiom, usually called the *countable additivity* (or *sigmaadditivity*) is the necessary step in concluding that if one belongs to the minority subset, one will “not likely be selected at random”. The rationale is the same as in the highschool level math problems going like “if there are 10 red and 2 blue balls in an urn, how likely is one to draw a blue ball at random?” On the other hand, while the reasoning is formally correct, there is something deeply demeaning in treating researchers in a scientific field as balls in an urn, is there not?

Finally, we have the insinuation that the X-risk researchers are granted the famed “decision-making powers”. Where and by who? The present author has been doing research in the area for about 20 years, not only without ever been granted “decisionmaking powers”, but even without knowingly meeting a fellow scholar with such powers.

That *some* scholars of global catastrophic risk/X-risk are on occasion granted some powers may be true – after all, the current Assistant Minister and former Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister of Australia has written a fine popular book on global catastrophic risks (Leigh 2024) – but one should not derive any general conclusions from such isolated incidents. To conclude from such stuff that there is a correlation between working on global risks and having “decision-making powers” is similar to concluding that there is a correlation between astronomy and police, since the famous Danish astronomer Ole Rømer was appointed Chief of the Copenhagen Police and

even more famous French astronomer and polymath Pierre-Simon Laplace was briefly the Minister of Police under Napoleon. It is even more ridiculous to ascribe “decision-making powers” to X-risks scholars who are *referenced* (together with dozens if not hundreds of *other* sources, many with entirely different or opposite views) in a UN report or in a speech by the UK Prime Minister, as Cremer and Kemp do (p. 85). To argue that “being referenced” by an important person or a document is the same as “having decision-making powers” is a malicious nonsense. The hypothesis that there is a causal connection between doing research in the global risk area and being empowered in some way simply requires evidence going way beyond an anecdotal example or two given by the skeptics. This is especially jarring if one builds a whole argumentative construction on this flimsy premise and begin ascribing some particular social or political “privilege” to global risk researchers, as is the case with both SW21 and CK24, and a number of their fellow skeptics.

3. The crux of the problem: deadly alternatives

Suppose for a moment that the criticisms of SW21 and CK24 are indeed cogent and serious. What alternative to techno-utopianism do they propose – or even just have in mind? As we know since Duhem and Quine (or at least since the emergence of postpositivist epistemology), it makes little sense to evaluate a hypothesis in isolation.⁷ On the contrary, we should understand contextual dependency, the danger of misinterpreting significance, the “web of beliefs” and other wider framings, etc. in order to reach the best explanatory outcomes.

Unfortunately, the critics seem to be blinded by their hostility to techno-utopianism that they fail to elaborate or even just outline plausible alternatives. The best they can do is give a laconic statement like the following: “For others who value virtue, freedom, or equality, it is unclear why a long-term future without industrialisation is abhorrent: it all depends on one’s notion of potential.” (CK24, p. 88) Although it is very difficult to criticize such a laconic vision, let me offer some arguments as to why this attitude is misleading and ultimately deeply dangerous.

First of all, it does not *all* depend on the notion of potential – and it is in particular jarring to see this double standard creeping into the discussion. *Some* of it may indeed depend on the notion of potential, but to argue that all of it is subjective in this manner is completely divorced from reality.

A clear reality of the pre-industrial societies was that they all were, ahem, abhorrent. Violence of all kinds, including human sacrifice, ritualistic rape and cannibalism abound. Recent archeological evidence clearly points that out (e.g., Daniele et al. 2023; Schulting et al. 2025), as does the classical cultural anthropology (e.g., Chagnon 1968). The idea that among hunter-gatherers and other primitive societies one will find “virtue, freedom, or equality” is a Rousseauesque ideological dogma unconnected to anything

⁷ E.g., Popper (1957, [1963] 2002); Sober (2002) and references therein.

in reality. “We find that honey-collecting group composition and economic returns are related to differential productivity in the predicted directions ... When physical capital investments such as boats or dams are involved in the acquisition of resources, there is likely to be greater scope for larger groups, greater heterogeneity in group membership and complex divisions of proceeds (e.g. explicit property rights and entitlements).” (Hooper et al. 2015, pp. 9–10) In other words, modern empirical research finds that huntergatherers possess corporate hierarchies of competence – in contrast to all the 18th century malevolent musings in cozy armchairs of Geneva or Paris (Nisbet 1943). The mythical egalitarianism – together with “peacefulness” – of hunter-gatherer societies is just that, pure myth, fostered by selection effects and biases when predominantly small/non-complex groups and situations have been considered in isolation.

Personally, I consider a long-term future with preindustrial 50–70% infant mortality rate and life expectation at birth of about 30 years abhorrent and opposed to all which is good and worthy *irrespective* of any extraneous philosophical notions like the one of human potential, but CK24 don’t seem bothered too much. It is hard to believe that any non-industrial world would be immune to horrible pandemics like the Plague of Justinian or the Black Death or the Spanish flu – or indeed capable of providing adequate health care whatsoever. Of course, one may take an extremist view (like Rev. Thomas Malthus actually did) that child mortality and pandemics are not only perfectly natural, but in fact morally good, since they prevent overpopulation and hunger. If that was the message here, it should have been made more explicit.

Further, the neoprimitivist alternative (“long-term future without industrialization”) requires magical thinking. It is not enough to state that pre-industrial society is more virtuous, free, etc. than the current thing – if one wishes to genuinely offer an alternative, one must be ready to explain how to reach that state *from the current state*. It is not enough to wave a magic wand and get to the “long-term future without industrialization” in a blink of an eye from the actual state; such process is likely to involve death – mostly violent – of billions of real human beings. Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber, was perhaps the only critic of modernity who frankly acknowledged that we cannot go back to a neoprimitivist paradise without a large fraction of the existing people dying, mostly very unpleasant deaths. Like all violent revolutionaries, Kaczynski held that the price was worth paying for The Cause. People who charge Bostrom with allegedly morally problematic ideas about surveillance should not be so quick to endorse (or cynically “just ask questions” or push under the proverbial rug) such genocidal ideas. I shall return to this all-important point in the next section.

Of course, an even bigger problem – on the level of logic, if not ethics – is that “a longterm future without industrialisation” is an oxymoron. There is no long-term future without capacity to ensure survival against a host of conventionally dubbed natural risks. This has been proved by literally millions of examples of extinct species in the (nowadays dramatically improved) fossil record: there is a finite stratigraphic range of each and any animal species which has ever existed. By definition, all species predating the emergence of humans went extinct due to natural causes, be they gradual

or catastrophic.⁸ Since Darwin, we know that humans are an animal species originating through evolutionary mechanisms identical to all other animals. The conclusion is obvious, and yet it somehow escapes the critics (CK24, p. 109):

Ord confidently asserts that ceasing any further technological development would “ensure our destruction at the hands of natural risks”, but we have seen no convincing analysis that shows we could not safeguard our survival with current technologies and re-directed resources. Indeed, it is unclear why we cannot develop technology to address threats from asteroids and supervolcanoes without indulging in the entire range of dangerous inventions.

No convincing analysis? The most convincing analysis has been in existence since 1859 – and it’s called *The Origin of Species*. That it has been so little taken to heart proves Daniel Dennett correct that consequences of “Darwin’s dangerous idea” have not been entirely taken to heart to this day (Dennett 1995). Recall the Red Queen Hypothesis proposed by Leigh Van Valen in 1973 within strictly (neo)Darwinian framework: a species must constantly adapt, evolve, and proliferate in order to survive the threat of extinction from both biotic and abiotic sources (Van Valen 1973). You must always run, just to keep in the same place, as the Red Queen told Alice! What more “convincing analysis” do they want?

Without industrial civilization – remember, that was CK24’s desirable alternative to techno-utopianism on p. 88, mere 21 pages earlier – humans have the same chances to resist mass extinction as did the end-Cretaceous dinosaurs or ammonites. Now, they go some steps further (and implicitly admit that the Rousseauesque neoprimitivism is a bad joke) and talk about “safeguard[ing] our survival *with current technologies* and redirected resources” (emphasis added) or even “develop[ing] technologies to address threats from asteroids and supervolcanoes.”

This strategic retreat is remarkable, because wise people have noticed long ago that most technologies are inherently of dual use. For instance, Carl Sagan warned us that the same procedure used to deflect asteroids from us, could be used to deflect asteroids toward us (Sagan and Ostro 1994). The same is likely to be valid for *any* preventative technology. It was exactly *protection* from novel viruses which was used as the justification for criminally negligent gain-of-function research undertaken in Wuhan with the blessings of the likes of Peter Daszak and Anthony Fauci, and against the better wisdom of President Barack Obama (who in October 2014 prohibited federal funding for GoF adventurism⁹). Whether it directly led to millions of deaths and trillions of dollars in material damage remains yet to be seen. Ord was writing before Covid-19 – and yet all that subsequently transpired just confirmed how correct he was.

⁸ Of course, we cannot ever *prove* that some species in, say, the Devonian did not go extinct as a consequence of hunting by time travellers from our future, but it is exactly the *critics* of the X-risk studies like SW21 who forcefully argue that very improbable hypotheses should be ignored.

⁹ <https://californiahealthline.org/morning-breakout/obama-administration-freezes-gainoffunction-> last accessed June 10, 2026. See also Lipsitch and Inglesby (2014).

In any case, the infrastructure to build and maintain all that asteroid defense and other systems is *incompatible* with agricultural or primitivist utopia rooted for by the Anthropocene antihumanist (cf. Kirsch 2023) crowd of people like Paul Kingsnorth, Patricia MacCormack, Andreas Malm, Extinction Rebellion, French “collapsologists” and the rest of the merry crew.

One thing should be made clear: “current technologies” are not (yet) capable of deflecting asteroids, not to mention protect from supervolcanism, which is a much harder task (Denkenberger and Blair 2018) and unlikely to be realized this century, not to mention protection against cosmic explosions (Ćirković and Vukotić 2016). And to achieve such capacity we need not only industrialisation, but *a very powerful industrialisation*, including massive space, undersea and underground infrastructure, and AI-based predictive models and oversight. Of course, a kind of rhetorical cop-out here would be to equivocate on “long-term”, since there is no sharp and consensual definition of what constitutes long-term. If a natural catastrophe leading to human extinction like a Galactic γ -ray burst or a close magnetar explosion were to strike in a million years, most people would reasonably consider it a long-term issue. Yet, a solid argument could be made that, since it would cut human species lifetime at the level *below* the average/median lifetime for mammal species in the fossil record, such a catastrophe would be very much premature and not, in fact, allowing for truly long-term prospects of ours to play out.

On the other hand, perhaps CK24 have adopted the standards of typical university administrators who consider long-term to be equivalent to “beyond the present employment contract.” In that case, yes, one can imagine human survival without industrialization for 3 to 5 years on the average.

A part of the problem here lies intrinsically in typical positivist obsession with definitions and formalizations. “[W]e need to define what our potential is before we can identify threats to it. How else would we know which risks to address?” (CK24, p. 88) This sentiment reflects a rather hazy understanding of how real science is done and how it progresses over time. Imagine for a moment biology were to be done like that. “We need to define that life is before we can study living beings. How else would we know which systems to study?” Luckily enough, literally nobody in life sciences thinks in this manner. There are *more than a hundred* proposed definitions of life so far – and *none* is entirely satisfactory (Cleland 2019). In fact, in this age of revolutionary advances of life sciences, this definitional project has become something of an embarrassment and an *obstacle* to progress (e.g., Hengeveld 2011; Szostak 2012).

Instead, the real process in biology looks something like “There is a broad intersubjective consensus that cephalopods are living beings; so let us investigate their properties!” This is fully analogous to the process in X-risk studies: “There is a broad intersubjective consensus that supervolcanic eruptions or bioterrorism are existential risks; so let us investigate their properties!” The analogy holds for marginal cases where there is no broad consensus either: not all biologists agree that viruses or prions are alive, just as not all X-risk analysts agree that unaligned AI is an existential risk. In

either case, however, the majority of researchers think it is worthwhile to try to study those topics by methods of the discipline in question in hope of obtaining better insight into the boundary regions.

The same approach is valid in everything else, outside science. Do we need to define numbers before utilizing them to pay for groceries? Obviously not, because the definition of a number is an excessively difficult technical issue in the axiomatic set theory and *metamathematics*. Do we need to define friendship each time before hanging out with friends? Obviously not. In all these – and myriad other – cases, we rely on our intuitive understanding of the Popperian “problem situation” and not on exact definitions. Why should the case be different for such a complex and involved concept as “human potential”?

Critics confuse this reasonable view with subjectivity: “A risk perception that depends so strongly on speculation and yet-to-be-verified assumptions will inevitably (to varying degrees) be an expression of researchers’ personal preferences, biases, and imagination.” (CK24, p. 96) The answer offered by history of science is simple: *so what?* One of the most prominent living historians of science, Helge Kragh, emphasizes how, using the example of physical cosmology, subjective philosophical and religious ideas, as well as unbridled speculation, played important role in the early history of the field, subsequently disappearing when the field matures (e.g., Kragh 1996, 2011). It is naïve to think that the problem-situation was different in, for instance, chemistry in the time of Lavoisier, or in astronomy in the time of Hipparchus or Apollonius or Omar Khajjam or Copernicus, or in quantum physics in the time of Bohr-Einstein debates, etc. It is the consensus of serious historians of science (Brush, Kragh, Holton, etc.) that physics, notably theoretical physics, was so successful in the course of the 20th century exactly because it *encouraged speculation*, including such “outrageous” stuff as postulating new invisible particles (neutrinos), violations of “obvious” mirror symmetries (Yang-Mills gauge theories), totally counterintuitive effects (relativistic time dilation) or wild mathematical speculations requiring literally 50 years and 4,000+ researchers and 10+ billion USD to empirically verify (the Higgs mechanism). So no, the young science of extinction and global catastrophe should *not* minimize or limit or censor subjective and imaginative speculation.

Of course, as the field expands and matures, the role of speculation and subjectivity decreases, but X-risk studies are still very far from that stage. Ironically, if the critics were to have their way, that stage may never be reached.

4. Double standards, part 1: ignoring the victims

In the well-known rhetorical flourish of fear-mongering through large numbers, Cremer and Kemp try to frighten their audience: “It seems, for example, vanishingly unlikely that a diverse group of thinkers or even ordinary citizens would entertain the

idea of sacrificing 1 billion living, breathing beings for an infinitesimal improvement in reaching an intergalactic techno-utopia.” (CK24, p. 111)

There is much to unpack here. First of all, the small word “even” plays an outsized role here. To use “even” in this context implies that the ordinary people – whatever that obnoxious political phrase exactly means – are *less likely* to advocate mass death for our utopian future. And this is, unsurprisingly, a point of full agreement with the transhumanists, who – no surprise – reject murdering millions and potentially billions for achievement of *any* kind of utopia. However, it is amusing that it is exactly the *technoutopia* which is invoked here, and not Marxist utopia (for which about 100 million living, breathing people *were* actually sacrificed, not in a philosophical thought experiment, but in the 20th century) or eco-utopia (for which many lives are currently being sacrificed, especially in the developing world) or Rousseau’s and Kaczynski’s hunter-gatherer utopia. One would expect those historically way more popular – and bloody – utopias to take the lead in queuing for criticism.

Again, cultural and professional and ideological uniformity of X-risk studies presumed by CK24 is a lie, and so their attempt of frightening us into “democratisation” by imagined “sacrificing 1 billion” by X-risk studies “community” fails. As Aristotle first taught us, from a false premise one can derive an arbitrary conclusion. Nobody in the global risk research community has ever really proposed specific problem-situation or mechanism which would require such mass sacrifice; it is admitted by CK24, since in the very next sentence they effectively admit that it is only their particular reading of the techno-utopian approach where such a situation *could possibly* occur.

On the other hand, the bizarre scenario raises more questions than it answers. When “deep adaptation” or “collapsology” proponents advise return to preindustrial “utopia” (e.g., Servigne and Stevens 2020) with local self-sufficiency and no global communication and trade, they fail to mention that such a vision cannot support more than, say, a quarter of a fifth (and that is too optimistic thinking!) of the current planetary population. It is implied that they do *not* contemplate murdering a couple of billions of living, breathing, etc. human beings. Although they *do contemplate exactly that*, without explicating it, of course. And they contemplate billions of deaths not even for a grand human perspective in cosmic future, but for the benefit of polar bears, Amazonian beetles or even mystical “Mother Gaia”.

Funnily enough, standards tend to double quicker than bacteria on agar plates when transhumanists and other visionaries are concerned. The very same sentence above could verbatim be repeated for eco-authoritarians from Naomi Klein to Keir Starmer, and yet its meaning is never quite explicated. So-called “net zero” is – if taken globally – effectively a proposal for quiet murdering of millions, and yet nobody dares even discuss those horrible consequences of it for health and well-being of real, breathing humans. The Unabomber (Kaczynski) was unlucky enough to be called a terrorist, while Andreas Malm is not only richly funded professor at a renowned academic institution and open proponent of (eco)terrorism, but is also approvingly

cited by CK24. Would a “diverse group of thinkers or even ordinary citizens” decide in favour of the “global net zero” policy? Highly doubtful.

Recall that we are discussing the strand of criticism of techno-utopia for which “it is unclear why a long-term future without industrialisation is abhorrent” (CK24, p. 88). But since there will always be some evil people desiring progress, repression and brainwashing will be required. As suggested by several far-seeing SF authors (e.g., Walter Miller and Philip K. Dick), even in a rural utopia it would require either a heavy-hand of church and state or a comprehensive brainwashing mechanism to suppress all the movements and local attempts leading to (re-)industrialization. Even if we were to agree that it would be a morally permissible thing to do, some questions remain: who will be responsible for enforcing the ban on science and progress? (The Holy Neoprimitivist Inquisition? Bureau for Persistent Barbarism? Central Committee of Hunter-Gatherer Defense?) And who will pay the enforcers out of which funds?

In addition, hypothetical future non-industrial societies will of necessity lack many important cultural values of today. While I fully understand that there are people to whom the capacity to enjoy Bolshoi Ballet or paintings of Vermeer and Magritte or designs of Fuller and Hadid and Foster or even sports of Messi and Jokić and Usain Bolt, etc. means absolutely nothing, I fail to see that this kind of barbarism is particularly representative, democratic, etc., not to mention desirable. This point alone would be entirely sufficient to discard the whole narrative of neoprimitivist, hunter-gatherer or rural utopia. While a popular story claiming that Winston Churchill responded to a proposed arts budget cut with: *Then what are we fighting for?*, is apocryphal, the sentiment remains accurate, as Churchill recognized that British culture was a vital aspect of their identity even in midst of the calamity of WW2. Here we have a situation in which some people would prefer destruction of the entire global culture if it means the end of hated industrial capitalism and “technocratic” modernity. For the present author, the bargain is odious and unacceptable. Destruction of humanity’s high culture is essentially tantamount to extinction. Of course, pre-industrial societies of the actual history, such as classical Athens, Mauryan India or medieval Islamic Spain, did produce wonderful cultures – but one could have enjoyed it only locally; only with the advent of industrial Western culture we have obtained the option to enjoy them vicariously, over large distances in both space and time. Only the industrial Western societies have *culturally empowered* its citizens in this respect. The loss of such an empowerment would be an unmitigated existential tragedy in and of itself.

Finally, with the dishonourable exception of the Unabomber – who was *not entirely* self-sufficient in his Montana cabin in spite of all the pretence – very few people have tried and succeeded to return to pre-industrial life in practice. On the other side of the coin, strangely enough, techno-utopian visions of the future are usually very pro-freedom and are entirely consistent with groups of people *voluntarily* choosing to live in neo-primitivist communes or whatever, at the charitable expense (at least partially) of the wider industrial society. Many proponents of space colonization and settlement

cited exactly this possibility of experimenting with social and economic and ecological structures as a powerful motivation for settling space.

5. Double standards, part 2: separating risk analysis from ethics

Perhaps the deepest and the most disturbing double standard in the rich skeptical arsenal is the one directly pertaining to methodology of global risk studies. Skeptics delivered a major request here: “We suggest... the separation of the study of catastrophe and extinction from the ethics of human existence and extinction.” (CK24, p. 77) “First, extinction risks should be analysed separately from extinction ethics and existential ethics. Some research questions will still require combining these inquiries, but the attempt to separate the science of risk from the moral evaluation of risk will benefit each endeavour.” (CK24, p. 113) Schuster and Woods concur in their characteristically wooden style: “The aspiration here is to make an ethics of extinction avoidance rational by grounding it in the relation between probability of a given risk and the idea that doing the right thing means dividing the total amount of total happiness, now and in the future, by the total number of humans.” (SW21, p. 52)

This may sound reasonable at first. If we were discussing risks from a particular new and never before encountered substance (like Čapek’s famous *krakatite*¹⁰) with no history worth mentioning, no deeper understanding of the laws of physics, no social context and no cultural embedding, this would be a perfectly reasonable suggestion. However, it is somewhat rich to read this suggestion coming from the domain of social sciences and humanities – that is, the set of disciplines which in recent decades have *vehemently rejected* viewpoints of moral neutrality and separation of epistemology and ethics. In other words, it is a prime example of rules-for-thee-but-not-for-me searing hypocrisy which needs to be further unpacked and exposed.

In the times of, say, Giambattista Vico or August Comte or Emile Durkheim or even Max Weber, it was not only perfectly acceptable, but also commendable to value viewpoint neutrality and moral neutrality with respect to social phenomena. It was probably under the influence of historiography and the Enlightenment ideas that history should be told *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (“as it really happened”) in Ranke’s immortal words. A corollary of such an attitude is that the science of X can and should be separated from the moral evaluation of X, as CK24 recommend for X = “global risk”.

Since the advent of Hegelian and Marxian “dialectic of history”, however, this entirely reasonable position has been under relentless attack by the historicist ideologies claiming a particularly elevated political and moral perspective. It is not enough to describe and analyse things such as they actually are, it is crucial to state how should

¹⁰ Čapek [1922] (2025).

they serve Our Agenda, be it the progress of the *Weltgeist* or the proletarian revolution. Especially since the 1990s, the Enlightenment perspective has been attacked and mostly overturned by postmodernist and assorted other crazies of the poststructuralist, postcolonialist and “critical theory” bent. Nowadays, both Amateur Joe and his tenured colleagues at the departments of literary theory, Foucaultian bullshit and fat studies argue that by ignoring the political nature of daily life, “neutral” individuals—and by extension, social scientists—passively approve of, or even enable, the existing power structures and injustices and “systemic systems”. This is seen very clearly on the example of climate change, where even quite a radical climate activist praises, for instance, the Stern Report for “its acknowledgement that ethical judgements *always* underpin economic analysis.” (Hamilton 2010, p. 56; emphasis added) That is, Lord Stern is commended *for doing the exact opposite* from what SW21 and CK24 insist that X-risk researchers do.¹¹

So, to make a long story short, it seems hypocritical and represents an explicit double standard to simultaneously argue that

1. there is a moral case for democracy, diversity and inclusivity in risk research (with the underlying assumption that these are *real* and *objective* moral goods); and
2. that the global catastrophic/existential risk research community must strictly separate descriptive science of risk on one side, from moral and value judgements on the other side.

By adhering to 1., CK24 have already left the domain of viewpoint neutrality and imposed moral judgements on the subject matter and the relevant community (here, the X-risk community); the proposition 1. is certainly not something analytically true like $2 + 2 = 4$ and set in stone for all time. Even if one does think that democratic decision-making in a diverse and inclusive environment is indeed better than the alternatives – as the present author happens to think – this is just a pragmatic inference from contingent facts of history and empirical knowledge. It is not at all unimaginable how less diverse or less diverse situation could, in principle, lead to better outcomes on a particular subject matter.

This is just the beginning of the problem, however. CK24 assume 1. *and* from this specific position they ask the X-risk researchers to *not* follow their lead (point 2.). In other words, they bring a moral judgement and ask those they criticize to refrain from moral judgements in their subsequent work. This is problematic on most usual construals of ethical universality and scope. Of course, they may try to wiggle

¹¹ Add to this the fact that climate change is (especially under Bostrom’s subjectivist definition) an existential risk itself, and the logical principle that what is valid for all elements of a given set is valid for each element individually, and we’ll arrive at the additional level of inconsistency on the part of critics who would prefer that one X-risk is given entirely different *methodological* treatment than the other X-risks.

out by insisting that they are doing a “meta-risk research” and that such an elevated standpoint gives them privileged position in judging what is in service of the “higher good” and what is not. Per analogy with similar criticisms in other areas (antinuclear movements, space scepticism, conservative resistance to stem-cell research, progressive resistance to IQ research), this is exactly what is at least tacitly implied: *we* know best what is good for *you*.

The proper response to this is just to point out that it is still hypocritical to assume that practicing researchers are incapable of assuming the same meta perspective in their daily work. Just as nuclear engineers can be as risk-averse as any hysterical antinuclear activist (and perhaps more, being truly aware of the issues involved), so a practicing X-risk researcher can disentangle her research results from any moral and value judgement at least as well as CK24 aspire – or pretend – to.

However, the very usage of this double standard is telling us something deeper and more disturbing about the state of the discourse. The fact that much of the social sciences and humanities in the West have become so deeply corrupted by the ostensibly “progressive” ideological memes and value judgements often has almost comical effects. Schuster and Woods provide *land acknowledgements* in their book (SW21, pp. 125–6) in which they criticize Bostrom for allegedly having a *narrow* view of what is widely accepted and desirable. They seem completely unaware of the empirical fact that it is an incredibly narrow segment of society which either seeks or values their pious land acknowledgements. As such, they are rather *undemocratic* and *unrepresentative* and (ideologically and philosophically) *non-diverse*.¹² Lacking precise polling data on this issue, it is very hard to judge numbers, but on the basis of anecdotal evidence and “lived experience” – which is, again, often hypocritically denied to one’s opponents, while massively used when it comes to supporters – I would estimate that at least twice as many people informed on the matter would prefer techno-utopianism to the academic postcolonial/thirdworldist ideology of land acknowledgements. Even if reader’s estimate is different on this point, the real question to be asked is: Is it *very* different? Does it approach the ratio of the number of (non-performative) flat-Earthers vs. the number of people accepting Darwinian evolution? Both groups are in the minority, mind you.

The same point undercuts *any* skeptical position. Ostensibly, the point of texts such as SW21 or CK24 is to make global risk studies *better* with help of, among other things, improved methodology. This cannot be achieved within the framework which rejects objective comparative analysis of various methodologies, preferring representativeness and vote-counting. In even simpler terms, one cannot meaningfully require merit in research on global risk (or in any other serious research) while *in the same time* rejecting or undercutting the concept of merit itself and discarding the idea of academic meritocracy as non-representative (cf. Shackel 2005; Pluckrose and Lindsay 2020; Abbot et al. 2023; Rauch 2013, 2021; Lukianoff and Schlott 2023). One cannot even *compare*

¹² Cf., Peters et al. (2020).

different methodologies without instrumental rationality, which is rejected by more extreme critics of techno-utopianism.¹³

6. Conclusions

While critics of techno-utopianism exhibit wide reformist (or revolutionary) ambitions regarding the theory and practice of global risk studies, they offer very little in term of serious alternatives – and it is eminently not due to their being in any way suppressed or cancelled. In light of all said above, Schuster and Woods, Cremer and Kemp, Becker, McKibben and other vocal critics of techno-utopianism come across alike to confused and ineffective radicals lampooned by Edmund Wilson in the epigraph. Their call for “democratizing risk [studies]” is based on multiple double standards, conceptual confusions, as well as ignoring/misunderstanding of the real history and practice of science. Democratizing risk [studies], as they imagine it, cannot lead to improving of our epistemic position vis-à-vis the greatest threats we are facing any more than democratizing of IPCC could have led to improved computer models of climate change. The criticisms all too often insinuate that there is a systemic repression or censorship of different, not-techno-utopian approaches in global risk analysis, while not providing any evidence – since there *is no evidence* for any such objectionable behaviour, because there is no such objectionable behaviour in the first place.

A particular kind of irony consists of offering a non-industrial alternative vision of the future in any publication which warns the readers about neglected *response risks*. A transition to the neoprimitivist society be it rural, pastoral or hunter-gatherer one is indeed *a major risk* in and of itself – and it is especially galling that it is presented as a “safe” *response* to the risks brought about by advanced technology, such as nuclear warfare or unaligned AI. This statement would be true irrespectively of the exact definition of existential or global risk or the overblown notion of “human potential”. Since there is no magical way to transit into the alleged “noble savage” utopia without much death and suffering any more than one can stop a commercial airliner in mid-flight for repairs without death and suffering (cf. Karlsson 2016), its proponents manifest a shocking lack of self-awareness. What they advise or at least condone while

¹³ Amusingly enough, Schuster and Woods hide nothing when they state that “there is in existential risk a tendency to use the word ‘rational’ in the fully positive sense... without the kind of questioning that comes from pragmatism, phenomenology, the Frankfurt School, postcolonialism, feminist theory, or critical race studies.” (SW21, p. 74) Why those and not, for example, “the kind of questioning that comes from antinatalist nihilism, Catholic integralism, neostoicism, technolibertarian theory, Suzuki’s Buddhist romanticism, the Dark Enlightenment, Sunni jihadism, or object-oriented ontology”? Clearly, because their set of doctrines coheres only within strictly ideological and narrow narrative. As usual, those who plead for the alleged virtues of diversity and inclusiveness, seem to have trouble with the actual *lack* of viewpoint diversity and *excluding* inconvenient doctrines, approaches and schools. Ironically, this comes from the same authors who call out “weirder regions of philosophy” (SW21, p. 77) and name Leibniz, C. S. Peirce and D. Lewis among those “weirdos”. *Physician, heal thyself!*

pretending to be bothered by response risks in cases such as geoengineering or AI risks, is in itself a huge response risk.

Even taking into account that the skeptics' call for democratizing risk *studies* is a healthy one to make in general, it is very much an open question whether such a democratisation can, if imposed from above, in practice cause more benefits than harms for a still small and young field such as global risk studies. Our historical experience with research areas which have been "reoriented" by external pressures motivated ethically or methodologically (e.g., stem-cell research or NASA SETI project) is not a happy one. Rhetorical calls out about the alleged "elitism" are just that – a rhetoric finding purchase not for its intrinsic value, but for the populist and authoritarian moment we are, unfortunately, finding ourselves in.

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In defence of techno-utopianism in global risk analysis

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