



Stanford eCorner

Collective Action of Humanity

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Do we have the will and the tools to coordinate the collective action of humanity? Asana Co-Founder Justin Rosenstein offers a vision of humanity as one big project that has the capacity to alter the current trajectory of our existence on Earth.



Transcript

At this point the universe is 14 billion years old, so for the vast majority of that time it was basically just some rocks and some stars hanging out in empty space. And over a very, very recent time slice of that we've had this big change where there is all this complexity that's arisen on planet earth, and within an even smaller time slice of that we have the evolution of consciousness as we know it. And within, you know, 200 years ago we were wiping our asses with bark, like technology - again, putting this in context of 14 billion years, and so now we are at this point where we are on this fascinating cusp, where all of a sudden we are empowered with all this technology in a totally, totally unprecedented way. And strangely it seems that we're on this sort of cusp where there is two paths that both, to me, seem equally likely. You on the one hand have the path of that - we won't go into details, but between global warming and biological warfare, and just like a bunch of different problems of global catastrophic risks, we are at this point where the global warming science is, you know, whether it's 30 years or 300 years, we are on an exponentially increasing trajectory, we are going to consume all the resources and very likely leave the earth in a much less pleasant state than the one we are enjoying today. That's basically just rampant short-sightedness and a rampant inability to come together and solve global problems because everyone is focused on their individual desires. There is an alternative world which is if we are able to solve those problems, if we are able to come together to coordinate our collective action, to see ourselves not as a bunch of individuals vying for what is in our own interest but to instead think about the we as a whole, to identify with humanity's interest as a whole, which I also think will lead to more individual human happiness. If we are able to come together and see us as basically part of one big project, not a series of little teams competing with each other, but a single company working toward a single ends. Instead we could break through, instead of the complexity of earth looking like this exponential trajectory and then kaput it could instead keep going. We could manage to make the world sustainable, to make our consumption sustainable, to find new ways to do things like solve the sort of ridiculous problem we have that we have enough food to feed everyone but it's not evenly distributed, and to allow everyone to have the resources they need to contribute to the world in the way that they should be capable of, and instead to continue on this exponential trajectory in a world of abundance, in a world where we are all exploring our creative possibilities and our creative potential.

So we really are in this place where we can choose either of these worlds, and it really is a question of do we have the will to come together and see ourselves and align our interest together as a single species, and do we have the actual tools and skills and technology in order to be able to effectively coordinate that will even if we all share it.