

Does the future depend on how much we value ourselves?

The existential risks that the human race must manage are apparent from a brief glance of the news headlines. “Save the Earth” the voices cry. “Look at the destruction us humans have caused”. But what exactly is it that needs saving? The Earth or ourselves? Our Earth is billions of years old surviving periods of high temperature insufferable to our bodies followed by periods of devastating cold and, throughout, our planet has remained on its course around our star. What do we mean when we state that the Earth needs saving? Do we consider this rock that we call home to be a living creature? Or have we simply breathed life into by being alive ourselves? Saying we must protect our Earth is saying we must protect our home. We must protect our space of living, not because it is alive but because, we, like other animals on Earth are alive. We breathe life into Earth. When we cry “Save the Earth” we should be shouting “Save Ourselves”. Save life on Earth and save our species among that life. If we consider risk to be a threat to something that human’s value then we must ask ourselves, if climate change is a risk, what is under threat? It could be argued that the Earth is not under threat, it is life on Earth that is. And perhaps the greatest threat from climate change is to lose our own lives, to lose the humans species. So we must ask ourselves, how much do we value the human species? How much do we value ourselves and each other?

The messages of climate change tell us how much of a mess we have, as a species, made. Does this have the opposite effect on us that it was designed to convey? Do we now feel that we don’t deserve the life we lead on Earth as homo-sapiens? Are we important as a species? We are less grand than the red barked trees seeming to reach out and caress the stars of the night sky, we are slower than the predators roaming the Savanna, we are less powerful than the ocean dwellers with brains multiple times the size of our own. Perhaps those who fight strongly to save the Earth strongly value the nature of beauty. The wonder of the great oaks and the dappled sun glittering beneath the forest, the salty freshness of a sea breeze with soft grains of yellow sand under foot.

But do we value the human species as strongly as the natural environment that our Earth's climate brings?

Perhaps those of us who value greatly the human species are blinded by the damage we have caused. Those who see the beauty of human ingenuity are perhaps blinkered to the waste and pollution produced by its side, or sees this as a sign of progress for the human race as opposed to the poison it is, slowly pushing us out of a climate we as a species can survive in. As more and more of us understand the damage we have caused as a sacrifice to growth perhaps we know no longer value our species and see it as detrimental to other life on Earth. Climate change being viewed as an existential risk that we deserve for how we have treated Earth. While others are blind to the risk of climate change as they are fooled by our species' past ingenuity.

Perhaps to universally respond and act to the risk posed by climate change we must understand the greatest risk is to the current life and species on Earth, particularly the human species as human societies have never lived out-with the stable climate of the Holocene. Perhaps we need to understand that it is ourselves along with the other life forms on this planet that breathe life into this home we call Earth, it does not need our saving, we must fight to save ourselves. And if the greatest risk is to ourselves, we must therefore value ourselves and the human species. We need to put forward a universal argument for the survival of the human species. We must decide that we deserve to live despite how we have treated other species on this Earth, despite how we have treated each other. James Lovelock puts forward the idea that the human species may be the only living species in the universe to be able to understand it, to gain information about the universe, our solar system, and the Earth and to tell its story. He suggests that if "information is an innate part of the universe" then we are the "chosen people" the "tool whereby the cosmos would explain itself". We as a life species have breathed life into this home we call Earth and have given it "consciousness". We are the potentially the only species in the entire universe to be able to ask and question what we see and feel around us and even to begin to understand what we see, to begin to understand the language of the cosmos. Does the knowledge we

seek, the art we produce, our ability to understand make us deserving of continued survival?

If we think as a species, a species that needs saving, if we can state that the greatest risk of climate change is to ourselves then we must share our value, our ingenuity, our empathy. We must see each other as part of the same species. Those who value human endeavour must accept the blinkered action we have undertaken and aim to further improve the human species. Those who value the beauty of the Earth must accept our species as part of that canvas and fight to save ourselves. A species with a future that we have not self-sabotaged, a species with an increased empathy for each other and other species and one that values itself and the members within and out with it.