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Meeting assets for Jerry Michalski's Zoom Meeting are ready!

Zoom <no-reply@zoom.us>   Thu, Oct 23, 2025 at 10:03 AM
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Meeting summary

Quick recap

The group explored various perspectives on technological and societal progress, discussing how advancements in computing and renewable energy coexist with perceived stagnation in other areas. They examined historical examples of innovation suppression and debated whether modern progress is genuinely different from historical advancements, considering factors like cultural attitudes, corruption, and the influence of science fiction on future visions. The discussion concluded with an agreement to focus on strategies for rendering crony capitalism obsolete as a means to address systemic issues and power imbalances.

Next steps

- Jerry: Post a link to the Peter Thiel and the Antichrist thread articles in the chat or follow-up materials
- Jerry: Post a link to the 2021 "Our Desirements for a Better Verse" call in the chat
- Jerry: Schedule next week's OGM call topic on "How to render crony capitalism obsolete

Summary

Perceptions of Progress and Innovation

The group discussed the perception of stalling progress in various areas despite technological advancements, particularly in computing and renewable energy. Alex highlighted how large economic interests may suppress transformative innovations that could disrupt existing industries, referencing historical examples like the Great American Streetcar Conspiracy. Gil challenged the notion of halted progress by presenting examples of medical and renewable energy advancements, emphasizing the need to redefine what progress means in different contexts. The discussion aimed to explore the multifaceted nature of progress and the factors influencing its perception and implementation.

Technological Progress: Obstacles and Insights

Jerry and Mike discussed the concept of progress, with Jerry exploring different perspectives on technological and societal advancements, while Mike suggested focusing on barriers to technological development. They agreed to narrow the conversation to examining whether there are more obstacles to technological improvement than in the past, and Mike recommended reading two books: "In Shitification" by Cory Doctorow and "Breakneck" to gain further insights into the topic.

Multidimensional Perspectives on Progress

The group discussed the concept of progress, with Mike expressing concern about the broadness of the topic and Jerry suggesting that progress can be messy and multifaceted. Victoria raised questions about who is imagining future outcomes and noted a trend towards dark, bleak visions. The conversation touched on the idea of a "better verse" and the importance of considering progress for all living beings, not just humans. Pete shared his thoughts on the ebb and flow of human progress over the past millennia, highlighting both advancements and regressions in various areas of society.

Progress and Iteration in Innovation

Scott shared his perspective on progress, drawing from his family's history as bicycle manufacturers in Shelby, Ohio. He noted that many modern innovations, such as the telephone and automobile, emerged between 1876 and 1903, but argued that much of today's progress consists of iterations on existing ideas rather than entirely new concepts. Scott introduced the concept of "satisficing," where people accept adequate solutions rather than striving for ideals, suggesting that this approach might explain why some technologies and systems continue to function despite being flawed.

Reimagining Progress in Society

The group discussed the concept of progress and its relationship to societal institutions, with Doug suggesting that breakdowns and system collapse can lead to new forms of progress. Jerry noted the importance of science fiction in shaping visions of the future, mentioning authors like Ursula Le Guin and the need for more utopian narratives. Mike agreed that the trend in science fiction is shifting towards more positive futures, and David shared links to Tyler Cohen's work on the "science of progress," highlighting the relatively recent development of the concept of human progress.

Revisiting the Nature of Progress

The group discussed the nature of progress and growth, with Alex noting that modern systems have shifted from competitive growth to controlled growth, while Jerry expressed concern about societal regression in areas like human rights and international relations. Gil contributed insights about the subjective nature of progress, contrasting historical European peace with recent conflicts, and discussed the biological reality of growth constraints in living systems. The conversation explored how progress as a concept has evolved, particularly in relation to capitalism and technology, with Gil questioning whether progress is a universal goal or culturally specific.

Defining Progress and Human Diversity

The group discussed the concept of progress and the challenges of defining it, with Scott suggesting that not being naked in a jungle could be a measure of progress. Gil and Mike debated the archaeological evidence of ancient societies, with Mike presenting data on increased violence in disrupted societies and Gil emphasizing the variability of human history. The conversation touched on the arguments of Wengro and Graber about the diversity of human societies throughout history, suggesting that there was no unified "golden age" of peace and harmony.

Cultural Perspectives on Progress

The group discussed perspectives on progress and cultural attitudes towards life and death. Stacey highlighted cultural variations in grief and the concept of life as a series of pages, while Alex explored the tension between perceived lack of progress in the present and historical advancements. Doug suggested that true progress involves an evolutionary maturation towards serving the greater good and aligning with natural laws, noting that such ideas often emerge through influential figures during transformative periods.

Progress, Corruption, and Power Dynamics

The group discussed the nature of progress and corruption, with Victoria emphasizing the need for clear goals in progress and Pete highlighting how different billionaires define progress in contrasting ways. Mike shared concerns about corruption in South Africa and its impact on economic inequality, while Alex expressed shock at hearing mainstream discussion of systemic issues he had long raised. The conversation explored how corruption and scamming are interconnected, with Stacey distinguishing between them based on power dynamics. The group agreed to focus their next discussion on rendering crony capitalism obsolete, rather than defeating it, as a way to address the root causes of corruption and power imbalances.

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