Thoughts on Oughts

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**Inconvenient essays
on environmental ethics**

**edited by
Floris van den Berg & Tomas Rep**

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It's because I work in ethics, and, more specifically, applied ethics, that I think it's important that if you have things to say that you think are right and you think could make the world a better place, it's important that many people read about them.

Peter Singer

Why weren't we taught this before? This course has shown me a whole new way of critical thinking apart from the usual academic way of thinking. I know for sure that I could have followed my whole master's program in a more meaningful way, had I done this course in the first semester of my studies. I am strongly in favor of making this course a mandatory part of any sustainable development program, as it is important that new students learn, from the start, to think critically about the meaning of sustainable development

Student of the course Environmental Ethics
& Sustainable Development

1// **Preface**

Anyone interested in the survival of humankind ought to read this book. We face an unprecedented existential global threat that requires reconsidering our core values. We are in the midst of a global ecological crisis. This book has two main target audiences. In the first place students of the graduate course 'Environmental Ethics & Sustainable Development' at Utrecht University, taught by dr. Floris van den Berg, and more generally, anyone interested in the field of environmental ethics. For students, this book can be a source of understanding regarding the concepts of environmental ethics and how to write an essay for a broad audience. Students of the graduate course have written the majority of the essays of this book. This book serves as a frame of reference and inspiration. For all readers of this book, its aim is to provide an enjoyable read that presents thought-provoking ideas on the fundamental challenges that have to be faced when engaging in the necessary shift towards sustainability.

   The structure of this book is as follows. The introductory chapter takes the reader through Floris' train of thought regarding environmental ethics. Its final station is the theory of universal subjectivism. Then, chapters 3 to 6, consisting of columns and essays by students, present reflections on key topics within environmental ethics. Chapter 3 examines the Earth Charter, a sustainable development vision written in commission of the United Nations. Does it have a sustainable worldview? Is it progressive enough? Or is it maybe *too* ambitious? Chapter 4 discusses the phenomenon of climate change deniers. What do they deny? What reasoning do they use? And why do people listen to them? Chapter 5 explores the central issue of behavioral change. Why is change so hard towards a sustainable lifestyle and economy? Which barriers to

change are there? And how can we stimulate change? Chapter 6 contains essays on a variety of topics related to environmental ethics. These essays explore ethical theories and arguments in greater depth than do the columns.

Chapter 7 is an interview with Floris, in which he answers questions about the relations between moral theories. Floris has a penchant for using innovative ways to present education to his students – as also evidenced by the writing of this book. Chapter 8 contains a discussion of a novel form of education: a *walkshop* in the woods to link knowledge with a sense of care for nature. Students are taught from the beginning of their education that science has to be value-free, that is to say: descriptive rather than normative. Hence, it can be hard to write academic columns and essays, as they are quite different from papers and descriptive assignments. Therefore, we thought it would be useful to offer some guidance on the reflection and writing process, which can be found in chapter 9.

Thoughts on Oughts is not meant as an introduction into political philosophy or ethics. Therefore, a certain level of knowledge is assumed. We could have included such an introduction, but there is a myriad of books that fulfill this need. For instance, we refer to Patrick Curry's (2011) book *Ecological Ethics – an introduction* for an understanding of the concepts and different school in ethics. Furthermore, the concepts, theories and ideas presented in this book are by no means exhaustive or representative of the whole body of thought on environmental ethics. The quote of Peter Singer at the onset of this book should make it obvious that Floris has an agenda, a clear and simple one. With his theory of universal subjectivism, as expounded in his book *Philosophy for a better world*, Floris aims to reach an ethically justified sustainable society. Notwithstanding, universal subjectivism is one of many possible outcomes of ethical thought, and we do not intend

to present it as the *only* way to look at the multi-faceted matters under discussion. Philosophy is, after all, about thinking autonomously and critically.

It is this emphasis on critical and consistent thought that attracted me to Floris' course. I enjoyed the fact that it was at long last important to make real statements, whereas most academic work is more sterile than a dentist's practice. While the course is liberating in that sense, it is also confronting – practicing ethics also made me reflect on my own attitudes and choices. It was quite an experience, and editing this book is the icing on the cake.

I hope you will have as much fun reading and thinking as we had editing this book and with the Environmental Ethics course!

Warm regards,
Tomas Rep

2// **Inconvenient explorations by Floris van den Berg**

Introduction
Tomas Rep

In this chapter, several introductory essays are presented. Together, these essays address crucial blind spots in worldviews. Addressing these blind spots coincides with the explanation of concepts important to environmental ethics. The essays together form a train of thought that starts out with the setting of priorities within philosophy and arrives at universal subjectivism, a moral framework that could be used to tackle the looming environmental catastrophe.

The first text is the parable of the *drill-a-hole cruise*, which, using a set of metaphors, sketches the problematic way in which people are currently dealing with climate change. Then, two essays discuss the role of philosophy in solving these problems. Philosophy is an incredibly versatile field. Indeed, not a single branch of science is without its underlying branch of philosophy. However, philosophy has an inclination for focusing on arcane academic discussion rather than solving practical problems. In his essay *Is there a biggest problem in philosophy?*, Floris argues that there is indeed a problem that should take top priority over all others: the ecological crisis. In the essay thereafter, Floris reviews a book on political philosophy, in which he further reasons that philosophers need to play a more active part in shaping a better world. Here he discusses the blind spot of anthropocentrism, and its companion: speciesism. The prime example of speciesism is the habit of eating meat. In *Ripping apart the omnivore's argument*, Floris discusses the fallacies used to legitimize this behavior. In

the essay *First, do no harm*, two more blind spots related to the current boundaries of our moral circle are explored: current disregard for future generations and nonhuman animals. Floris argues that religion cannot justify ethics. He instead points to secular values, and through the 'no harm principle' arrives at his theory of universal subjectivism. In the subsequent article, he explains this moral theory in more detail. The train of thought that underlies universal subjectivism, and the elaboration of this theory, is treated in full in Floris van den Berg's (2013) book *Philosophy for a better world*, which is a mandatory text for the master's course.

Universal subjectivism is the best outcome of sound ethical reasoning according to Floris van den Berg. However, such outcomes depend on your assumptions and trade-offs between core values. In other words, a reasoning that uses other assumptions and core values might lead to other ethical frameworks. For instance, universal subjectivism takes Peter Singer's pathocentric approach to determining the boundaries of the moral circle. But one could also reason from the idea that all of nature (ecosystems) has intrinsic value and should therefore be included in the moral circle, i.e. scope of moral concern. This perspective is that of ecocentrism. For a more elaborate discussion on ecocentrism, we refer to Curry's (2011) book *Ecological Ethics: an introduction*, which is also a mandatory material for the master's course. To provide the basic understanding that is needed to understand the texts in *Thought on Oughts*, ecocentrism's fundamental tenets will be briefly elucidated.

  Ecocentrism regards all life as valuable because any value humans can derive from either themselves or their sur-roundings, is a product of nature. Therefore, Curry reasons, nature is the ultimate source of value and therefore intrinsically valuable. He defines nature as the whole of interrelated

ecosystems, including the non-living surroundings that host these ecosystems. He thus accords moral status to the atmosphere, rivers, oceans et cetera.

It is sometimes implied that ecocentrism is misanthropic (anti-humanity) and that in order to save nature, we should kill ourselves. Curry dismisses this notion. After all, humanity is part of nature. So to save nature, humanity needs to be saved as well. The relation humans have to nature is that of a 'citizen of nature'. One with special abilities, but nevertheless fundamentally dependent on its surroundings. The holism of ecocentrism is well illustrated by the following statement from Curry (2007, p. 66): "*To begin with, the very word 'environment' is not a good place to start. Its meaning ('that which surrounds') already relegates the natural world to something whose primary if not only point is to support and showcase 'us'; and such an attitude is itself, as I hope to show, part of the problem*". Ecocentrism acknowledges that it is impossible to refrain from using nature for our own ends altogether, but urges that we minimize our impact on ecosystems. Better yet, Curry does not believe that an ecocentric ethic is the *only* good ethic. Rather, he argues that different schools of ethics are to be used in parallel, and should balance out one another.

These principles are summarized in Curry's (2011, p. 92) suggested definition of a 'deep green ethic':

1. *It must be able to recognize the value, and therefore support the ethical defense, of the integrity of species and of ecosystemic places, as well as human and non-human organisms. So it is holistic, although not in the sense of excluding considerations of individual value.*
2. *Within nature-as-value, it must (a) allow for conflicts between the interests of human and non-human nature; (b) allow purely human interests, on occasion, to lose. (It is hardly a level playing field otherwise.)*

Ecocentrism is part of Curry's 'spectrum of green ethics', and on the far (deep) end of it. Light green ethics refers to environmental protection for the purpose of sustaining humanity, i.e. anthropocentric environmentalism. Between light-green and dark green ethics sits a number of different 'shades', for the elaborate discussion of these I refer to Curry (2011), more specifically chapters 6, 7 and 8. Another scholar that has classified attitudes towards nature is Wim Zweers. In his book *Participating with nature: outline for an ecologisation of our worldview* (2000)*,* he formulated six ordinal categories that describe stances ranging from a exploitative despotism to one of living in service of nature.

THE MANDATORY LITERATURE

The master's course taught by Floris has number of mandatory readings. Two of these are works that explore the future of humanity. First, Conway & Oreskes' (2014) *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* has an interesting way of describing the issues surrounding sustainability. It provides a historical analysis of our past and future, written from the distant future. What makes this book so compelling and effective, is that it pays attention to failure of political institutions and how we might react to global warming, as well as the core beliefs that underlie current overconfidence in technological fixes for systemic problems. It provides an enjoyable, albeit cynical, read that with few words gives powerful insights. Second, Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) is a utopian novel that tells the story of the secession of a part of the USA to become a sustainable nation. It paints a vivid picture of alternative values and practices regarding the human–nature relationship, as well as societal structures and cultural beliefs. Novels may appear to be an unsound source of academic thought. One should however realize that without inspiration for what a more ethical life could look like, it is all

too easy to get stranded in overemphasizing the negativity of having to restrict current practices. In other words, rethinking fundamental beliefs requires cold logic and warm imagination alike.

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The parable of the drill-a-hole cruise
Floris van den Berg

Emma and Thomas are enjoying their trip on a luxurious cruise ship. One day they find out that there is a small hole in the floor of the ship and that water is leaking in. With a group of fellow passengers they decide to start a restoration project. There is discussion in the group whether or not the material and color of the fill should match the surrounding material. Thomas and Emma never skip their favorite on-board workshop, the so-called *drill-a-hole* workshop where passengers can drill holes in the ship's bottom floor. The holes accumulate and more and more water is leaking in. There are some concerned passengers who remark that the ship will eventually sink if the drilling does not stop and the holes are not repaired. When Thomas and Emma and their group have repaired one hole, they feel proud of themselves. Aboard ship there is heated discussion if the restoration of a hole should or should not be in the original color. The ship is making water. There is no denying. The popular drilling workshops continue. Some suggest that the participants should use smaller drills and make smaller holes. Others suggest that the workshop should be held less regularly or that there should be fewer participants, or that only people who have not yet drilled a hole should be allowed to drill. Some say that they have paid a considerable sum of money for this cruise so they just want to drill. Some passengers are concerned and don't join the workshop, but they just keep quiet and respect the drillers in their freedom to drill. Some passengers try to model the amount of water, the number of new holes, the rates with which holes are repaired and the speed of the ship and when it is expected to reach the harbor. The modelers tend to be skeptical about their models because there are many unknown factors and it is a complex system. They do however enjoy their evening workshop drill-

a-hole. There are anti-drill campaigns aboard ship. There are leaflets and documentaries like *The water is rising* and *We are sinking*, which draw a lot of attention. One day the drill-a-hole participants find out that some of the drills have been tampered with. This incident infuriates most passengers and there is an investigation to 'find those terrorists'.

The biggest problem in philosophy
Some reflections on setting priorities
Floris van den Berg

Philosophers and others with inquisitive minds have busied their brains for millennia with questions such as: 'Does god exist? What is the meaning of life? Are we free or determined? What is truth? Is there any knowledge that is so certain that no reasonable person could doubt it? What is reality? What is good? What is beautiful? Why exist? What is 'to be'? What is justice? What did Kant mean by the categorical imperative?' Are all these topics equally (un)important or is there a ranking of philosophical problems? If there is such a ranking, is there a need to set priorities? What philosophical problem is most urgent?

The answer: the Biggest Problem is the ecological crisis, i.e. the human-induced ecological degradation of our planet. There is a delicate evolutionary evolved ecological balance, which will collapse when a tipping point is reached. We are on the verge of reaching that tipping point. Human life is sustained by a functioning ecosystem. From our modern perspective, it may be hard to see ourselves as part of nature and to be aware of our total dependence on the so – called ecosystem services, like food, a stable climate, a stable sea level, clean air and fresh water. We tend to take all of these for granted. Unfortunately, it is now certain beyond any reasonable standard of scientific doubt that the global ecosystem is being increasingly degraded by anthropogenic impacts. Human caused climate change is just one aspect of a multifaceted ecological disaster, which includes large scale deforestation, desertification, overfishing, ocean acidification, accumulation of the plastic soup, fresh water shortages, air pollution and large-scale biodiversity loss. If we fail to solve this ecological crisis, either we – or our descendants – will perish. It will be future generations who will

suffer from our ignorance, negligence and shortsightedness. We are shifting the burden of our lifestyles onto future generations.

If philosophy is about reflecting on the fundamental questions of humankind, it is clear we can no longer neglect to rethink our relation to nature. Nature is not limitless; there are ecological planetary boundaries, which, if passed, pose an existential threat to our species and those of many others. Shouldn't philosophers play their part in trying to solve this problem? Some do. But many are concerned with a plethora of other problems. Within the discipline of philosophy, there is the recent branch of applied philosophy and, within that branch, there is environmental philosophy, which addresses aspects of the ecological crisis, such as climate ethics. Unfortunately, only a fraction of philosophers is professionally concerned with the ecological crisis. It seems philosophers are like the general public in neglecting to reflect on setting priorities.

The Biggest Problem is how humanity can survive and overcome the ecological crisis. Humans collectively have an impact on the finite carrying capacity of planet Earth. If that impact is larger than the carrying capacity (overshoot), then there will be an environmental collapse. The impact factor consists of a simple calculation: (1) the number of people multiplied by (2) their average ecological footprint. The ecological footprint is a measure of human demand on the Earth's ecosystems. The human population is growing rapidly, the average ecological footprint is also growing and therefore the impact factor inexorably increases. Despite all the green policies and good intentions of sustainable development, the global ecological crisis is worsening. Population control – stopping the unsustainable growth – and decreasing our (average) individual ecological footprints are therefore a philosophical, moral and political issue of the highest importance.

The job of philosophers is searching for blind spots.

Philosophers are explorers in the realm of ideas. During the last few decades, their explorations have turned up many new ethical blind spots. This has led to emancipation movements on behalf of homosexuals, women, unbelievers, animals, and, to some extent, the environment and future generations. But how do we find such blind spots when we are unable to perceive our own? By searching actively, with the help of guidelines and theoretical insight, we can succeed in finding new blind spots. When such a blind spot has been located, it is important to address the problem. The need for a theory is urgent, but the need for action is even more pressing. Awareness of our dependence on the ecosystems of the planet is one such huge blind spot. Humans are ruining the Earth on an unprecedented scale and the limits of the Earth's capacity will soon be reached.

First things first. The time has come for action. It is time for setting priorities. We have to realize that we are earthlings first and humans second. Solving the ecological crisis while reducing suffering in the world should be the main task of philosophers. It is time to lay aside Heidegger, to name just one, for when we have reached the safe ground of sustainability and the amount of suffering in the world has been minimized. Then there will be time to ponder other philosophical questions. In the meantime, philosophers should assume their fair share in solving the Biggest Problem. Environmental ethics is Prima Philosophia. If we do not solve the Biggest Problem, we commit involuntary collective suicide.

Political philosophy within limits
Floris van den Berg

When Tony Blair was Prime Minister in the UK he wrote a letter to Isaiah Berlin posing some political philosophical questions. This triggered philosopher Adam Swift, professor of Political Theory at the University of Warwick, to write an accessible introduction to core concepts in political philosophy that might be of use not only to students in political science and philosophy, but also to politicians: "*[…] this book tries […] to tell politicians some of the things they would know if they were studying political philosophy today*" (ix), i.e. in the Anglo-Saxon analytical school of philosophy, whose motto is: "'*conceptual analysis' is just the only way to get at what people mean when they say things*" (p. 233). "*This book is for those who want to think for themselves about the moral ideas that structure political argument*" (p. 9). A third updated edition of this work appeared in 2014 in which Swift included discussions on global justice and gender equality. Swift has chosen to use the female gender as the default position: so instead of writing 'he or she', he writes 'she'.

According to Swift: "*Political philosophy asks how the state should act, what moral principles should govern the way it treats its citizens and what kind of social order it should seek to create*" (p. 5). Political philosophy is, according to Swift, "*[…] a very specific subset of moral philosophy*"; "*It's not just about what people ought to do, it's about what people are morally permitted, and sometimes morally required, to make each other do*" (p. 6). Swift's Political Philosophy is a concise and clear introduction to contemporary analytical political philosophy, focusing on the dominant paradigm of liberalism. He focuses on five topics (each representing a chapter in the book): (i) social justice, (ii) liberty, (iii) equality, (iv) community and (v) democracy.

After having discussed different conceptions of social justice,

especially contrasting Rawls' 'justice as fairness' – which defends the welfare state – with libertarianism by Hayek and Nozick – which defends a minimal state –, Swift concludes that perhaps the focus should not be on justice within nations, but rather on global justice: "*Perhaps it's the world as a whole, not any particular society within it, that should really be the subject of distributive justice*" (p. 55).

The chapter on liberty seems particularly interesting because it deals with the limits of (individual) liberty. Individual liberty is the core value of the paradigm of liberalism (including libertarianism). One topic Swift devotes attention to is education. "*Someone who has been taught relevant information, and been taught to process it, to think for herself, to consider consequences, to evaluate different courses of action, is more autonomous, more in charge of her own life, than somebody who has not*" (p. 66). Education, according to Swift, consists of two layers: (i) it increases effective freedom, which means that you have more possibilities to make use of your freedom, and (ii) it increases autonomy: you can decide for yourself what you want to do. If we take these two criteria for (liberal) education seriously, it offers a possibility to evaluate education and schooling systems. Would religious education be justifiable if we account for these two criteria? It seems doubtful. And, if that is the case, then this would have tremendous political and social implications. Swift is not clear about the consequences of what his view on education would entail. While he clearly stands in the social–liberal tradition, it would seem that he is more concerned about analyzing concepts than in trying to solve concrete political philosophical problems: "*What we ought to do about tax rates, welfare, education, abortion, pornography, drugs and everything else depends, in part, on how and what we think about values*" (p. 1). This statement seems to imply some kind of moral relativism. People's values differ in time and place. One role of political philosophy, I would argue, is to help elucidate the core values underlying political

choices and opinions. Another interpretation of Swift's position is that people have different values and that there is no way to morally evaluate different and opposing values. What values are good values and why? This is the fundamental question both of ethics and of political philosophy. Politicians reading this book, however, will not find answers to concrete questions; and it is doubtful whether the tools of conceptual analysis will help them to make an ethically justifiable decision. Although Swift's book has an inclination towards Rawlsian social liberal democracy I doubt if it will be helpful to politicians in trying to find out what is morally best.

Swift's introduction is in the analytical tradition of philosophy – which seems to dominate the contemporary political philosophical discourse. However, political philosophy, even contemporary political philosophy, is wider than the analytical spectrum. I tend to agree with Swift that the analytical school of philosophy is more useful than some alternatives from the continental tradition. Nevertheless, even within the analytical tradition Swift chooses to leave out three important areas in which the most intellectual progress is being made: (i) nonhuman animals, (ii) future generations, and (iii) the environment. Swift ignores animal ethics in relation to political philosophy, in spite of publications like Martha Nussbaum's *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality and Species Membership* (2007) and Alasdair Cochrane's *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory*, which appeared in 2010. Swift's analytical moral paradigm is restricted to anthropocentrism: he deals exclusively with human animals, without even mentioning nonhuman animals. It reminds me of all those (political) philosophers in the past who wrote about the good and just society without mentioning or even endorsing slavery, including Plato and Aristotle. Isn't it one of the fundamental tasks of philosophy to find blind spots, both in our knowledge and in our ethics? Swift also does not pay attention to what we owe to future

generations. Sustainable development is likewise not addressed by Swift. It seems that the major question facing every society today is how to cope with the urgent environmental crisis. The environmental crisis has two political philosophical components: future generations and the environment/nature. While Swift included the concept of global justice in his third edition, he does not address the pressing case of justice concerning the global warming.

The question is: how relevant is Swift's introduction to political philosophy if we account for these omissions? If you were to buy a book introducing the subject of physics, you would consider it strange if the latest major discoveries had been omitted. Why then an introduction to political philosophy without these expansions of the circle of morality (see Peter Singer's *The Expanding Moral Circle*, first published in 1982).

In his conclusion, Swift is explicit about the role of political philosophers (as compared to politicians): "*Being committed to the pursuit of truth, they are happy to change their minds, and to admit to changing their minds, when somebody shows them they are wrong. They don't claim to have all the answers*" (p. 233). I agree that they don't claim to have all the answers, but it seems unfortunate that Swift's book contains few answers to the pressing political problems of our times.

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Ripping apart the omnivore's argument
Floris van den Berg

People often say that humans are omnivores in order to justify eating meat as normal and vegetarianism as abnormal. The 'Omnivore's Argument' is one of the arguments that vegetarians and vegans encounter when meat-eaters try to defend the moral acceptability of their lifestyle choice. When responding to this argument, the position of the vegan is similar to the atheist who time and again is confronted with the same fallacious arguments in support of the existence of god(s). I am aware that it is in vain to attempt a refutation of these arguments, but, as a philosopher, I have devoted my life to rational arguments. Another similarity between atheists and vegans is that the burden of proof is logically on the other side: those who claim that there is a god have to adduce supporting evidence and those who claim it is moral to use nonhuman animals – the meat eaters – have to provide rational arguments in favour of including body parts on their plates. Veganism and atheism are both ethical default positions.

Similarly, not killing other people is also a default position. If you kill your neighbour, you are obliged to produce a very good argument (e.g. 'it was an accident', or 'it was self-defense'). If these arguments are unconvincing, you end up in jail (presupposing a morally just society). But, in the real world, the burden of proof has been shifted, because of two reasons. Firstly, the historical argument: people have always believed in god/eating meat. Secondly, the commonality argument: many people believe in god/many people eat meat. Both arguments are logical fallacies, which becomes clear by providing one counterexample: during most of human history slavery was common and most people did not see it as a moral evil, including Plato and Jesus.

There are four sub-arguments of the Omnivore's Argument:

(1) 'It is natural', (2) 'It is normal', (3) 'The vegan lion', and (4) 'It is healthy'.

Let's start with the first: 'Meat eating is natural.' It is pointed out that humans have evolved into omnivores – this is supported by our canine teeth and the structure of our intestines. But, take a look at a close relative of Homo sapiens, the gorilla. Gorillas have huge canines and prosper on an herbivorous diet. Teeth do not always give an accurate description of food consumption habits. Chimpanzees, other close evolutionary relatives of humans, predominantly eat leaves and fruit, and only occasionally eat meat, if they can lay their hands on it. Homo sapiens is an omnivore; which means we can live and thrive on a wide range of food patterns (except the modern western obesogenic diet). A large part of the human population still does not eat meat, or certainly not daily. There is no biological necessity to eat meat. Meat eating might be natural, but the way modern meat products are processed (i.e. factory farming) is certainly not natural. Another line to defeat the 'it's natural' line of argument is to point out a plethora of things that are very hard to define as natural, but which most meat eaters nevertheless do. Take, for example, brushing one's teeth. That is profoundly unnatural. Most people in the history of humankind, and no animal, brushes its teeth, let alone with a brush and toothpaste. Or, if the meat eater is a biologist who comes up with examples of carnivorous crocodiles that have their teeth cleaned by helpful little birds, medicine. Modern medicine is the result of centuries of non-natural laboratory research and industrial processes – and still, meat eaters don't abstain from modern medicine because they find it unnatural. The same argument applies to such 'unnatural' activities as cutting our hair, using contraceptives and cooking our food (including meat).

'It's normal to eat meat.' Yes, indeed, it is. Most people eat or want to consume animal products. The consumption of

animal products increased immensely within the past few decades, as has the practice of factory farming. However, again the example of slavery shows what humanity considers normal at one stage of societal development can drastically evolve. Normal, or socially accepted, does not automatically connote moral goodness. The task of moral philosophers should be to find moral blind spots in society, and to try to overcome them. Anthropologists, sociologists, historians and archaeologists tell us that warfare is natural for humans. Humans (men, to be precise) always went to war. Killing and raping outsiders is undeniably 'normal' based on historical evidence. But does that make it good? This is an example of David Hume's renowned is/ought distinction: it is not possible to draw a logical conclusion from a state of affairs ('rape exists in all cultures in all times') that this practice is morally good ('rape is good'). Philosophers ponder about what is good and what arguments can support it (e.g. good is that which does not harm others and thereby contributes to the happiness of all concerned).

'If it's wrong to kill animals, should lions and other predators stop eating other animals too?'. It will likely be impossible to convert a lion into a vegan, even in captivity, because the lion is not an omnivore, but rather a carnivore, which limits its dietary range. But what does this have to do with what humans eat? Ethics is limited to humans and other sentient creatures capable of moral deliberation, like intelligent aliens (if they exist). Simply put, moral agents who have the ability to deliberate on their actions have a moral duty to do so. We can choose how we treat animals in farms. What wild animals do or do not do is outside the range of ethics. But most importantly, what others (including lions) do does not affect how you ought to behave. If most people would own slaves, it would still be immoral for each of us to enslave others.

'Humans need to consume meat and other animal products to be healthy.' This argument never gets off the ground

because it is the weakest. According to the American Dietetic Association, carefully planned vegan diets are healthful and nutritionally sufficient for individuals of all ages, including pregnant women, children, adolescents and athletes. There are vegan Olympians (including multiple gold medalist Carl Lewis), bodybuilders and triathletes. However, most significantly, the majority of the world's population lives on either vegetarian or vegan diets. If anything is clear, it is that we do not need to consume animal products in order to maintain our health. So, KO in the first round for the vegans. Time for some more vegetables.

First, do no harm
Expanding our moral circle beyond religion
Floris van den Berg

The world would be a better place without religion. Without religion, people could work for a just society without super-stitious delusions, whether or not these are institutionalized in religious faiths.

Without religion there would have been no attack on 9/11, no acts of terrorism in London or Madrid, no brute assassinations of journalists in Paris, no Boko Haram, no conflict between Israel and Palestine, no sex scandals in the Roman Catholic Church. It's not difficult to make a long list of evils related to religion and its role in supporting ignorance and inequality. Voltaire didn't want to discuss atheism in the presence of his servants, because 'they might lose their religion' and not be obedient anymore. Not all problems vanish with the disappearance of religion. But many do, and that's a good thing. It's like being cured from a disease, which doesn't mean you're healthy or that there's no risk from contracting something else.

It has been said that Western societies are too individualistic, and that religion makes people less egocentric. However, the USA is both egocentric and religious at the same time, so there's no guarantee that religiosity correlates with being non-individualistic. By contrast, more secular countries like Germany and Sweden have healthier social systems with a high level of social welfare and a low prevalence of crime and violence. Contrary to the idea that religion plays a positive role in societal wellbeing, the correlation seems to be the opposite, at least when coupled with social-liberal democracy.

The positive social role of religion is highly overrated, including by those who don't believe themselves. Daniel Dennett calls these people 'believers in belief': they attribute value to religion for the social and psychological role it plays

in society as part of the 'cement' for shared moral values. Such values are essential in any community, even more so today in the face of urgent ethical and environmental problems like the environmental crisis and global inequality, which require a deep transformation of self and society. But it doesn't seem as though religion is a sound way to anchor these transformations. In that case, what could replace it?

From individual liberty – the core value of the enlightenment – it follows that everything is allowed so long as we do no harm to others. So a society in which no harm is done should be the goal. But who are these 'others'? One lesson of modern philosophy, especially that of Peter Singer, is that there are good reasons for expanding our moral circle away from anthropocentrism (concerning only human beings), and towards sentientism – to encompass all beings that are able to experience suffering. From these simple premises it follows that everything is allowed, so long as we do no harm to other sentient beings. This is the yardstick against which we need to evaluate our ethics, politics and behavior. One powerful way of doing this is by focusing on victims, but who are they? By expanding our moral circle from anthropocentrism to sentientism, we find two new categories of victims: non-human animals and future generations, all of whom suffer under our current political and lifestyle choices. So we need a fundamental transformation towards a no-harm lifestyle and no-harm society.

To start from the perspective of a no-harm lifestyle, this necessarily requires adopting a vegan diet, which abstains from using animal products, because sentient beings have been harmed in the process of animal farming. Secondly, a sustainable lifestyle is essential, measured by the concept of the ecological footprint: we should not lead lives that entail the consumption of more than the renewable resources of the planet if everyone is to attain the same standard of living. A

large ecological footprint means that we are harming future generations by stealing their fair share of resources, and reducing the possibilities for them to flourish. If every human being on the planet lived like the average American, 4.4 planet Earths would be required.

But what motivation or ideology could inspire the expansion of our moral circle in this way? Religions do not suffice because their moral circle is anthropocentric and in-group oriented. Religious arguments only appeal to believers of one specific faith, and the truth claims of religion cannot be rationally validated. A better alternative is 'ecohumanism', which combines the scientific worldview needed to cope with the global environmental crisis with the normative ideals of political liberalism, with individual liberty at their core. In place of religion, the philosophy of ecohumanism can inspire people to become vegan, lower their ecological footprint, live in voluntary simplicity, and broaden their tolerance for people who choose lifestyles that differ from their own.

The most fundamental moral experience one can have is the realization of the contingency of one's own existence: you have no right to be whom or what you are – that is down to fate or luck. You can imagine what it would be as any other sentient being – the cow that gives you the milk you're drinking, or the beef on your plate, or the leather of the shoes that you wear. Therefore, the best one can do is to strive not to harm other sentient beings.

But what if somebody doesn't care about the contingency of existence or the harm they inflict on others? Is no transformation possible? This is the biggest obstacle facing non-religious ethics. But set against this question, we should remember that deep-rooted, large-scale societal changes have taken place in history from which we can learn. Two prominent examples are the emancipation of women and the achievement of legal equality for LGBTQ individuals.

Both of these movements have been obstructed by religion. In the Netherlands homosexuality was seen as a psychological disease 60 years ago, but by 2001 the first same-sex marriage had taken place. In a few short decades, attitudes towards LGBTQ rights had been transformed. During the same period, the role of religion in Dutch society has declined drastically. As in these cases, religion – to make a bold statement – has almost always been on the wrong side of moral progress. The same is true today in relation to new emancipation movements like care for non-human animals and for future generations, neither of which are rooted in religion.

Instead they are anchored in a moral baseline that is both stronger and clearer: the no harm principle. What's needed is to enshrine this principle in societies more deeply, and that requires the development of moral awareness and sensitivity for the suffering of others. What we call moral education these days involves desensitization, designed to avoid thinking about the cruelty that lies behind what's on our plates and all the animal products that we use. In order to raise awareness in this way, we need more information about the costs of our current lifestyles, and more role models that can illustrate the alternatives. Examples include the philosopher Peter Singer and the eco-activist Colin Beavan ('No Impact Man'). We can learn from the ideology of 'veganarchism', which strives to end every kind of exploitation. The difference between veganarchism and ecohumanism is that the latter still sees a role for government and for organizations like the European Union and the United Nations.

Ecohumanism strives for a world with less suffering and more happiness. Striving to avoid harm to others, and trying to help them achieve their own fulfillment, provides a powerful source of inspiration and meaning. This is all we need to anchor the fundamental transformation of self and society.

Universal subjectivism
A moral Esperanto
Floris van den Berg

How can people live together peacefully, especially in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society? We should find a minimum level of consensus, which is needed to live peacefully together in an open (world) society and a moral language to communicate with each other. Dutch philosopher Paul Cliteur published his book *Moral Esperanto* (this book is in Dutch and has not yet been translated) in 2007 in which he argues that it is important that people can communicate with each other in a moral and political language which is in principle understandable for everybody; in contrast with religious discourse which only makes sense to believers. Cliteur makes the analogy of Esperanto, the artificial language proposed to be the *lingua franca*, and emphasizes the need for a universal moral language.

A moral Esperanto has minimally two requirements. On the political level, Cliteur argues that the state should be neutral: the state should not in any way support religion. Cliteur pleads for the French model of secularism (*laïcité*), instead of the Dutch model of religious pluralism. Religion should not be privileged. On the moral level, Cliteur argues that morality cannot and should not be grounded in religion. If people have to live together in one country and on one planet, then they have to have consensus about some fundamental issues. They have to speak a moral Esperanto.

I propose to outline such a moral Esperanto, which aspires to be a universal moral theory. I call it: universal subjectivism. Universal subjectivism is, like Esperanto, an artificial moral construction. I do not think that universal subjectivism is a panacea for all moral problems. However, the suffering caused by human beings living together can be lessened. Universal subjectivism can reduce the suffering of humankind and

hopefully all sentient beings. That is the ambition of universal subjectivism. Universal subjectivism is based on combining the political theory of John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* with the applied ethics of Peter Singer, as for example in his book Practical Ethics, whilst taking a secular humanist stance, which has been stated clearly for example by Paul Kurtz in *Forbidden Fruit: The Ethics of Humanism*.

Moral philosophy should search for blind spots in morality. Every society has its own traditions, moral codes and customs. Moral philosophy and ethics should find any blind spots in them and try to find ways to overcome them. Moral philosophy should try to reduce suffering and improve the human condition. It should be a method to make the world a better place. How to do that? Perhaps like this:

A MORAL THOUGHT EXPERIMENT
Imagine you are miraculously lifted up from your existence on planet Earth and you can look at the world from 'the point of view of the universe', the Original Position. From this position you know you will go back to Earth, but you do not know what kind of being, capable of suffering, you will become. You can be 'born' in any possible form of existence. From this position you can create the institutions, laws, rules, and customs of the world in which you know you are going to be 'born'. You are the lawgiver. From here you look at the world through a 'veil of ignorance': you do not know what your position will be in the world. You do not know if you are a woman or a man, you do not know in what shape your body is, you do not know the color of your skin, you do not know your sexual preferences, you do not know where you will be on the planet. You could be in any of these positions.

WORST-OFF POSITIONS
For example, imagine yourself being born into the world

physically handicapped. You find yourself in a world with institutions, which you yourself from 'up there' had invented, but there are no ramps to get into malls, shops, and buildings. For you in a wheelchair this is a serious problem. However, there could be a world in which this problem was solved by the availability of wheelchair ramps. Therefore – hypothetically – you go back up there, change the institutions to include ramps, and go down again. You cannot exclude the possibility of ending up in a wheelchair, because there are people in the world who are physically disabled. Hypothetically it could have been you. What you can do is to try to help society accommodate as best as possible the needs of the physically disabled. In a utopia one could imagine no people being disabled, but that's not how reality is. The second best option – optimizing the conditions and accepting the contingencies of fate – is the most rational thing to do.

This time you find yourself as a woman. More specifically, you find yourself as a woman in a misogynist society, like Saudi Arabia. You would probably want to get out of this position as soon as possible and change the conditions again in order that no society oppresses women.

Imagine yourself being born into a deeply religious family who take religion very seriously and impose their dogmas, traditions, taboos and customs on you, whether you like it or not. According to Islam scholar and critic Ibn Warraq no one could freely and rationally want to be a Muslim, especially when you are a woman. If you – from behind the veil of ignorance – would want to exclude positions in which there is religious indoctrination, then this tells us that there is something deeply wrong with parents and teachers trying to impose a particular religion upon a child. If you think this is over the top, then imagine yourself to be born in a fanatical (fundamental) religious position and imagine you yourself to be someone who happens to hate this religious

environment without escape routes. Or imagine yourself being a homosexual, a woman, an apostate, a libertine, a freethinker *et cetera*, being stuck in a fundamental religious social setting.

You happen to enter the world as a homosexual, but you 'created' a society in which homosexuality is forbidden and socially disapproved of. It is not somebody else, but it is you who happens to be a homosexual. It is about a one in ten chance that you are a homosexual. Society therefore should not discriminate against homosexuals. The denial of one's emotional and sexual flowering as a person does have severe consequences for psychological wellbeing and happiness. For die-hard homophobes this thought experiment would be difficult because they will have to imagine themselves to be a homosexual. One should also include in the thought experiment the option that you yourself happen to be a fervent anti-homosexual for whom it is not seen as a problem that homosexuality is forbidden. However, it is those who discriminate against homosexuals who interfere with the life of homosexuals, not the other way around. The homo-discriminator will probably reply that he is personally deeply offended by the homosexuality of others. In liberal theory that's just how it is: you might be upset, offended and grieved by how others behave, but as long as they do not directly interfere with your behavior, you will have to cope, and be grieved and offended. Just like Muslims will have to cope with cartoons and critique which they find offensive. This is what the Virtual Museum of Offensive Art is about.

You are born and you see the world through the eyes of a cow. This cow is confined to harsh and cruel conditions in factory farming. It might stretch the imagination to think of yourself as a cow, but it makes moral sense, because cows too have an ability to suffer and the ability to suffer is what makes an entity fit for moral concern. I am not sure if I can vividly imagine what it is like to be a cow, but I can imagine the

difference of being a cow in a lush meadow and a cow in a dark confinement. So you probably go back and change the world into a world without factory farming. And I can also try to imagine what it would be to be a dolphin that is entangled in a fishing net and fighting for its life, thereby breaking its nose. If I were a dolphin, I would want to have fishing methods that would leave me, and whales for that matter, alone. And if I were a fish, I'd rather not be eaten at all.[1]

Now take into account future generations: there are more people in the future than there are now. Imagine being born into the future, on a barren planet. The chances of being what you are here and now in this comparably privileged position are tiny.

In the previous example I spoke as if there were a future, but if we do 'business as usual' we will experience the human-made Apocalypse sooner or later. In order to think about what a (just) future society would look like, there has to be a future to humankind on this earth. You can't share a pie when there isn't one. The problem of sustainability and the exponential growth rate of the population of human beings ensure that the we will ruin the planet. So, all moral and political thinking should have as top priority thinking about the future of humanity and the sustainability of the planet. Would you want to live in a world with 6 billion people or would you want to live in a world with 16 billion people or more? In the case of a scenario of 16 billion people, the pressure on the environment will be immense and there is a limit to what the planet can sustain.

Digression: The Titanic. I do think that it is five to twelve and we should do our utmost best to prevent what happened to the people of Easter Island, who ruined their island by chopping down all

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1 Dolphins have to eat fish in order to survive; humans have a choice, humans can also thrive on a plant-based diet.

the trees. Abortion, euthanasia, Intelligent Design, the scientific investigation of religion and other paranormal phenomena are all important, but of secondary importance. Let me compare the situation of humankind at this moment with the people feasting aboard the Titanic before it hit the iceberg. Of course, it was important that nobody stole jewelry or was being killed aboard. But much more important was what happened to the ship as a whole. The difference is that the captain of the Titanic did not see the iceberg, but we do. We see our ship cruising towards the iceberg, but we are more concerned about business as usual on board and continue to live our lives, hoping that someone will change the course so that we will pass the iceberg.

The model of what I call universal subjectivism is a procedure one can perform oneself at any time. To do this rationally one should consider the worst possible positions, the so-called 'worst-off' position. It is irrational to maximize positions, which are good at the expense of those in a worse off position. Taking into account the chances of being in one of these positions, it is not rational to bet on ending up wealthy and therefore maximizing this position. What is rational is to try optimizing the worst-off position, whatever that may be. Ideologically this is what the welfare state is about: the state tries to make life better for those worst-off in society, no matter the reason of their predicament.

The procedure is that one should pick one's 'favorite' worst-off position, go hypothetically behind the veil of ignorance and change the world as one thinks optimizes the conditions for this particular worst-off position. Then, one descends mentally, imagines how it works and adjusts if one thinks it can be better. Universal subjectivism is a dynamic process of mentally jumping into different existential possibilities. Universal subjectivism is a mental moral journey.

SUBJECTIVE, BUT UNIVERSAL

Universal subjectivism is universal because the model can be applied to everybody equally. It is subjective, because it is you and your feelings and emotions who decides – when hypothetically switched to a different existence – what could and should be changed in society and institutions in order to make life more bearable and, hopefully, enjoyable. It is you who has to imagine to be in all these different worst-off positions. The paradox is that although it is a subjective model, the outcome, though not objective, is universal (all rational individuals would want the same in the same worst-off position). It is not relativistic.

There are two ways to use this model. In the first place, individuals can use it for themselves as an ethical tool. When confronted with a moral problem, you mentally change positions with the others concerned and imagine yourself in that position. Can you want yourself in that position?

On the other hand, there is the social and political level. This model can be used to test how just a particular society is, and change it for the better. Universal subjectivism tries to maximize the freedom of the individual, not the group, because it is always imaginable that some people in the group do not want what the group wants. Therefore, the State should guarantee maximum freedom for the individual. However, even maximum freedom has limits. Individual freedom cannot intrude on the freedom of other individuals. Individuals should not limit the freedom of other individuals; only if there are strong reasons to do so, like compulsory education. Paradoxically, education is interchangeable: most adults agree that their parents were right in insisting they go to school.

In order to evaluate and judge a society morally, one should look how it is to be in the worst-off position in that particular society. You can use the following checklist: what would be my social position in that society if I were: a woman, a homosexual,

a different race, mentally or physically handicapped, ill, unemployed, nonbeliever, apostate, transsexual, prostitute, a libertine, democrat, a farm animal, belonging to an ethnic minority, a critic of the government, an inmate, a journalist, or a political activist. The Amnesty International Yearbook can be used as an indicator of the moral condition of a country. Many societies are, what I call, a 'victim society': groups of individuals are systematically placed in a worst-off position. We should try to expand the circle of morality as wide as possible and prevent that there are victims. Universal subjectivism is a tool to help to check if there are victims.

The idea of interchangeability, that is the contingency of any existence, limits the domain of possible options. The axiom on which the theory rests is that you cannot rationally want to be in a worst-off position, or, in other words, you cannot rationally want to be tortured (even for a masochist there are kinds of torture where the 'fun' stops). When there are victims, interchangeability is irrational and self-destructive. Most people are not rational, or at least not all the time. But within the 'moral game' of doing the model of Universal subjectivism, people are assumed to be rational. In order to test a particular position, look for the possibility of interchangeability.

EXPANDING RAWLS' *A THEORY OF JUSTICE*
Universal subjectivism is a hypothetical social contract theory based on Rawls' version of the social contract by making people decide on the social and political parameters of society without them knowing what they will be in that society. In the Original Position people who make the choices look through a veil of ignorance at the society: they do not know what and who they will be in that society. Rawls limits the domain of his theory in two ways: 1. Rawls takes rational, or potential rational persons into account (thus not taking non-human animals into account for example) and 2. Rawls limits

himself to a single nation. However, the broadening of the Rawlsian idea of deliberation in the Original Position from behind a thick veil of ignorance does make expansions possible. Rawls does not seem to use the potential power of his idea because he incorporates a (Kantian) notion of the essence of a human being. When one leaves these notions behind and instead focuses on the ability to suffer, plus universalizability of each sentient being, the theoretical problems disappear, but pragmatic problems appear.

WHY BE MORAL?

But why be moral? Why should anyone bother to do this thought experiment? Well, because hypothetically it could be you in any of those worst-off positions. Many people do not care at all about the moral irrelevance of their fortunate existence and are unwilling to consider giving up any privileges. Not being willing to apply this model, is the end (or at least a severe limitation) of moral discourse. It is a personal choice whether or not you want to be involved in (this) moral discourse. It is a choice anyone can and has to make.

Education, more specifically moral education, is pivotal. It is important to be able to imagine oneself to be in the position of someone else. Films, series, games, theater and literature can be helpful tools for moral education. For example, when you read a novel you see the world through the eyes of some character. You see and experience what the world looks like from the perspective of another human being. If you are able to do this yourself, you are able to play the game and see the world from different perspectives.

Education should be free and open, not closed and unfree. Education should be secular and scientific: would you want yourself to be taught falsehoods (like 'evolution is just a theory') and guilt-ridden by taboos? I do think that the kind of education that people would create for themselves from behind

the veil of ignorance is a kind of liberal democratic, science based, open education. An open and free education ensures that each individual has maximum possibilities to choose how to live for him or herself.

Seeing the world from a different perspective is one thing, the next thing is to have empathy: to feel the emotions. In universal subjectivism you do not have to have sympathy with the fate of somebody else, but only with your own fate, which could be anything. In order to prepare yourself for the worst-off positions you have to have empathy. You have to have sympathy only for yourself.

I conclude that universal subjectivism is a useful tool to overcome moral blind spots. So, imagine what it is like to be in a worst-off position. Doing this means you take the moral weight of contingency seriously.

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3// **On the Earth Charter**

Tomas Rep

The Earth Charter is a document that describes a framework of fundamental values and principles regarding sustainable development. It was commissioned by the United Nations and was completed in the year 2000, upon which it was presented to the world in the Peace Palace in The Hague, The Netherlands. The Earth Charter represents "*an ethical framework for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations. It is a vision of hope and a call to action. The Earth Charter is centrally concerned with the transition to sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development. Ecological integrity is one major theme. However, the Earth Charter recognizes that the goals of ecological protection, the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, respect for human rights, democracy, and peace are interdependent and indivisible. It provides, therefore, a new, inclusive, integrated ethical framework to guide the transition to a sustainable future.*"

The Earth Charter attempts to consolidate elements of human development with sustainability. Since human development, achieved through (technology-based) economic growth, is the direct cause of the global environmental disaster, the Earth Charter forces us to ask some fundamental questions about whose interests are to be included, and how sustainability can be reached.

An important issue is the Earth Charter's scope of moral concern (moral circle). Some of its principles are solely focused on the interest of humans, while other principles allude to the intrinsic value of nature. Are we only concerned with saving

humanity, or should we also sacrifice unsustainable lifestyles to benefit nonhuman animals and nature as a whole?

Since many interests, from current to future and human to nonhuman, are involved, a big question is which values should underlie a sustainability vision and what the balance between these varying and often conflicting interests should be. In a number of columns – for example those of Maxim Wesselink and Tomas Rep – the Earth Charter is criticized for placing anthropocentric principles above ecocentric principles. In other words, internal consistency seems to be lacking. Rep links the Earth Charter's inconsistency and lack of potential for bringing about change to the inclusive nature of its creation. Eva Seignette writes a similar critique. According to her, the Earth Charter's focus on universality makes it lose power.

Another aspect is the democratic legitimacy of the Earth Charter. Arne Wijnia's column stresses that democracy, let alone *global* democracy, is not able to provide the speed necessary to tackle the problems at hand. Contrarily, Carmen van den Berg's column criticizes the undemocratic origins of the Earth Charter, stating that its 'soft law' approach will not make a dent, and only supported (i.e. democratic) 'hard law' is potent enough.

It seems paradoxical that alongside the critique of being not progressive enough, it is also pointed out that the Earth Charter is *too* ambitious. However, the conclusion seems to be that the error is in trying to maintain anthropocentric principles of human (economic) development at the expense of a necessary shift in our collective moral circle (towards sentientism or ecocentrism). Furthermore, there is a tension between focusing on pragmatic incremental steps or forcing a radical shift by sticking to strong principles. One can also ask the question whether sustainability can be reached through technological fixes, even though our technological attempts at the mastery of nature lie at the foundation of the global environmental disaster.

On a different note, Silvana Ilgen's column delves into the origins of collaboration for survival in which even egoism, currently a major obstacle to sustainability, should be able to lead to big sustainability changes.

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The Earth Charter
An inconsistent utopia

Maxim Wesselink

After a decade of worldwide dialogue by a civil society initiative to find common goals and shared values, the Earth Charter was published in the year 2000. The final product is a comprehensive set of fundamental ethical principles allegedly shared by the global community and aimed at building a sustainable global society in the 21st century. Despite being based on good ideals and admirable ambitions, that goal will never become reality. It is exactly its idealism and excessive ambition that make it internally inconsistent and unrealistic.

The Earth Charter's goal to "*bring forth a sustainable global society*" (Earth Charter, 2000, p. 3) is to be achieved through the principles listed in the document. However, this goal conflicts with a number of those principles. Principle II.5 calls for protection and restoration of ecological systems and their diversity, which implies that diversity within the human species should also be protected, for we are part of those ecological systems. Principles III.12.b and III.12.d call to "*affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality*" and "*protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance*" respectively (Earth Charter, 2000, p. 5). Imposing the fundamental ethics of the Earth Charter on cultures or people with belief systems that currently are not in line with the Earth Charter's ethics, would lead to a loss of the diversity advocated in the Earth Charter rather than its protection and conservation.

A second issue is the comprehensiveness of the Earth Charter's principles, which include ecological protection, the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, and respect for human rights, democracy and peace. The document rightfully states that these goals are indivisible, but that does not mean that they can all be achieved without

compromise. Five out of six of the Earth Charter's principles have an anthropocentric ethic while one is ecocentric. Since the "*anthropocentric individual would be less likely to protect the environment if other human-centered values, such as material quality of life, interfered*" (Nordlund and Garvill, 2002) and "*the overwhelmingly dominant ethical consensus is anthropocentric*" (Curry, 2011, p. 125), internal conflict between Earth Charter principles will almost inevitably occur and will mostly marginalize the ecocentric ethic.

Finally, conflict between the Earth Charter and other global ethics is to be expected. Most neoliberal individuals, for example, are unlikely to waive material luxury to adhere to the following statement in the Earth Charter's preamble: "… *when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more*". There is an almost guaranteed conflict with competing global ethics that is unlikely to be overcome by the charter and its supporters.

Although the goals of the Earth Charter are undeniably admirable, full implementation and realization of its goals are a utopia. The goal to create a sustainable global society is internally inconsistent with the principles of protection of natural, cultural and spiritual diversity. Moreover, the comprehensiveness of the charter guarantees internal conflict between anthropocentric and ecocentric interests. Lastly, as a global ethic the Earth Charter competes with other global ethics, some of which are currently dominant. Despite the fact that the ambitious community that wrote it may deserve better, the Earth Charter will never see itself become reality.

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Inclusive and inadequate
On the Earth Charter's lack of potential
Tomas Rep

The ecological crisis is the most pressing contemporary problem facing humanity, given its present and likely future trajectory (Van den Berg, 2012). This problem not only requires concrete mitigation measures, but especially a global and fundamental change in ideology. The world and the problems therein are perceived through the sum of values that constitutes an ideology, and consequently the solutions undertaken also emerge from an ideology. Therefore, there can be no fundamental change in action without a fundamental change in ideology. The Earth Charter, a vision document commissioned by the UN and finalized in the year 2000, is meant as a starting point for a global 'change of mind and heart'. However, the Earth Charter lacks the potential to instigate necessary change.

The Earth Charter does not represent a fundamental change in ideology. An ideology capable of achieving ecological sustainability probably has to go beyond anthropocentrism to ecocentrism or sentientism. A sustainable ethical framework needs to be based on a humble perception of humanity's position in the ecosphere, and in being a citizen of nature, rather than its ruler (Curry, 2011). The mastery of nature and modernist 'problem solving' is precisely what degrades the planet and a meaningful lifestyle. The EC is clearly anthropocentric, as shown by its second principle: "*accept that with the right to own, manage, and use natural resources…*"

The ecocentric principles that are present in the Earth Charter sit uncomfortably with its other goals, i.e. to promote economic justice and strengthen the practice of democracy. According to its 3rd principle, all human societies must give "*everyone an opportunity to realize his or her full potential*". This seems to mean a humanist 'enlightened development'

ideal, which promotes an education-based lifestyle, which presupposes an industrialized society with abundant resources to spare, which is at odds with ecological goals. By and large, the Earth Charter's principles sketch a world in which human development and human rights are central, even though the large focus on the uniqueness and rights of humans is precisely what legitimizes the ongoing ecological crisis.

Why then is the Earth Charter so weak in its ecocentrism? The process of its creation provides an explanation. During its five-year drafting process, many parties from all over the world were consulted, creating an inclusive document. The United Nations, being a consensus-based organization, heralds the Earth Charter as an inclusive set of principles. Therein lies a dangerous flaw: is does not derive legitimacy from the merit of its principles (judging from an ecocentric perspective), but from the democratic process of its formation. It is understandable that inclusivity allows current interest and worldviews to smother ecocentric aspirations. Therefore, the Earth Charter's source of legitimacy is strongly related to its lack of potential for fundamental change.

It can be concluded that the Earth Charter is not ecocentric, and does not address the inherent tension between human 'development' and ecological equilibrium – it is inconsistent and does not give shape to the humble attitude needed to avoid ecological (and hence societal) collapse. The culprit seems to be the inclusive character of its creation, making the Earth Charter far less coherent and potent as the stepping-stones of a serious ecocentric ideology. To make a genuine change toward sustainable development, humanity needs a convincing and consistent ideology that isn't drenched in short-term anthropocentric interests.

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The unconvincing cosmopolitan promise of the Earth Charter
Eva Seignette

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future, is how the Earth Charter begins its declaration for a communal step forward towards a sustainable future. The Earth Charter could be seen as a form of deep ecology but also as a form of cosmopolitanism as it is a 'global civil society initiative' that is striving to build a global ethical framework in order to foster a sustainable and peaceful society (Macgregor, 2004; Tännsjö, 2002). With its ambitious and broad principles, the Earth Charter seems to provide an overview of what the global community should perceive as 'good' or as 'justice', based on the realization that we share a common destiny and should therefore strive for a long term and sustainable future of our planet. I however will argue that this rather optimistic objective of creating a shared 'vision', in a world dominated by conflicting views on ethics, is not feasible.

It all starts with the question of what is good and bad as a driving force within philosophical debates. The Earth Charter corresponds with Van den Berg's (2013, p.93) vision on what the biggest philosophical problem is, namely the 'ecological crisis'. This term broadly refers to humanity's alienation from nature and the degradation of ecosystems as a product of the current prevailing neo-liberal capitalist system (De Vries & Petersen, 2009; Klein, 2014; Van den Berg, 2013). The fact is that despite all our good intentions and inconvenient realizations related to the ecological crisis, we are still not collectively turning these into necessary actions (Van den Berg, 2013; Klein, 2014). The question then remains if an unbinding initiative like the Earth Charter is able to properly address this 'huge blind spot' within environmental ethics by uniting humans under the cosmopolitan goal of a sustainable global society, let alone

effectively transform our words into actions (Van den Berg, 2013, p. 94).

To look at it from a broader perspective, it can be argued that every human being has his or her own worldview that is based on a subjective surrounding and is constructed of values, capabilities and context-specifics, which according to De Vries & Petersen (2009) explain a person's notion of 'quality of life' and their resulting behavior. Their broadly accepted division of worldviews, of which the 'A1 type' is associated with our short-term and market driven neo-liberal heritage in the developed world, is never strictly black and white. However, it is remarkable that the Earth Charter is a product of actors belonging to this same heritage.

It is therefore questionable if such an initiative could be effective in fostering sustainability by taking a cosmopolitan approach towards the individual without even addressing the underlying economic, political and cultural systems he or she is part of and influenced by. Belief in a single ethical framework has too little consideration for conflicting values of human beings in different localities. As Klein (2014, p. 34) states "*it is always easier to deny reality than to allow our worldview to be shattered*". A statement that unfortunately still validates the relatively small influence of the Earth Charter, compared to its intentions.

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Democracy is hampering the Earth Charter
Arne Wijnia

The Earth Charter is a document that provides "(…) *a shared vision of basic principles to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community*" (Earth Charter Commission, 2000, p. 2). It is an idealistic document that sketches four main principles for an ethical foundation of sustainable development. For sustainable development, involvement of all the nations of the world is needed however, and it seems that we are still far from a full implementation by even a single nation. Ironically, parts of the Earth Charter's the fourth principle that discuss the importance of democracy might be a reason for this lack of implementation. But if we want the Earth Charter's principles to be realized in our lifetime, democracy might not be such a good idea.

The Netherlands has been a stable democracy for some time, which has given its population the freedom to choose its own government, but has also made the government a reflection of daily interests of the population. Unfortunately, the four Charter principles do not receive priority from civilians who care more about their day-to-day issues. As for the main points of the, at present, currently largest political party (the VVD), one has to dig deep to find points that could be related to the Earth Charter: they do not seem to have any priority. The government will thus not prioritize working towards implementing the Earth Charter's principles.

Democracy furthermore forces a government to listen to every party. Especially in the Netherlands we have become stars at this so-called *polderen*: finding a solution that works for everyone, regardless of how radically some views might be apart. The great advantage is obviously that everyone feels heard, but the great downside is that every decision takes a large amount of time before it can finally be taken. And the

end result can easily end up being a watered-down and not so useful version of the original plan. Examples of this are the failed climate conferences and their subsequently lackluster agreements. In order to come up with an agreement that suits all parties, the signed climate agreements turn out to be rather useless and empty. An implementation of the Earth Charter that caters to almost everyone will thus likely also be an empty shell.

Lastly, trying to implement the Earth Charter through democracy seems to be such an unrealistic goal (based on the previous arguments), that it is ethically viable to implement the Charter principles without the majority's consent. The happiness provided by a world community based on the Earth Charter is greater than the loss of happiness due to a small loss in democratic input. Upholding a utilitarian ethic, we should thus strive for this greater good (Curry, 2011).

The Earth Charter contains an ambitious set of principles that should give the world community an ethical foundation. Its fourth principle includes the importance of democracy. The paradox however, as stated in this column, is that democracy seems to be a key factor in preventing the Earth Charter from being implemented in most developed countries. If the principles from the Earth Charter are to be implemented in our lifetime, we shall have to do so without everyone's support, or even the support of the majority. This is morally our best course of action.

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The democratic side of the Earth Charter
Carmen van den Berg

In 1995 the United Nations started an initiative to create an ethical framework: the Earth Charter. By 2000 the document was finished and launched, with the aim of building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society. The Earth Charter consists of a list of principles that would effectuate this improved society, if societies would actually comply with these principles. According to their website the document is endorsed by over 6,000 organizations, including governments and international organizations. One of the principles of the Earth Charter (principle IV) argues in favor of the democratic institutions. However, the Earth Charter itself is not even in line with the principles of democracy.

According to the Oxford Dictionary a democracy is "*a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives*". In other words, the Earth Charter is not a democratic document itself if the population or its elected representatives have not chosen it. However, the organization behind the document does state that it is acquiring the status of a soft-law document by an increasing number of international lawyers. Is this fair, since the population has not elected it democratically? In fact, as long as the document is not hard law, the document is not in line with the principles of democracy, even though it claims to be in favor of a democratic society.

The principles presented in the Earth Charter were formulated after a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural dialogue searching for common goals and values. This seems indeed a good start for a democratically legitimate document. The principles also reflect familiar widely discussed ethical issues. The question is whether the (majority of) the population agrees with all of these principles. Did they find common

ground in these principles, or just common ground within a select group – like environmentalists – of the population? For example, many principles seem to be in line with the idea of deep ecology, while this theory is also being criticized (Tännsjö, 2002). For example, according to principle 1.1 one should recognize that every form of life has value. But is it then right to kill one individual to save another species?

The only way to make the Earth Charter a document that abides by its own principles, is to convert these principles into hard law, supported by the population or its elected representatives. Until then, it is not right for the supporters of the Earth Charter to expect others to view the document as a guiding ethical framework. If the creators of the Earth Charter believe in democracy, they would have to agree that the list of principles cannot be viewed as guidelines if the majority of population is not supporting it.

The Earth Charter has been around for fifteen years now and a few thousands of organizations representing millions of people have endorsed it, but are enough people agreeing with the ethical principles as presented in the Earth Charter so it could become hard law? Maybe it just takes time to reach people and convince them that this is 'the right way'. Or maybe the supporters should realize that the principles are not just as long as the population is not democratically supporting it? The only way to solve this issue is to present it as a legislative proposal at the government and let the population decide if the framework is ethically right. Or get rid of the fourth principle.

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The road ahead
Our choice
Silvana Ilgen

The Earth is in crisis. The anthropogenic impact on the Earth depends on several factors, such as population size, lifestyle and technology (Curry, 2011). Institutions are being set up to increase awareness thereof and to tackle unsustainable standard procedures (Spangenberg, 2002). For instance, the Earth Charter states: "*The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living, we must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more*" (Earth Charter Initiative, 2012). However, are humans capable of making this choice towards a global partnership when individuals' egoism is involved?

Egoism can lead to choosing for oneself instead of a collaboration. The theory of egoism describes that the motivation and the goal of one's own action is oneself (Avolio & Locke, 2002). Egoism is part of human nature as a result of survival instincts (survival of the fittest, theory of evolution) (Richerson & Boyd, 1998). Taking this concept into consideration, it is unclear whether humans are capable of collaboration to live in harmony, before business-as-usual leads to destruction.

The opposite of egoism is altruism, which can lead to the collaboration (Avolio & Locke, 2002) that is necessary for humanity to survive. Altruism is the principle or practice of unselfish concern for and dedication to the welfare of others (Avolio & Locke, 2002). It is evident that altruism explains charitable behavior. However, it is not obvious that altruism explains all charitable behavior. Charitable behavior can be compatible with egoism (Hammond, 1975), i.e. people's actions

benefit others because, ultimately, to do so benefits them. As history has shown, cooperative behavior allowed humans to survive under harsh conditions (Bergstrom, 2002). Therefore trying to reach one's own egoistic goals of survival can also lead to opting for collaboration.

In addition, Friedrich Nietzsche argued that egoism is the essence of a noble soul. According to him, the idea that it is virtuous to treat others as more important than oneself hinders the individual's pursuit of self-development, excellence and creativity. Nietzsche maintained that it was an ideology constructed by the weak for the weak and, consequently, creates collective powerlessness (Batson & Shaw, 1991). On the other hand, the philosopher Bertrand Russell argued that one's own wellbeing is dependent on the interest of others, which makes it important to pay attention to others, i.e. the concept of enlightened egoism. Furthermore, he stated that egoism is a part of human emotion, and only growing wisdom will lead to a less concern for the individual's state (Russell, 1954). Therefore egoism can lead to the best version of one's own self, as Nietzsche stated, but humans are still influenced by their direct and indirect environment which should be considered (and learned through growing wisdom) as Russell stated.

In conclusion, humans are capable of making the choice to form a global partnership to care for the Earth and one another even when individuals' egoism is involved. As history has shown, individuals can collaborate to survive in harsh circumstances. Furthermore, humans are still dependent on their environment, which should be taken into consideration when making choices about the future, as our survival is at stake.

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4// **On climate change deniers**

Climate change deniers (or 'deniers' for short) are people who deny climate change, the anthropogenic nature thereof, or the responsibility we have to mitigate climate change. Issues surrounding attribution of responsibility lie in several dimensions.

There are a number of issues involved in the attribution of responsibility. First, there is the uncertainty about causes. Science is always provisional, and the methodological conventions related to scientific truth claims require a high degree of certainty. Denial of climate change involves the de-legitimization of scientific consensus by overemphasizing the opinions of a small number of dissenters. Second, there is the uncertainty about the effect of climate change and mitigation measures to tackle it. The precautionary principle states that if there is too little information about the outcome of a certain action, and the outcome could be negative, this action should not be taken. The precautionary principle is not without its inherent weaknesses, as Maxim Wesselink explores in his column: if the outcome of an action is unclear, the outcome of not taking the action is also unclear. One could also ask where the line should be drawn between 'enough' and 'not enough' knowledge about outcomes. Deniers take advantage of these weaknesses. In general, the complexity of the climate issue constitutes an easy exploit for deniers, who use logical and rhetorical fallacies to manipulate the discussion. These issues are addressed in the following columns, and most pronouncedly in those of Ruben den Uijl and Tomas Rep.

Climate change deniers are often liberals, or the more purist variant thereof, libertarians. Examples of such libertarian deniers are writers Steven Milloy and Melanie Phillips. Since current technological and economical trajectories are

strongly related to accelerated climate change, mitigation inadvertently requires some form of governmental interference. Libertarianism is against interference in the lives of people unless such action is necessary to prevent harm to these people. In her column Kyra Weerts addresses the discrepancy herein; showing that libertarian principles apply especially well to climate change and should warrant governmental action. Also, she raises the fundamental point of whether or not the liberties humanity has taken in relation to nature have been too plentiful.

Denial furthermore relates to the scope of moral circles. Ruben den Uijl links this issue to the (im)moral underpinnings of Donald Trump's bullish stance on climate change. A more subtle (and less 'Trumpian') form of denial is implicit denial. Implicit denial means that although climate change is not denied as such, actors' priorities reflect that it is not deemed important enough to warrant strong action. This kind of denial is seen in the actions of governments, which currently only seem to engage in mitigation efforts when these align with economic development goals. The column of Daan van Put delves into this type of denial, which is a recurring theme, as attested to by the columns written on the Earth Charter in the previous chapter.

The human psychology also plays into denial. The title of Al Gore's climate change documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), aptly captures the undermining power of disbelief. Since living sustainably requires large changes in consumption behavior, and this threatens people's way of life, they are prone to disbelief of these threatening facts. This problem is touched upon in Tomas Rep's column, and takes center stage in the column written by Nathalie Herdoiza-Castro.

The perversion of science
On the podium, practices and power of deniers
Tomas Rep

As scientific insight makes it increasingly clear that immediate action should be taken to combat the collapse of ecosystems on a global scale, it becomes ever more painful how much influence climate change deniers have over the public and political opinion. Deniers are an enormous problem, as their messages allow the public to comfortably confirm that nothing is wrong with their damaging lifestyles. Here it will be discussed why deniers are granted a podium, how they pervert the tenets of science and why their nonsense is effective.

   The most powerful deniers are those that have the most exposure through airtime on television, usually in the context of a television debate. Usually, such debates are stirred up when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases a still more apocalyptic report on our global climate's future. A debate presupposes two (or more) sides to a given issue, and these sides are given equal opportunity to represent their views. In the late 1940's, when television became a powerful medium, the Fairness Doctrine was adopted in the US, which meant that issues had to be presented in an honest, equitable manner (Matthews, 2011). This policy has been abolished, but its echoes can be seen today: even though there is hardly any debate on climate science (Cook, 2014), critics are given disproportionate opportunity to cast doubt on climate science (Oreskes & Conway, 2010).

   Sure, deniers receive a podium, but why would anyone watching believe them? They take the foundations of scientific thinking, corrupt them, and misuse them to give the impression of legitimacy. First, by using scientific terms in a superficial way, the laymen watching can no longer distinguish between proper and flawed scientific arguments. Second, and

more severe, is the betrayal of the critical scientific mindset – deniers embellishingly call themselves 'critics' or 'skeptics'. The critical way of thinking is closely related to scientific enquiry. But those who adhere to the mode of critical thinking should also adhere to its outcome, which is scientific consensus – the consolidation of critical thinkers (Curry, 2011). By using scientific terminology, critics inherently subscribe to the idea that science is the most legitimate process of arriving at truth claims. If they thereafter claim that the established outcome of that same science is illegitimate, they should not be allowed to enter the arena of using scientific terminology.

But why does the public believe deniers? Humans tend to choose their beliefs. If we hadn't, we would have never gone through philosophical processes like the enlightenment. However, steps like the rise of libertarianism, utilitarianism and neo-liberalism have in common that they promote the quality of individual human life – particularly in the contexts in which all of these specific ethical theories have arisen; respectively oppressive monarchy, brutal industrial conditions, Nazi Germany and failed communism (Oreskes & Conway, 2014). Unfortunately, the benefits to human life from current hedonistic neo-liberal stance are not present in the implication of the truths presented by climate science. Therefore, it is not tempting to accept the deep truth that both the Earth and the growth of wealth have limits.

In conclusion, climate deniers are understandably but extremely disproportionately given podium. On this podium they abuse scientific principles to undermine its legitimacy. Yet to the public, these flaws are not apparent, as the denialist message resonates frighteningly well with the need for comfort. More so than the message of actual science.

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Donald Trump, the man
who will destroy civilization
Ruben den Uijl

On September 17th 2015, Donald Trump, the billionaire who is running for presidency of the United States, was asked how he plans to reduce pollution that contributes to climate change and damages public health. Trump turned to his audience and asked them whether they believed in climate change. Only few hands rose, and with that Trump dismissed the question and moved on (Grim, 2015). In other words, Trump simply dismissed an entire scientific discipline and arguably the most serious threat to humanity's welfare and wellbeing since the Cuba crisis, by treating climate change as a question of belief. There is a number of reasons why Trump's action should warn Americans not to vote for him.

Firstly, the type of argument that Trump used was fallacious because it violated one of the basic argumentation rules. Trump used an *argumentum ad populum*, which means that because a large number of people believe something, it must be true. In this case, Trump used the disbelief of his crowd as an argument. By doing so, Trump said to the questioner that if so many people disagreed with him, he must be wrong. Thus Trump refused to play the debate-game fairly, and resorted to cheating. That is not worthy of a president.

Secondly, Trump's rebuttal shows clearly that his moral circle, the question to whom ethics or moral concern applies, is limited. By not addressing climate change, Trump was in fact saying that climate change did not concern him. However, since one of the consequences of climate change is rising temperatures, which will increase the destructiveness of California wildfires even more, he is in fact stating that the survival of one of the most important states of the United States is unimportant (Westerling *et al.*, 2011, p. 457-459). California is

a Democrat-voting state while Trump is a Republican. Clearly, Trump's moral concerns do not reach beyond himself and his direct voters. A president, however, should care for all his citizens, not just his own supporters.

Thirdly, Trump also showed a despotic attitude towards nature, which will increase the velocity of the environmental disasters heading towards humanity. On the Scale of Zweers, depicting attitudes towards nature, the despot is anthropocentric, meaning that he sees humans as the center of moral action, and treats nature as a human tool. Trump stated that climate change was a belief. A belief he did not share. Thus he denied the environmental problems, even though mainstream science clearly indicates that the state of nature is worsening every year. Consequently, because Trump clearly thinks that neither nature is in danger, nor that he should care about it or protect it, he must necessarily view nature as a tool for human 'progress'. This means that under Trump, the United States is most likely to further destroy nature, hence destroying humanity's natural foundations, bringing humanity even closer to disaster. Trump would increase the force of the disasters that will hit eventually.

Concluding, Donald Trump is a presidential candidate who cheats to win discussions, who seems only to care for a fraction of the American people, and who would most likely increase the magnitude of the environmental disaster that will hit humanity, and thus endanger humanity even more. The results of a 'Trumpian' as president would be catastrophic.

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Implicit denialism
The threat for COP21
Daan van Put

At the moment of writing, coming December Paris will be hosting the 21st conference on climate change by the United Nations, named COP21. COP21 is internationally seen as one of the most important climate conferences in history, since for the first time it is aimed to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on how to keep global warming below 2°C (COP21, 2015). Despite all good intentions, previous conferences have proved to be largely unsuccessful at changing countries' behavior. Politicians acknowledge the importance of preventing global warming, but do not implement concrete solutions. The cause of this is not that the politicians deny the existence of climate change, but that they do not recognize the necessity of taking short-term action. This phenomenon is called implicit denialism and is one of the main causes why the world fails in solving climate issues (NCSE, 2012). Without any action, politicians will keep this attitude, which will result in another failed climate summit. It is therefore important to let the politicians understand their implicit denialism so they can change their attitude towards COP21.

The main cause of implicit denialism is that people are incapable of looking at long-term consequences. Consequentialism is the ethical theory that states that a decision is good when it has the best consequences (Curry, 2011). However, the theory does not state to whom these consequences apply. Politicians tend to make decisions based on the best consequences for their own nation in the short term. China, for example, wants to participate in new climate actions, but only if it does not affect their economic development (Europa-NU, 2014). This form of presentism makes it impossible to achieve agreement on solutions for

issues like climate change. It is time for politicians to include future generations in their moral circle and start looking at the long term.

Aside from that, many politicians threat nature in a despotic way. This means that they are convinced that nature exists only for the benefit of humans, meaning it merely has instrumental and economic value (Zweers, 2000). With this attitude exclusively political and economic arguments are used in making governmental decisions. The United States, for example, prevented the Kyoto protocol from becoming binding, because it could have seriously harmed the United States' economy (NCPPR, 1997). This despotic attitude, however, neglects the fact that an average citizen in the United States has five times the maximum permissible ecological footprint. It is impossible for the whole world to live at American standards. Politicians must understand that nature is not made for humans, but that we are part of it. Continued misuse of the planet can have catastrophic effects, already in the short term (Footprintnetwork, 2015).

Concluding, in order to prevent COP21 from becoming another failed climate summit, politicians must stop to implicitly deny climate change. They must understand that they have to expand their moral circle, so that also future generations can enjoy life on our planet. Besides that, politicians must change their despotic attitude towards nature and understand the disastrous effects of abusing the Earth. When politicians understand this, it can help them to change their attitude, so that COP21 will be the success it needs to be.

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When freedom fails
Questioning our liberties in the face of climate change
Kyra Weerts

"*It is time that you recognize that a great green tsunami is heading your way, threatening to wash away our standard of living and many of your liberties*", stated Steve Milloy in 2009, when presenting his new book *Green Hell* at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC. He continued his talk, stating that "*the green movement may seem to advocate small lifestyle changes to benefit the environment, but the green agenda is in fact much more ambitious, it promotes countless new restrictions and regulations designed to reorganize society from top to bottom.*" After this he concluded that this green movement will result in a less free and less dignified way of living. However, Milloy makes a critical mistake, as the green movement might restrict the liberties we *think* we have. He does not consider the possibility that we have afforded ourselves too much freedom for centuries, by which we have compromised the freedom of others in countries more vulnerable to climate change, as well as the freedom of future generations. We need restrictions to restore balance.

"*Your freedom ends where my freedom begins*" (Spencer, 1851) is a famous libertarian quote by which is meant that freedom has to have boundaries, if others' freedoms are not to be compromised. Milloy fails to recognize that the effects of climate change limit the freedom of others. Western countries have unlimitedly polluted the atmosphere with greenhouse gases for decades, resulting in climate change from which primarily developing countries are suffering. By appropriating too much freedom, we have compromised the freedom of the more vulnerable developing countries. Problems like climate change and increasing resource scarcity are a clear sign that we need policies and restrictions to regulate resource use and

protect our environment, to create an equal global division of freedom regarding the environment. If we do not address climate change in policies and legislation, as suggested by Milloy, the inequality gap between the self-granted freedom in western societies and the compromised freedom of developing countries, will grow. A true libertarian would never allow this to happen as all individuals are considered to be equal. One should not have more rights to, for example, resources than another, let alone harm others through use thereof.

John Stuart Mill argues in his book *On Liberty* (1859) that "*the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others.*" This is exactly what the green movement tries to accomplish; to set rules that prevent harm to others. It does not threaten to wash away our standard of living and many of our liberties as Milloy argued, but on the contrary tries to make freedoms more equal on a global scale. In some western societies, this might be felt as a burden of restrictions, but it is in fact just a sign that we have permitted ourselves more freedom than can be ethically justified.

Milloy, a self-proclaimed libertarian, fails to oversee the result of the unrestricted individual freedom he pleads for, and with that, ignores the created global inequality in freedom. This unlimited freedom will only widen the inequality gap between the self-granted freedom in western societies and the compromised freedom in developing countries. Regulation and restrictions are necessary to restore this balance.

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Pitfalls in the precautionary principle
Maxim Wesselink

In response to the overwhelming evidence for anthropogenic global warming accumulated over recent years, many deniers previously debating with scientific arguments have changed strategy. Cherry picking, falsified citations, taking facts out of their context and ridiculing scientific work using inappropriate popular language seems to be the norm nowadays. Journalist and denier Melanie Phillips, for example, stated that the use of computer models to predict the future climate is "*(…) scarcely more believable than the extraction of sunbeams from cucumbers on Jonathan Swift's satirical island of Laputa*" (Phillips, 2011, p. 22). The previously scientific debates have been replaced by psychological trickery from the side of deniers that triggered a new response from climate scientists: the precautionary principle. However appropriate this principle may seem, though, climate scientists should take caution as it contains several flaws that deniers may soon take advantage of.

To start with, investments in greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction measures can retard economic growth. Although this may not have severe consequences in developed nations, it can indirectly affect developing countries that heavily depend on trade for their income. With a decline in economic growth, or even an absolute decline in GDP, comes hunger, poorer health, higher mortality, high fertility rates and reduced adaptability in general as well as to the impacts of climate change (Goklany, 2000). Well-intended measures from developed nations to reduce GHG emissions may thus have indirect negative externalities in developing nations that may weigh heavier than the improvement potential of these measures.

Another mechanism through which negative externalities occur, is the increase of prices of fossil fuels. Around the world, agriculture is heavily dependent on them for fertilizers,

machinery, irrigation and transport of produce to markets. An increased price of this resource would thus make food more expensive, which dramatically complicates access to food for many people in developing countries. Moreover, higher prices will halt the transition from using solid fuels to cleaner commercial fuels like oil and gas for cooking and heating. This will result in continued indoor air pollution, which is a major cause of death in developing countries (Goklany, 2000). Although fossil fuels are the cause of a major threat to humanity on the long term, making them more expensive may lead to even more serious threats on the short term.

Finally, there is an ethical discrepancy that can be held against climate scientists. In most countries, the share of GDP spent on development aid is less than one percent. If serious attempts to reduce GHG emissions will be made, these measures will amply exceed the percentage spent on development aid. Considering that development aid addresses problems that occur today while climate change is a future problem with many uncertainties, deniers may rightfully question whether this distribution of financial resources is fair.

Using the precautionary principle to justify GHG reduction measures seems obvious at first sight. However, the effect of GHG reduction measures is likely not as straightforward as they seem and may come with negative externalities that possibly outweigh the intended improvements. Moreover, the principle may not be as ethically correct as we think. There is a need for a narrower definition of the precautionary principle that specifies that GHG reduction measures should always be assessed in a wider perspective that particularly takes into account the interests of people in developing countries.

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Waking up to the facts
On the psychology of imminent ecological catastrophe
Natalie Herdoiza-Castro

> *Much of people's destructiveness toward themselves and others can be attributed to the fact that people conspire with one another to create cultural imperatives and institutions that deny the fact of mortality.*
>
> R.W. Firestone

We face forthcoming human-induced natural threats. Yet, denial of the urgency to act is widespread. Many explanations of human inaction on climate issues can be given, but I propose that denial isa result of a defense strategy intimately linked to human survival skills. The realization of imminent overpowering or disturbing emotions related to existential climate threats, paradoxically lead some people to deny the indisputable evidence of ecological destruction.

Whereas it might be true that most skepticism concerning ecological degradation in the present is a result of underlying economic and political interest, it is also possible that some people refuse to accept the facts because they find the need to develop specific defenses in order to numb themselves from existential concerns (Firestone, 1994). Eco-existentialism provides a psychological explanation to this phenomena, suggesting a connection between denial of potential ecological threats and the awareness of our own mortality, thus: our necessity of biological continuity (Pienaar, 2011). Accordingly, throughout his work, psychologist Craig Chalquist, explains how persistent warnings about potential ecological catastrophes might numb people instead of waking them up towards the reality of an eminent environmental damage.

As a result, people might support ideas of denial, minimize the consequences of specific practices, and promote contrarian views; even when there is enough evidence to support the fact that these practices are not sustainable or morally acceptable. A distinctive example: human beings who refute the role of humanity in climate change, as well as their responsibility on the matter. Instead, they choose to disregard the impacts of climate change and regard them as something far from their reality (Dickinson, 2009). Another example is the belief system known as 'carnism'; in which people develop a position of avoidance and denial in combination with physical and emotional numbing in order to continue with their traditional meat consumption, and reject the fact that their food choices are harming other sentient beings as well as contributing to environmental degradation (Joy, 2011).

When people are comfortable enough being part of a belief system, it becomes surprisingly easy for them to ignore strong, well-founded facts. Thus, being in denial, they are no longer forced to face their fears and preoccupations regarding potential threats to their survival and the continuity of human life. For instance, despite the fact that there is enough evidence to support the existence of human induced climate change and the capacity of animals to suffer and feel pain; the belief that 'god would not allow the disappearance of humankind due to climate change' or 'animals were destined by god to nourish and be used by humans', are both supported by a significant number of people based on their cultural and religious principles. At the end, if helplessness or the fear to face the facts is bigger than the motivation to take action, it might be more comfortable for deniers to promote a particular belief system, which allows them to avoid an uncomfortable reality.

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5// **On behavioral change**

Behavioral change is a crucial topic where a shift towards sustainability and a more ethically sound society is concerned. It is necessary to understand why too little change is currently occurring, and how this may be turned around. The columns in this chapter identify and discuss various sides of this multi-faceted challenge.

A central question is whose responsibility and whose right it is to bring about change. It can well be argued that governmental intervention (*top-down* approach) is required to bring about the necessary changes in both harmful consumption patterns and unethical use of animals. However, arguing from a liberal (and especially a libertarian) point of view, governmental intervention − which encroaches upon individual freedom − is not a tool to be used lightheartedly. Hence, this perspective leans towards a *bottom-up* approach.

The columns in this chapter show many different dimensions of these issues, and the grey areas between extremes. For instance, the column of Daan van Put stresses the power the government could have in changing values surrounding meat consumption, as with smoking. Susanne van der Kooij's column proposes a meat tax as an 'eco-capitalist' solution, lying in between direct governmental interference and laissez-faire economics.

Aside from the question of who has the right to intervene, there is the question of what the psychological barriers to behavioral change are. Behavior is deeply rooted in emotional drivers, which leads us to one of the barriers to change: the high tolerance of humans for cognitive dissonance − the state of experiencing contradictory beliefs and feelings. If a person

cognitively knows an action is wrong, but does not feel an emotional response to this realization, it is not likely this individual will change his or her behavior. This topic is present in many columns, but specifically discussed in Tomas Rep's column. Also, the deep-rootedness and long history of carnist beliefs creates a barrier to change. How then to overcome these barriers? Tomas Rep's column argues that children's education is central to creating a basis for a more ecocentric worldview in following generations.

There are activists that take on a misanthropic attitude, saying that who wants to do the earth a favor should kill himself. Deep ecologists like Patrick Curry and Arne Næss dismiss such extreme stances, as they state that humanity is a part of nature, and therefore also has intrinsic value. Also, it is doubtful such a provocative stance will produce goodwill or following from current deniers. On the other hand, history has at crucial times proven tough stances and revolts as effective means of breaking through existing beliefs to create a better world. For example, the bloodiness of the French revolution did facilitate the widespread diffusion of the principles of equality and human rights. Principles we value.

Our moral obligation
On radical behavioral change
towards true sustainability
Arne Wijnia

The human population on Earth is large and still growing. Furthermore, we continue to increase our ecological footprint and thereby our pressure on the environment. These two elements combined constitute the enormous problem of continued growth in a system with clear bounds. There are several reasons why it is ethically good to both decrease our population and footprint (Curry, 2011). This can only be achieved through radical behavioral change. Every moment we continue our current practice of increasing our footprint and the size of our population is damaging both humans and animals, ecosystems and future generations. We therefore have a moral obligation to radically change our behavior, starting now.

Radical change is needed for some of our most integrated behavior, which takes time. Small incremental changes to our behavior are being made by most of us, such as people eating less meat, getting a car that pollutes less or separating waste. However, *radical* change is needed to have an impact and to start living sustainably. Such radical change takes some time though, because alternatives have to prepared and because it affects many, if not all aspects of our lives. Waiting for radical change until the moment that we have used all our resources and are at the edge of global ecologic, economic and social collapse is thus too late, because no alternative can then be developed in time. The hurt caused by waiting now will then be catastrophic: it will mean the end for entire species, ecosystems and millions if not billions of people.

Behavioral change is needed now, because not everyone can be convinced immediately. It is an unfortunate fact that there is always a group of people who are impervious to reason or

sound ethical argument if that means they should apply radical behavioral change to some of their most profound habits. They will continue to eat meat, reproduce at a high rate, drive their cars or use unnecessary plastic products. Their tolerance for cognitive dissonance is impressive: even with the knowledge in their head they keep polluting. A change in our behavior is needed however and society-wide behavioral change can only occur through leading by example. When something is publically no longer accepted because the vast majority no longer exhibits that behavior, such as discrimination of women, those who were first unmovable will then simply adjust their behavior to the new norm. The habit is removed when a certain behavioral pattern is no longer institutionalized in a society. It is therefore important to start changing our behavior with respect to resource use and sustainability now, to ensure the new standard is created fast enough.

Radical behavioral change is tough and requires time especially if it is to be established on a national or even global level. The only ethically just choice, though, is to radically change our behavior with respect to the way we use resources, reproduce and live sustainably. We can no longer keep destroying, polluting and exhausting our surroundings. This radical change in behavior is needed right now, because it will take some time to implement alternatives and because it will take time to convince all of society. Starting now is the only way to prevent mass suffering and is thus a moral obligation for us all.

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Eating meat should be the new smoking
Daan van Put

Eating meat is one of the most polluting habits of humanity. The production of meat involves enormous amounts of greenhouse gas emissions, water usage and deforestation. Estimations about the contribution of meat consumption to global greenhouse gas emissions differ from 18% to 52% (Pink, 2015). This share can even increase since meat consumption is expected to more than double in 2050 compared to 2010 levels (FAO, 2010). Despite the enormous impact of meat, currently only about 5 percent of Dutch inhabitants are vegetarian (DietCetera, 2015). It would be expected that a government that tries to reach ambitious climate targets would prioritize efforts to change people's behavior and thereby decrease meat consumption. However, the opposite seems to be true. Almost no policies exist related to meat consumption, like tax policies or public campaigns, even though they can be effective (Belastingdienst, 2015; Sire, 2015). It is time for the government to recognize the necessity of policy intervention, so the attitude of people towards meat consumption may be changed.

The first argument for policy intervention is that it gives a direct incentive for people to stop their meat consumption. The main reason why people are unwilling to change their pattern of meat consumption is that they are scared of changing habits. Especially food habits are deeply rooted in our society. Curry describes food consumption as one of the most important cultural roles in our life (Curry, 2011, p. 184). Without any external stimulant too few people will have the incentive to change their habit. The government, however, can provide the required incentives. With, for example, tax raisings on meat the government can stimulate people to switch to meat substitutes.

However, the most important reason for the government to make policies is to pose a statement and to change the public

opinion towards meat consumption. Many people still have a despotic world view, which means that they are convinced of the fact that nature only exists to serve humanity and can be exploited without limit (Zweers, 2000). The government must act as a moral agent and steer towards new moral values of its citizens. The policies and campaigns against smoking are a great example of how government intervention can radically shift public opinion and change people's behavior. Just by removing meat from our dinner table we include both animals and future generations in our moral circle. When the government can spread this message the public opinion towards eating meat might shift radically, being an effective way of changing people's behavior.

Concluding: it is time the government starts making policies to counter meat consumption. Meat is one of the cruelest habits of humanity, affecting both animals and future generations. It is essential that people start decreasing their meat consumption and the government can stimulate this. People are by nature unwilling to change habits and will therefore not change them without external incentives. Raising tax on meat can provide this incentive and stimulate people to switch to substitute products. The indirect effect can be even larger, since government intervention has proven to be able to radically change public opinion. Many people will change their behavior when the immorality of eating meat becomes the public opinion. So let eating meat be the new smoking, and eliminate it from our society.

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States' moral obligation to change meat-eating behavior
Susanne van der Kooij

Scientific consensus exists on the fact that human–induced greenhouse gas emissions are the major cause of accelerated climate change (Randall, 2014). As it will harm future generations and therefore cause intergenerational injustice, the present generation has a moral obligation to mitigate climate change (Nordgren, 2012). The entire meat industry has been overlooked as a source of emissions, yet accounts for 18% of all human–caused emissions (FAO, 2006). A necessary measure for mitigation is therefore the introduction of a meat tax as incentive to change behavior and reduce meat consumption (Nordgren, 2012).

The tendency of eating meat has been institutionalized and is deeply rooted in consumption habits (Joy, 2015; Nordgren, 2012), causing a large blind spot on the negative effects of meat consumption. This blind spot is kept in place by denial, justification and cognitive distortion, according to professor Melanie Joy (2015), founder of *Beyond Meat*. She argues that raising awareness can alter these perceptions and trigger behavioral change. But changing this institutionalized behavior is not so straightforward, as one encounters both cultural-political and cultural-personal obstacles (Fox, 1993). Humans who eat meat can be said to have a despotic attitude towards nature, looking only at their short-term self-interest (Van den Berg, n.d.). These individuals act in ways that are optimal for themselves and will not change their behavior for the benefit of others, according to the moral theory of egoism (Van den Berg, n.d.), causing a collective action problem with regards to climate change (Nordgren, 2012).

Collective action problems need political steering to change the rules of consumption (Nordgren, 2012). Furthermore,

social engineering stimulates desired behavior more effectively than explicitly urging people to behave in a certain way (Van den Berg, 2013). Voluntary changes will not be sufficient for the change needed (Alcott, 2008; Nordgren, 2012). Therefore, more ethical consumerism should be encouraged, using a policy that affects consumption patterns (Ripple et al., 2014). A meat tax in the form of a 'sin tax', comparable with the tobacco tax, would help restrict negative externalities that result from meat consumption (Oreskes, 2011). This tax fits into the anthropogenic light green ethic school as described by Curry (2013), which ties the wellbeing of humans to the wellbeing of nature. Ecologically sound regulation and legislation can then be defended in terms of (current and future) human interests. Furthermore, this measure can be seen as a form of eco-capitalism, a theory that argues that market-based policy instruments should be used to resolve environmental problems to protect common goods (Mulvaney, 2011).

Some might argue, however, that introducing a meat tax is a form of paternalism, which limits individual freedom. This forms a conflict between individual autonomy and the welfare of future generations (Nordgren, 2012). But the exercise of government power over the individual can be justified when it prevents harm to others (Mill, 1859). The definition of 'others' can be extended to include future generations as well, which fits the theory of Green Liberalism (Van den Berg, n.d.). Furthermore, according to Kinzig *et al.* (2013), governments can change the behavior of citizens by altering the conditions influencing those behaviors, which it is not about limiting freedom but about changing 'the architecture of decision-making'.

So, as the consumption of meat has been proven to negatively affect current and future generations, liberal principles should demand the government to take up its moral obligation to protect its citizens now and in the future. Citizens should be

safeguarded against their own weak will; therefore intervention in personal decision-making is necessary. Even in a liberal society.

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Emotional engagement for happy animals
On rationality, emotion, change and children
Tomas Rep

The consumption of animal products is an enormous problem. Not only does it constitute a glaring blind spot in our societal ethics (Van den Berg, 2009), it is also one of the leading causes of greenhouse gas emissions (FAO, 2006). It is thus imperative that humanity stops this destructive habit. However, this is no mean feat. It has proven to be difficult to stop people from harmful conduct, even if the benefits of stopping are more than obvious. Smoking, for example.

It is hard to curb behavior if it is not considered wrong. Many people have limited knowledge of the abhorrent conditions of animals in factory farms. The sheer amount of suffering experienced by the animals within it is simply unknown to many people. Therefore, to them the wrongness of using animal products isn't apparent. Also, there is the possibility of knowing of animal suffering, but not considering it wrong. A common defense is that animals are not capable of suffering, as they are not rational. This is laughable. Suffering resides in neurological structures that are found pronouncedly in the intelligent animals we use in factory farming (Van den Berg, 2009). However, in a liberal democracy, it is easy to dodge information and arguments you dislike, and there are many comforting fallacies to choose from.

Another issue is the phenomenon of well-informed people that rationally disapprove of factory farming, yet partake in the reaping of its 'fruits'. In this case, there is no will to change one's own patterns. The word 'will' is key here. The ratio never offers the basis for action, it only provides the means (Curry, 2011). Pleasures and displeasures, which steer the will, are emotions. Thus, will requires emotion. Therefore, the problem

is that there is no emotional engagement with the rationally registered problem.

Now for potential solutions. The firstly mentioned category of people might be swayed by anthropocentric self-interest. Animal products, being secondary products of nature, are notably less energy-efficient to produce than primary products (such as vegetables, grains etc.). Taking population growth and decreasing food security due to rapid climate change (Curry, 2011) into account, it is in our own interest to stop eating animal products. Yet, this is an abstract issue and furthermore constitutes a collective action problem, which are never easily solved when dealing with indifferent or ignorant masses. More promising might be the method of Gary Yourofsky (2010), who posits that animal products cause many health issues, such as serious cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis. This is related to personal self-interest, which is far better aligned with the current dominant ideology of neoliberal individualism. As Battilana *et al.* (2009) propose, framing your dissenting goals as if they are in alignment with current dominant values, in order to subvert these dominant values in the long run, can facilitate institutional change. In other words, to 'tolerate' use of light green ethics, in order to create a foundation for dark green ethics in the long run.

As for the rationally engaged people: lack of emotional commitment might stem from the emotional difficulty of living outside of a social value system. Many people fear alienation and on top of that, it seems hard to eat consistently vegan. A deceptively simple solution might be a sponsor system, similar to that used with drug addiction. Being partnered up with another aspiring vegan might offer emotional and practical support and create companionship. A more fundamental solution might lie in early education. Creating an emotional bond with nature in children – a feeling of being a part of nature, rather than being its master – might be far stronger than

any rational argument. In the end, radical change requires a change of heart.

I conclude by stating that rational agreement on the ethical problem of using animal products is desirable but not necessary and certainly not enough to facilitate radical change in our values and behaviors. The key lies with being, in a realistic and practical way, focused on the emotional engagement aspect. Personal self-interest is the most direct way to force engagement. But where better to instill the needed deep engagement than in a young heart? Children have always held our future. Now they hold the future of animals as well.

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Vegans should inspire others
Fighting for the forgotten victims of this world
Lenore Sturm

Billions of nonhuman animals are tortured and slaughtered by humans each year. Not only does this cause unnecessary and extreme suffering for these nonhuman animals, it is also by far the number one cause of environmental degradation and greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, it is an extremely inefficient way of producing food, which causes millions of people to unnecessarily live in hunger each day (Van den Berg, 2013a). Only a small percentage of the world population is ahead of their time and lives a vegan lifestyle. Beforehand, it was unthinkable for many of them to change their behavior in such a way, but they did. As they now understand the necessity of veganism, they should stimulate other people to change their behavior and go vegan as well.

Convincing other people to do so is going to be hard. Friedrich Nietzsche explains why, in one of his famous quotes: "*Sometimes people don't want to hear the truth, because they don't want their illusions destroyed*". But people's discomfort is not a valid reason not to fight for the victims, as they are the ones suffering. The fact that people feel uncomfortable when they hear the truth means that they understand they are wrong and that their behavior is indeed unethical. Unfortunately, changing habits is an emotional issue and therefore hard to accomplish. People will try to convince themselves that it is okay to use animal products, because everyone does it. This is an *ad populum* fallacy, and is not an argument to refrain from questioning behavior. The same holds for many other fallacies that people use to 'explain away' their unethical behavior (Van den Berg, 2013a). On top of this, many people who use animal products claim to love animals. This points to moral dissonance, as they do not act accordingly. They have to see the uncomfortable

truth and vegans need to keep reminding them, so they can change their behavior to match their words.

People who use animal products will tell vegans that they should respect their personal choice to do so. However, a choice ceases to be personal when victims are involved. The freedom of one stops where someone else's freedom begins (Van den Berg, 2013b). Therefore, vegans should not respect the right to eat meat as a personal choice, simply because it is not; it creates suffering, defends oppression and encourages the continuance of exploitation. It would be the same thing as saying: it is okay if you want to respect women, but you should respect my right to abuse them. In other words, it is not a personal choice when there is a victim and therefore vegans must not give up and keep stimulating people to change their behavior.

In conclusion, although it is difficult to change people's behavior, it is worth the struggle. One should never stop believing that change is possible if it's for a just cause. Vegans should not lose hope and keep stimulating people to go vegan. We owe it to the forgotten victims of this world. Just remember what Gandhi said: "*First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, and then you win.*"

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6// **On environmental ethics**

Tomas Rep

In the previous chapters we've seen different takes on single topics. In this chapter, there is no specific uniting subject, other than, of course, environmental ethics. It is a collection of essays that delve into varying issues and moral theories. These essays are greater in length than the columns of the previous three chapters, allowing for more depth in treatment of backgrounds, theories, arguments and counterarguments.

   In his essay on the 'polluter pays principle', Ruben den Uijl dives into the issue of responsibility for causing and solving climate change. He relates these to the question of whether and which individuals have the power to make a difference. Pieter Groenewege uncovers a blind spot: the keeping of house cats. He discusses the consequences of the meat–eating disposition of cats through a utilitarian ethic; should we kill our house cats? Our relation to animals is also explored by Kyra Weerts, albeit in a different way. She addresses the issue of animal testing and attacks the arguments that are used to justify this practice, arriving at an appeal to a paradigm shift. Arne Wijnia also discusses a paradigm and a required shift therein. He takes a critical look at the stream of ethics known as ecofeminism. He refutes the assumptions of ecofeminism and argues against the idea that sex is linked to ecologically sound ethics. The subsequent essay, written by Francis Zoet, also attacks assumptions, namely that the eating of meat is inherently unethical. She explores the mechanisms of suffering and the conditions in which eating meat could have moral merit.

What these writings have in common is a mixture of building on existing thought and challenging established

beliefs and assumptions. This balance between construction and deconstruction is what makes philosophy so exciting – working towards a better world through critical thinking. In general, these essays make clear that in this regard we have work to do, if we are to tackle the big challenges of the present and the future. Yet, we must not forget that in the past, crises have brought about important and radical shifts in thinking, and the world has become a better place for it.

The polluter pays principle

An unjust tool for a just cause

Ruben den Uijl

Currently the world is preparing itself for the climate change negotiations in Paris later this year. Thousands of government, business and civil society representatives are part of this process. Since the 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen, there is a shared understanding that climate change should be limited to a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius increase in temperature compared to pre-industrial levels. This can be achieved in many ways, such as by consuming less, replacing fossil fuels with biomass, using solar panels, having fewer children, reducing or stopping meat and dairy product consumption. However, it is not these specific actions that these international negotiations touch upon. Instead they are concerned with which country, which actor, is supposed to do how much in the shared effort of reaching the maximum 2 degrees goal. It is clear that the industrial system has increased and is increasing the greenhouse gas effect on Earth via the emission of greenhouse gasses. It is also clear that the majority of these greenhouse gasses have been emitted by the developed world. Therefore, the developing countries demand that the developed countries do more than the developing countries are required to do. Clearly the developing world uses the polluter pays principle (PPP), which holds that the actor that is causally responsible for the situation is also morally responsible for it and must rectify the situation. However, the status quo opinion that those who pollute must pay the price is a wrong principle to base the climate negotiations on because it is incapable to achieve justice in the climate change situation.

In the PPP the actor (A) that causes the pollution is morally required to rectify it. After all, being morally responsible for an unjustified negative situation but having to do nothing

about it would destroy the concept of responsibility. This sounds logical. In the climate change discussion, the cause is clear: the greenhouse gas emissions by individuals either emitted themselves or emitted via the buying of a product. The effect (S) is also clear, namely dangerous and undesired climate change. Thus it seems logical to place the obligation to rectify S on A, in this case mainly the developed world. It is one of the basic principles of the rule of law, where the causal responsibility results in the obligation to rectify. However, the philosopher David Miller proposes that it is possible to have causal responsibility without being morally responsible (2001, p. 455-458). Building on Miller's examples, it is possible to imagine that whilst A is walking along a smooth pavement and takes normal care not to stumble, A turns a corner and stumbles over stone he had not seen. Unfortunately, A falls against the person walking in front of him (B), who is injured as a result. In this situation, A is causally responsible for the injury because he tripped and fell against B (Miller, 2001, p. 455-458). However, moral responsibility in this case cannot rest with A, because, Miller argues, A did "*nothing that attracts moral praise or blame*" (2001, p. 456). After all, it was not A's intention to injure B and A took as much care as can be required of A in a normal situation. It was just some unfortunate circumstance that led A to stumble. Moral blame can perhaps be attributed to the mole that pushed the stone upwards when it tunneled below it. But because a mole is a nonhuman-animal it is impossible that it can rectify the situation and understand morality, therefore ascribing moral standing to a mole is illogical. If the stone was left behind, the person that did so (C) might be morally responsible. However, it is possible to imagine situations where that person is also not morally responsible, for example because of an emergency or a heart attack. Thus stating that causal responsibility automatically leads to the moral responsibility to rectify the situation is unjustified. This means that there is a

need to look into the PPP to see if the moral responsibility is less strict than commonly assumed.

Even if the causal responsibility would lead to moral responsibility, which the PPP requires, there can be problems. If the situation is more complex or complicated, the logic fails. Miller uses the example of Iraq, where under Saddam Hussein's rule, Iraqi children suffered. He argues that it is possible to look at Saddam Hussein's rule and his decision to spend a lot on military hardware, but not on childcare, as being both justifiable and unjustifiable (Miller, 2001, p. 457). Perhaps the economic sanctions by the United Nations, the unwillingness of the Iraqi people to revolt for their children vis-à-vis the Iraqi government, the dangerous national security situation in the area, or the warmongering of Saddam Hussein, can all be termed causes of the situation (Miller, 2001, p. 457). It thus depends on the normative position the person occupies when looking at Iraq which actors are morally responsible for the situation because some causes (or all) might be justifiable (Miller, 2001, p. 457). That is an unsatisfying conclusion if the PPP is the correct way forward, because that principle leaves no room for different kinds of interpretation.

What is also clear from this argument is that in complex situations, multiple actors can be causally responsible for the situation. However, then the question is raised who receives what share of the responsibility. In other words, how the responsibility to rectify the situation can be divided among the various actors is still unclear. Miller tries to provide an answer to this situation by understanding responsibility in such a way that actors that are neither causally nor morally responsible for the situation (D) can have an obligation to rectify the situation because D benefited from the situation, is capable of rectifying the situation while the causally/morally responsible agent is not, or because there is a connection between D and the victim of A's negative actions (Peeters et al., 2015, p. 22). However,

even though such a way of distributing the responsibility to rectify the harm can be justified on grounds that rectifying the situation should be done best (capacity), on the idea that it is unfair to profit from others' misfortune (benefit claim), or because one has special responsibilities towards the situation or victim (community), it leaves the ethical system open to freeriding behavior of actors that are incapable of rectifying the situation best, have no special relationship with the victim, and/or do not profit from the situation. Neither is it possible to identify which type of responsibility is to be chosen in a situation, because it is most likely possible to create an argument for more than one responsibility in any case. For example, the benefit responsibility could be invoked in crimes committed by poor people who lack the means to ever rectify the damage they caused. However, it is unjust to let richer people constantly pay for the crimes committed by poorer citizens simply because they have the capacity to pay for the damages. Therefore, the three ideas of Miller could lead to more freeriding behavior as well as to confusing situations, which actors are to rectify a situation. Therefore, a more adequate tool to ascribe responsibility is needed if the PPP is to be used effectively in the climate change situation.

To find that, it is necessary to look into the specific situation of climate change. The current climate change is caused by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Following the PPP, the actors that emit the greenhouse gasses are causally responsible for the climate change. Thus, the PPP demands that these emitting actors have to rectify their situation. When looking at a study of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency into the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1850, it is clear that the developed world is the largest emitter with just over half of total greenhouse gas emissions (Den Elzen et al., 2013, 400-403). If greenhouse gas emissions for 'basic needs' are left outside the calculations, this number

rises to nearly 60% (Den Elzen et al., 2013, 400-403). Recently, however, the developing world has taken over with 56,5% of total emissions from 1990 till 2010 originating from developing countries (Den Elzen et al., 2013, 400-403). However, when looking at the total emissions, the developed world clearly emitted more. When zooming in at the emissions per person, the unbalance is even larger because the developing world has a factor 6 or 7 more citizens nowadays than the developed world. Thus if these numbers are approximately correct, the developed world should pay more to rectify the situation than the developing world. These countries have the capacity, both financial and technological, for it, they benefited from emitting greenhouse gasses, and are causally responsible for, at least, their part of the emissions. This seems fair. However, when assigning moral responsibility, the stumbling pedestrian example shows that some situations create causal responsibility but not moral responsibility. Moreover, when the case is complex, moral responsibility is more difficult to assign because actions of various actors might be justifiable when considering their respective situations. Thus it is necessary to look further into the complexity of climate change.

Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions began rising in earnest with the advent of the industrial revolution. Factories were constructed, greenhouse gas emitting machines were introduced and started to replace human/animal power and society changed as a result. Life was miserable in the countryside, less people were needed on the farms and wages were higher in industry, and thus people were forced by poverty and opportunity to leave their homes and move into the new industrial society. With their entrance into that system, they had no choice but to work in the factories and to buy products that now were produced with machines. The other alternative was leaving society and possibly, even likely, starvation, which is therefore not an option. Thus the question

that is raised is whether those individual ordinary people, even though they are causally responsible for climate change by buying products that were made with practices emitting greenhouse gasses, are also morally responsible for these emissions and thus need to rectify the situation. Their case is similar to the pedestrian case. They did not mean to cause the situation, but the situation came upon them and forced them to cause it, like the stone forcing the pedestrian to fall. Thus it might be the case that they are not morally responsible for the climate change situation.

Similarly, nowadays people need to work in order to survive. It is almost impossible to leave the greenhouse gas emitting system. Some self-sustaining communities manage to achieve a good relationship with the planet and barely emit any greenhouse gasses, but not everyone can make that choice because of the way the system operates. The greenhouse gas emitting mechanisms became part of life, and through technological development and ideology, it became part of the cultural system of societies. From an early age people are part of that cultural system. Almost the entire cultural system of the developed world is currently based on greenhouse gas emitting products and machines, because almost every action that a person can undertake will involve these emissions since most of the systems, from food to recreation, are dependent on greenhouse gas emitting resources or practices. Moreover, people are constantly confronted with advertisements to buy greenhouse gas emitting products such as cars or products or services that were produced using greenhouse gas emitting resources. They are also told from an early age that, for example via television and education, the capitalist system works and is good, even though it does not take external (environmental) effects into serious consideration. In fact, people are almost bred into the capitalist system, first via an obligation to go to school and afterwards by the necessity to work in order

to survive, leaving precious little time for people to actually question what they are doing or to find correct literature on the climate change situation, especially when they also have a family to take care of. Many ordinary people thus have no alternative than just move with the flow and hope for the best. Hence, even though many generations of ordinary people are causally responsible for the climate change situation that is unfolding, they might not be morally responsible because they lacked any serious opportunity to act otherwise.

Furthermore, it is most likely that ordinary people only first could have known of the destructive nature of their actions with the publishing of books like *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962, or the 1972 *The Limits to Growth* report by the Club of Rome, but at least from the 1992 IPCC report onwards. From that moment in time, the actions of the people to continue with their greenhouse gas intensive lives arguably became more of a voluntary choice than before those publications. With knowledge comes moral responsibility to act justly (Peeters et al., 2015, p. 54). After all, a lack of knowledge means people do not know they act harmfully, but with the availability of knowledge people can make rational decisions. However, even ignorant people could have used a strict precautionary principle and do no harm. Unfortunately, such a principle is difficult to use if you are sucked into a system and are constantly told that the system is good. This becomes even more difficult regarding climate change when it is taken into consideration that there have also been many reports published by climate change deniers who denied anthropogenic climate change and tried to spread doubt among the people. Similarly, if a person must cooperate in order to survive, then it is difficult to blame him of her for his or her actions (Peeters et al., 2015, p. 54). Therefore, the pressures of the system, the role of marketing, education and ideology made it difficult for people to step out of the greenhouse gas emitting system. Thus,

it is questionable if these people, who obviously are causally responsible for the situation, are also morally responsible for the situation and must rectify it. Depending on the importance a person attaches to using a precautionary principle or how she or he interprets the ability of the people to step out of the system, it is possible to go either way. However, it requires good arguments to claim that individual ordinary people are morally responsible for the climate change situation and thus also have an obligation to rectify it.

If indeed ordinary people of developed countries are not morally responsible for the climate change situation, then it is necessary to find another actor that is responsible for rectifying the situation. The situation must be rectified, because the harm done to the planet and all its inhabitants is too large to go unrectified. Thus the eye turns towards the people that actually can make a difference in societal constructions. These are the people with power such as major industrialists, important bankers, the extremely wealthy, powerful politicians, important intellectuals, and major corporations. These actors were and are capable of changing the system in such a way that it becomes sustainable. However, their track record seems only to point into the direction of using greenhouse gas emitting resources. Thus these actors, who control society to a large extent by managing the socio-economic and socio-political situation, are via their control not just largely causally responsible for the behavior of ordinary people. Because they are in a position to actually change the system, their actions can be judged to be worthy of blame or praise as well. Therefore, if not ordinary people, but their (unelected) leaders are morally responsible for the situation, then the PPP that is currently being debated between nation-states and which encompasses a transfer of public money from the developed world to developing countries is wrong. After all, taking the 2016 government budget of the Netherlands as an example, around 75% of

government income comes from ordinary people working in jobs or having small businesses (Rijksoverheid, 2015, p. 2). Therefore, unless new taxes on the wealthy and powerful are introduced (which is unlikely since they hold the power), any transfer of money that would come from the government budget would also largely come from ordinary citizens. But that would be unjust because they are not morally responsible. Therefore, the PPP between nations actually is likely to cause people to pay for a situation to which they hold no moral responsibility while those morally responsible are likely to get out safely.

As a consequence of all the above, it can be concluded that the causal responsibility for climate change lies with ordinary people and their leaders. However, because it is unlikely that ordinary citizens have had choices to live sustainably, this causal responsibility does not lead to the moral responsibility to rectify the situation. That responsibility should not be ascribed to actors based on their relation with the situation, but to the actors that were actually in the position to change the systems to become more sustainable but refused to do so. Therefore, these actors have conducted blameworthy actions and are as a result morally responsible to rectify the situation. As a result of that conclusion, it is unjust to use the polluter pays principle as it is currently being debated internationally, because that principle would likely lead to the situation where ordinary people are going to bear the bulk of the climate change rectification costs, while those that are morally responsible get off lightly. Hence, instead of focusing on causal responsibility, the polluter pays principle needs to be either modified to focus on moral responsibility as its baseline for identifying those who need to pay, or should be removed altogether and replaced with a principle that looks into the world's systems to identify the actors that are responsible for the situation. Either way, ordinary people should not suffer from the decisions of the elites.

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Our moral duty to kill house cats
Pieter Groenewege

INTRODUCTION

Reptiles do their best, but cats still are the most controversial pets one may have. Indeed, many call themselves a 'dog person' to implicitly express their aversion to them. On the other side, cat people are attracted to their intelligence, independence and kind disposition. Morally, cats are more problematic than dogs. As I will show, cats are obligate carnivores, whereas dogs can more easily live happily and healthily on a vegan diet. This leads to a moral clash with sentientistic utilitarianism, which prescribes veganism. If vegan cats are an impossibility, should we kill the cats instead of the animals to feed them? This essay explores that question by looking at utilitarianism, cat diets and the consequences the one has for the other.

UTILITARIAN ETHICS

Utilitarianism is a school of consequentialism (Curry, 2011, p. 43). According to consequentialism, "*the value of an action derives entirely from the value of its consequences*" (Blackburn, 1994, in Curry, 2011, p. 43). The basics of utilitarianism themselves are straightforward. Utilitarian ethics' main concept is, as the name suggests, utility, which roughly translates to happiness or welfare (Višak, 2013). Utilitarians strive for a maximization of utility. This is based on equal consideration of interests; as Jeremy Bentham phrased it, "*Each to count for one and none for more than one*" (Singer, 2009, p. 5).

Like any ethical theory, these propositions have a number of disadvantages. Maximizing utility, for instance, sounds good at first until one goes about doing it. There are basically two options: maximizing total utility and maximizing average utility. The first strategy leads to the so-called Repugnant Conclusion: bringing into life vast numbers of beings that need

only be marginally more happy than unhappy is a valid strategy to maximize utility, which nonetheless has little intuitive appeal (Višak, 2013). The second strategy requires killing every being whose happiness is below average, eventually leaving the world population to consist of one supremely euphoric being, who is both unable and unauthorized to reproduce since that would lower the average happiness. This outcome, too, has little intuitive appeal[2] (Višak, 2013).

Curry (2011), in addition, remarks that Utilitarians, in striving for the common good, have a theoretical disregard for individuals. What is good for the common good (or the common 'utility') may be disastrous for a few individuals. Utilitarianism, in this sense, has no inherent protection against exploitation, and can therefore likely only be used when combined with individual rights. Curry further adds that utilitarianism requires measurement of utility or happiness and everything that causes it, which is practically impossible since many things do not lend themselves to measurement.

A further comment was made by John Stuart Mill, who wondered whether it would be preferable to be stupid but happy or bright but unhappy, in asking, "*Is it better to be a satisfied pig or a dissatisfied Socrates?*" (Rollin, 2006, p. 126). Mill argued Socrates is the one to envy, but opinions vary. Dogmatic Utilitarians would probably not see this as an objection, if utility is all that counts.

The leading exponent of Utilitarian animal ethics is Peter Singer, whose trailblazing book *Animal Liberation* (1975; 2009) explored its foundations and consequences. *Animal Liberation* is a moral extentionist approach to utilitarianism: Utilitarian principles are applied not just to humans, but to all that can

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2 I do not claim that lack of intuitiveness is a valid argument against any philosophical theory. However, it does lower the chance of a theory's perscriptions being put into practice and can therefore be used as a criticism.

suffer, as suffering is the basis for interests. Singer's approach is sentientistic: it lays the boundaries of its moral consideration not at the edges of humanity, but includes all sentient beings, thus, all that can suffer. This means Singer's theory excludes plants, fetuses, ecosystems, species (all that cannot suffer) from moral consideration. The utility of both (sentient) animals and humans must then be maximized.

Sentientistic utilitarianism leads to veganism: there is no way the human's interest of a pleased palate outweighs the animal's interest of not being raised in horrible circumstances and/or being spared a stressful transport and slaughter. Add to that the environmental damage caused by the animal industry and the relief becomes even starker. Strangely, in *Animal Liberation*, Singer advocates vegetarianism, not veganism (2009). Veganism is – philosophically – the most coherent option, however. The production of eggs and dairy products, for example, entails the killing of animals (be it chicks or calves). All animal protein is the product of suffering in some way or another – a suffering that is not outweighed by anyone's culinary interests.

CATS

Here, the cats come in. In contrast to domestic dogs (which are omnivorous), cats are obligate carnivores (Plantinga, 2013). A bit of history will explain why. The domestication of cats was a voluntary effort on both sides: cats were attracted to the significant quantities of mice and rats that were, in turn, attracted to humans' granaries, which were set up when agriculture started yielding grains that needed a central storage (Plantinga, 2013). The Egyptians revered cats for this, but the average Dark Age civilian did not: they were even declared demonic by the papacy and lonely women with cats were seen as witches. In an interesting twist of events, the resulting extermination of cats led to an enormous population of rats

with fleas that carried Yersinia Pestis, the bacteria that caused the bubonic plague. This also led to a further stigma on lonely women with cats, because these 'witches' somehow got off the hook. At some point, people started to understand that rats and the plague were related and that cats' murderous rampages were beneficial in this regard. This set off the modern domestication of cats that led to them being the loved pets they are today (Plantinga, 2013). The point of this story is that as cats have, throughout their history with humans, been deployed to kill pests and vermin, their current diet does not differ all that much from their diet at the start of their domestication – when they first approached human granaries several thousand years ago (Plantinga, 2013). As a result, today's domestic cats are responsible for an extermination of birds and small mammals on a massive scale, killing '1,3-4,0 billion birds and 6,3-22,3 billion mammals' in the United States (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) annually, a review article suggests[3] (Loss, Will, & Marra, 2013). Cats are not only instinctually but also biologically obligate carnivores: "*some of their required nutrients are only found naturally in animal sources*" (Wakefield, Shofer, & Michel, 2006).

This does not stop the vegan cat food market, though. There is demand for vegan/vegetarian cat foods, so there is also supply. In the Netherlands, several brands are available online and in organic/health food stores; popular brands include Benevo and Ami Cat. The nutrients that a vegan diet naturally lacks are – or so the manufacturers claim – created artificially and added to the mix.

Some manufacturers, however, do not deliver what they claim. A 2004 study of two American vegan cat foods showed that both were deficient in a number of vital nutrients, containing less than the minimum amounts prescribed by the

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3 Around 37 birds and 240 mammals per cat per year (Loss, Will, & Marra, 2013, p. 3).

Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) (Gray, Sellon, & Freeman, 2004), even though one of them explicitly claimed to comply to the AAFCO standards. This seems not to be a popular research topic, however: recent health analyses of current vegan cat foods are not available.

When it comes to animals capable of suffering, many would argue that health is not a topic where the benefit of the doubt may rule. As long as today's vegan (and vegetarian) cat foods are not shown to contain all vital nutrients by independent researchers, consumers can assume that a vegan diet may, for certain individual cats, lead to increased risk for several illnesses, including bladder stones, heart failure and eye problems (Plantinga, 2013). This means that in practice, house cats are thus still obligate carnivores: in order to keep them at prime health, other animals must be killed.

If more than one sentient animal must be killed to keep the cat alive, sentientistic utilitarianism would argue for killing the cat instead, as each animal's interests count for one. It is probably safe to assume that more than one animal must be killed to feed a cat during its lifetime, as most cat foods contain chicken and fish and not elephants and whales. As long as reliably nutritious vegan cat foods are not available, sentientistic utilitarianism leads to the conclusion that we must kill cats instead of the animals to feed them.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

But which would sentientistic utilitarianism argue we kill? All domestic cats? Even the feral ones? This depends on our sphere of responsibility, which is different from our sphere of moral concern. Whom or what we value morally is included in the latter. Our decisions must take into account the interests of all within it. And indeed, this applies only to our own decision. We cannot sensibly be held responsible for the decisions of others (including other animals). So the behavior of which

cats is our responsibility, then? To answer that question, we need to distinguish between different kinds of cats. The most basic distinction that can be made is between house cats and feral cats. House cats are tame, live in or near people's homes and are fed by them. Feral cats are wild and shy, live on farms, allotments or in nature and tend to themselves. I would argue that house cats are our responsibility, but feral cats are not.

For house cats, humans decide what happens and are therefore responsible for their actions. Firstly, their very existence may be due entirely to humans, as both 'responsible' catteries and commercial breeders breed cats purely to sell them to future owners – or servants, as the saying goes. Cats from shelters have various sources: they may be feral cats, taken from farms, allotments or nature, or they may come from humans who could no longer care for them. Secondly, humans choose their diet. Commercial cat food mostly consists of grain, with a pinch of so-called 'animal by-products': the remains of intensively farmed animals humans are too disgusted by to eat. Thirdly, the hunting trips cats have when they are allowed to leave the house are the consequence of humans' choices and are therefore the humans' responsibility. I have described the consequences of this particular choice above.

Feral cats follow their instincts and cannot be held responsible for their actions, since responsibility applies only to creatures with morality (i.e. mentally competent humans) and does not apply to amoral creatures. Their behavior therefore generally does not fall within our sphere of responsibility. An exception that should be made, is feral cats whose existence is the consequence of humans' decisions, as these do fall within humans' sphere of responsibility. These are the invasive domestic cats that have been introduced to environments they did not originally inhabit and that have consequently wreaked havoc in the local ecology. The major concern for utilitarians is the animals cats harm and kill, for which

humans are responsible. A second concern is the (mostly island populations of) mammalian, bird and reptilian species that have gone extinct through cat predation (Nogales, et al., 2004). A noteworthy case is a single cat that ate the entire last population of the Stephen Island Wren, now extinct (Nogales, et al., 2004). The species themselves have no interests and are therefore not included in our sphere of moral concern, but the individual sentient animals (and humans) that depend on them are. These two reasons have led to feral cat eradication programs that sentientistic utilitarianism would, in fact, approve of.

At this point it may be suggested to turn all house cats into feral cats so that they leave our sphere of responsibility. There are more objections to this suggestion than the simple fact that many cats will not survive the transition. Kicking out one's cat is one's own decision, not the cat's, so the consequences are one's own responsibility. The consequences are that the cat, instead of eating farmed meat and fish, will hunt, kill and eat several hundred sentient beings per year. As this killing spree still falls within humans' sphere of responsibility, this is not a morally viable option.

A TAD LESS

The above statements will have so little appeal to almost everyone, that (almost) no-one will be willing to kill their cats (painlessly, since minimizing suffering is one of utilitarianisms main goals) for the greater good. Even those who oppose such extreme measures as sentientistic utilitarianism prescribes can strive for a better society with less suffering and take less extreme measures to get there. Many are doing this.

The vegan cat foods mentioned earlier are a good example. Yes, their nutritional value[4] has not yet been assessed, let alone proven, independently. Emotionally, consumers would not want

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4 Of the modern recipes, of course.

to risk the health of their cats. But, even if vegan cat foods are slightly less healthy than those containing meat or fish, there would still be a good moral argument for feeding them to your cats. From a Utilitarian perspective, their loss in health would be more than compensated for by the general increase in welfare that comes with rearing and killing less animals. And if the cat is more happy than unhappy, this is even the imperative strategy: the one which maximizes utility. This argument is of diminishing value when vegan cat foods contain barely anything a cat needs and the loss in health becomes more and more significant, leaning towards torture.

Keeping your cat indoors is another simple action. Even PETA approves (n.d.). Not only are cats a danger to the environment, the environment is also a danger to them. Feline AIDS, dogs, wildlife, thieves, intolerant neighbors, bored juveniles, cars, antifreeze etc. all pose serious threats to cats left to roam the streets (PETA, n.d.).

Another example is a Trap Neuter Return (TNR) policy, which is applied on some locations where feral cats are especially prolific. Instead of killing cats, they are – as the name aptly suggests – caught, sterilized and released back into the wild. Less tact is used on islands where cats are a serious threat to species. There, they are simply eradicated, by using "*trapping, hunting (with dogs, rifles, and guns), poisoning (in fish baits), and disease introduction (mainly virus)*" (Nogales *et al.*, 2004, p. 313).

On the other side of the Earth, New Zealand economist Gareth Morgan pleads for a cat-free country. His website – Cats to go – sounds like a take-away restaurant, but is actually an activist page covering the damage cats do and ways people can prevent it. Comfortingly, he states "*We don't suggest you knock your favorite furry friend on the head*" (Morgan, n.d.). Instead, less extreme measures, like getting a bell for your cat, sterilizing him or her, keeping him or her inside etc. are suggested.

CONCLUSION

Strict sentientistic utilitarianism leads to the moral imperative to kill cats for whose behavior we are responsible, if one does not trust vegan cat food alternatives. Many alternative actions are available to those unwilling to take such drastic measures. I would count myself among the latter. Feeding cats vegan cat foods and keeping them inside seems to solve the problem, but for the uncertainty about the health consequences of that diet. In any case, cats also undoubtedly have many positive effects on their environment that were not covered here. Apart from killing those pesky mosquitoes – unless you have a lazy Joe – they are family members in many households for a reason. If they can be held morally and responsibly, they increase overall welfare rather than decrease it. Utilitarianism then prescribes a moral imperative to keep cats!

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Animal testing from a moral perspective
The need for a paradigm shift
Kyra Weerts

When I was 16 years old, the father of the children I was babysitting asked me to be part of a photo-shoot for the company he worked for. Together with some neighbors we participated in a photo-shoot with our dogs for MSD Animal Health. I was honored when I heard that my pictures would be used in the campaign for their newest dog vaccine. How little did I know. I was young, fooled by the name MSD Animal Health and never did any research on their practices. Only years later when a friend from high school, (who now studies animal science), mentioned she was cleaning the animal cages at MSD as a summer job did the alarm bells start to ring.

   Just a minimal search brought up cruel practices of animal experimentation at MSD and after a week filled with nightmares and guilt I decided to call MSD to withdraw my pictures from their campaign. Unfortunately they made me sign a contract, which entitled them full ownership over the use of these pictures, resulting in it becoming a black page in my young existence. The animals at MSD are used in tests for veterinary vaccines for diseases such as calicivirus, kennel cough and parvovirus. These animals exist for the sole purpose of dying, all in the name of good health for other animals. This essay will reason why these type of practices still exist, and will develop argumentation on how these animals should be included in our moral circle, leading to a political paradigm shift that will result in the abolishment of the experimentation of animal vaccines on animals.

WHY DO THESE PRACTICES STILL EXIST?
If a living being is suffering, there is no moral justification for not taking that suffering into consideration. No matter

the background or nature of this being, the equality principle requires that all its suffering is counted equally with the suffering of any other being (Singer, 1979). The ability to suffer differs between humans and non-human animals, but is the same between animals of the same species (Bentham, 1789). We have assigned some animals from one species more rights to exist and live a healthy live than other animals from the same species. This is strange as they have the same capacity to suffer. A reason for this hypocrisy is that apparently pets are located within our moral circle where animals used for experiments to test the vaccines for our pets, strangely enough are not included. The moral circle is the invisible boundary drawn around those entities that you deem worthy of moral consideration (Singer, 1981) It can be argued that the exclusion of animals that are used to experiment animal medicines on from our moral circle is based on contractarianism, which Regan (1983) defines "*as a morality that consists of a set of rules that individuals voluntarily agree to abide by, as we do when we sign a contract*". This means that those who are able to understand and accept the terms and conditions of the contract are covered directly. These contractors can also agree on a set of rules that help protect the rights of others that cannot "sign the contract" themselves but are loved and cared for by those who can (Ibid). Generally, animals are unable to understand and sign contracts, which would imply that they have no rights. However some animals like our pets, have sentimental value for people and therefore their rights will be protected (Ibid). So reasoned from a contractarianism perspective we have no moral duty to animals in general, but only a duty to those people who have sentimental interests and care about what happens to them (Ibid). A conclusion that could be drawn from this is that apparently most humans lack the sentimental interest in animals used for animal vaccine experiments. This can be due to a lack of awareness of the practices, people deciding to close

their eyes for it or people having other 'more important' moral values that ought these practices necessary.

Another reason for these practices to continue causing these animals not to be part of our moral circle is because their objectification is indirectly embedded in our legal system, where pets are assigned intrinsic value. The Dutch law explicitly states that it is against the law to abuse or kill your pet cat or dog, assigning them intrinsic value and rights. Yet, at the same time it continues to grant companies like MSD Animal Health permits to experiment their animal vaccines on animals. Undercover research done be Cruelty Free International (2013) revealed some of MSD Animal Health's practices, which include:

- Puppies from the age of 5 weeks and kittens less than 6 months old being killed on a regular basis.
- Puppies being taken away from their mothers from the age of only 4 weeks, to be used in tests.
- Healthy female adult beagles, which no longer serve a purpose once their puppies are taken away for tests, being killed.
- The lack of effort put into the finding of homes for those adult and puppy beagles that were 'no longer required'.

If these animals were owned and abused like this by individuals, it would be considered an offence and people would have to face trial. On the contrary, these companies receive a permit from the government, supporting and allowing them to continue these cruel practices. The legal embeddedness of this unfair distinction facilitates people to morally justify these practices. Even if individuals would decide to include these animals in their moral circle, the legal system would still facilitate these practices.

After having developed a clear understanding of the core

problem why these practices still exist, the next section will further elaborate on why and how these animals should be included in our moral circle. Once included, this will lead to the abolishment of the use of animals for the experimentation of animal vaccines.

HOW AND WHY WE SHOULD INCLUDE THEM AND STOP ANIMAL TESTING

Gandhi once said "*The greatness of a nation and its moral progress, can be judged by the way its animals are treated*". By stating this Gandhi called attention to a major blind spot indicating that by allowing animal experiments we block national moral progress.

To become more aware of these moral blind spots within our society and stimulate moral progress Van den Berg (2013) designed the theory of universal subjectivism. This is a pathocentric theory that takes the moral importance of coincidence seriously (Ibid). It makes you imagine yourself being in the worst possible situation in society, to which being an animal that is used for experimenting comes pretty close. Ask yourself, would you like to trade places with them? If the answer is no, then there is something fundamentally wrong with the way we treat these animals. Expanding the moral circle in a way that not only pets but also these animals are included is not only a sign of moral progress but most importantly a promising development towards an ethical treatment of these animals.

History has proven this type of moral progress is possible, as in the past, black people were also used and abused as slaves and only had instrumental value. This is to a certain extent comparable to the way we use animals in experiments to develop vaccines for their peers. We exploit the rights of one group of animals for the betterment of another group of animals of the same species. Nowadays, black people are generally included in our moral circle, have rights and are

considered to be equal. Why do we not do the same with animals that are used for the experimentation of animal vaccines? Maybe because the group that is generally most concerned with the suffering of animals: pet owners, puts the interests of their pets before those of other animals. We have special relations with our pets that we do not have with other animals, which make this argument not a matter of morality but one of affection. Pets are seen as family members and people care for them and there is no way to convince them not to feel this way. Pet owners argue animal testing is necessary to keep their pets healthy and potentially prevent their untimely deaths. Not testing vaccines would make them have to risk their dog's life with an untested compound. Feelings of affection as such are not ethically good or bad. The question is whether our moral obligations towards these animals should depend on our feelings in this manner. Ethics does not demand us to eliminate personal relationships and feelings of affection, but it does demand that when we act we consider the moral claims of those negatively affected by our actions independently of our feelings for them. Awareness needs to be raised to make people realize that feelings of affection should not make us ignore the resulting immoral treatment of other beings. For the abolishment of slavery also 'sacrifices' had to be made as the luxury of having employees that could be freely exploited, disappeared. This is a bigger sacrifice than the slightly increased risk of your pet dying from a disease that cannot be cured yet, as most important vaccines have been developed. Therefore it is likely that animals that are used to test animal vaccines nowadays will (eventually) be included in our moral circle. By doing so, lessons can be learned from the process of abolishing slavery, which all started with an overall increase in awareness of the moral blind spot.

With an increase of awareness, a window of opportunity is opened to convince a critical mass of people of the cruelty of

these practices. Such mass is needed to create enough collective will to set up a moral contract that includes animals in the moral circle (Regan, 1986). This could result in a development that has the potential of starting a shift in the political paradigm surrounding the topic of granting permits allowing these cruel practices.

There are, however, some skeptics around with different interests that deliberately block the abolishment of these types of animal experiments. In the next section their main arguments will be refuted on moral grounds.

REFUTING COUNTERARGUMENTS

A first politically based argument is that the law makes it obligatory to test these vaccines on animals and that therefore they do not have another choice. However, only 20% of all animal experiments that are executed in the Netherlands are obligatory (Rijksoverheid, 2015a). All the others could be done in other ways, given the latest technology and science that is available. The underlying reason for those businesses not to convert to the use of these technologies is that the implementation is just more expensive. This argument is in no way based on any ethical grounds but is solely focused on trying to reach the highest amount of profit possible trying to hide behind a curtain of sanctimony provided by the government that is unnecessarily granting them a license to conduct experiments on animals. To facilitate a transition, the Dutch government will invest 5.6 million euro in the period of 2015-2017 in research that targets lowering the amount of animals used in experiments (Rijksoverheid, 2015b).

Another more politically founded argument is that these companies would move their practices to other countries where experimenting with animals as discussed is still allowed. Here, we can at least make sure it is done in the most humane way possible. The fact is, there is no humane way of doing

animal experiments. A choice to grant permits for executing animal experiments should not be based on the argument that if you stop allowing it, they will move their practices elsewhere. This does not make it a morally right thing to do. Being one of the most liberal and morally progressive countries in the world, shouldn't we become frontrunners and start this process of abolishing animal testing? It is easy for all countries to just point at each other, this way you never reach moral progress.

Furthermore it is argued by speciesists that the expansion of the moral circle including black people is entirely different from the inclusion of animals. Speciesists assign different values, rights and special consideration to beings solely on the bases of their type of species (Singer, 1975). If this is the case, why did we manage to include pets in our moral circle? Apparently human beings are capable to feel empathy for non-human species. It is not about trying to include a randomly selected animal species in our moral circle but about the equal moral treatment of individual animals within one type of species. The case is therefore comparable with the abolishment of slavery.

Bentham (1789) and Singer (1979) have stressed the importance of considering whether a being can suffer and indicated an equality of suffering for all animals of one species. The difference in treatment of pets and animals used to experiment new animal vaccines on is based on the fact that the latter are not included in our moral circle. This is reasoned from Regan's (1983) theory on human contractarianism in combination with the legal embeddedness of the intrinsic value we have assigned to our pets and instrumentalization of animals used in experiments. It has pointed us at the moral responsibility to include animals used for the experimentation of animal vaccines in our moral circle in order to create moral progress. Van den Berg's (2013) theory of universal subjectivism can help to create a general acknowledgement of it to be a moral blind spot, initiating action. By comparing the current

situation to times of slavery we have come to the conclusion that it is possible to expand the moral circle in such a way and lessons can be learned from this process. A major problem for it to become a reality is the distortion of feelings of affection and morality by many pet owners. Therefore it is important to raise awareness of this difference, and if established this could form the start of a political paradigm shift. In the last section different counterarguments have been morally refuted, clearing the way for the inclusion of animals used for the experimentation of animal vaccines into our moral circle. Once included, the political paradigm will have to be reconsidered, resulting in the abolishment of these type of practices.

This essay has given a thorough analysis of the ethical problems that arise with animal experiments for testing animal vaccines. I have argued why these are unethical and unnecessary and refuted most important counterarguments on moral basis. By doing so it has cleared the way for the abolishment of these type of animal experiments. No animal should be born to suffer, it is time to start this paradigm shift.

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Taking the feminism out of ecofeminism
Arne Wijnia

With the rise of environmental philosophy, many different
ethics of the environment have emerged (Curry, 2011).
They all try not only to formulate how we should treat our
environment and world, but they also explain why current
environmental practices are not ethical (on which almost all
at least seem to agree). Ecofeminism is one of these ethical
theories. It is a form of ethics of care, in which typical feminine
virtues are propagated. In our relation with the environment,
we have lost sight of virtues such as compassion, care and
reciprocity. According to ecofeminism, these are virtues typical
amongst female relations and through centuries of patriarchal
oppression of both women and nature we have lost sight of
these virtues (Kheel, 1991). Ecofeminism took off especially
among (obviously) feminists, with the first use of the term
dating back to the early 1970s (d'Eaubonne, 1974). I can only
agree with the virtues propagated by ecofeminism. It seems
clear that in our relation with nature and the environment we
indeed have had a way too destructive, parasitic and heartless
approach. The problem with ecofeminism is therefore not in
the virtues that it propagates. As a matter of fact, this could be
a leading ethical theory with regard to how we should treat
nature. The problem with the theory is the emphasis on these
virtues being feminine. Through that, it implies that everything
is the fault of men, that men are by default incapable of
correcting these mistakes and that only women can grasp
the mystical bond with nature that is needed to protect and
safeguard said nature. I propose to adopt the virtues and ideals
of ecofeminism. However, we should not call it ecofeminism,,
acknowledging that these are virtues that every human being
can and should have, regardless of sex.

   The first mistake of ecofeminism is the idea that the virtues

of ecofeminism are feminine traits. Ecofeminists point to hundreds and even thousands of years of male oppression, in which only greed, domination and strength were valued (Spretnak, 1990). They give this as an argument for the fact that men exhibit these traits and that only women can be compassionate and loving. However, men, just like women, can exhibit the virtues of ecofeminism. Whether or not they do, has to do with their surroundings and the way that they are raised. Implying that only women can have these virtues implies that they have a radically different biological constitution compared to men. This is not the case with respect to feelings or virtues. Women, like men, can be greedy and inconsiderate. Men, like women, can be caring and loving. No virtue is typically feminine, nor typically male, nor typical for blacks, gays or blondes. We get our virtues from our culture and the way we are raised, we do not get them because we have certain biological traits. If the latter were true, there would be no difference in values between cultures.

From this it also follows that women can be just as heartless as men and it is the system that should be changed. As addressed in the previous point, the virtues of ecofeminism are not typically feminine, but can be exhibited by every human being. So why do we not see them on a large scale as part of our institutionalized culture? This is not the fault of men because they were in charge through patriarchal ways, but is the fault of the system itself. For centuries, this has been a patriarchal system, which indeed heavily oppressed (amongst others) women. The patriarchal system had at his head a father figure (hence the name, which is derived from the Latin pater, meaning father). This father figure was traditionally seen in the family, with the literal father being in charge. It was present in the church father as well, with the religious leaders given an authority based on god. It was also present at work, with the boss being the father figure. Note how in each case the

father figure was indeed male, but also white, Christian, old, straight and richer than its subjects. In the case of the family, children were oppressed, in the case of the church the religious were oppressed (and deliberately kept dumb) and in the case of work the poor and black were oppressed. Throughout the above, women have also been oppressed and the natural world has not been treated with any consideration, but it is not true that men, as a sex, are at fault for the oppression of both women and nature. It was a specific group that benefited from the patriarchal system and some women participated in this as well, seemingly without any 'feminine' virtues. Furthermore, over the last decades, the dominant doctrine has switched to a neoliberal one. This new doctrine has little to do with the supremacy of men. In fact, it advocates freedom and liberty for everyone, regardless of what you start with or how you are born. The destruction of the environment and nature has continued unparalleled however and even increased over these last decades (Stockholm Resilience Centre,2015). It has become obvious that this destruction has no connection with the oppression of women if we see that their rights have increased in the same period and women's equality, although still not perfect, has improved significantly. The point is that it was thus not men that destroyed and oppressed nature and women alike. It was the patriarchal system that promoted destruction and oppression of everything different from the white, male, Christian, straight, rich human being and a neoliberal one has now replaced that dominant system. This has undoubtedly improved the situation of women, but oppresses new groups and oppresses nature just as much as the patriarchal system has. Women are a part of the neoliberal system, they can be found working at big companies, studying at universities and actively taking part in political parties. The emphasis on the so called feminine virtues of ecofeminism has not increased however. This is because it is the system itself that internalizes

certain virtues in every human being. Neoliberalism has internalized competition, individuality and greed and it has done so in every child growing up under its wings, once again regardless of biological traits. A society based around caring and compassion will internalize radically different virtues in all of its children. Every human being is capable of good and bad after all. Just like replacing all the bankers and punishing the 'bad' ones won't work to prevent a new financial crisis because the system remains the same, replacing men in key positions with women won't instantly create a society based around caring and compassion. Therefore, blaming the current ecological crisis on men and a so-called masculinity bias, as some ecofeminists do (Curry, 2011), cannot hold. The crisis seems more likely to be caused by a greed and indifference bias from men and women alike.

Furthermore, calling certain virtues feminine enhances stereotypes that affect both men and women, which is exactly something that feminism should avoid and fight against. By listing care, compassion and love or the connection with nature in general as typical feminine traits, you discourage men from wanting to exhibit these traits. Especially in societies that do not encourage such traits to begin with, it can be hard for large groups of men to actively pursue traits that are listed as being unmanly. Ecofeminism thus shoots itself in the foot: it loses almost half of the population by claiming that the good virtues are feminine. It implies that these cannot or should not be pursued by men. It thus enhances the inequality between men and women it so desperately tries to fight. It is better to name virtues of love and compassion as virtues of good human beings. This makes them worth striving for by everyone, regardless of sex.

Another issue with ecofeminism is the unnecessary emphasis of some ecofeminists on the mystical bond between women and nature (Spretnak, 1990). A bond that can supposedly

be traced back to ancient tribal religions in which an earth mother was worshipped. This being, called Gaia after the Greek word for earth, is a representation of the earth, which gives us food, nurtures us and has sacred and intrinsic value. This can be seen in sacred places that were worshipped such as groves and caves or certain trees. The Gaia religions were replaced with male-centered religions, first in the form of religions worshipping male thunder and sky gods and later the great monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Islam. By doing so, it is argued that we have lost contact with our earth mother and the intrinsic value of her being. Indeed, most present day religions are predominantly male-centered and have in almost every case done little good for nature and our connection with it. However, a religion based on an earth mother in which women play a central role because they understand this connection is a good alternative. According to such religions, women represent the fertility of the Earth, but you need both men and women to reproduce. It once again just emphasizes differences and inequality between men and women if one proclaims that women have some spiritual connection with a Gaia goddess. We don't need a new (or old for that matter) religion to regain our connection with nature. Our Earth is female nor male: it is here for every creature living on it equally and should be treasured by every creature equally. Men can connect with nature just as well as women, as anyone who has ever taken the time to visit nature for the sake of nature can confirm. I agree that we should not try to express environmentalism simply in terms of scientific fact because nature gives us value beyond oxygen, food or clean water. Nevertheless, our connection with nature has nothing to do with godlike beings that are assigned anthropogenic properties, female or male. The connection has to do with the fact that we are living beings on this planet and we share that connection, regardless of genders and species.

In defense of ecofeminism, one might argue that women do exhibit virtues of care and thus can protect and understand nature better, but their oppression by men has prevented them from doing so. However, this argument, which seems to be a dominant one, only shows how the patriarchal system is the root for the lack of these virtues in our daily lives. To blame men for oppressing women and to even indoctrinate them in such a way that they no longer show ethics of care but start copying virtues typical for men such as greed and egocentrism is an easy way out. Men have been indoctrinated by the system as well. It has surely favored them (although not all men. For a poor man, or a black man, or a young boy, the patriarchal system can hardly be described as a system that favored them), but it didn't bring out the best in them. The fact that the patriarchal system indoctrinated and oppressed women and in combination with that the lack of virtues of care within that system does not show a necessary connection between women and said ethics of care. The system never indoctrinated women into behaving against their 'nature' to act submissive or with disregard and a lack of care for nature, it simply installed these virtues in them, just as it did in men. Not despite the fact that these virtues are unnatural for women, but because these virtues can arise in each of us. They are created by culture and dominant systems and cannot arise out of nowhere because of nature, or be installed against someone's nature.

A second argument in favor of ecofeminism is that the fight for women's rights is linked to that of rights for nature. Both groups have been oppressed for centuries and are therefore connected, which makes a solution to this oppression also connected. This argument puzzles me, because as I showed before, other groups have been oppressed for centuries as well. These include, amongst others, blacks, non-Christians, children, homosexuals and the poor. However, no one argues for an ecoblack movement (as far as I know), or an ecohomosexual

movement. The idea that black people have a sacred bond with nature because both have been equally oppressed by the patriarchal system seems ludicrous and racist. The same applies to homosexuals, the poor or non-Christians. One could argue that children do have a special connection with nature, but this has more to do with their innocence and the fact that they have not yet internalized our cultural virtues which are so anti-nature at the moment. It only shows that every human being has the possibility to develop into someone loving and caring for nature and that it is our dominant system that installs virtues against this, both in boys and in girls. A society that does not oppress women but does oppress nature can exist (I believe we are living in one right now, or at least the neoliberal model strives for that) and the other way around seems also possible. The solution to start caring for nature and incorporating new virtues is thus not enhancing the rights of women or giving them a leading role in protecting nature and showing us how it should be done.

Overall, the debate around ecofeminism is a complex one. On one hand, ecofeminists see a clear link between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature and thus also see great hopes for a combined solution to both problems. On the other hand, it creates a weird paradox when women try to advocate equal rights but claim at the same time that an unequal relationship between women, men and nature exists. The result is a movement with a compelling and moving message about love and care for nature, but with a wrong agenda. Ecofeminists should stop emphasizing mystical relationships or attribute virtues to groups based on biological traits. Human beings are not born with certain virtues, they are not born good or evil. Our culture and the dominant system that we live in internalize virtues in each of us. Men can learn to care and love just as women can and women can learn to be greedy and competitive just as men can. The ecofeminist

ideal will thus not be achieved by improving rights for women, or by putting women in charge of environmental protection. The ideal will be achieved by propagating the virtues of ecofeminism to everyone equally and by putting people in charge of environmental protection that are passionate and caring about nature. And these people can be just as easily men as they could be women.

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The moral good of meat and dairy consumption
Francis Zoet

There are many things wrong with the current meat industry. To list a few examples: chickens that succumb under their own weight and get slaughtered within 3 months from birth (Tamzil *et al.*, 2015), mega-stables that can hold over 3000 pigs or 100.000 chickens that are prone to large scale epidemics and disease (e.g. swine fever, bird-flue, BSE, FMD, Schmallenberg-virus, Q-fever (Rijksoverheid (s.a)), the excessive use of antibiotics and the buildup of resistance to these antibiotics in both humans and animals (Kluytmans *et al.*, 2010; Autoriteit Diergeneesmiddelen, 2014), the inability of controlling agents to limit fecal contamination of carcasses in mass slaughter (Bell, 1997; Zembla, 2013). When the effects of meat production on the environment are included, the industry can even be called a true disaster. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation (FAO) 18% of global GHG emissions are caused by animal farming (later corrected to 10% by Fairlie (2010)), while 70% of the worlds arable (pasture + cropland) land is used for animal production, covering a total of 30% of the land surface on the planet (Steinfeld *et al.*, 2006; Monbiot, 2010). The FAO reports that animal farming is responsible for over 8% of global human water use (mainly through feed crops) and that it is probably the largest sectorial source of water pollution caused by animal wastes, antibiotics and hormones, chemicals from tanneries, fertilizers and pesticides used on feed crops, and sediments from eroded pastures (Steinfeld *et al.*, 2006). Industrialized meat and dairy production cannot be justified in any way, and consumption of meat and dairy as a result of this is in many ways morally wrong. Besides the aforementioned effects on the environment it also induces

unnecessary suffering for the animals involved, and poses a threat for human health. However, this does not mean that eating meat and dairy is in the basis morally wrong.

There are several lines of reasoning to support this claim. This essay will begin with the anthropocentric argument that meat production on pastures with organic waste provides an equally efficient source of protein as plant-based protein. To place this in a green ethic the morality of eating meat as defined by the practice of universal subjectivism is countered with an ecocentric ethic, regarding the value of all life as equal. A third argument is based on the intrinsic value of cultural diversity and the dependence of some cultures on eating meat. In the conclusion it is summarized how these arguments show that morally eating meat does not necessarily have to be wrong, as long as this consumption is limited, in balance with the natural environment and/or supporting the intrinsic value of cultural heritage.

The basis of the first argument is an anthropocentric one, as it relates to the utilitarian concept of the greatest 'good' for the largest number of organisms. Within a sustainable agricultural system, eating a little meat is actually more efficient in terms of land-use than relying solely on crop agriculture. The reason for this is that a large part of the landmass on this planet is not fit for crop agriculture. By using this land for animal protein production a larger world population can be fed. A large side-note here is in order, as 26% of the ice-free terrestrial surface is currently used for grazing, of which 20% is degraded through overgrazing, compaction and erosion, and even 73% of the grazing areas in arid regions. The use of silvopastoral activities, combining agroforestry with grazing of ruminants or cattle, could significantly reduce and reverse these effects, while providing opportunity for more biodiversity and increased forestry yields (Steinfeld *et al.*, 2006). The improved diet caused by these feeding methods results in less methane and nitrogen

production from manure, while excess manure that cannot feed the soils could be used for biogas production.

The same argument, increasing the feeding potential of this planet, can be found for the processing of organic waste through animal farming. Pigs and chickens can thrive perfectly well on organic waste and the insects that live in it. Using their fertile manure to replenish the nitrogen and phosphates in the soil is thereby also more efficient than composting the organic waste directly. As Simon Fairlie in his book *Meat: A Benign Extravagance* (2010) summarizes: sedentary pigs, nomadic cows and urban chickens can contribute effectively and sustainably to worldwide protein production.

An addition to the previous statement is the comparison of the use of organic waste streams as feed the use of this source for other purposes. Sanderine Nonhebel from the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen compared the outcome of three different models: In model 1 all (Dutch) waste streams went into the oven to generate energy, while protein was produced from plants. In model 2 all (Dutch) waste streams went to pig feed, while energy was produced with plant material grown for that purpose. In model 3 all (Dutch) waste streams went into the oven again, while special feed was grown for production of animal protein. In all three models the protein and energy production were equal, but where the third model was the most inefficient, model 1 and 2 differed only minimally (Van Dinter, 2014). When the production of energy in model 2 would be replaced by wind or solar instead of biofuels, the efficiency of land-use would even be better for model 2.

There is a maximum to how much meat a person would be allowed to eat in this way. Fairlie calculates in his book that one-third to two-thirds of the current cattle are fed from land unsuited for crop production, which could produce around 18 kilo's of meat per year per person on the planet, and 39 liters of milk or 3 kilo's of cheese. If the 20% of pastures that are

currently being degraded by cattle production are subtracted from these numbers, 14,4 kilo's of meat (276 grams per week, less than half of which is actual meat and not bones, organs, head or tail), 31,2 liters of milk or 2,4 kilo's of cheese would be available per person per year on this planet. That is little, and much of the cattle farmed today are not even farmed in a sustainable way.

The previous argument might be able to justify meat eating in terms of land-use efficiency, but another large moral aspect remains unresolved. By eating an animal we are responsible for the suffering and killing of another sentient being. The theory of universal subjectivism by Floris van den Berg explains the moral argument for not killing other sentient beings for food clearly: the moral good of your actions depends on whether the ones involved in your actions suffer from it (Van den Berg, 2013). This is based on Jeremy Bentham's famous phrase: "*the question is not, can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But, can they suffer?*" Universal subjectivism expands the moral circle of who and what to include from humans to all sentient creatures. Using an expanded version of John Rawls' theory of justice, Van den Berg argues that everyone should (re)view his/her moral stance from the 'worst-off position' a sentient being could be in. If one could not agree with being in this position, this position needs to be improved upon (Van den Berg, 2013).

The criterion for being a sentient being is however based on whether or not the organism has a central nervous system, how it behaves in response to external stimuli and what place it has in the tree of evolution. This argument significantly differentiates between the earthworm's capacity to suffer and the roundworm's; an earthworm does have a central nervous system, while a roundworm does not. This does however not necessarily mean that the roundworm does not suffer when his/her rear end is cut off (Steele *et al.*, 2010). Even plants respond to external stimuli with protective behavior

and "alarm" those of the same species of dangers posed by herbivores (Niinemets *et al.*, 2013; Spinelli *et al.,* 2011). In more basic wording: when a plant is being eaten by an insect it starts pumping venoms to its leafs and "calls" loudly to the plants around him to do the same. Van den Berg solves this issue by arguing that organisms that are higher up the tree of life (as shaped by evolution) have more value than organisms that are lower on this tree. The moral basis of this argument is however slippery. The fact that we as humans can imagine the suffering of an organism that is more similar to ourselves is indeed easier than imagining the suffering of a 'lower' organism less similar to us. This does however not mean that this organism does not have the capacity to suffer; it only means that we cannot imagine it can suffer.

As Van den Berg argued in his lectures, 'suffering' can be seen as a qualia. A qualia is explained with the following example: imagine that you were born blind. During your lifetime you develop a great interest in color, and you learn everything there is to know about it: the different wavelengths of different colors, what colors everyday things and objects have, etc. But you will not know the experience of color and you never will. Although every (biological) aspect that causes suffering can be known to science, what is experienced can be uncertain if the organism is unable to communicate in a manner familiar to humans. This translates both to consciousness, but also pain and suffering: we can know exactly what it constitutes physically and biologically, but we cannot know what a plant, fish or cow experiences. The differentiation Van den Berg makes is therefore an anthropocentric one: it is easiest to make this distinction, because we as humans can identify with sentient animals and what it feels like to have a central nervous system.

Because of the uncertainty of the extent of suffering caused to any organism it is more logical that we should not differentiate between value of different life forms. This view

results in an ethic that places equal value on every single life on this planet. This means that harming other organisms is only allowed to fulfill basic human needs. Killing bacteria is allowed if this prevents sickness, the eating of animals is allowed if this provides the most efficient method of feeding. This does however not result in intensive livestock farming being all right. Nor does it mean that monoculture crop farming is all right, as this has devastating effects on the ecosystem and all its life forms. It does mean that silvopastoral meat farming or hunting is better than monoculture farming of plant protein, because of the lesser harm to a smaller number of species. It does however not mean that silvopastoral meat farming or hunting is better than permaculture farming of plant protein, as this results in even less ecosystem damage than any form of animal protein production, and thereby as little harm as possible to all organisms in the calculation. Unfortunately permaculture farming is not possible everywhere, as was argued before, which in some occasions results in meat consumption being the most positive solution.

And then there is another argument that concerns cultural integrity. All around the world there are peoples that have co-evolved with the eating of meat for their subsistence: the Maasai in Kenya feed primarily on milk, meat and blood, whereas the Inuit rely almost solely on whale and seal meat and blubber. Pictures of kids in Siberia eating raw meat straight from the reindeer in their herd is one of the more poignant images of a cultural reality. People would not exist in these areas without the consumption of animal protein. While they could with current modern technology, this would be objectionable for two reasons.

The first is that throughout history humans have co-evolved with their diet, which has resulted in a metabolic system that uses the natively available nutrients to its fullest. Where a European or American citizen would become obese

and develop colon cancer from the high quantities of animal fats and red (raw) meats the Maasai consume (O'Conner, 2015), the co-evolution of the Maasai with their diet results in good health and possibly even worse health with a plant-based diet. Although in this argument aspects of a naturalistic fallacy can be found (i.e. "The fact that it is this way does not mean it should be this way"), the co-evolution of people and their diet does hold a different kind of truth: many peoples around the world would not have been able to live where they do by relying solely on plant protein. Put even more bluntly: many people all around the world would not be able to survive without farming animals, making a global vegan ethic one that can only exist with a large reduction in human population, mass migrations away from lands unsuitable for crop agriculture.

The second is that even though peoples like the Maasai and Inuit can probably survive on a solely vegetarian/vegan diet with modern technology, this would require a radical change in their way of living. A moral plight to abstain from eating animal products would thereby so drastically change not only their food habits, but also their culture, culinary traditions, lifestyle and heritage, while at the same time requiring a high level of integration of technology (for a vegan diet that still contains vitamin B12 or crop production in the desert), that requesting such a change is morally highly objectionable. When it is considered that a large share of the modern population does not conform or want to conform to Western culture, culinary traditions, lifestyles or heritage, veganism should not be a globally forced practice.

To summarize the points mentioned above: eating animal protein can be the right thing to do in terms of sustainability and respect towards natural ecosystems and cultural diversity. The method of farming of both animal and plant protein is however important in this equation, as is the natural state of the

country people reside in. If a country naturally possesses a large amount of fertile soils, or few people, permaculture production of plant protein is definitely the morally right solution, although this does require technological sophistication for vitamin B12 production. If a country does not possess sufficient fertile soils, the consumption of animal protein produced through sustainable farming methods or fed with biological waste of human consumption is the better solution.

In practice there are difficulties with: if the Dutch polders are managed their water levels will be sufficiently low for crop production, but this would require an addition of sufficient compost and significant extra energy input for pumping, while currently many are only suitable for grass production. However, these farmlands would not have been here without human interference. Leaving them to be consumed by nature again would bring most benefits to the most organisms, although humans would not benefit and would have to decrease in numbers. However, if we do consider the current state of the world as a starting point for our ethic, technology can be included as well. This would again for the Netherlands result in a morally superior position for solely plant protein consumption when produced in a high-rise building with hydroponics for example. Although this requires higher energy consumption than outdoor farming, it results in both ecosystem conservation and efficient protein production. Both permaculture and hydroponics farmed vegetables and fruits are however still difficult to obtain, while grass-farmed meat and dairy is easy to find. To find the balance between our own needs and harming as few as possible hereby becomes the most difficult question. Fairlie's calculation of a balanced maximum meat and dairy consumption per person doesn't take into account the cultures that rely on animal protein for the larger part of their diet. The resulting meat consumption per person in a developed country would thereby probably be significantly

lowered, resulting in a consumption well below one small bite of sustainable meat and one spoon of well-farmed dairy product a week. Consuming meat and dairy in a western country therefore still needs to be discouraged to create a more respectful, balanced, sustainable and ecologically sound planet. Meat and dairy consumption in itself is thereby not inherently wrong. It can even be right.

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7// On writing philosophical reflections

Tomas Rep

The writing of ethical reflections isn't easy. You have to have a message and to support that message with compelling arguments. These arguments have to be linked in a coherent way and the whole needs to be written in an attractive and persuasive fashion. In contrast to scientific writing, ethical reflection requires value judgments. In other words, it calls for a *prescriptive* rather than a *descriptive* approach. In the course Environmental Ethics & Sustainable Development, there won't be any papers to be written, but essays and columns. Columns are small essays of around 500 words in which the author makes one well-argued point. An essay is longer, which allows for more background information, more buildup of arguments and refutation of counter-arguments. A column is compact and tests your abilities to achieve much with few means; to say a lot with few words. It is expected of you to write *academic* columns and essays, meaning there is a high standard for critical thinking and solid argumentation without the use of logical fallacies. Stating your opinion and making a statement requires you to argue solidly. Indeed, the bolder the statement, the more solid your reasoning needs to be.

To aid in the writing of texts, I have elaborated on five insights that emerged from the difficulties experienced by students. They are phrased as negatives, but from what you shouldn't be doing, you can distill what you could be doing. I hope this helps you and makes the writing process as fun as it should be. In this course you can finally really *say* things.

1. Confusing the distinction between moral theory and the scope of moral concern

A moral theory gives a framework for judging whether actions are good or bad. To do so, a theory specifies the nature of good and bad actions through fundamental principles, called axioms. However, equally important is to whom these principles apply. The demarcation of who is 'part of the equation' and who is not, is called the scope of moral concern. To shortly illustrate this point, let us consider an important moral theory: utilitarianism. Utilitarianism states that, an act is good in relation to other options, when it results in the most utility (most happiness, or least suffering, depending on your axiom). In other words, the ends justify the means. But this alone does not say whose utility should be taken into consideration. The scope of moral concern (also called the moral circle) can be limited to one person (egoism), the inhabitants of a nation state (nationalism), an ethnic group (racism), a gender (sexism), humanity (humanism), or expand to include non-human animals (sentientism). So always keep in mind that a moral theory does not automatically imply a specific scope of moral concern.

2. Lack of a message

As disciples of science, we are taught to be as value-free as possible. However, ethics is just about that: values. What has value? How should values be compared and how do we decide on which of two things to value higher? This means you are not only allowed to give your opinion, you have to give a value judgment, you have got to give your opinion in this course. In other words: don't be just descriptive, be prescriptive – You are not writing a paper, you are writing an essay. For example, students have a tendency to discuss consequences (e.g. the usefulness of a policy to tackle climate change) without reflecting on ethical dimensions (e.g. is the idea behind the

policy good?). Furthermore, a common problem is that students do make a point, just not an ethical one. Don't go too in-depth into psychology, hardcore economics etc. while forgetting to ask the 'why' and 'it is good?' questions. The fact that you should voice an opinion is not to say that anything goes. Not all opinions are equal, as most political debate will have you believe. Philosophy requires you to construct good arguments, a solid line of reasoning. A good line of reasoning consists of arguments that are supported by information and other arguments in a consistent way. And good reasoning leads to a conclusion: your point. You could hint at your point in the introduction, and preferably your title as well. Both should grab attention and entice the reader to want to know how you will arrive at your already-stated point.

3. Redundant information

Since information is used to back up arguments, there is an inherent tension in the amount of information to use per argument. You can view it this way: information that does not contribute to an argument is redundant. Introductions are an exception, because in an introduction you build up towards the problem your column addresses. But also in an introduction, every sentence should serve a purpose.

4. Lack of philosophical theories & concepts

In this course, arguments will require you to introduce and explain ethical theories. However, when a theory or classification is introduced in your text, it should relate to your arguments. For example, don't introduce the 'scale of Zweers' if you don't relate it to an argument. The goal of this course is that students engage in critical thinking. This means that your reasoning should be autonomous, rather than heteronomous – simply reproducing other people's arguments is neither challenging nor interesting. Try to engage with the

concepts, apply them, and use them in a meaningful way. The 'dark side' of purposefully using a theory is abusing it. Be sure to avoid selectively using theoretical concepts that fit with a predetermined conclusion. A conclusion should follow from your use of theories, not the other way around. Relatedly, a good academic acknowledges the possible objections and counter-arguments to their own reasoning. In fact, conflict between theories usually leads to the most interesting discussions. You don't necessarily have to address such counter-arguments (as the amount of words in your texts is limited), but be sure that you don't strategically misrepresent the discussions you are taking place in. This almost goes without saying, but never use a concept if you are not aware of its meaning, or if your use of the theory defeats the idea of the theory. For example, saying humans should embrace ecocentrism in order to save themselves is a form of anthropocentric reasoning and therefore voids ecocentrism of its meaning. You can discuss such discrepancies on purpose, but make sure you are aware of them.

5. Too many elements
Above, it is mentioned that a good line of reasoning leads to a strong, convincing conclusion. And that such a conclusion requires a set of interrelated or supporting arguments. When attempting to tackle too large of a problem or to make too grand of a claim, too many arguments are needed to arrive at a convincing conclusion. Therefore, limit your scope to a manageable size, so you can give sufficient attention to the arguments and information that constitute your line of reasoning and lead to your point.

6. Inaccessible writing style
As stated above, the course expects your writing to be of an academic level. But that does not mean you should drown

the reader in complex sentences that are filled to the brim with incomprehensible jargon. The philosophical subjects treated in this course are of practical nature and are relevant to everyday human behavior. At the onset of this book, we remarked that our aim with contemplating moral blind spots and unsustainability is to create a better world. And the most straight-forward way of doing so is communicating convincingly to a wider audience. In other words: it is expected that your writings are readable and understandable to a wider audience. This is not to say you have to simplify your writing excessively – you should aim at striking a balance between depth and clarity. This principle is nicely captured in this quote:

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.
Albert Einstein

8// **Why walkshops make us more critical, ethical and caring**

Pieter Groenewege

Neoliberal politicians often argue that research should lead to valorisation, the idea that scientific knowledge is only valuable if it is useful to society. It is impossible, nowadays, to write any kind of research proposal without considering a valorisation strategy. This influences the types of studies the government funds and therefore the career opportunities of graduates from different fields. There is some merit to this approach: it certainly makes sense for the problem-solving fields (e.g. the medical sciences, engineering). However, in focusing so narrowly on pragmatism it fails to see value beyond practical knowledge. This is a short-sighted approach and one hands-on way out is to organise walkshops.

A focus on the direct, practical usefulness of knowledge may be useful in narrowly economic terms for narrowly pragmatic fields of study, but it wastes the other aspects of personal development through education. Bernard Lonergan has drawn our attention to (at least) two other aspects of learning, in saying that we should "Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, and Be responsible" (Lonergan, 1973 in Centeno, 2007). That these virtues are valuable should be self-evident: the four together constitute critical thinking, which is an essential characteristic of citizens in a functional democracy. Derkse also mentions being 'caring' or 'engaged' (2011, p. 10) as a fifth necessary characteristic, which seems to make sense, as indifference can potentially nullify all four previous characteristics.

To focus exclusively on the practical application of knowledge is to be attentive and intelligent, but it is also to not necessarily be reasonable and responsible – or critical

and ethical, as we should perhaps prefer to call them. Yet it is obvious that critical and ethical use of knowledge is essential. By being attentive and intelligent, we could make chemical weapons, but by additionally being critical and ethical, we would decide (and, in fact, have decided) not to. Not everything that can be done, should be done, and it is our critical, ethical and caring insights that reveals this to us. It follows that the critical, ethical, and caring application of knowledge should be part of education as much as the attentive and intelligent aspects, so that our potentially harmful uses of knowledge may be restrained.

These other aspects cannot always be learnt through the same process that teaches us about practical knowledge. Much of these aspects is based on insight rather than on knowledge. It is revealed, not taught. One activity that contributes to these insights is the walkshop of Environmental Ethics course of the University of Utrecht. It is a rather simple formula: workshop + walking = walkshop. The walk, through nature, itself is as educational about Environmental Ethics as the workshop, which consists of a number of presentations on philosophy, of walks in silence, and of picking up rubbish that others have left behind. Connecting students with nature makes them care about the insights gained through the workshop, which obviously increases the impact of these insights on their day-to-day lives.

This is reflected in the feedback we received from the students about the walkshop. Literally, in fact. Many students mentioned the (critical) 'reflection' the walkshop provided on the topics the classes merely instilled information about. Relatedly, the terms 'driving home' recurred often. Some students mentioned that nature has few distractions or doesn't try to sell itself (unlike cultural elements), causing them to focus much more on their thoughts and thereby enhancing their philosophising. Many students also mentioned feeling

'connected' to nature more than usual, which is obviously of great value to their environmental ethics.

Perhaps the inclusion of a walkshop in an Environmental Ethics course seems like a no-brainer, but critical, ethical and caring use of knowledge is certainly not solely relevant to ethics. It would be a significant improvement to students' formation if their courses also taught them to think, question and care, rather than to merely blindly apply knowledge pragmatically. Feeling part of the world and caring about it should not be restricted to those students who happened to have chosen an ethics course. Walkshops can certainly contribute to this appreciation.

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9// Interview with Floris van den Berg

Tomas Rep

Why are you opposed to shallow ecology?
I do not think shallow ecology can solve the fundamental global environmental crisis because shallow ecology does not address the root causes of the problem, which is the idea that it is justifiable to use the planet instrumentally for our own benefit without any limits. Shallow ecology does not question the (neoliberal/capitalistic) system, which is based on the idea of infinite economic growth and expanding consumerism. Shallow ecology is about implementing incremental changes, often with technological fixes. A fundamental question is if incremental changes will lead to the much needed fundamental changes. This is highly doubtful.

Where do you place yourself on the scale of shallow to deep ecology?
In theory, I am a deep ecologist. I long to be in nature and wilderness. However, in daily life I hardly live a deep ecology lifestyle. I do not grow my own vegetables. I live a shallow ecology lifestyle – buying fair-trade, organic and, sometimes, local vegetables.

Universal subjectivism takes into account the interests of nonhuman animals and future generations as well as those of present day humans. Universal subjectivism does not rely on the notion of intrinsic value. This is in stark contrast with deep ecology in which the intrinsic value of nature is crucial. In universal subjectivism nature is instrumental for the interests of human, both present and future, and nonhuman animals.

According to philosopher Curry that would make universal subjectivism a mid green theory. Universal subjectivism expands the moral circle to sentientism, whereas deep ecology is an ecocentric theory. From the perspective of deep ecology, universal subjectivism might be criticized as shallow ecology. My point is, that even without the notion of intrinsic value, still there are good reasons to care about nature and ecosystems.

Philosopher Arne Næss has argued that deep ecology is a set of values and principles about taking care of ecosystems and nature. Deep ecology is like a mountain peak that can be reached by various routes. These routes towards deep ecology Næss calls ecosophies. This is a pragmatic approach. People might disagree about the route, but still reach the same peak. Næss is an atheist and rationalist and his route is rational. He calls his ecosophy, Ecosophy T. The T stands for Tvergastein, which is his mountain retreat in Norway. Because I agree with deep ecology, I have coined my ecosophy, Ecosophy US, where the US stands for universal subjectivism.

Why do we use Rawls in such a way that we can also come back to Earth as an animal. Isn't that taking the experiment one step too far?
Philosopher John Rawls deliberately excluded nonhuman animals from his theory. In his book A Theory of Justice (1971), he uses the Kantian notion of personhood and the capacity to reason as a criterion for the inclusion in the moral circle. A problem for Rawls/Kant is babies and mentally handicapped humans who lack the capacity for reason. Rawls comes up with ad hoc solutions, claiming that babies have the potential to reason. But as Jeremy Bentham and Peter Singer have shown, the criterion for inclusion in the moral circle should not be the capacity to reason, but the capacity to suffer. (Bentham: Can they suffer?).

Taking nonhuman animals into account in the Rawlsian

theory of universal subjectivism is for many people a huge step too far, because it challenges their own behavior as a carnist. Philosophy however is (hopefully) not about staying in your comfort zone, but about the search for truth and the good. Unnecessary suffering of nonhuman animals on an unprecedented scale, as is the case in modern day factory farming, is not good. It is evil. And meat-eaters (carnists) are part of it.

Why limit suffering to animals? Why not plants and ecosystems as well?

According to consensual biological knowledge only animals can suffer and experience pain. Biologists explain that a central nervous system and a brain are needed in order to have the capacity to suffer. Therefore, plants and ecosystems that do not have a central nervous system, cannot experience pain. Hypothetically, if there are entities that are able to experience pain and suffering (perhaps computers some day?) then, from the perspectives of sentientism, they should be included in our moral circle.

What role does democracy play in your philosophy?

Constitutional democracy – in which fundamental human rights are beyond democratic control – is the political system which guarantees individual liberty most. However, democratic systems will not always lead to policies that would be the outcome of universal subjectivism. For example, there are no democracies in the world that include nonhuman animals in the moral circle, which is the outcome of universal subjectivism. From the perspective of universal subjectivism, that is immoral. Democracy does not necessarily lead to inclusion of all stakeholders. Nonhuman animals, people far away (but who are affected by our choices) and future generations are excluded in democratic systems. Due to

the four year cycle of elections, politicians tend to have a short term, i.e. four years, time horizon. Caring about future generations and thus making some sacrifices for citizens of today, will probably cost you voters. Voters in general have a tendency to vote for their own short-term interests. However, it is possible that in a democracy people take consideration of those who do not have political voice. For example, we take care of the interests of babies, children and mentally disabled. A difference between babies and future generations is that babies are not abstract, they are visible. We see them, we hold them in our arms. Future generations are an abstract concept. However, if we want that babies grow up in a livable world, we have to implement serious environmental policies.

How does universal subjectivism relate to nation states and national interest?

Universal subjectivism is an ethical theory with a universal claim, which means that the outcome of universal subjectivism should hold all over the planet. Universal subjectivism is a cosmopolitan theory. From the perspective of Universal subjectivism, nation states play only a pragmatic role, not a moral role. In the real world it is utopian to think that nation states (and nationalism) do not matter much, but from an ethical perspective, where you happen to be born is contingent. Universal subjectivism makes you look at the world from a worst off position. For example, imagine if you were born in a poor country without access to medical aid, food or even water. You would want not to suffer from these, would you? Well, in this thought experiment, how would you organize the world in order to optimize this worst off position in which you are in?

Which authority should protect rights?

Ideally, I would hope that each nation state respects fundamental human rights. Above that there should by a

United Nations court of human rights and also a political and perhaps even military power to enforce human rights and protect individuals (including nonhuman animals) from oppression. I would hope that the United Nations could be modeled on the European Union model.

Don't you consider that people can be happy in a collectivistic (oppressive) culture?
In theory (and in utopian novels) people could be happy in collectivistic and oppressive cultures. In the real world however, collective and oppressive societies lead to hell. Only small scale, voluntary collective communes could create happy people. However, study of collective communes shows that it often leads to unhappiness and disaster. See the impressive and awesome book *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (1987) by Krishan Kumar.

Why do you say that positive freedom is dangerous, but you do advocate for it?
This question needs some elucidating. There are two kinds of freedom (as is argued by Isaiah Berlin): positive and negative freedom. Negative freedoms are the fundamental rights of individuals: the right to live and the right not to be tortured and the right to the freedom of expression. Positive freedom is the ability to do something with that freedom. If there is neither infrastructure in society nor any cultural, recreational and educational facilities in society, there is not much freedom to enjoy. According to universal subjectivism, you would want, whomever you end up being in the world, to flourish and develop yourself. In order to develop your talents and enjoy the world, positive freedom (arranged by the government) is a necessity. I am in favor of this kind of positive freedom (it will need to be financed by a – progressive – taxation system).

The Golden Rule has two versions, a positive and a negative

version. I will explain why the positive version is dangerous and detrimental to individual liberty. The negative version of the Golden Rule is: Do not do unto others what you do not want them to do to you. So, if you do not want to be beaten, do not beat up others. The negative version is pretty straightforward.

The positive version of the Golden Rule however, is a completely different matter: Do unto others what you would want them to do to you. In some cases, this might be good. Imagine you are a weary traveller, thirsty and hungry and you would want others to invite you in for a nice dinner. But it becomes problematic for, for example, sexual desire. A man could think of a woman, I would want her to have sex with me. In that case, the positive version of the Golden Rule becomes dangerous because it does not respect individual liberty. This version is paternalistic; others deciding what you have to do.

What is your position on invasive species?
This is a question that I do not have a clear opinion about. From the perspective of universal subjectivism you would not want to be killed (culled) by humans just because you happen to be considered an invasive species. I am inclined to be in favor of a hands-in-the – pocket conservationism, even if it means the landscape and ecology will change drastically due to invasive species.

It is important to realize that ethics involves moral beings, that is human beings. Ethics is what humans do to other sentient beings. Ethics is not about what nonhuman animals do to each other. Nature, as Darwin put it, 'is red in tooth and claw'. There is much suffering in nature. Utilitarians tend to weigh that in their calculations of what to do. For utilitarians there is a problem with predators: if a predator kills many animals in its life, perhaps we should kill the predator, which would lessen the amount of suffering. Apart from the fact that this is a dubious claim because the ecosystem might be

disturbed without the predator and the prey animals might die from starvation because they tend to grow in number, there is the moral issue that nonhuman animals among each other fall outside the moral realm. And, lastly, we should first end the unnecessary suffering we humans inflict before even thinking about the suffering in the animal world.

What do you think of managerialism, the idea that we can and should manage nature?

I don't know. When it comes to nature conservation, I am inclined, in line with deep ecologists, to have restraint and not to try to manage nature. See my drill-a-hole parable in this book.

Why is intrinsic value and spiritualism towards nature a bad thing according to you?

I am not sure if these are bad. As a philosopher I am are pursuer of truth and I do not see any reason for the existence of intrinsic value (other than a human construct) or any spiritual entity or power. If other people would come to the same conclusions as one would through universal subjectivism, I do not see a problem.

As I said before, I hold the same position on this a deep ecologist philosopher Arne Næss. Næss was an atheist and rationalist. If the aim is a deep ecology, then there might be more roads to reach this. His path, or ecosophy-T (the T stands for Tvergastein, his recluse in the Norwegian mountains), is a rational and logical path. But, Næss says, there might be religious and spiritual ecosophies that will bring you to Deep Ecology.

Can religion be used to tackle the problem of climate change?

It seems to me that there is no noticeable difference between believers and nonbelievers in the degree of (un)sustainability of their lifestyles.

To me, the idea that religion can be used instrumentally by people who themselves do not believe any of it, in order to make people behave in certain ways; I think is cynical and demeaning. This idea is widely used in the history of philosophy. Plato, Machiavelli, Nietzsche and Voltaire all think that religion can be used as an instrument to make the masses do what you want them to do.

How can you avoid confusing universal subjectivism with Western ethnocentrism?
To start with, universal subjectivism criticizes many cultural practices in the Western world, for example meat eating (carnism). So, it is not a theory that hails the West and criticizes the rest. Universal subjectivism does not privilege white males for example. Universal subjectivism is a universal moral theory. Science is also not inherently Western; it just happens to be invented in the West. The same goes for the Enlightenment Project, of which universal subjectivism is a part.

You're known to criticize religion and cultural practices you disagree with. How do you reconcile this with your focus on liberty?
As a philosopher I criticize unsubstantiated truth claims. None of the truth claims of religion can be substantiated by empirical evidence or logical arguments.

From an ethical point of view, I criticize all cultural practices (which overlap partially with religious practices) that have victims and cause unnecessary suffering. I am using a liberal point of view: everything goes as long as it does not harm others. However, many cultural practices do harm others, e.g. women, homosexuals, infidels and apostates. It is a paradox that from a liberal perspective many cultural practices should be forbidden, for example non-therapeutic circumcision of boys. Notice that a paradox is not a contradiction.

I think I get angry when people cause serious suffering or don't alleviate suffering when they could.

<div align="right">Peter Singer</div>

Glossary
Some fundamental concepts of environmental ethics

> *The fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence whatever that it is not utterly absurd.*
>
> Bertrand Russell

- **Abolitionism**: The Kantian notion that human beings should not be used only instrumentally. They are ends in themselves. Therefore, abolitionists are against all forms of slavery, because as slaves humans are being used instrumentally, not as ends in themselves and their fundamental human rights are not respected. In his book *The case for animal rights* (1983), Tom Regan has applied this concept to nonhuman animals as well. As a result, humans should not make instrumental usage of human and non-human animals. Killing animals then is considered murder. Gary Francione in *Animals, property and the law* (1995) is a strong defender of abolitionism.
- **Anthropocentrism**: Moral scope that includes humans only.
- **Anthropogenic**: Caused by humans or human-induced. Anthropogenic climate change is climate change caused by humans emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- **Attitudes towards nature/scale of Zweers**: In his book *Participating with nature* (2000) environmental philosopher Wim Zweers created a scale of attitudes humans have towards nature. He distinguishes six attitudes:
  1. *Despot*: Short-term (egoistic) self-interest. Denial of environmental problems.
  2. *Enlightened despot*: Believing that technology will fix all problems.
  3. *Steward*: Religious: Taking care of the earth for God;

Secular: Taking care of earth for future generations

4. *Partner*: Being an equal partner with nature, making use of nature for human purposes as long as the ecosystem as a whole is sustained; conserving nature (e.g. Leopold).

5. *Participant*: Having the least possible harmful impact on the planet, respecting the intrinsic value of nature and trying to preserve wilderness as much as possible. 'Treading softly on the earth': preserving nature (e.g. Næss).

6. *Unio mystica*: Selfless harmony with nature.

- **Biocentrism**: Inclusion of *all* living beings in the moral circle (Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature* (1986))

- **Blind spot**: A moral injustice that is unnoticed by most people.

- **Carnism**: The hidden ideology that justifies the use, abuse and killing of non-human animals in factory farming for non-essential human purposes, such as eating meat. The term was coined by social psychologist Melanie Joy in her book *Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows. An introduction to carnism* (2011).

- **Collective action problem**: A situation in which multiple individuals face a problem that affects them all and they all would benefit from undertaking action. However, because the solution requires all individuals to take action at their own expense, while is it not guaranteed that anyone else will take action, it becomes implausible that any individual will undertake action. The ideal solution would be to undertake collective action so the costs are shared and action is coordinated. For example, the ecological crisis is the most urgent collective action problem: each individual benefits from the economic system, even though collectively they pollute and degrade the planet. Often the benefits of taking collective action lie in the future, see **presentism**.

- **Conservationism**: The attempt to conserve nature by taking measures to protect certain species or ecosystems.

- **Contrarianism**: Psychological disposition to deny and contradict everything stated by people with an opposing view. For example, contrarians deny the scientific claims of anthropogenic climate change and deny that we are facing an unprecedented ecological crisis.
- **Deep ecology**: An environmental philosophy created by philosopher Arne Næss that states that humans should participate with nature and create sustainable societies. Næss contrasts this approach with what he calls **shallow ecology**, which tries to solve environmental problems by technological fixes. Deep ecology addresses the root causes of environmental degradation in the attitude humans have towards nature.
- **Deontology/Kantian ethics**: Ethical theory, which states that individuals have a moral duty to follow universal rational moral rules, without exception. Kant argued that to act in a morally right way, people must act from duty. In other words, that it is not the consequences of actions that make actions right or wrong, but the motives of the person who carries out the action. And thirdly, individuals should never merely be used instrumentally, but always as ends in themselves (see **abolitionism**).
- **Ecocentrism**: Expanding the moral circle to include ecosystems. Ecocentrists care about the preservation of ecosystems. Including abiotic nature that sustains ecosystems like water and the atmosphere. This expansion is born from the notion that since everything that can be valued in human experience is a product of nature, nature is the ultimate source of value and therefore has intrinsic value, and therefore has to be accorded moral status.
  A problem is: what exactly is an ecosystem? Some ecocentrists argue that planet Earth is one big ecosystem (e.g. Gaia-theory by James Lovelock).
- **Ecofeminism**: A form of non-anthropocentric feminism

according to which there is a link between the domination by men over women as well as nature and animals. Ecofeminism strives to end all forms of (male) domination.

- **Ecosophy**: A philosophy or spiritual pathway that leads to deep ecology. Arne Næss coined his ecosophy, Ecosophy T (the T stands for Tvergastein, his mountain cabin); Floris van den Berg coined his ecosophy, Ecosophy US (the US stands for universal subjectivism).
- **Ecohumanism**: Expanding humanism from anthropocentrism to sentientism.
- **Extentionism**: Expanding the moral circle.
- **Green liberalism**: Expanding liberalism, from anthropocentrism, towards sentientistic liberalism that includes non-human animals and future generations in the moral circle.
- **Humanism**: Anthropocentric life stance and philosophy based on 1) the scientific worldview and 2) giving individual liberty a central role.
- **Instrumental value**: The value something has for something else, not in itself.
- **Intrinsic value**: Some things have value in themselves irrespective if they have any instrumental value. Kantians/deontologists ascribe intrinsic value to rational beings, i.e. in their view: humans. Ecocentrists tend to ascribe intrinsic value to ecosystems and wilderness; biocentrists attribute intrinsic value to *all* living beings; Tom Regan attributes intrinsic value to beings capable of having a life (as opposed to being alive), which includes future generations. Some fundamental moral questions about intrinsic value are: 1)which things have intrinsic value?; 2) what is the criterion of intrinsic value?; 3) where does intrinsic value come from?; 4) What is the ontological status of intrinsic value?; 5) Does intrinsic value exist in human minds, or elsewhere?
- **Liberalism**: Philosophy of individual liberty. The crucial

maxim of liberalism was phrased by John Stuart Mill in his book *On liberty* (1859): '*The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.*' In other words, everything is allowed, as long as you do not harm others.

- **Libertarianism**: Political philosophy that strives for a minimal state and focuses on negative rights.
- **Light/mid/dark-green ethics**: Three categories of ethics by philosopher Patrick Curry in his book *Ecological ethics* (2011). Light green ethics is anthropocentric shallow ecology; mid green ethics are sentientistic ethics (e.g. Singer and Regan) and biocentrism; dark green ethics is an ecocentric deep ecology.
- **Moral agent**: Actors who are able and allowed to make their interests known to policy makers by participating in the political arena. Moral agents are responsible for moral patients.
- **Moral patient**: A sentient being, which has interests but is incapable, or capable but not allowed, to participate in the political process. Moral agents could try to include the interests of moral patients in the political process. The Dutch Party for the Animals, for example, explicitly takes into account the interests of nonhuman animals (especially farm animals) and future generations.
- **Negative rights**: Rights that protect individuals from actions that harm them. For instance, the right to be protected from sexual assault or theft of property. Also see **positive rights**.
- **Paternalism**: Antonym of liberalism. The ideology of a dominant person or group deciding for others what they can and cannot do. Human beings have a strong inclination to interfere with the freedom of others. Liberalism is the exception in history. Paternalism is the default mode of human societies. Paternalism and liberalism are two ends of

a wide spectrum; on the one end brutal oppression (like the Taliban and IS), and on the other end individual liberty as in open societies of liberal democracies.

- **Pathocentrism**: Using pain as a criterion for inclusion in the circle of morality. Although it overlaps largely with sentientism, pathocentrism focuses solely on negative stimuli of pain and suffering. Pathocentrism is about alleviating pain and suffering, not about striving for happiness.

- **Positive rights**: Rights that protect individuals from *absence* of certain actions. For example, the right to education, as not having an education is harmful to an individual's opportunity to develop. Also see **negative rights**.

- **Presentism**: Discrimination based on excluding future generations from the moral circle. Even democracies tend to be presentistic because future generation cannot vote (see **moral patient**).

- **Sentientism**: Inclusion in the moral circle of all sentient beings. Sentience can be defined in different ways, e.g. the capability to reason or the capability to experience. Most biologists claim that a central nervous system is necessary in order to experience suffering. Most animals used for food are sentient animals. In the most quoted footnote in history Jeremy Bentham states in *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789): '*The question is not, Can they reason? Nor Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?*' In his book *Animal Liberation* (1975), Peter Singer developed a powerful animal ethics using Bentham's sentientism as a starting point.

- **Speciesism**: Term coined by Richard Ryder and popularized by Peter Singer to denote discrimination based on species membership. Singer equals it with other kinds of discrimination such as racism and sexism.

- **Universal subjectivism**: Theory developed by Floris van den Berg, that expands the moral circle from anthropocentrism to include nonhuman animals, future

generations, and, indirectly, nature. It is a sentientistic, hypothetical social contract theory, which expands on Rawls' theory of justice (see **veil of ignorance**). It invites you to imagine yourself to be in a worst-off position how society could be rearranged to optimize that worst-off position. See Floris van den Berg, *Philosophy for a better world* (2013).

- **Utilitarianism**: Moral theory that judges an action by the consequences of that action. Utilitarians like Bentham, Mill, and Singer, try to calculate whether an action is likely to cause more happiness than suffering. Peter Singer's version of utilitarianism is preference utilitarianism, which takes individual preferences into account rather than imposing preferences (like happiness in classical utilitarianism or freedom in liberalism) on agents. Singer stresses the importance of equal consideration of equal interests.
- **Veganism**: Diet without animal products, including eggs and dairy. Moral vegans strive to live a life without harming other sentient beings.
- **Veil of ignorance**: Concept from John Rawls social contract theory in *A theory of justice* (1971). The veil of ignorance hides people in the so-called original position from which they have to arrange the institutions of society, taking into account that they are ignorant of who they would be in this society. Behind the veil of ignorance, people do not know if they would be female or male, gay or straight, poor or rich, able or disabled.
- **Virtue ethics**: Ethical theory that emphasizes the role of character and the virtues that one's character embodies for determining or evaluating ethical behavior (e.g. Aristotle). Patrick Curry's **ecocentrism** is a form of (green) virtue ethic.
- **Welfarism**: An animal ethic, which focuses on reducing pain and suffering.
  Weak welfarism focuses on small steps of improvement on

animal welfare, for example larger cages for chicken. Weak welfarists are not opposed to the killing of animals per se, as long as it does not make animals suffer. Weak welfarism tends to be incorporated in the paradigm of **carnism**. *Strong* welfarism argues that animals should be able to live a natural life. Strong welfarists argue that death is a way of suffering because it takes away the possibility to lead a (happy) life. Strong welfarism leads to veganism and overlaps with abolitionism.

About the editors

Dr. Floris van den Berg (1973) is Assistant Professor at the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University. He studied Japanese Language and Culture at Leiden University and spent two years in Japan studying tea ceremony (*chadō*). He also studied Philosophy in Leiden and Utrecht and has specialized in environmental ethics and the ethics of sustainable development. Among the books he published is *Filosofie voor een betere wereld* (2009), which appeared in English translation (*Philosophy for a better world*) in 2013. In his thesis *Harming Others. Universal subjectivism and the expanding moral circle* (2011), he developed the theory of universal subjectivism. This theory expands the moral circle to include nonhuman animals, future generations, and, indirectly, nature. Floris likes to go running and tries to live a vegan lifestyle. He published the book *De vrolijke veganist* (*The happy vegan*) (2013). His latest book is *Beter weten. Filosofie van het ecohumanisme* (*Knowing better. Philosophy of ecohumanism*) (2015). He is presently working on his next book: *De vrolijke feminist* (*The happy feminist*).

Tomas Rep, MSc. (1990) holds a master's degree in Innovation Sciences from Utrecht University. Within this field, he has great interest in the topics of sustainability, the ethics of innovation and policy. He conducted research on the challenges inherent to institutionalizing cycling at the cost of automobility in Copenhagen's transportation system. During his studies he partook in a multidisciplinary honors programs to satisfy his curiosity for knowledge of other scientific fields and academic and life skills. He was board member of the Dutch United Nations Students Association (SIB-Utrecht), where he coordinated the weekly lectures pertaining to international relations, and societal and political developments.

He likes to play squash, walk around in woodlands, enjoys watching films and reads from time to time.