

## Stoehr Discussion of Longtermism

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I think of myself as a simple person. I believe morality is well covered by the Golden Rule. I believe in about half of the Ten Commandments, and that laughter is the best medicine.

I like Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs." in the sense that you take care of yourself and yours before practicing altruism; Occam's Razor, (the simplest solution is usually best) and Mill's Utilitarian philosophy (in giving, try to do the most aggregate good with available resources).

I may be misinterpreting my sources, but if so, my misinterpretation is what I believe.

Singer espoused similar beliefs in 1971, but made them moral imperatives, while I think it is the choice of each individual to follow his own morality, and the moral imperative of society to allow that choice, so long as no others are harmed. I don't know, or care, how Singer's thinking may have changed over 50 years.

When I was a kid, the retort to someone who was haughty and bossy was "Who died and made you King?" The Megalomania which that implies seems rampant today. I certainly don't recall getting to vote on Singer, Macaskill, Ord or Bostrom, and yet they seem to feel that I am responsible for all the people in the world today, and equally responsible for all the unborn.

The four manage to sound like Ghandhi yet seem to be living very comfortably.

Macaskill suffers from "Somebody Oughta Do Something Syndrome." He also does not seem to realize that the passage of civil rights laws and women's suffrage was not entirely altruistic but part of the Ponzi scheme that defines economics. (More Customers!)

Toby Ord is the "Shady JD Vance" of Philosophy-Very smart, affable and self-serving.

Nick Bostrom (Main thing is to reduce future existential risk), like the others, ignores the fact that humanity is not a single organism, that the value of future lives and events must be discounted relative to the present and that for sustainability, asset growth (supply) must equal or exceed population growth (demand).

I get a strong implication of Eugenics in their thinking. If half the world's population will be in a water crisis NEXT YEAR, the simplest way to preserve humanity for the future is to cull the population and reduce it by half temporarily. I think our four philosophers would reluctantly agree, if they were allowed to choose their group.

**Show me the Money!**

## **On to the suggested questions:**

### **What is the moral obligation for helping people that you do not know, but could help?**

Moral obligation to whom? To myself? To God? To the Center for Effective Altruism? To the Unborn and Might be Born?

It is up to one's personal moral code, which, if it exists at all, is malleable and usually inconsistent.

My own code would apply a Maslow type of pecking order, based on my available resources.

### **What is the moral justification for helping people who are alive today as opposed to helping people who will be alive in the far future?**

When I was younger, I thought we should set aside a secure warehouse of Apple 2 computers, so the world could restart after the Apocalypse. Looking back, it probably wouldn't have been the best use of funds. But what else can you do? Give it to people who would just waste it on food for themselves?

### **What is the moral justification for the opposite?**

By allowing those alive today to see tomorrow, we allow potentially billions or trillions of their descendants to see the far future. (Calculation based on Toby Ord's work)

### **We are living in a time that Homo sapiens never experienced before, as we have existential threats that could terminate our species. If you believe this gives us a special responsibility for the future, then what actions can be taken collectively in the present to reduce the possibility of extermination?**

They say you can't step into the same river twice, so every time is one that Homo sapiens has never experienced before. "We" are not part of the future, just of the present. Tomorrow never comes. It is often mutually beneficial for "Me" and "You" to act together to benefit "Us," thereby enriching both of our lives. We have learned, over time, that acting to ensure one's future "Today" is prudent. (I do not mean "Acting today to ensure one's future")

I don't believe there are any known existential threats that will terminate our species during the lifetime of anyone now living, or their children. Tail risk or "Black Swan" events are unforeseeable and must be dealt with in the present.

### **If you believe that at the level of morality everyone is equally important, then should all lives, both present and future, be treated as having equal value? If yes, how do you envision this being done?**

I really don't have the luxury to think at that level. My answer is "Sorta," "No (The present is more valuable)," and "N/A."

**Macaskill is thinking about Longtermism not in decades but in centuries and beyond. If you consider the utilitarian model that it is important to maximize the good, is it fair or even possible to calculate the maximization of the good in terms of the people in the unknown distant future?**

Economists regularly win Nobel prizes for this sort of thing, and I'm sure Toby Ord is working on his acceptance speech at this very moment. Small errors are greatly magnified by projection into the future, and discounting a future benefit that is billions of years away will make it effectively disappear in the present. So, no.

**If you are walking on the banks of a stream and come across a situation where two toddlers are being carried away by the water. You know if you act quickly, you can save one of them. You see that the one child, who is your nephew will be much harder to save than the second child, who is a stranger. Knowing that only one child can be saved, what do you do?**

I assume by "harder to save" you mean "less likely to be saved successfully." If not, of course I would put in the extra effort to save my nephew. If so, I'd still try for my nephew, because I have to live with my sister.

**How do you see last month's seminar on Parahumanism relating to the discussion of Longtermism?**

I could not attend last month. I assume Parahumanism is the same as Transhumanism. As defined by the guys making the big bucks, it seems that Bostrom wants to re-engineer bodies and brains to create a super race, to colonize every speck of outer space (Space Expansionism), and to install a system of "Total Utilitarianism," wherein people have no intrinsic value, they are just pieces on a gameboard.

The word "Total" corrupts the meaning of Utilitarianism, as I previously understood it. It is apparently the basis for the current meaning of "Effective Altruism."

The whole concept, as promoted originally by Bostrom, smacks of Eugenics.

Now Eugenics, as I understand it, is fine for growing bigger and better flower blooms, and for breeding faster racehorses, but to create a society of Six Million Dollar Men?

That is your existential threat to humanity.