



DAILY PHILOSOPHY

FEBRUARY 2022

GUEST ARTICLES BY:
JOHN SHAND
CATHERINE GREENE

THE FIRST SEASTEAD
CONTROLLING TECHNOLOGY
PHILOSOPHY IN QUOTES:
SOCRATES, KANT, HEGEL

Copyright © Andreas Matthias, 2022. All rights reserved.

First edition 2022.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission.

Find all our books at: daily-philosophy.com/books

Cover by Andreas Matthias (licensed image used with permission).

Contents

Welcome to the monthly magazine!	3
Socrates on Knowing Nothing	4
John Shand	
The Empathy Paradox	7
Can We Control Technology?	10
Catherine Greene	
I'm depressed and it's all your fault!	16
Immanuel Kant on Means and Ends	20
Half the Earth	24
Hegel's Dialectic	30
Colonising the Oceans: Visions	35
The Ukraine Conflict and the Ethics of War	41
The First Seastead: A Modern Utopia	46
Fundraising for Ukraine	51
Epilogue	53

Welcome to the monthly magazine!

Welcome to our monthly, printable round-up of the articles you could read on the Daily Philosophy sites, daily-philosophy.com and dailyphilosophy.substack.com.

The content here is the same as what you could read on Daily Philosophy. The point of this magazine-like format is to make it easier for you to catch up with the articles, in case you couldn't read them when they were published. We are all busy, and having a file that you can put on your e-reader might be more convenient than having to read the emails in Outlook or GMail.

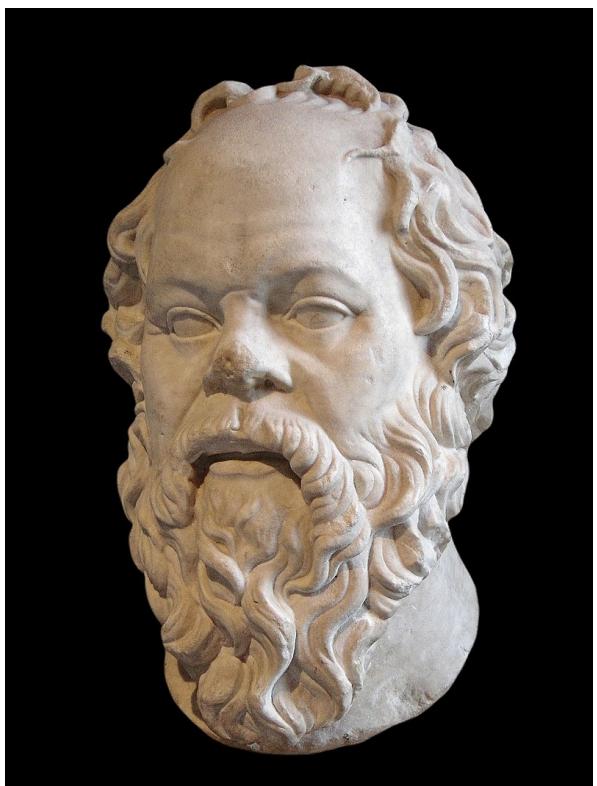
If you received this from someone else, please subscribe here to receive your own copy in the future, directly in your inbox!

One warning: Be careful if you send this to your printer. The file is around 48 pages long.

Thank you and have fun reading!

— Andy

Socrates on Knowing Nothing



By Sting, CC BY-SA 2.5 [1]

A History of Philosophy in Quotes.

Socrates: Apology

I know only one thing: that I know nothing. (Attributed to Socrates, *Apology*)

Socrates (470–399 BC) was an ancient Greek

philosopher, often cited as one of the “fathers” of philosophy, especially of a particular method of philosophical questioning. He was the teacher of Plato (428/427–348/347), who, in turn, was the teacher of Aristotle. These three together are certainly the most influential trio of thinkers of all time in the Western philosophical tradition.

Socrates left no written works of his own. Part of his famous method was not to write down theoretical works, but to engage the citizens of Athens in discussions at the marketplace. Often, he would ask them questions about something they were supposed to be experts on, in the manner of children who keep asking “but why ...?” after every reply. Sooner or later, this method made it impossible for the supposed expert to further justify his assumptions. And then, Socrates would triumph, having shown that the person did not actually know as much as they assumed.

In time, having in this way publicly humiliated the most prominent citizens of Athens, Socrates had created a formidable alliance of enemies. When they thought that the time was right, they accused Socrates of corrupting the youth with his teachings and brought him to court.

The trial of Socrates became legendary, because the old philosopher did not only refuse to apologise. Instead, he asked his accusers to thank him with a lifelong pension for his service to the city, and kept making fun of them. Unsurprisingly, they sentenced him to death.

It is today understood that even then Socrates would have been able to escape the sentence, as others had done before him. He could have left the city and gone somewhere else to live. But, in his typical stubbornness, he refused. By forcing his accusers to go through with the execution, he became a martyr for the ideals of truthfulness and his name and story became immortal.

The actual quote above cannot be found in Plato's works. There are similar statements in Socrates' *Apology*, which is Plato's recollection of the speech that Socrates gave in court. "Apology" here does not mean what it means today in English. For the ancient Greeks, an *apologia* was just a defence in court, not a plea for forgiveness.

Let's look at some of the statements that we *can* find in Socrates' *Apology*, as it has come to us through Plato's retelling (transl. Benjamin Jowett):

And this is the point in which, as I think, I am superior to men in general, and in which I might perhaps fancy myself wiser than other men, – that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know.

Note that here Socrates does not say that he knows "nothing." Instead, he says that he does know "little." The main point is not that he wants to glorify ignorance, but to expose those who pretend to know things that they don't.

Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is – for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. *I neither*

know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him.

The enemy of knowledge, according to Socrates (and Plato) is not ignorance. Not to know is not shameful. Someone who does not know, and is aware of their ignorance, can do something about their lack of knowledge and start to study and learn and improve themselves. The true enemy of knowledge is the ignorance that we don't even perceive as such. If we are caught in the illusion that we know something that we actually don't know, then it will be much harder for us to improve. First, we would have to admit that we don't know, which is something that we don't like to do. And only then we'd be able to learn and start really knowing something.

It is a paradox that we can observe particularly well today, in the age of rampant miseducation and misinformation. It is mainly the uneducated and misguided who have the strongest opinions about things. From opponents of vaccinations to proponents of flat Earth theories, the least educated the person, the strongest the conviction often is. And, generally, they don't take kindly to being shown that they are wrong. Socrates:

There are plenty of persons, as they soon enough discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing: and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me.

The *Apology*, Socrates' speech to his judges and the people of Athens, ends when he is handed his death sentence. In one of the most beautiful and striking sentences of acceptance, Socrates

once again emphasises how little we all actually know:

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways – I to die, and you to

live. Which is better God only knows.

[1] <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=96296061>

John Shand

The Empathy Paradox



To be empathetic is to have a good and reliable understanding of how others feel and think. To be unempathetic is to either have a poor and unreliable understanding of how others feel and think, or to be oblivious to their feelings and thoughts. These characteristics manifest themselves in what one says and how one acts towards and treats others.

It is often supposed that greater empathy is a good thing. But this is a mistake, unless one assumes that being empathetic will inevitably bring it about that one treats others better. But there is no logical reason to suppose this. Being empathetic may be a good way to know how to do hurt to someone in respect of their feelings and thoughts more acutely and damagingly. Not being empathetic may result in such hurt too, but

that will be because of poor understanding, or lack of awareness, of the feelings and thoughts of others, not through calculated use of good understanding enabling one to better get people where it really hurts.

It could be factually that greater empathy tends to make people shy away from hurting others, as the person doing the hurting will know what is being done with acuity, but this need not necessarily so. Being empathetic is a factual not a normative matter, and it may be a better way of being cruel to someone than simply being incomprehendingly insensitive or oblivious to their feelings and thoughts. This aside however is not the central focus this paper, though it is a background which it is beneficial to hold in mind.

It certainly is not the case that in order to be empathetic one has to *know* that one is empathetic. Many people are regarded, indeed vaunted, as empathetic ‘by nature’ or ‘intuitively’, with little or no reflection involved or cultivation of it. They have an innate talent for it. Some people, on the other hand think they are empathetic, even think it is quality they have to a special degree and more than more than others. This goes back to empathy, other things being equal, being regarded as a good thing, and thus people and motivated to claim they are empathetic. A comparison with others who lack it which may even be

self-congratulatory.

The paradox of empathy arises from knowing whether oneself or another is empathetic. Let us say someone is not empathetic. The lack of empathy could well make it appear to oneself that one is empathetic. The evidence of one's empathetic ness would have to derive from one's being empathetic, that of understanding the feelings and thoughts of others. But in this case of the unempathetic person they are unable to see that they are not empathetic because they do not understand that the reactions of other people to them through their feeling and thoughts that indicate the lack of empathy.

Something that could be repeated and show itself in different ways. Let us say some one is empathetic. But how would one know that one was really empathetic rather than it just seeming so as it does to the unempathetic? The evidence for one's being empathetic would be the same in both cases, it's just that in the case of the empathetic person the evidence would be accurate and genuine but in the case of the unempathetic person it would be inaccurate and illusory. But there seems no way for a person to be in a position to distinguish the two.

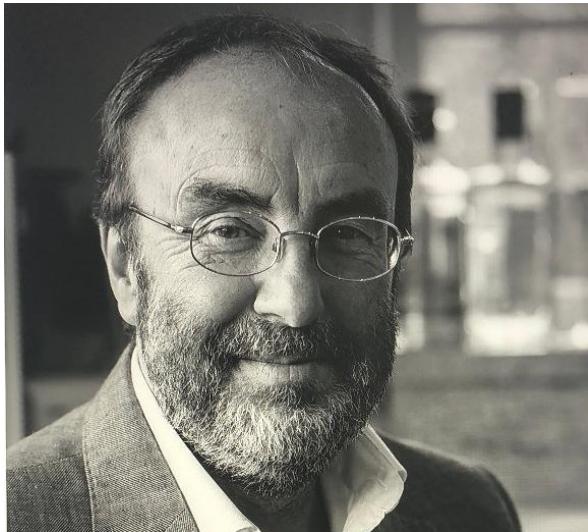
At this point on might appeal to others. To whether others think we are empathetic or not. This however gets us nowhere. It only pushes the problem onto whether those other people are themselves empathetic, *ad infinitum*. But we could never know which of them is empathetic or which unempathetic for the same reason we cannot know whether we ourselves are empathetic or unempathetic, so therefore we could

never know who would be able to judge accurately whether we are empathetic or not. Indeed, those who consider themselves as empathetic are just likely to back each other up as empathetic because they treat others in the same way, without their actually knowing whether that is being empathetic or not. This is especially so because empathy is regarded as a good thing and people are motivated to believe that they empathetic and are a good judge of whether others are.

The paradox is therefore, that the very quality that leads us to being good at understanding the feelings and thoughts of others does not put us in a position to know whether we are good at understanding the feelings and thoughts of others, or merely *seem* to be to ourselves and to others.

If there is a lesson to be learnt it is that we should be wary of being sure that we are empathetic and behaving empathetically, and being self-congratulatory as to the putative virtue (though whether it always is a virtue is doubtful) we think we therefore possess, because we can never know if we are really.

We can take a guess, even hope, and it might be true, as we like to think of empathy as a virtue. But that is as good as it is going to get. We can never acquire the evidence to know whether we are empathetic or not, for in order to know whether the evidence in genuine we would already need to know if we are empathetic or not. There is no difference in how it is to a person between the reality of being empathetic and the appearance of merely seeming that one is empathetic.



Dr John Shand is a Visiting Fellow in Philosophy at the Open University. He studied philosophy at the University of Manchester and King's Col-

lege, University of Cambridge. He has taught at Cambridge, Manchester and the Open University. The author of numerous articles, reviews, and edited books, his own books include, *Arguing Well* (London: Routledge, 2000) and *Philosophy and Philosophers: An Introduction to Western Philosophy*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2014).

Contact information:

- Dr John Shand, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK7 6AA, United Kingdom.
- <https://open.academia.edu/JohnShand>
- <https://fass.open.ac.uk/philosophy/people>
- <https://oro.open.ac.uk/view/person/jas66.html>

Cover image by Veit Hammer on Unsplash.

Can We Control Technology?



Understanding technological development

If we look around today, it is increasingly clear that whatever future we might have will depend on how we can manage humanity's technological development.

Most of what makes our society good and worth living in, and what keeps us largely free of the poverty, diseases and the suffering of old times, we owe to our technologies. But for most of our problems today, from the destructive influences of social media on democracy to global warming and environmental destruction, we can also blame technological progress. If we ever get to Mars and the other planets and become a multi-planet species, it will be due to the technologies we will develop. If we overcome cancer and old age and live productive lives into our 200s, it

will be due to technology. And if we annihilate ourselves in a nuclear inferno or environmental collapse, we will also have to thank our technological world.

So if we want to understand where we are heading, it is crucial to understand technological development. And, in particular, to answer the question: Can we control technologies, or do they control us? Has society any say in what the next big, shiny tech gadget will be? Or are we, obedient sheep, forced to adopt whatever technologies are placed in front of us by the dark forces that govern our fates?

Philosophy of technology and the Internet

These questions are discussed in an area of philosophy called the philosophy of technology, or society and technology studies (STS).

Let's look again at the question who controls technology. Very roughly, one can give a number of possible answers:

First, technologies develop according to their own logic, by evolving from each other. The water mill leads, eventually, to the steam mill. The steam mill to the factory. The steam engine to the electrical generator. Electricity to electric cars. And so on. In this view, society has little to no say on what the next technology will be or how it will affect us all. Technology is largely

autonomous and goes its way without asking for our permission. This thesis is called *technological determinism* or *autonomous technology*.

In recent years, one could see such processes at work in the way the Internet and mobile phones were adopted. In both cases, there was no demand for these technologies from society at all. Computers have existed since the 50s, but were confined to offices and large computing centres, without intruding into the everyday lives of normal people. The Internet, which also existed for a long time as a communications channel among universities, mainly in the US, was an esoteric technology, of no possible use or interest to the wider population.

Then, in an instant, it all changed. IBM and Microsoft created the PC, and suddenly computers were everywhere. AOL popularised the Internet and overnight everyone had a madly whistling dial-up modem standing beside the telephone. Nokia shoved the mobile phone into our hands, and suddenly everyone was talking into a brick while walking down the street. Apple dropped the iPhone in our laps, and suddenly everyone was connected everywhere and all the time. Google, Facebook and Twitter created their services and suddenly we were all in there, taking part in something that now we cannot imagine ever living without.

There was no demand from society for any of these things at any point in their development or deployment. These technologies were dreamt up by individuals who thought “wouldn’t it be cool, if ...”. They were created by companies who started with nothing, created something and put it out there. People adopted the technologies after the fact, used them, made them part of their lives, and became addicted to them. But at no point was there someone who said, “I know such

a thing doesn’t exist, but I’d really like to have an iPhone! Who will make me one?”

Technologies generally are not created to satisfy a demand. They create their own demand.

This likely was always the case. I cannot imagine that a French farmer in the Middle Ages would have thought, “gee, wouldn’t it be great for someone to invent a printing press and print books, so that my kids can learn to read and we can have our own Bible and get rid of our dialect and create a church that speaks French instead of Latin?” Gutenberg, probably, forced his press on his contemporaries not unlike Steve Jobs hit us over the head with his iPhone.

But is this bad? Even if we’re given technology without choosing it, why would this be a problem? Isn’t it a good thing that the world gets better and better, even if it does so by itself, without our conscious choice?

Let’s see.

Problem 1: Democratic choice

The first problem with technology dictated “from above” is that we don’t get to democratically choose the world we’d like to have. Often, the interests of technologists and industry leaders don’t reflect the best interests of large parts of the population.

For example, the introduction of cashless payments sidelines poor people and the homeless, who may lack bank accounts and credit cards. They also don’t have a way to receive alms any more. How would you give the beggar at the street corner something if all you have is a rectangular piece of plastic with your name on it?

Additionally, technologies create their own necessities which, again, remain outside of democratic control. After nuclear power has been

forced upon us, we also need to accept nuclear transports, nuclear waste storage facilities that will be radioactive for tens of thousands of years, and the possibility of devastating nuclear accidents.

After accepting the iPhone into our lives, we, as a society, need to pay for the construction of mobile phone towers, the extraction of rare metals, the disposal of millions of tons of toxic electronic waste, the cost of Internet and online-gaming addiction and a myriad other costly consequences. We have no say on any of these.

The more technologies are pushed into our lives, the less ability we have to take decisions as a society, and the more our future decisions are constrained and dictated by our past choices.

Problem 2: Choices diminish with time

This is a continuation of the previous point. In the past, we could have had the option to decide whether we want a society with cars or horses. But by accepting cars at one moment in time, the decision has been made, and from then on, we don't have the choice of abandoning cars any more.

Many technologies intrude into our lives in so complex ways that they cannot be extricated again once they have been adopted. There is no way back from the adoption of the car, the mobile phone, the Internet, or nuclear power. There is only a way forward that might include replacing these technologies by others. But that choice will, again, not be ours. It will be made according to the internal logic of technological progress and in a way that satisfies the financial needs and plans of the industries that control these developments.

No country, democratic or not, can afford to switch off or ban Google. No country can afford to revert to horse carts, scribbled postcards and home-spun clothes. Technology, in this way, directly interferes with human autonomy and democratic choice.

Even more, technologies limit the field of discourse about solutions to the problems of society. *When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail*, goes the saying. When all you have is technology, everything looks like a technological problem.

We can clearly see this in the extreme technologisation of health. Instead of health being seen (as it probably should) as the holistic ability of a human being to flourish, our modern perception of health is focused almost exclusively on measuring numerical parameters of the human body. And this is a very recent development that was made possible only by the emergence of health apps, the Internet and mobile phones. Pregnancy has long mutated from a natural process to a disease that is managed in hospitals and with the help of drugs and surgical procedures. The hype around umbilical cord storage and the possibility of genetically designed and pre-selected babies all contribute to seeing pregnancy as a huge technological operations field, rather than something that all life on Earth does without making such a fuss about it.

As long as this is a choice, all is good. But, in time, the choices diminish. When one goes to a hospital today, one has no choice about the methods of treatment. Doctors have only learned to operate using the machines and the drugs of the health-industrial complex and are powerless without them. Instead of restoring health and well-being, our modern medicine emphasises the technological fix of a symptom, of-

ten in crass disregard of the patient's well-being and flourishing.

This is also very obvious in the debate about global warming. There are many excellent, cheap and (in principle) easy to implement ways out of the problems of the climate emergency; but nobody talks about them. The discourse on global warming refuses to engage with proposals like banning long-haul flights, outlawing private cars or reverting industrialised agriculture to local eco-farming. Instead, the debate focuses again on purely technological fixes: new machines to bind atmospheric carbon; the creation of artificial, reflective clouds in the higher atmosphere; nuclear fusion as the cure for all problems; and the terraforming of Mars, as if we were likely to make a better job of reviving Mars than we did of keeping our own, perfectly healthy planet alive.

Similarly, the fix for the problems of Internet misinformation (caused by technology in the first place) is sought in more technology that will automatically censor particular content. If that censorship goes wrong, another, better AI technology will control the censoring software, and so on. The sane option of just scrapping these huge information networks and scaling discourse down to small groups that can easily be socially controlled seems not to be available any more.

Technology has created not only the problems we face, but also limited discourse to the solutions that can be implemented using more technology on top of the existing one.

Problem 3: The selection of particular technologies

The third problem of technological development is that it tends to create powerful elites that con-

trol most of society. When once the control of technologies has passed into the hands of a particular group of people, there is no incentive for them to let go of that control.

We can see this every day with the power of Google and Facebook and the impossibility of effectively controlling these companies. When SpaceX decided to fill the sky with their necklace of thousands of satellites that interfere with astronomical observations, there was a worldwide outcry. The result? Elon Musk is still sending his satellites up and nobody has found any way of stopping him.

Jerry Mander, US activist and writer, once wrote: "If you accept nuclear power plants, you also accept a techno-scientific industrial-military elite. Without these people in charge, you could not have nuclear power."

We can easily see that in the history of fossil fuels throughout the 20th century. Although electric cars existed from the very beginning of the automobile age, soon they were overtaken by petrol-driven cars. The demand for petrol and, later, plastics, created the world-dominating oil cartels. Oil-producing states, together with sprawling companies, have since managed to keep a tight control not only over the price and availability of oil, but also on the development of alternative, regenerative energy technologies.

Conspiracies

And here's something interesting: look at the names of the four largest oil and gas companies worldwide, according to Google: Saudi Aramco, ExxonMobil, Chevron and Shell. If you're not an industry insider, you probably recognise only

two of them. I had never heard of the other two. Isn't this strange, and, in a way, worrisome? That we are aware of the existence of only half of the companies that essentially own the worldwide energy market, while the other two of them fly entirely under the radar of the common citizen. It's no wonder that people are falling for conspiracy theories.

And it's not that conspiracy theorists are wrong in principle. Conspiracies abound:

- Mobile phones often don't get operating system updates after as little as 3 years, forcing users to change perfectly good phones.
- Tobacco companies have for decades created and supported "research" that downplayed the dangers of smoking.
- Powerful nuclear lobbies are still building new reactors in many countries, although it is by now clear that nuclear power creates more problems than it solves, and that it is only financially viable if the governments pick up the tabs and finance their construction, operation and removal with public money.
- Purdue Pharma has been misleading the US public for years, keeping it in the dark about the addictiveness of OxyContin: According to Wikipedia, in 2012, New England Journal of Medicine published a study that found that "76 percent of those seeking help for heroin addiction began by abusing pharmaceutical narcotics, primarily OxyContin."
- Volkswagen has been systematically cheating the emissions controls in the US, its cars regularly releasing up to 40 times the permitted emissions.

- Failed oversight by the FAA allowed Boeing to ship the 737 MAX that caused two crashes in 2018 and 2019.

The problem is that conspiracy theory believers are manipulated by those in power into looking at the wrong places, making themselves the objects of ridicule in the process, while the industrial cartels and their elites can go on robbing society and making profits from the misery of others.

Problem 4: Technologies form their society

The last issue that we will mention here is that technologies often *create* the society that they need in order to exist. Rather than the society deciding whether it wants a particular technology, it is the *technology* that dictates how society will have to change in response to that technology.

For example, as Langdon Winner has pointed out ("Do Artifacts Have Politics?"), the atomic bomb is an inherently political artefact. It can only exist together with a rigid, hierarchical chain of command that keeps it reasonably safe and away from the hands of the public. No state can afford to give true, democratic control over nuclear weapons to its population.

Another example, in clear daily view of everyone, is our system of industrial mass-production. If we want factories that mass-produce goods, then we need workers that work in shifts, we need a particular structure of cities that support regular commuting, we need uniform break and holiday times that can be synchronised with pauses in the operation of the machines. A society of free-thinking hunter-gatherers who are now here and tomorrow at another place, and who perhaps don't work at all on the third day,

would not be able to successfully operate a modern factory. It is no accident that we talk of a human “servicing a machine.” This is the truth of the matter. It is not any more the machines serving the humans. Instead, the workers have to adapt their lives so that they can optimally serve the machines.

Conclusion: Where are we going?

If this all sounded a bit dark, it is because, well, it is. Our world is currently controlled by technologies, which, in turn, are controlled by tiny, tightly-closed elite circles who determine how the world is being run.

If we want to understand what the future will bring, it is not enough to only look at technologies as the means to endless prosperity and comfort. Technologies are also, in our societies, means of domination that aim to perpetuate their hold on society and to suppress the free choice of its citizens.

We need to keep this mind as we go forward, looking to make sense of how the future may unfold.

Photo by Nicolas Hippert on Unsplash.

Catherine Greene

I'm depressed and it's all your fault!



Disclaimer: This is an article about the history and philosophy of psychiatry. It is not meant and should not be used as advice on how to treat depression. If you feel symptoms of depression, please consult a specialist.

Incidence of depression is increasing. One explanation is that aspects of our modern lives are responsible. Loss of in person connections, fast paced and sometimes bewildering communication, the increase in temporary and insecure work. A British Prime Minister who seemingly can't tell whether he is at a party or in a meeting. Henry Maudsley wrote, "an increase of (depression) is a penalty which an increase of our present civilisation necessarily pays." Maudsley [1] wrote this in 1867 but he could have written it today. And he used the word 'insanity' rather

than 'depression', but the point is the same. Are we driving ourselves insane? And have we been doing so for over a hundred years? To understand this, we need to understand how we came to think of ourselves as depressed.

Depression through the ages [2]

Historically, sadness was divided into 'sadness with cause', and 'sadness without cause', also known as melancholia. Melancholia was considered a medical disorder because there was no apparent reason for the person's symptoms. This distinction has a long history, going all the way back to Hippocrates and Aristotle.

The early 10th century Arabic physician Ishaq ibn Imran defined melancholia as "irrational, constant sadness and dejection" but noted that "the loss of a beloved child or an irreplaceable library can release such sadness and dejection that melancholy is the result." The implied existence of non-beloved children and the equating of beloved children with libraries are interesting side issues. In the 19th century, Mercier defined melancholia as "a disorder characterised by a feeling of misery which is in excess of what is justified by the circumstances in which the individual is placed." This makes sense intuitively. If my irreplaceable library is burned to the ground I will be very sad, despondent,

and have little interest in doing things. This is different from waking up one day and having those same feelings without an apparent cause. These early thinkers believed that melancholia had some physical cause, such as a misalignment of the humours.

Freud (1856-1939) attempted to understand depression by uncovering hidden desires and motivations, rather than physical imbalances, but nevertheless maintained the traditional distinction. He wrote:

Although grief involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a morbid condition and hand the mourner over to medical treatment. We rest assured that after a lapse of time it will be overcome, and we look upon any interference with it as advisable or even harmful. (Freud, Mourning and Melancholia)

On the other side of the fence, Kraepelin (1856-1926) advocated a behavioural approach to psychology. For him, the focus should be symptoms, not hidden urges, and he used these to classify mental disorders. In a break with those before him, he moved away from just describing the major symptoms of mental disorders in favour of looking at patterns of symptoms over time. Those of us who are pretty sure that we never wanted to have sex with our parents might naturally have some sympathy with this approach. Kraepelin did agree with most of his forebears that the context within which patients exhibited symptoms was critical to understanding whether they were disordered or not. Kraepelin's influence can be traced down the

years into the American Psychiatric Association's DSM, which provides diagnostic criteria for all mental disorders, based on symptoms.

The DSM

The first version of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) was published in 1952. It listed 106 mental disorders, including homosexuality. The DSM II, published in 1968, listed 182 disorders. The third edition appeared in 1980 after a thorough revision because concerns had been raised that different psychiatrists came to different conclusions when diagnosing the same patient. The approach taken for DSM III harked back to Kraepelin, in that groups of symptoms were taken to indicate underlying pathology and Freudian inspired approaches were abandoned. It listed 265 diagnoses.

Very few doctors pull out a copy of the DSM when patients come to them with symptoms of depression. Instead, they use questionnaires, such as this one, used in the UK:

*Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

- Little interest or pleasure in doing things?
- Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?
- Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much?
- Feeling tired or having little energy?

Depression in the DSM

DSM III broke with prior understanding of depression. It was based on symptoms, rather than

symptoms relative to potential triggers. As is clear from the questionnaire above, no mention is made of triggering events, or occurrences that might explain sleeplessness or low mood.

However, until the DSM 5 in 2013, the criteria for diagnosing someone with depression did still retain a nod to the ‘sadness with cause’ and ‘sadness without cause’ distinction. This is because it exempted people from a diagnosis of depression for two months after the death of a loved one. In other words, people with symptoms of depression should not be diagnosed as having depression if they had suffered the recent loss of a loved one. Why just death you might wonder? Losing a job, family breakup, or the destruction of an irreplaceable library might have similar effects. But according to the DSM these would be classified as instances of depression, not normal reactions to unhappy circumstances. The depression exemption was removed in DSM 5.

Treating depression

Why does it matter how people are classified? It matters because a diagnosis usually leads to treatment of some sort, and the belief that there is something wrong with us. Either that our brain chemistry is out of balance, or that we are thinking about the world in ways that are making us miserable.

Treatments for depression have changed dramatically over time. In the 1940s, patients, mostly those in hospitals, began to be treated with electroconvulsive therapy. The first drugs targeting depression specifically appeared in 1958. These drugs appeared to work, and depression began to be understood as resulting from an imbalance in brain chemistry.

The other option for treating depression is with

therapy rather than, or sometimes alongside, drugs. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is the most common therapy in the UK and it has its origins in the 1960s when Aaron Beck wondered whether depression did not result from outside stressors but from our inability to cope with these stresses — because we have faulty beliefs that we are helpless or unworthy. Initial trials of CBT were successful. But this raised a question: If depression is responsive to CBT, can it really result from a chemical imbalance in the brain?

Prozac arrived in 1985 and tipped the balance back toward the chemical imbalance explanation. It was seen as safer than previous drugs, seemingly very effective and was very widely prescribed. In 1997, anti-depressants were marketed direct to US citizens, highlighting the chemical imbalance that could be cured by drugs.

An epidemic of depression

Between the end of World War II and the 1960s, depression was rare, partly because feelings of despondency and sadness were believed to result from anxiety. But by the 1970s it became a much more common diagnosis. To some extent this resulted in a change in classification of patients from anxiety to depression.

A WHO report also suggested that incidence of depression was much higher than usually supposed. How did this happen? People hadn’t often been assessed using questionnaires about their mental health before. These questionnaires asked people how they felt, not why they might be having these feelings. By the time of the DSM III in the 1970s, all reference to life story, background and triggering factors were dropped in favour of a checklist of symptoms. Depression became common. Even those not prone to

conspiracy theory also note the enormous profits available to drug companies from selling drugs targeting common conditions.

Where now?

Where does this leave our original question? Are our lives making us depressed?

People have always responded to their experiences, both good and bad. We have always felt sad when we suffer setbacks and disappointments. However, in the past, this would not necessarily have led us to believe we are depressed. If we continued to feel sad long after our disappointment had passed, we would have been more inclined to think that something might be wrong.

If we are categorised as depressed we will usually be offered drugs, CBT, or both. In the first case, our feelings are attributed to a chemical imbalance; in the second, due to faulty ways of thinking. But the old distinction between sadness with cause and sadness without cause allows us to challenge this. Insecure working patterns and social isolation are not making us sick, requiring treatment focussed on us. Insecure working patterns and social isolation are bad for us. The problem and the cure are not wholly within us, but outside of us. These are the things that need to change. Our negative mental states may be warranted, and reasonable; a sign that we are responding in an appropriate way to our environment.

Needless to say, there are many good therapists and doctors out there and we shouldn't hesitate to get professional help if we need it.

Further reading

- [1] Anne Harrington: *Mind Fixers*.
- [2] The historical overview is based on: Allan V Horwitz & Jerome K Wakefield: *The Loss of Sadness – How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder*.

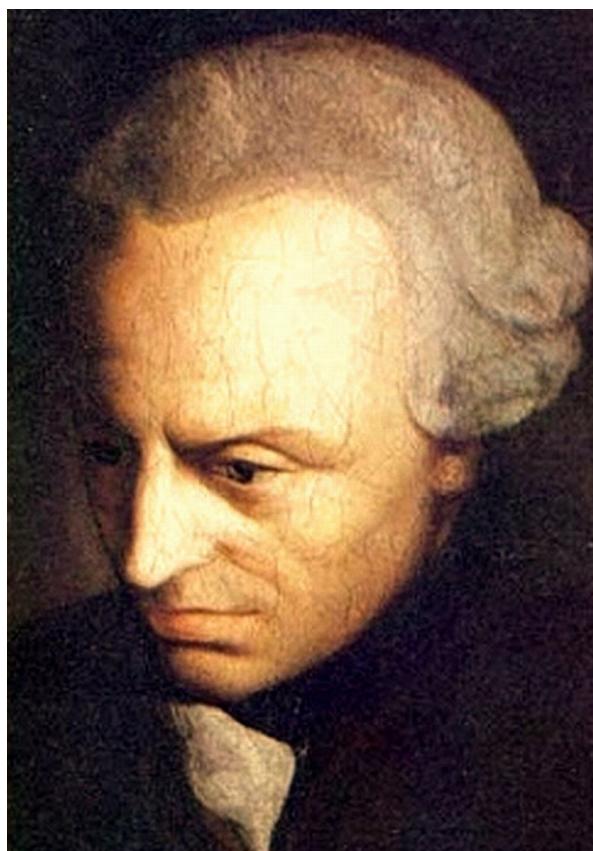


Catherine Greene is a Research Associate at the Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science at the London School of Economics. Her research interests are the philosophy of finance and social science. Before studying for a PhD she had a career in finance and still consults an ethics and investment strategy. More information is available at www.catherinegreene.co.uk

Cover image: Canva.com.

Immanuel Kant on Means and Ends

Since ancient times, philosophers have been portrayed as “walking on clouds,” being too busy to concern themselves with the mundane things in life. Immanuel Kant certainly fits the cliche. Today, we talk about Kant’s idea of the value of human beings, the quote that changed ethics forever.



Immanuel Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

Act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, at all times also as an end, and not only as a means. (Kant, Ground-work of the Metaphysics of Morals, Second Section)

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was one of the most influential philosophers of the past 300 years. Not only that — he was also the embodiment of a philosopher who is too busy with his thoughts to take notice of the actual world.

One of his favourite pastimes was to visit a friend, one Mr Green. Kant would go to Green’s home, only to find him asleep. This happened in the same way every time, without fail. Kant would sit beside Green, waiting for him to wake up. After a while, he would doze off himself. A little later, a third friend would come along and also fall asleep with them, until, finally, the last of the group of friends would enter the room and wake everyone up. Once awake, they had a blast talking about interesting ideas, but only until precisely seven o’clock in the evening. At seven, and not a minute later, the group would break up and everyone would go their own way. The locals, who were used to this weird meeting, would know when it was seven o’clock, because Kant would always pass by the street at exactly this time. [1]

Kant needed this kind of regularity and could be profoundly unhappy when something didn't go according to plan. One time, an acquaintance invited him for a trip to the countryside. But the trip took a bit longer and Kant wasn't home at his customary bed-time at precisely ten o'clock. This upset him so much that he immediately created a new rule for his life: never to accept another invitation for a trip to the country.

Kant could be charming and witty, his students reported, but he could also do the weirdest things. When his long-time servant, a man named Lampe, left him, he found it very difficult to accustom himself to a life without the man. So he stuck a note to the wall: "Lampe must be forgotten!" One wonders whether the wise man expected this to actually work.

Means and ends

Kant never left his home town, Koenigsberg (today's Kaliningrad), never married, never changed his daily schedule or his diet, and died, presumably happy and mildly bored, at the age of 80. His last words were: "It's fine."

In the course of his long and externally uneventful life, Kant created a series of works that uprooted and changed philosophy for ever. His fundamental Critique of Pure Reason tried to sort out the limits of what we can know independently of all experience of the world; that is, with our "pure reason" alone.

But what we're interested in today is his ethics. Today, we are accustomed to the thought that all living things have developed out of each other in the long process of natural evolution. We are willing to give rights to animals and to recognise that their concerns are, essentially, of the same importance as our own; their suffering as bad as our own.

But Kant would not entirely agree. He saw that human beings have a particular kind of value that animal lives lack. And this value comes from the ability we have to be *autonomous*, to decide for ourselves how we want to act and then to actually *act* upon our decisions.

Animals are caught in the necessities of their instincts. A bee cannot decide to ignore a flower. An ant cannot ignore a morsel of food. A lion cannot freely decide to let a zebra live. And this applies even to those animals that we consider the "highest" on the evolutionary scale, those closest to us: dogs are as much slaves to their instincts as apes. It is only humans, at least this is what Kant believes, who can freely decide which course of action to follow in every situation. Yes, we also have to eat, but many have voluntarily starved to death in hunger strikes, clearly showing that our mind and our free will can triumph over the demands of our bodies. Many are voluntarily celibate. Many abstain from particular foods when dieting. And so on.

This ability we have to act freely, to decide how we *want* to act, makes us special. Every time we do follow a rule, say a moral rule, we are doing it freely. There is no way to coerce a human being into doing anything. You can punish a murderer, but murders still happen. In principle, we are all free to be murderers, as we are free to be saints. We can decide to be lazy or hard-working. It is always a free decision, no matter which way we choose.

This ability of human beings is what gives them a value that is of a different kind than the value other things have. You can replace one car by another. If you lose a pen, you can buy another. You can go to the market and exchange two eggs for a head of lettuce. And so on.

But one cannot exchange human beings for one another, Kant thinks. You cannot say, I have too many children, so let me exchange two of them for a new car. This would not make sense, and we would immediately recognise such an action as immoral. Why? Because this would implicitly put human beings on the same level as a mere thing, a car. Such an action would deny human beings their special status, what Kant calls their “dignity.”

But now, if we agree with Kant that human beings are special in this way, then we can never “make use” of a human being in order to achieve some other goal, since any other goal must be of less value, inferior to the value of the human being. This is what Kant means with his talk of “means” and “ends.”

The “end” of an action is what I want to achieve. Let’s say, I want to get my pen back, which I forgot at a friend’s house yesterday. The “means” are the instruments or tools that I will use to get that pen back. I might walk over to my friend’s house to get my pen back, for example. Then my walking there would be the means towards the end of getting my pen back.

But what if my friend lives far away? I can take a taxi. Assuming my pen is worth 5 dollars, and I pay 50 to the taxi to get the pen back: would this be a rational action? No, in this case, I should just use the money directly to buy another pen (or ten of them) instead of trying to retrieve that one pen that I forgot.

So the means that I use to achieve some end must, if I want to be rational, have less value than the end itself.

But now, if humans have a special, unlimited value, it follows that I can never use them as means towards any end. Because no end can

have a value that is higher than a human being’s dignity.

Acting in a way that recognises this fact makes sure that we always respect human dignity and that, therefore, we act in a way that is morally right. For Kant, the highest good in acting is to act rationally. And respecting human dignity is a rational necessity. Not doing so would be like paying a 50 dollar taxi bill in order to retrieve a five-dollar pen.

If we follow Kant’s advice, we will never sacrifice a person for any reason. We will not agree to wars where soldiers get killed for a military gain. We will not accept a prison system that mistreats human beings in the name of deterrence. We will not lie to another just to secure an advantage for ourselves. And we will not exploit workers to lower the prices of our consumer products.

Kant’s “Categorical Imperative,” as this idea is also called, is actually pretty demanding, and it is rightfully considered a kind of gold standard of human behaviour towards others.

Just think how much better our world would be if everyone acted following this quote, if we treated the soldier, the worker, the prisoner, the prostitute, the beggar as ends and not only as means to our own ends:

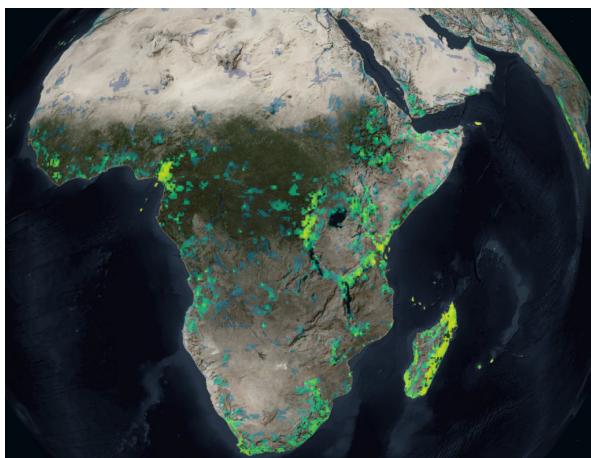
“Act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, at all times also as an end, and not only as a means.”

[1] The facts on Kant’s personal life were taken from Wilhelm Weischedel’s genius book on the lives of famous philosophers, which, unfortunately, exists only in German. But if you can

read German, get it. It's one of the most entertaining philosophy books: Wilhelm Weischedel, *Die Philosophische Hintertreppe. 34 grosse Philosophen in Alltag und Denken.*

Half the Earth

If we go on destroying the planet, would it be better if we restricted ourselves to half of it? The audacious Half-Earth proposal has met with a lot of criticism. But is it really a bad idea?



Thinking clearly about the problems

Today we begin with a look at the most pressing problems of our near future: what can be summarily labelled the “ecological catastrophe.”

Our environmental problems are many, and solving them will be imperative if we are to have any future on Earth. The public debate often focuses only on global warming and climate change. The detractors who don’t believe in the reality of climate change seem to be under the impression that if climate change is not real, or

if it is not as severe as predicted, then everything will be all right with the Earth. Of course, the reality is different.

Earth.org identifies the 12 most pressing environmental problems of our lifetimes as:

- Global warming from fossil fuels
- Poor governance
- Food waste
- Biodiversity loss
- Plastic pollution
- Deforestation
- Air pollution
- Melting ice caps and sea level rise
- Ocean acidification
- Agriculture
- Food and water insecurity
- Fast fashion and textile waste

... and I would like to add: overfishing and the destruction of the ocean’s ecosystems; and nuclear waste, which, strangely, doesn’t get a mention in this list.

Some of the items above are, indeed, consequences of global warming; but others are entirely independent issues. Even if we didn’t have a problem with global warming, even if it was all fake, as some believe; we would still have to deal with plastic pollution, overfishing, deforestation, biodiversity loss and food and water insecurity for large parts of the world.

As philosophers, we have an obligation to promote clarity in thinking about problems, and here is one area where large parts of the world's population are currently deluded. Especially the technological fixes to global warming, like the spraying of reflective materials into the stratosphere, are not only potentially more dangerous than global warming itself, but they also completely ignore the roots of the actual problem. And they ignore all the other problems mentioned above, which won't get fixed even by successful sunlight dimming. Plastics, radioactive waste, depletion of crucial resources, air pollution and species extinction won't stop because we're spraying metallic droplets into the clouds.

So what *will* save us?

Biodiversity and human habitation

If you look at the list above, some of the problems are the result of a human population that has grown to occupy too much space and use too many resources, while the rest of the planet and its biosphere, that is required to recycle these resources, is constantly shrinking. Food waste, biodiversity loss, air pollution, and even plastics wouldn't be the problems that they are if we had fewer humans, concentrated in one part of the world, with vast areas of pristine, protected nature to make up for the destruction that we cause.

Especially biodiversity depends on contiguous areas of wild nature, in which self-sustaining ecosystems can flourish. One garden patch here and one over there, separated by a highway, won't be as effective in creating habitats as a combined area would be, with the highway on the one side of it. Some animals require huge areas of land in which they can hunt, mate and live natural lives: A single Siberian tiger female

needs up to 450 km² (170 sq miles) to live in — and males need even more than that [1]. Humpback whales travel up to 3,000 miles from their feeding grounds in the cold waters of the Polar regions, to their breeding grounds in the warmer waters of tropical regions [2].

The way we have divided nature into small patches of forest between roads and cities, and the way we manage and clear our forests, lead to the disappearance of more and more natural habitats.

On a positive note, it is amazing how quickly nature can regenerate when we retreat from the picture. After the Chernobyl nuclear accident, humans left the area and designated it an "exclusion zone." The UN Environment Programme describes how Chernobyl has become How Chernobyl has become "an unexpected haven for wildlife":

Many people think the area around the Chernobyl nuclear plant is a place of post-apocalyptic desolation. But more than 30 years after one of the facility's reactors exploded, sparking the worst nuclear accident in human history, science tells us something very different.

Researchers have found the land surrounding the plant, which has been largely off limits to humans for three decades, has become a haven for wildlife, with lynx, bison, deer and other animals roaming through thick forests. This so-called Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (CEZ), which covers 2,800 square km of northern Ukraine, now represents the third-largest nature reserve in mainland Europe and

has become an iconic – if accidental – experiment in rewilding. [3]

The principal reason for the extinction of species is habitat loss. So may this be one part of the solution to our problems? Might we improve our chances of survival if we just leave a part of the Earth alone, just as we did in Chernobyl and the Korean Demilitarised Zone, another ecological success story of the past few decades?

Enter the Half Earth proposal.

Half an Earth?

The E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation was established in 2005 to honor Dr. Edward O. Wilson (1929–2021), biologist, naturalist and writer. Wilson was an expert on ants, but he was also an early proponent of conservation of biodiversity. From the 1970s onwards he worked on various subjects related to the conservation of the environment and our fascination with nature. He forcefully advocated for the protection of America's forests:

Now when you cut a forest, an ancient forest in particular, you are not just removing a lot of big trees and a few birds fluttering around in the canopy. You are drastically imperiling a vast array of species within a few square miles of you. The number of these species may go to tens of thousands. ... Many of them are still unknown to science, and science has not yet discovered the key role undoubtedly played in the maintenance

of that ecosystem, as in the case of fungi, microorganisms, and many of the insects. [4]

In 2014, Wilson proposed setting aside half the Earth's surface, which should be protected from human civilisation, in order to let nature thrive in these spaces.

A common question when one first encounters the Half-Earth project is “why half?” The Half-Earth Project website says:

As reserves grow in size, the diversity of life surviving within them also grows. As reserves are reduced in area, the diversity within them declines to a mathematically predictable degree swiftly – often immediately and, for a large fraction, forever.

When 90% of habitat is removed, the number of species that can persist sustainably will descend to about a half. Such is the actual condition of many of the most species-rich localities around the world. In these places, if 10% of the remaining natural habitat were then also removed, most or all of the surviving resident species would disappear.

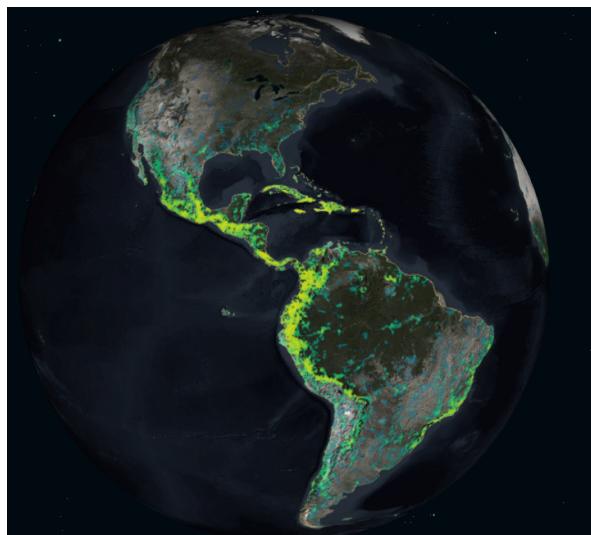
If, on the other hand, we protect half the global surface, the fraction of species protected will be 85%, or more. At one-half and above, life on Earth enters the safe zone. [5]

Which half?

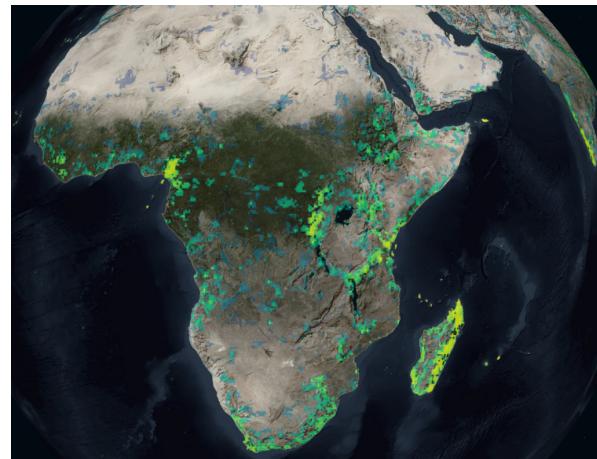
The Half-Earth Project has mapped the areas that are most in need of conservation and where protection would have the biggest impact on the survival of species.

The United Nations list of protected areas is updated only every decade or so, and the last edition of 2014 shows that around 15% of land and only 3.5% of oceans are protected. This is far too little to make it possible for nature to exist sustainably in the long run.

The Half-Earth project publishes online maps of the Earth's biodiversity. If you click on that link, you'll be able to explore the world-wide map that they have put together. Here is a screenshot:



The yellow and light green areas are those most in need of protection. The greyer an area is, the least important it is in terms of biodiversity.



As one would expect, the most important areas for conservation centre around the equator, South America, Madagascar, East Asia and the Indonesia-Philippines region. Sadly, these are also the areas that are often most under pressure to develop economically, and where nature is often exploited in the worst, most destructive ways: the Amazon rainforests that are cut down for timber and cattle ranching; the deforestation in Indonesia, driven by pulp and paper companies, logging and palm monocultures that are needed to create our palm-oil fuelled chocolate bars.

Protecting just these crucial areas will have a huge effect on biodiversity, without even requiring us to vacate any of the main urban centres of the world.

Human needs?

The Half-Earth project, as urgent as it is in the eyes of its supporters, has been criticised for not taking human needs seriously enough. In a number of papers and magazine articles, a small group of researchers have argued that protecting these high-biodiversity areas will harm precisely those human populations which are now the most vulnerable and themselves in need of protection: the indigenous tribes of South America, South Asia, and Oceania. Should they all be relocated out of their traditional home lands, forcefully exiled in the name of biodiversity? Should they not be allowed to live in their traditional

ways just because Western science is, once again, convinced that it knows better what's good for everyone?

These questions are indeed quite philosophical. How much sacrifice can we expect from others, especially from those who have contributed the least to our present ecological problems? How many people's suffering can be tolerated for the common benefit of all? And does nature have any claim at all at being protected if protecting it requires human sacrifice?

This article is not the place to answer all these questions. We are here just concerned with the possible futures of mankind, and one of these would possibly include something like the Half-Earth protection scheme.

But as Wilson himself has pointed out, relocating indigenous people is not part of the scheme. In his book, Wilson points out that indigenous people "are often the best protectors" of their lands. The Amazon rainforests are not destroyed by the indigenous tribes that live in them, but by greedy multinational corporations that displace these very people in order to exploit the forests' resources.

Recent research has found that contrary to popular belief, protected areas may actually improve the conditions of local communities (at least in countries like Uganda, Thailand and Costa Rica) instead of impoverishing them.
(The Guardian)

So it doesn't seem like the Half-Earth proposal would require any relocation of indigenous people or any change in the way they live their lives. What it would require is that *we*, the highly developed industrial nations, stop robbing the re-

sources from the planet's last remaining biodiversity hotspots.

Another interesting philosophical question is how we should weigh nature's claims against human interests. Ethical systems like Deep Ecology have tried to argue that all life should be considered equally valuable and that nature's rights must receive equal consideration to human needs. But this seems difficult for us, as humans, to accept. And the problems are made worse by the short shelf-life of our democratic governments that always try to pass the buck to the next government, a few years down the line.

Half or full Earth?

Finally, we'll have to ask: assuming we successfully protect half the Earth from development; what will this mean for the other half?

Is it any good to protect half the planet, while the rest goes about their everyday business of destruction? Many of the sources of our current ecological problems are global. Yes, we can create secure habitats for Siberian tigers or whales, but what is the good of those if, at the same time, we let our nuclear reactors explode like we did in Fukushima? In the end, there is no effective border between the protected and the exploited areas, between paradise and hell. Pollution is global, microplastics will eventually disperse everywhere, as already they have found their way into the Antarctic ice. Global warming and air pollution also don't stop at protected area borders, although such areas would certainly help mitigate these problems.

It seems that our situation on Earth right now requires more than just a half-earth protection scheme. Closing off half the earth to human industrial development would certainly be a good

thing, and perhaps it is even a necessary component of any plan for a sustainable future of mankind — but alone it probably won't solve all our problems on this Earth.

[1] Wikipedia: Siberian Tiger

[2] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[3] UN Environment Programme

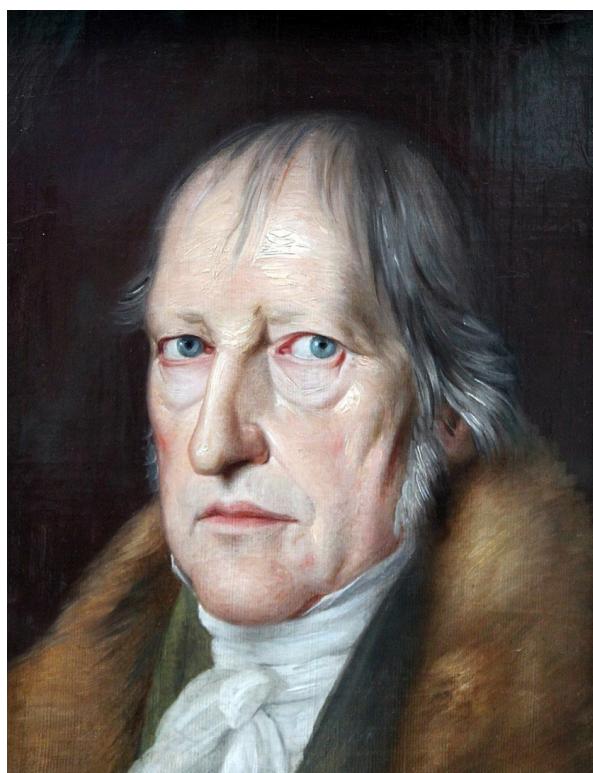
[4] Wilson, Edward Osborne (April 28, 1998). “Slide show”. saveamericasforests.org. p. 2. Retrieved November 13, 2008. Cited after Wikipedia.

[5] Half Earth Project

[6] <https://map.half-earthproject.org>

Hegel's Dialectic

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel thought that the whole world is better understood not as a collection of isolated objects, but as the synthesis of opposites into a bigger whole. In this, he is much closer to today's ecological thinking than he is to much of modern Western philosophy. Perhaps it's time to re-discover Hegel's philosophy of synthesis for our world.



Hegel: Truth is a synthesis

“Truth is found neither in the thesis nor the antithesis, but in an emer-

gent synthesis which reconciles the two.” (Attributed to Hegel)

This quote feels so familiar: the dialectic exchange of thesis–antithesis–synthesis is such a common pattern of thought, particularly since Marxism took it up and the rhetoric of the student movements in the late 1960s made it famous. It has even made it into Hollywood movies: in the 1992 film *Sneakers*, the characters of Robert Redford and Ben Kingsley playfully go through an argument in exactly these three stages: thesis–antithesis–synthesis.

It was therefore quite surprising for me to discover that it is disputed whether Hegel ever actually said (or wrote) that sentence above. The sad truth about academic philosophy is that the overwhelming majority of philosophy professors have never read the overwhelming majority of philosophical works. When it takes a whole academic lifetime to become a Kant or Plato specialist, it is impossible for any one person to have read everything. Like most of my peers, I have never actually read Hegel himself, except in small doses: a chapter here, a paragraph there, and fragments of works *about* him from other authors. So I cannot really say with certainty whether he wrote this quote or not: if you happen to know, please tell me in the comments to this article on the Daily Philosophy Substack!

The closest I came to a source for this quote is actually a sermon by Martin Luther King, “A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart” (1962/1963), which exists in multiple versions. In one of them, we find the passage:

The militant are not generally known to be passive, nor the passive to be militant. Seldom are the humble self-assertive, or the self-assertive humble. But life at its best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony. *The philosopher Hegel said that truth is found neither in the thesis nor the antithesis, but in an emergent synthesis that reconciles the two.* (Martin Luther King, A Tough Mind; emphasis by me)

According to a comment in a collection of papers by Martin Luther King, published by the King Research and Education Institute at Stanford, “the quote mirrors lines from an E. Stanley Jones book that King annotated and kept in his personal library (Jones, Mahatma Gandhi An Interpretation; New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948, p. 17)”.

So the quote recedes more and more into the distance of literary lore and might or might not have been by Hegel, or perhaps by King, or perhaps by E. Stanley Jones, or maybe even by Gandhi. One wonders whether some version of it might not be found in the Gospels.

In the end, it doesn’t matter much whether Hegel actually wrote these precise words. They are quoted all over the Internet for a reason: they beautifully summarise what Hegel thought about truth, about history and about God. And since they are so famous, we are justified in discussing them here.

Hegel's dialectic

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was an enormously influential philosopher of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He was a contemporary of many famous German Idealists and romantic poets, and this shows in his philosophy, which is heavily influenced by the times.

Like them, Hegel had a tendency towards the mystical and he sought to see the union that underlies the apparent diversity of the world. The German poet Novalis (born only two years after Hegel) expressed the longing for cosmic harmony in these words:

Mankind travels along manifold pathways. He who pursues and compares them will perceive the emergence of certain strange figures; figures that appear to be inscribed in that massive tome composed in cipher that one everywhere and in everything beholds: on wings, eggshells, in clouds, in the snow, in crystalline and stone formations, in freezing waters, on the skins and in the bowels of mountain-ranges, of plants, beasts, people, in the stars of the heavens, in contiguous and expansive panes of pitch and glass, in the clustering of iron filings around the magnet (...) In these one may glimpse an intimation of the key to this wondrous text, its very grammar-book (...) He [our teacher] would behold the stars and plot their courses and positions in the sand. He would gaze into the celestial sea, never tiring of contemplating its movements,

its clouds, its lights. He would collect rocks, flowers, beetles of all species, and array them in manifold sequences and combinations. He would keep a keen eye on both men and beasts and sit on the seashore searching for shellfish. He would eavesdrop attentively on his own thoughts and emotions. (translation © 2008 by Douglas Robertson, reprinted here with permission. Source here)

To understand Hegelian dialectics, we can take the example of love. A lover is a fact, a thing that exists. The lover is our starting point in trying to understand the phenomenon of love. This starting point, we may call the *thesis*, which, in Greek, literally just means that which has been “put out there”.

But looking at an isolated lover, we realise that this alone cannot give us an understanding of the phenomenon of love. It is essential to also see what is outside this lover – the world around them, which will, necessarily include the *object* of this lover’s love. So we have to look outwards, to all that is *not* this lover. This is, in the dialectic way of speaking, the *anti-thesis*, the negation of the original thesis.

But still: the world outside the lover, even if it includes the beloved, cannot alone give us an understanding of love. Only when we bring the two *together*, we can understand the relation between the two lovers, and thus gain a better understanding of their relationship. This is the *synthesis*, the coming-together of thesis and antithesis. The synthesis is not only a collection of two things, where thesis and antithesis are put together into one bag. Instead, it provides a new insight, which we couldn’t have had before: the

understanding of the interrelation of lover and beloved.

But the process does not stop here. Now that we have synthesised the relationship between the lovers, we discover that we still don’t have a truly complete understanding of love. Yes, we can understand parts of their relationship. But much of their love will also be influenced by their pasts, their childhoods, their families, their societies. So we construct more “non-lovers,” more *antitheses* to the lovers, and end up with more, and more higher-level *syntheses*. These syntheses give us more and more insights into the workings of that love affair, its history, and its social embeddedness.

In the end, if we want to have a truly complete understanding of this one love relationship, we will have to include all of the universe in our final synthesis, since everything, all laws of nature and all history, somehow have had an effect on these two particular people and their love. Unquestionably, their DNA is part of the game, their mammal ancestry, their hormonal regulatory systems, their religious beliefs, their ideas about parenthood, and a myriad other things.

The conclusion from that is, according to Hegel, that what we perceive as individual objects are always, necessarily, partial versions of the truth. The full truth is that the universe is one big thing that can only be comprehended in its entirety. Hegel calls this “the Spirit,” and at some point it becomes a quasi-religious thing, his version of a God manifesting herself in all of creation. And here we’re back at Novalis and the Romantic sentiment.

Dialectics and ecology

What I find surprising is how modern Hegel sounds here. The idea of the interconnectedness

of nature is something we constantly hear about from the ecology movements. From Arne Naess' Deep Ecology to a David Attenborough documentary, we are always reminded that the conditions of flourishing of any species necessarily involve all others.

It also reminds me of the truth sought in Zen Buddhism. My understanding of it is very limited, but it seems to me that "the sound of one hand clapping" and similar koans are meant to point out the fallacies in our dualist, subject/object dichotomies of thinking.

Sure, we can study the leaf of a tree in isolation, but how much understanding of what a leaf truly is about will we gain from such a study? A leaf cannot be understood in its full role without the knowledge of how and why it is attached to a tree. And that cannot be understood without an understanding of the roots of the tree, the ecosystems in the soil, the weather patterns in that region, the global weather patterns, insect pollinators, bird migration and so on. All these relationships and these ever widening circles of understanding can be described as successive stages of thesis–antithesis–synthesis.

Natural sciences, in modern times, have been decidedly *analytical*. They take things apart into their components, divide, cut open, separate, and study smaller and smaller components in isolation. But after about four hundred years of that, we now begin to realise that what waits for us at the end of natural science is not the full picture of how nature works. A clock, taken apart into a pile of gears and sticks, does not anymore show the time or even provide any understanding of what the clock originally was about. The clock cannot be understood without its user. The user's use of the clock cannot be understood without that person's need to go to their

workplace. This cannot be understood without an understanding of society and its structures of labour. And so on.

Hegel today?

Looking at it like that, it seems that perhaps it's time to rediscover Hegel. Not as the (often misunderstood) philosophical background to Marx's view of history and (later) one of the patron saints of "actually existing socialism," but as a philosopher of non-dualism, of integrative, ecological thinking.

In the lyrics to the musical Jesus Christ Superstar, Tim Rice has Judas say to Jesus:

If you'd come today
You could have reached the whole na-
tion
Israel in 4 BC had no mass communi-
cation...

In a similar way, it seems that Hegel was sometimes hindered in developing a consistent system by the limitations of his time. He saw history as a progression towards an ideal state, but then he identified that state with the Prussia of his time. He mentions "oriental" philosophies as one stage of the self-realisation of the Spirit, but he didn't know much about these oriental philosophies to really be able to estimate their importance for mankind. And his understanding of social organisation never goes beyond the nation-states of his time.

Is it time to rediscover and re-apply Hegel's dialectic to the problems of *our* world?

Bertrand Russell, a sharp critic of non-analytic approaches to philosophy, writes in his History of Western Philosophy:

In the best thinking, according to Hegel, thoughts become fluent and interfuse. Truth and falsehood are not sharply defined opposites, as is commonly supposed; nothing is wholly false, and nothing that we can know is wholly true. ... [Hegel's system] illustrates an important truth, namely, that the worse your logic, the more interesting the consequences to which it gives rise." (Hist. of W. Phil, 734)

Was Hegel's so terribly illogical? Or was Russell just trying to justify the blandness of his own flavour of analytical philosophy?

"Truth is found neither in the thesis nor the antithesis, but in an emergent synthesis which reconciles the two."

Perhaps the time has come to take Hegel's thesis and the analytical philosophy's antithesis and to envision a synthesis of the two. A new, holistic, non-dualist way of seeing the world and our place in it.

Colonising the Oceans: Visions

Since Jules Verne, visionaries have dreamt of a life on (or under) the Seas. But is it likely that we will ever live in underwater cities? Here are some of the most amazing and audacious underwater city concepts.

This is the first in a series of four articles on life in the oceans. We will discuss visions of ocean habitation, the history of living on (or under) the sea, the political philosophy of seasteading and we will compare living under the sea with future colonies in space.



Life in the Oceans?

The oceans have always intrigued us. One of the oldest epics of Western civilisation, the Odyssey, relates the 10-year journey of the hero Odysseus back to his home, the Greek island of Ithaca. Since Plato brought back from

his own travels the story of sunken Atlantis, humans have been dreaming of another, better society, that once used to be somewhere *out there*, lost in the wide expanses of Mediterranean blue.

Long before the Spanish and Portuguese took to the oceans, the Norse Leif Erikson went in his dragonship and landed on continental North America. And sailors from Asia in fleets of long multihull boats colonised the Pacific and erected the magical statues on Easter Island, with their eyes still looking out over the waves, quietly waiting for their creators' sails to reappear on the horizon.

There was even for a while a theory that humans developed from aquatic apes, that our proper habitat is the water. This was supposed to explain why we have subcutaneous fat and no body hair, similar to whales but different from other apes.

Whether we've come from the sea or not, our development has often been inextricably linked with it. The first life on Earth originated underwater, and over 50% of the oxygen we breathe today is created in the oceans. Earth's oceans absorb 90% of the additional heat trapped by atmospheric carbon pollution and they serve as the primary source of protein for over a billion people [1]. Many empires in human history, from the Phoenician to the British, were built on naval power. Long-distance trade, from Queen Hatshepsut's 1450 BC expedition to the Red Sea,



Swimming city by Andras Gyorfi. Source: in-habitat.com

to today's giant container ships, has always depended on the oceans.

Despite this millennia-long history, today over 80% of the oceans are unmapped and unexplored. Even of the coastal waters of the US, shallow and easily accessible, only 35% have been mapped with modern methods [2]. In contrast, nearly 90% of the surface of Mars has been mapped by high-resolution stereo cameras [3] and for the moon we have detailed 3D data for 98.2% of its surface [4].

So let us, in this and the coming three weeks, look at the history and future of our life in the oceans.

Seasteading Institute

The Seasteading Institute is (was?) a non-profit organisation which advocated living on floating platforms in international waters, that is, more than 370 km (200 nautical miles) away from the nearest land.

At this distance, territorial claims of land-based countries end and the open seas are legally unreg-

ulated. Floating colonies, that was the thought, would be able to establish their own rules, live in freedom and self-determination, avoid heavy-handed taxes and other regulation and prosper on their own terms.

The libertarian dream was ideologically supported and, to a significant extent, financed by philosopher-turned-businessman and Silicon Valley investor Peter Thiel (see? there's a connection to philosophy in all this!). Thiel donated half a million US dollars to the Seasteading Institute when it was founded in 2008 and wrote an article [5] supporting the idea. In it, he compares living on the high seas to virtual worlds on the Internet and, on the other hand, to space colonisation:

Between cyberspace and outer space lies the possibility of settling the oceans. To my mind, the questions about whether people will live there (answer: enough will) are secondary to the questions about whether seasteading technology is imminent. From my vantage point, the technology involved is more tentative than the Internet, but much more realistic than space travel. We may have reached the stage at which it is economically feasible, or where it soon will be feasible. It is a realistic risk, and for this reason I eagerly support this initiative.

In addition, colonising the high seas will bring about the libertarian Eden faster and more surely than relying on democratic processes, Thiel thinks. There is an interesting connection there between politics, utopia and ocean colonisation: one that we will explore later in this series.



Ithaa restaurant, inside. From: Wikipedia

The Seasteading Institute had planned to show off a prototype seastead by 2010 and a production version by 2014. Nothing came of these projects. In 2009, they patented a design for a 200-person resort on the seas, which they called ClubStead. But already in 2013, five years after its founding, the Seasteading Institute was planning to operate their Floating City Project within the territorial waters of a nation, rather than on the open ocean. They had realised that it would not only be beneficial to be part of an existing legal framework, to have someone to call for help and to chase the pirates away, but also that their Floating City would be much easier to reach if it wasn't situated at the far end of a salty nowhere.

In 2016, they tried to arrange an agreement with French Polynesia to park their prototype seastead in a "seazone" within this country. But already two years later, French Polynesia's government said the agreement was "not a legal document" and had expired at the end of 2017 [6]. Since then, the project has disappeared from the public view.

Historical habitats

There has been no shortage of historical attempts to live underwater for extended periods, but these habitats were highly experimental and were manned by skilled divers, "aquanauts," rather than tourists and the general population.

Robert Stenuit spent a full day in 1962 in a steel cylinder at a depth of 200 feet. Jacques Cousteau (who else?) created a series of underwater habitats (Conshelf 1, 2 and 3) in the 60s, at a depth of around 100m. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration funded their own underwater project, Hydrolab, where people stayed for up to a month in the early 80s. And MarineLab in Florida has been continuously operated since 1984 to today, at a depth of 9 meters.

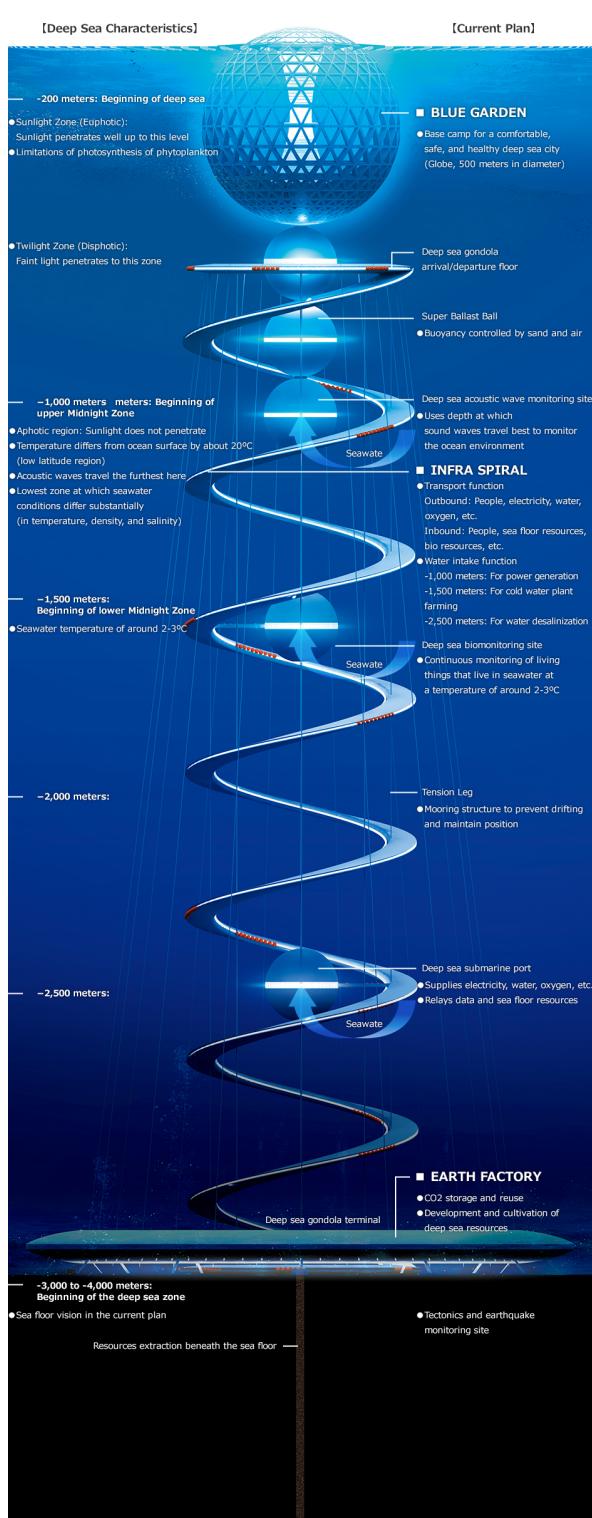
Closer to actual habitats for normal people are various underwater restaurants. In the Maldives, one can eat at the Ithaa undersea restaurant. In 2012, unfortunately, another underwater restaurant in Eilat, Israel, closed down. But one can still visit the 1975-built Eilat's Coral World Underwater Observatory, which is about 12m underwater.

Ocean Spiral

In 2014, the Japanese "Ocean Spiral" underwater city made headlines. Shimizu Corporation put itself at the forefront of a solving all the environmental problems of mankind with a spiral underwater structure that would use resources and energy from the ocean bottom to support life in a spherical city of half a kilometre across.

The city, called Blue Garden, is advertised as being:

A comfortable city with minimal temperature changes



Blue Garden atrium

A safe city with unaffected by typhoons or earthquakes

A healthy city with a higher concentration of oxygen than on land

Here is a spectacular image that showcases the whole structure, from top to bottom (you should be able to zoom in to see more details if it appears too small):

And here is a promotional video of the whole thing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFG89OjFIbI>

The beautiful graphics are intended to distract, perhaps, the casual viewer from the price tag. According to Shimizu, the whole structure is projected to cost 26 billion (!) US dollars. In comparison, the total value of the property market in Houston, Texas is about 47 billion USD. The floating city will thus be worth half of Houston.

If this sounds like a bit much for a floating acrylic ball, sci-fi writer Ella Ananeva has an interesting comparison:

Sending 12 astronauts to Mars will cost \$10 billion each, Elon Musk said.

Ocean Spiral concept



Artisanopolis, from [8]

\$120 billion is the lowest price for a Mars colony, not counting materials, machines, technologies and other stuff required for a settlement. Compare this with \$26 billion — the estimated price for a Japanese project Ocean Spiral. [7]

Artisanopolis

If the vision of an underwater paradise extending three kilometres down to the ocean floor seems a bit excessive, Artisanopolis, a floating city, won the Seasteading Institute design competition in the spring of 2015:

In order to protect the city from the vagaries of the weather, a breakwater system surrounds the facility. Artisanopolis generates its own electricity with photovoltaic panels and wave energy converters. With an aquaponics system for nutrition, desalination for drinking water, and recycled and composted wastes, Artisanopolis is a sustainable city. [8]

Isn't that image interesting? I find that it says a lot more than what the designers intended. See how the places that are open to the environment are all either concrete, or solar panels, or landscaped lawns. The only nature in this picture is trapped, imprisoned, stowed away under glass domes (why?!).

What we see here is a geek's dream of finally fully controlling nature, of safely containing her within a number of glass coffins, of rendering her impotent, helpless, useless. The whole concept (you can visit their website to see more pictures) has the sunny techno-sterility of a modern yacht or a painted futuristic city backdrop in 1980s Star Trek TNG. It's saying a lot about the approach of the Seasteading Institute to nature that this weird vision of sterile techno-masculinity won their best design award.

This might give us a hint about what's going wrong with mankind's ocean colonisation plans. In an article published in "Our World" by the United Nations University, Margaret Leinen, director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the UC San Diego, has this to say about the value of Earth's oceans:

By 2050 our seas will be viewed as more than a platform for tourism and recreation and rather an ocean for solutions. Our sustainable energy solutions will be aided by marine algae-derived biofuel, while new medicines to treat modern diseases will be derived from sea creatures with novel chemical structures.

In contrast, here is how Captain Nemo, Jules Verne's hero in 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1872), talks about the ocean:

“Yes; I love it! The sea is everything. It covers seven tenths of the terrestrial globe. Its breath is pure and healthy. It is an immense desert, where man is never lonely, for he feels life stirring on all sides. The sea is only the embodiment of a supernatural and wonderful existence. It is nothing but love and emotion; it is the Living Infinite, as one of your poets has said. In fact, Professor, Nature manifests herself in it by her three kingdoms—mineral, vegetable, and animal. The sea is the vast reservoir of Nature. The globe began with sea, so to speak; and who knows if it will not end with it? In it is supreme tranquillity. The sea does not belong to despots. Upon its surface men can still exercise unjust laws, fight, tear one another to pieces, and be carried away with terrestrial horrors. But at thirty feet below its level, their reign ceases, their influence is quenched, and their power disappears. Ah! sir, live — live in the bosom of the waters! There only is independence! There I recognise no masters!

There I am free!”

And perhaps somewhere between these two ways of looking at the ocean lies the problem, the cognitive dissonance. Our strained, uneasy relationship to the watery Eden our ancestors were expelled from such a long time ago.

Notes

- [1] Michael Conathan, Director of Ocean Policy, Center for American Progress.
- [2] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Dept of Commerce.
- [3] European Space Agency, Mapping Mars.
- [4] NASA Creates CGI Moon Kit.
- [5] Peter Thiel, *The Education of a Libertarian* (2009).
- [6] Wikipedia, The Seastading Institute.
- [7] Ella Ananeva, *7 Reasons Why We Should Colonize Oceans Instead Of Mars*.
- [8] DESIGN: Artisanopolis, a modular city on water.
- [9] OurWorld website

The Ukraine Conflict and the Ethics of War

Today we talk about the ethics of war. Are there any ethical rules for wars, or are soldiers allowed to do whatever they want on the battlefield? How can attacks like that of Russia on Ukraine be justified? And do other countries have a moral obligation to come to Ukraine's assistance? Read on to find out!



Everyone is talking about the war in Ukraine right now, and I feel that, as philosophers, we also have something to contribute to the discussion.

So let us today talk about the ethics of war. What are the moral rules for war, how can wars be justified and are we obliged to help a country that has been attacked?

Are there any ethical rules for wars?

One might think that perhaps wars don't really obey any rules. Since the expected behaviour in a war is that people shoot with the intention to kill each other, what rules could there be that they would be likely to obey?

But it turns out that we *do* distinguish between good (relatively speaking) and bad behaviour, even in war situations. Killing an armed enemy soldier in order to save one's own life will not be as bad, morally speaking, as bombing a school full of children or a hospital. Killing a soldier in war might not generally be seen as equally bad as murdering someone at peacetime, but there are also behaviours that we would recognise as "war crimes," that is, behaviour that even in the context of war should be considered a crime. So how do we know which behaviours are relatively better or worse in a war situation?

One crucial question is: do we believe that wars are really totally different from everyday life, so that killing in a war obeys radically different rules than killing in peace? Or do we see a war just as one more kind of human behaviour (like, say, working or mating)? If this is the case, then we would try to argue that, in principle, the same kinds of moral rules should apply to wars that also apply to everyday life at peacetime.

The laws of war

The ethical problems of wars can be divided into three groups (see [1] for a good overview and more details):

1. Declaring and entering war. This is often called the *jus ad bellum* part of war ethics:

the law *towards* war. Here, we would ask questions like:

- What are good reasons to go to war?
 - Are there better and worse reasons?
 - Are some wars easier to justify than others?
2. The *jus in bello* (law during war) is about the behaviour of the warring parties while the war is taking place. Here, issues include:
- Is it ever permissible to target civilians?
 - What if underage children take part in the war as armed soldiers? Should they have a special status and must the enemy avoid harming them?
 - Which kinds of infrastructure is it okay to target? (Weapons factories or hospitals?)
 - How to treat the wounded and the prisoners of war?
3. The *jus post bellum* (law after the war) deals with questions like:
- How to end a war?
 - How should the losing party be treated?
 - How to rebuild the warring countries and their relations after the end of the war?
 - How to deal with the return of prisoners and the wounded?
 - How should the aggressor compensate the other parties for the damages inflicted during the war?

The six conditions for a just war

Let's take the recent attack Russia's on Ukraine as an example for the thoughts that one might have during the first stage, the *jus ad bellum* (the law of entering the war).

A "just" war (if we assume, for the moment, that such a thing even exists) is generally thought to fulfil six criteria:

1. Just cause

It must have a **just cause**. There must be a good reason to go to war, and this means that the reason cannot only be greed or the wish of the one party to eliminate the other. There must be some kind of moral justification for the war, some attempt to use the war in order to prevent a worse outcome.

2. Right intentions

The party that enters the war must have the **right intentions**. This means that they must be honest that they enter the war only because of the just cause (see above). They should not use the cause as an excuse to start a war that really is motivated by other causes. Unfortunately, bad intentions are all too common in wars. Often, the warring parties will fabricate some excuse to go to war, but the actual reason will be something entirely different.

3. Reasonable chances to succeed

The war must have **reasonable chances to be successful** and to achieve its aims. It would be immoral to drag two (or more) countries into a war, if it is already foreseeable that a country is going to lose that war.

4. Benefits proportional to losses

The expected benefits must be somehow **proportional** to the expected losses due to the war. One wouldn't start a war that is expected to lead to thousands of deaths just in order to take revenge for an insult uttered by the other country's president, for example. Of course, this (and the other criteria) can all be disputed. Especially the idea of proportionality is easy to question: What benefit could possibly outweigh thousands of human deaths? Even to ask this question seems to show that the questioner has a wrong, too low idea about the value of human lives. If human lives are, as we would perhaps want to maintain, almost infinitely valuable, then we can not use them as "means" (as Kant would say) to any "end" that the war might achieve.

5. War is a last resort

The requirement of **last resort** emphasises that war, being the source of a great amount of suffering for innocent populations, should not be entered lightly. It must be the last possible way to achieve the just cause. If there is any other way, no matter how costly or inconvenient, that should be attempted first.

6. War can only be declared by a legitimate authority

And finally, the war should be decided upon by a legitimate authority: a head of state, a government or an administration that legitimately holds the power to declare this war and to ask its citizens to sacrifice their lives for the just cause. This requirement, too, can be questioned: Does *any* government, even a democratically elected one, have the right to order me to be killed in a war? Would such an order not be directly op-

posed to what is the whole point of having a state in the first place, which is to protect the interests of its citizens? And what if this is a war of liberation, where the people who are pursuing the just cause (their freedom from oppression) do not in advance have a suitable, legitimate, official authority to declare the war? If this criterion were always observed, there could never be just wars that are not started by already existing, stable, democratically legitimised states. But this is obviously not realistic.

Is Russia's war in Ukraine a just war?

Now let's briefly look at the present war in Ukraine. Is it a just war in terms of the *jus ad bellum*?

First, Putin passes the legitimate authority test. He and the Russian government are internationally recognised, legitimate authorities with the power to declare a war.

Second, the just cause test. Although one might initially think that Russia lacks a just cause, on a closer look perhaps we might say that it has a legitimate interest to preserve its own safety and to safeguard its own territorial integrity. With NATO constantly expanding East since the end of the Soviet Union, it is understandable that Russia might feel threatened. Not only has Poland been in the NATO (a US-led military alliance) for over 20 years, but Ukraine itself had begun negotiations to be accepted. This would clearly threaten Russia's interests and long-term safety. So we might assume that Russia could have a just cause in wanting to keep NATO off its borders.

Third, right intention. This is more difficult to answer, especially since it is in principle impossible to know other people's intentions. But

we have some hints. Does President Putin likely enter this war with the sole intention to protect Russia's interests against an attack from NATO states? It seems questionable.

1. Even with NATO states approaching from the West, it is not obvious that there was an actual threat to Russia that would justify starting a war. I am not a political analyst, but from my limited knowledge of world affairs, it doesn't seem like the Western world has recently shown any signs of aggression against Russia. Quite the opposite. The West has been very relaxed about Putin's rule in the past, the Novichok poisonings, the imprisonment of Alexei Navalny, Russia's role in Syria, the invasion of Georgia, and many other instances where it could have reacted in much stronger ways. Would not cooperation with Russia, rather than a war, have been in the interest of all parties, including NATO?
2. If we look at Putin's own life: he is an ex-KGB officer who ruthlessly has removed all possible rivals from positions of power for years, he is accused of widespread corruption, disregard for the rule of law and has repeatedly presented his nostalgic views of the Soviet Empire. All these make it plausible to question whether there might be other motives behind the attack on Ukraine than just the objective security needs of his country.
3. It might be that the aim of restoring Russia's security and blocking further NATO memberships of countries bordering the country could be better achieved by other

means, like economic pressure or the threat of cutting off gas supplies to Europe. Would the prospect of being attacked by Russia not increase the willingness of bordering countries to seek the protection of NATO? Would it not likely achieve the opposite of the stated goal?

Considering such points, it does not seem plausible that Russia's intention in attacking Ukraine was only to guarantee its own safety. There seem to be other goals behind the attack: the wish to restore the historical power and unity of the Soviet Union perhaps, or Putin's desire to expand his personal power and to secure a world-changing legacy of his reign.

Let me say again that this is an *example* for how to apply the philosophical principles of Just War Theory to a particular situation. It is not a political analysis. If you disagree with my points and conclusions, you are welcome to provide your own. You are even more welcome to do it right here, in the comments section below. I don't claim to have any superior knowledge of this particular conflict or its political background.

Fourth, there also don't seem to be many reasonable chances to succeed for Russia in this war. Yes, a purely military victory is likely, but politically it will be difficult to avoid negative long-term effects on Russia's interests. This poses the question what would actually count as a "success" for Russia? Is it only achieving a particular military goal, e.g. controlling Kyiv? Or is it to enter a long-term state of safety and prosperity for the country?

Fifth, are the benefits proportional to the losses? What is the actual, measurable benefit to Russia of this attack? And could that effect not

have been achieved much easier and more sustainably by improving relations with all neighbouring countries and the West, instead of starting a new war? This question always also has a cynical ring to it, because what we are asked to do is weigh human lives against other goals and perceived “benefits.” Can any benefits ever be “proportional” or “more important” than the intentional destruction of human lives? This is the point where radical pacifists would disagree with Just War Theory.

Last, if we believe that Russia’s long-term goals could be better served by being cooperative and non-threatening, then war would not be a **last resort**. If we assume that Russia has many other ways of achieving its geopolitical goals without needing to start a war, then this criterion is not fulfilled and we should conclude that this war is not just.

To summarise, according to what are generally taken to be the criteria for just wars, Russia’s attack on Ukraine seems to fail 4 of the 6 require-

ments. It would therefore seem to not be a just war. The international community is probably right to oppose Russia’s aggression. Of course, as always, one might disagree. The criteria themselves can be questioned and also my own evaluation of the political and historical background may be wrong. If you have more ideas, please feel free to add them to the comments below!

We could only cover a small part of the ethics of war in this article. We did not talk about the *jus in bello* or whether other countries are obliged to come to Ukraine’s assistance. We will cover these other questions next week, so stay tuned and come back next weekend for the second part of this article on the philosophy of war and armed conflict!

Sources

- [1] Lazar, Seth, “War”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), available online.

The First Seastead: A Modern Utopia



The dream: A “seapod”. Artist’s rendering.
Source: <https://oceanbuilders.com>

Could we actually live happy lives away from land? Could we flourish on a “seafront” property on the oceans? Chad and Nadia, the Adam and Eve of seasteading, tried it. They are now facing the death penalty.

The men behind the dream

It’s easy to poke fun at the Seasteading Institute and their grandiose plans for thriving, independent nations, floating on the waves in international waters. In the real world, none of their projects has yet taken off in the way they were meant to.

Still, there is something there, a persistent question posed by these visionaries, whether perhaps we are all collectively misguided in our understanding of democracy, of the role of our states,

of the value of our freedoms. Seasteading poses once again in human history the old questions: what is the role of the state, how should it relate to its subjects, and how can state power and state violence be justified? The answer, this time, is not presented in terms of a grand historical-philosophical narrative in the styles of Hegel and Marx, nor in terms of divine power invested in the sovereign; it is, rather plainly and fittingly for 21st century culture, given in the vocabulary of libertarian Silicon Valley entrepreneurialism.

In April 2019, Chad Elwartowski and his Thai partner, going by the name of Nadia Summergirl, set out on what they stylised then as a historic mission: to be the First Seasteaders, the Armstrong and Aldrin (or would it rather be Adam and Eve?) of a new social order.

With the help of Ocean Builders, a company that currently sells, as far as one can see, only 3D renderings of futuristic-looking houses, they planned to move into the first “Seapod.” This was planned to be part of a series of dozens, perhaps hundreds of “seafront properties,” to be anchored in the world’s oceans. Freedom-loving people would embrace the chance to escape from overbearing governments, unjust taxation laws and rampant paternalism and finally create the ideal society on the open ocean.

It is interesting to have a look at the biographies of the people who are at the head of the seasteading movement. Behind the Seasteading Insti-



The reality: The First Seastead. Source: Youtube screengrab.

tute, which we already met in the previous article in this series, is one Joe Quirk, author of a seasteading bible with the epic title: “Seasteading: How Floating Nations Will Restore the Environment, Enrich the Poor, Cure the Sick, and Liberate Humanity from Politicians.” Quirk has also written a couple of novels, a book on relationship advice based on evolutionary biology, and is a cherished guest on US right-wing, “libertarian” media.

The second brain behind the movement is Patri Friedman, grandson of economist Milton Friedman, high-level poker player, founder of Pronomos Capital, a company that aims to construct “tax-friendly” cities in developing countries with the support, again, of Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel. Friedman has arranged to be cryonically preserved after his death. This surely says something about the man.

The third in the triad of seasteading prophets is Titus Gebel, whom we will talk about in a future article. He is the author of a not uninteresting manifesto called “Free Private cities — A New Operating System for Living Together.” Wikipedia describes him as: “German entrepreneur, lawyer, political activist and publicist. He is the former CEO of Deutsche Rohstoff AG and Managing Director of Rhein Petroleum

GmbH.” The article goes on:

In 2006 he founded Deutsche Rohstoff AG with Thomas Gutschlag and served as CEO until 2014. The company initially participated in exploration and development projects and later built its own production, primarily in Australia and the US (gold, silver, tungsten, molybdenum, petroleum, natural gas). The company has been listed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange since 2010 and generated an annual turnover of 108 million euros in 2018. Rhein Petroleum GmbH was founded in 2007 to put oilfields in southern Germany back into operation and began production in 2018. (Wikipedia)

Despite the greenwashing that the Seasteading Institute is trying to put on their designs, it is important to realise that these people are not eco-warriors, driven by utopian dreams of the equality of men, freedom for all and the restoration of nature. These are a shady Silicon Valley entrepreneur and poker player, involved in creating tax refuges for the rich, supported by a notorious right-wing tech billionaire; a writer of thrillers and relationship advice books; and a fossil fuel manager who made millions with mining and oil production enterprises. I’ll leave it to you to draw your conclusions about a movement that is headed by such men.

Adam and Eve on their ark

In April 2019, Chad Elwartowski and Nadia “Summergirl” Thepdet began their journey. With the support of Ocean Builders, they moved



The dream: Planned interior of a Seapod.
Source: <https://oceanbuilders.com>



The reality: Actual interior of the First Seastead.
Source: Youtube screengrab.

a long “spar,” the base on which their oceanic house would float, to a point around 14 miles off the coast of Thailand; as they thought, well out of the 12-mile zone of Thai territorial waters.

There is an amusing documentary about the whole project ([link](#)) on Youtube. It is worth watching and takes only about half an hour to go through the whole thing.

From the beginning, almost everything seemed to be going wrong. A huge storm prevented them from setting off at the date they had planned. After placing the “spar” in the water, they returned on the next day to put the habitat onto it, but the spar was gone. It was only after a long search that they spotted the structure in the distance. When they tried to build the construc-

tion, it turned out that nobody actually knew how to do it. Chad hit himself with a hammer in the face when a wave crashed against the floating structure. Poisonous giant jellyfish circled the house. And it went downwards from there.

The house, much less flashy looking than the concept drawings on the Ocean Builders website, resembles more an oceanic storage closet or a military bunker. It does actually float on the waves, supported by the “spar,” a vertical column that is held upright underwater by its weight and a number of flotation tanks.

On top of the spar sits the habitat, an octagonal structure with three small rooms and a platform on top. This design, so Ocean Builders, is supposed to minimise the movement of the habitat when the sea is rough. The rooms inside look bare and utilitarian, which is understandable, but requires a bit of imagination if one is to see this as the future of free, happy communities, bobbing gleefully up and down on the ocean blue.

It is also telling that all the flashy graphics on the Ocean Builders website display the Seapods close to land, precisely where they are not supposed to be: either among beautiful, wild mountainscapes or in the harbours of cities. The reality of a little white box sitting forlorn in an endless ocean, waiting to be attacked by pirates or hit by a passing tanker in the night, is not part of the saleable dream.

A few weeks after the First Seastead began floating on the waves, the Thai navy appeared on the horizon. Not surprisingly, they didn’t take kindly to the rhetoric of installing a new nation of lawless free thinkers just on their sea borders. There was some dispute whether the seastead was actually less than 12 or more than 12 miles out, the Thai navy contradicting the settlers, but given that the latter had managed to

lose their own spar in the ocean a few days previously, one might perhaps be justified in questioning their ability to precisely locate things in the endless sea. The navy ships took over the floating garden Eden and dismantled it, intending to arrest its inhabitants. Chad and Nadia fled on a speedboat and are, as I understand it, still wanted in Thailand for advocating a free state, which seems to be punishable by long imprisonment or even death.

The fury with which the Thai media descended on the two aquatic visionaries is remarkable. They were labeled traitors and anarchists and the media wished them swift punishment and, often, death. In case you know Thailand only as a benevolently backward place where one can spend one's holidays on the cheap, watch the last part of their documentary ([link](#)) to see the other side of that expat paradise.

What does this story tell us?

There are multiple things one can take away from the adventure tale of Chad and Nadia.

First, getting established governments and states to tolerate a lawless society on the sea will take more than just towing a barge 12 miles out. The main problem is that once one departs all countries, one also loses, at the same moment, any protection that a country would have afforded. Chad and Nadia freely put themselves into a position where they were entirely alone in a place without laws (which was their whole point). Thus, they can't well complain that the Thai navy didn't feel like it needed to observe any due process. If you renounce all states and all laws, then you are back in the state of nature, with all that this entails.

This leads to a second point: states existed since

the dawn of history for a good reason: human cooperation and flourishing requires safety and someone to guarantee that safety. The instance that we would like to appeal to when our rights are threatened, must be powerful enough to be able to protect us. This naturally leads to the idea of a state monopoly on force. If we decentralise governance, as the Seastead Institute advocates, if we privatise security, who is going to keep a fully armed navy ship from sinking my house?

Third, it's interesting to think about what these seasteading experiments can teach us about the colonisation of other planets. We will talk more about space colonies in a later article; but we should keep in mind how every single attempt to colonise the seas has, until now, failed because of very similar reasons. If we move to Mars, as Elon Musk advocates, as part of a free enterprise colonisation project, without a state authority to provide the guarantees upon which organised societies rely: Will the first Mars colony not also find a lawless anarchic end, similar to the outcome of every anti-authoritarian "social experiment" on Earth?

Lastly, we should keep in mind the fundamental shift in attitude and political orientation that underlies contemporary libertarianism, compared to the traditional utopias of the past. Historical utopias have often been proposed and defended by those who had more good intentions than worldly power or even good sense: writers like Hermann Hesse or Tolstoy, priests and monks like Francis of Assisi or Frère Roger, philosophers and revolutionaries like Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg.

Not so today's utopias. Colonising the oceans or other planets will be done by techno-geeks, not old-school intellectuals. People raised and schooled in Silicon Valley, equipped with funds

from big-time investors, trained in computer programming instead of Latin verbs. It is astounding how many of the pioneers of our new world are IT people and have, at some time, worked for Apple, Facebook or Google. Most of them are wealthy, coming from the most privileged one percent of one of the most privileged countries on Earth. They are young, independently-minded, suspicious of states and the social order, critical of laws and regulation, with a relaxed attitude to laws, taxes and social obligations, and often with little regard for the social and ecological issues mankind faces.

Often they are associated not only with big money, but with big oil, big pharma, big space and other big enterprises. These are not people who believe that “small is beautiful,” and their

visions reflect their personalities: from Steve Jobs and Bill Gates to Elon Musk and Peter Thiel, our future is now shaped by an elite of men and women for whom their own freedom and genius is the highest good. Those who fall by the wayside due to excessive greed, like Martin Shkreli and Elizabeth Holmes, don’t seem very different *in kind* from those who succeed; just out of luck at the crucial moment.

Perhaps the Frankfurt School was right, after all: perhaps, when we replaced Kropotkin by Elon Musk, we lost even the ability to *imagine* a different world, a true utopia, a place that’s entirely outside the value system that surrounds and indoctrinates us, a place where nobody is poor, where all are equal, and where the lion and the lamb shall live in peace together.

Ah, well.

Fundraising for Ukraine

Donate and get your free, premium membership.

Note: This article was published in March 2022, so it shouldn't, technically, be here in the February issue. But since it's about a fundraising which happens right now, it wouldn't make sense to have it in the next issue. So here we go.

Dear friends of Daily Philosophy,

as you have surely read in the news, over 1 million Ukrainian civilians have been forced out of their country and are now refugees in Poland and other countries, in urgent need of assistance.

It is only right that we, as the more educated, affluent and privileged slice of mankind, do our small part to help. I therefore came up with the following idea:

The Daily Philosophy Ukraine fundraising membership

If you subscribe to the paid Daily Philosophy newsletter any time within the month of March 2022, either with an annual subscription for USD 70 or with a monthly subscription for USD 7, **I will transfer the whole of your membership fee, without any deductions from my side, to the International Rescue Committee (rescue.org).**

In this way:

- We all get to do something to help alleviate the hardships of war.
- You get access to all premium posts of your favourite monthly philosophy newsletter for the period you paid for.
- I get more readers for my premium posts (just in case you were wondering why I'm doing this).

Since I'll be paying this off my own pocket, please do not cancel your subscription before the end of the period you subscribed for, because then Substack would refund you the rest of your fee, but I will have already paid it in full to the IRC. So you could bankrupt me in this way. Please decide in advance if you want to do it, and if you do, please stick with your decision and don't ask for a refund. Of course, you're free to quit your subscription once the period you paid for (a month or a year) is over. But I hope that you will find the premium posts valuable and interesting enough to stay with me.

I will post all the numbers at the beginning of the next month (April) here in this newsletter, together with proof of the donation, so that you can be confident that your money went to the IRC and not into my own pockets. Anyway, if you have been reading this newsletter for any length of time, you probably know me well enough to realise that I'm not going to cheat either my readers or an charity.

If only eight readers decide to take a yearly subscription, we'll already have collected enough to equip one mobile clinic, according to rescue.org (table at the end of this article).

If you prefer, you are free to head directly to <https://help.rescue.org/donate> or any other organisation of your choice, and donate directly to them. But then you won't get the premium newsletter :)

And now click here to get a free premium membership to Daily Philosophy within March 2022 and I will donate your fee to the International Rescue Committee. Or give a subscription to someone else as a gift. Thanks!

A few words about the International Rescue Committee

The IRC was founded in 1933 at the suggestion of Albert Einstein to help the victims of the German Nazi state. After the end of World War II, the IRC continued its emergency relief

and refugee resettlement programs, eventually switching to providing assistance to refugees from East Europe. The IRC provided assistance for refugees from Vietnam since 1954, Hungary (1956), Cuba (1960), ex-Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and almost every other country that has ever been in the news. Here is a short, 1-minute video overview ([link](#)).

Rescue.org states that 87% of the money donated goes to the help programs; only 8% to administration and 5% to fundraising efforts.

Your money can achieve the following (source: rescue.org):

- 60 USD: Emergency kit for one family
- 80 USD: Treatment of one child for acute malnutrition
- 108 USD: Temporary shelter for 8 families
- 190 USD: Medical care for 10 children
- 500 USD: Can equip one mobile clinic

So let's do this. Thank you all and have a nice week!

Andy

Epilogue

And that was it, our second monthly, printable magazine. Thank you so much for being part of this experiment, and I hope that you enjoyed it!

If you encountered any errors or other problems with this booklet, please be so kind to write me, so that I can make it better.

I'm always grateful for your comments, suggestions and criticism!

Thanks again for your support and have a great, thoughtful March!

— Andy

PS: If you got this magazine forwarded to you and you're not a subscriber, you can subscribe for free here:

<https://dailyphilosophy.substack.com>

You can also choose to get a premium membership for the price of a Starbucks coffee per month, which will give you all these printable magazines for free, plus all books that Daily Philosophy will publish as long as you are a member! Thanks!