

principles II: common principled arguments



Structure of this workshop

- **common non-utilitarian claims**
 - means to an end **X** ends in themselves
 - special relationships
 - experience versus meaning
- **applications**
 - justifying democracy
 - obligations to future generations
 - choice
 - property rights and redistribution



common non-utilitarian claims i

- human beings as an '**ends in themselves**'
 - treating people as '**merely a means to an end**' **X** treating people as '**ends in themselves**'
 - **intuition pumps**:
 - organ harvesting
 - harmless rape
- **special relationships**
 - **vulnerability/trust**
 - **intuition pump**: organ harvesting
 - **application**: e.g. doctors, the state
 - **dependence**
 - **intuition pump**: drowning man
 - **application**: e.g. parents to children
 - **promises**
 - by making someone a promise you are setting expectations that will **inform** how they'll act in the future in order to maximise their preferences → you are doing them a harm by limiting their ability to exercise their agency



common non-utilitarian claims ii

- **reparatory duties**
 - **standard structure**
 - reparative obligations exist (intuitions)
 - there has been a past injustice
 - ...that still **affects the present**
 - ...and creates continued culpability
 - redress for which is created through **motion**
 - **application:** reparation motions, the state
 - response
 - competing obligations
- **experience vs meaning**
 - **intuition pump:** experience machine
 - therefore, happiness (utility) is not valuable in and of itself - it is only a by-product of more valuable things (e.g. friendship), that only become valuable because the human will wills them → given that nothing is valuable unless assigned value by the human will, the **human will** is the only thing that has a fundamental value
 - **application:** protection of autonomy (on the expense of utilitarian benefits)
 - **responses:**
 - **incompleteness** - the fact that the human will has the capacity to assign value to other things does not imply that it has a fundamental value
 - **social conditioning** affects preference formation → do we actually choose what we assign value to?



applications i: justifying democracy

- **preference aggregation**

- e.g. *THBT all decisions on economic policy in times of crisis should be made by an independent panel of experts*
- **claim:** these decisions are fundamentally moral decisions (e.g. austerity vs. stimulus → future vs. current)
- there is no reason why a panel of experts has a superior knowledge of what the correct moral decision is → democracy as a way to find out what the **human will assigns value to**

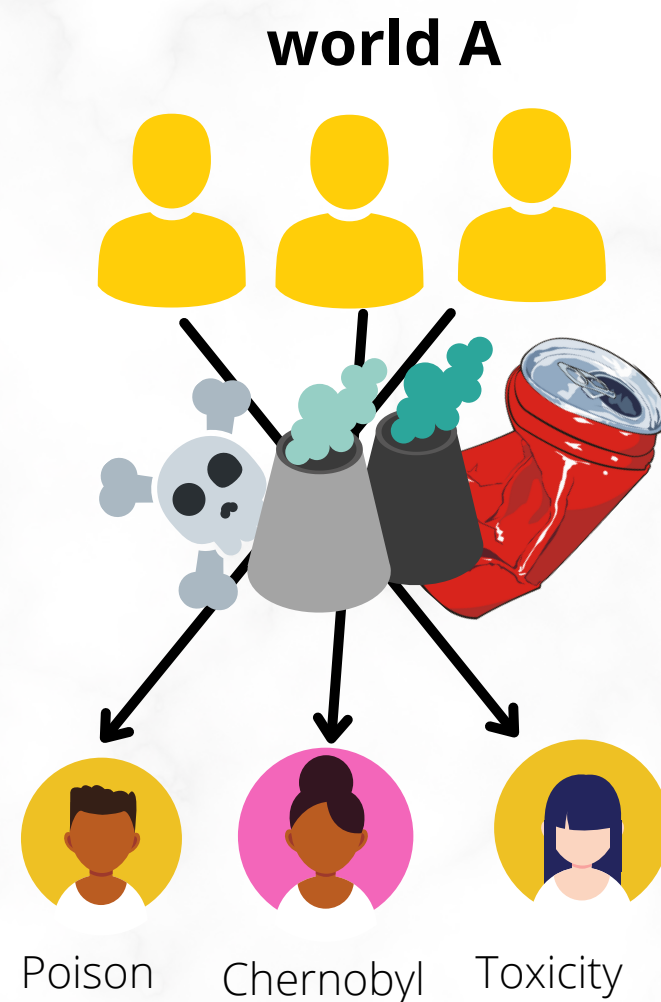
- **procedural justification**

- using a reparatory principle
 - the state is a coercive agent (limits your autonomy → has an obligation to restore it)
 - the state has this obligation equally to all of its citizens
 - therefore, it has to do its best to give everyone an equal say over the state's actions → can be done only through a vote

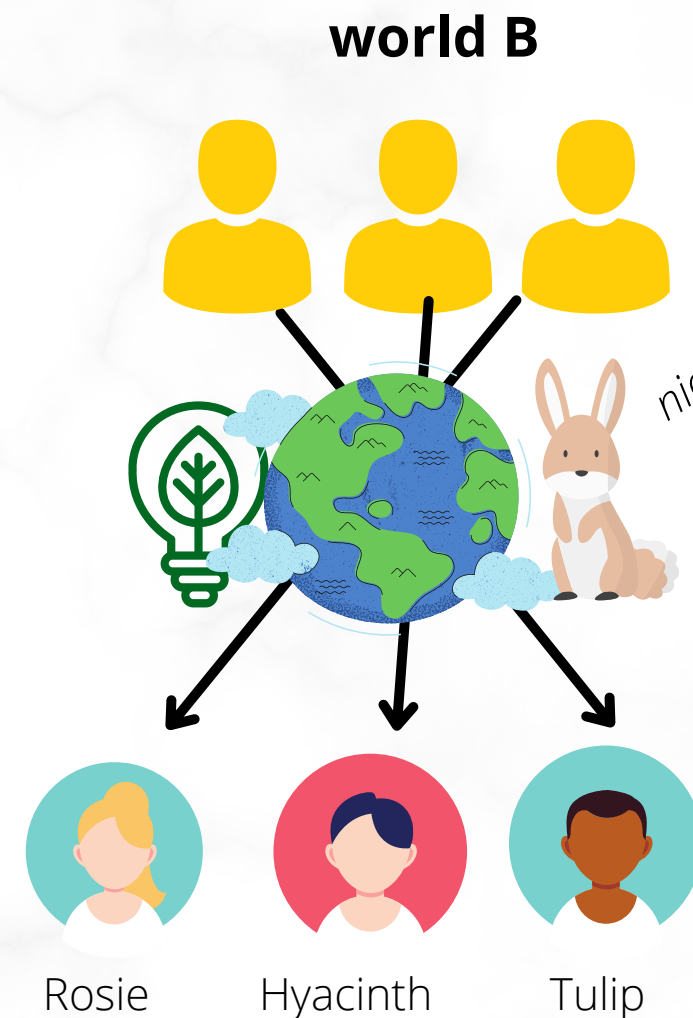


applications ii: obligations to future generations

- nature of obligations is preference dependent
 - **X** we can safely assume certain preferences (e.g. survival)
- nature of obligations is character dependent
 - moral obligations differ based on the moral character (e.g. I do not have obligations towards *[insert an awful dude of your choice]* → as future generations do not yet exist, we do not know that we have moral obligations towards them)
- the non-identity problem



sad world full of ugly
polluting companies



nice happy world with
green energy

therefore → Poison, Chernobyl and Toxicity are not harmed by pollution, because in the alternative world without it, they would not exist at all, because Rosie, Hyacinth and Tulip would be born instead → they are not worse off, because the alternative for them is not existing at all

applications iii: obligations to future generations

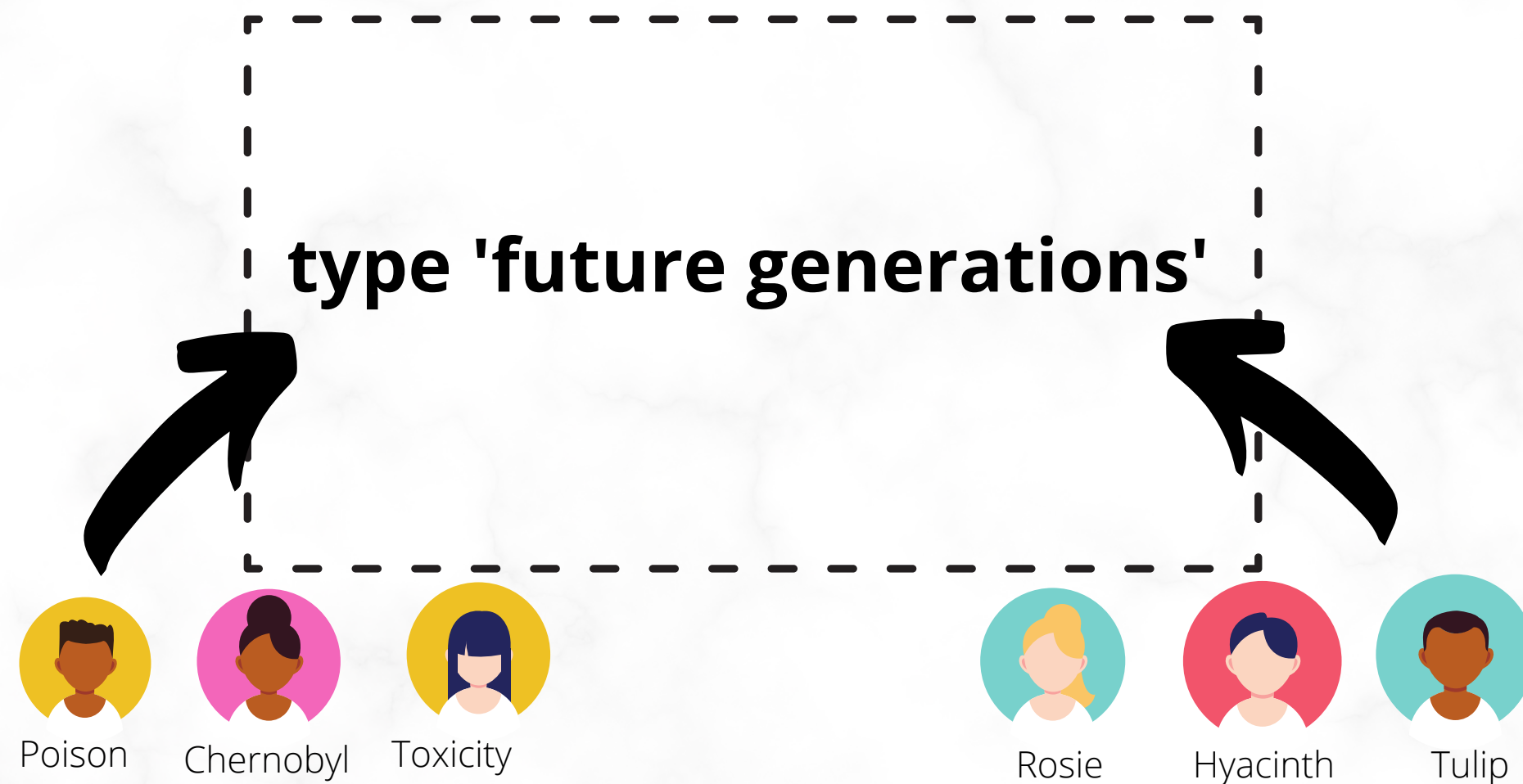
- responses to the non-identity problem:

- **maximising total utility**

- **X** repugnant conclusion

- **X** the reason why we find the repugnant conclusion 'intuitively bad' is because of a cognitive bias (humans inherently bad on conceptualising things on a large scale - bias towards positions that maximise individual happiness - feels more proximate)

- **type/token distinction**



→ owing obligations to whoever fulfils the category/type 'future generations', rather than to the concrete individuals/tokens

X thought experiment: blind vs. sighted child adoption

- **non-comparative harm** (boat thought experiment)

- **X** thought experiment proves that intention to make someone worse-off is bad, but that is not the case for the non-identity problem
 - **X** is it actually a harm?



applications iv

- **choice**

- **what is the value in choice?**

- debaters often suggest 'choice' is valuable in and of itself → but often just proxy for the **maximisation of preference actualisation?**
 - intuition: £100 gift X choice between £10 and £20

- **property rights and redistributive justice**

- **justifications**

- consequentialist (pareto-improvement)
 - non-consequentialist
 - entitlement to things that you add value by using your body

- **responses**

- individuals do not deserve the property (achieved as a result of birth lottery) → they are not entitled to it → redistribution is justifiable
 - according to what should we redistribute?
 - reparatory duties (unjust enrichment → done harm → need to restore)

