

PHIL 226
Biomedical Ethics
 Week 12

Exam Nov. 29.

Today: Global health
 problems and
 future generations.

No electronics.



1

Global Health Problems

- 4 million newborn babies die each year, but 72% of these deaths could be prevented by low-cost measures such as delivering babies in a clean environment.
- Of 11 million childhood deaths, 90% occur in 42 countries, and 8 million could be prevented.
- 1.5 billion people do not have an adequate diet.
- 6 million people die per year from treatable infectious diseases: tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS.
- There are countries in Africa with average life expectancies below 40.

2

Ethical Arguments for Ignoring Global Problems

- Egoism: People need only care about themselves.
- Nationalism: People need only care about people in their own country.
- Property rights: No one can be obliged to give up their property. Taxation is theft.

3

Ethical Arguments for Tackling Global Problems

- Consequences: Minor losses in wealth of people in rich countries would lead to major gains in health and happiness of people in rich countries.
- Rights: Health is a vital human need, so people everywhere have a right to good health care and nutrition, so people in wealthy countries have a duty to help them.
- Principles: Equality demands that people in poor country have at least roughly equal access to good health care.

4

Ethical Obligations

- Political: Elect and lobby a government that will take a strong role in providing international aid by taxing wealthy Canadians for the sake of poor people in other countries.
- Personal: Donate money and time to international organizations such as Oxfam and CARE.

5

Discussion question

- Professor T makes more money than he needs to live well. What are his moral obligations to improve the health care of people in other countries?

6

Ethics of Future Generations

- Issues concerning future generations
 - Climate change leading to medical problems, e.g. heat waves, droughts, malaria.
 - Depletion of resources, e.g. oil.
 - Increasing inequality leading to poorer health.
- Reasons for neglect of future generations
 - Lack of emotional concern about long run.
 - Lack of empathy for people not yet born.
 - Religious reassurances.
- Ethical deliberation
 - Should consequences include all future generations?
 - Do we have duties to people not yet born?

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