


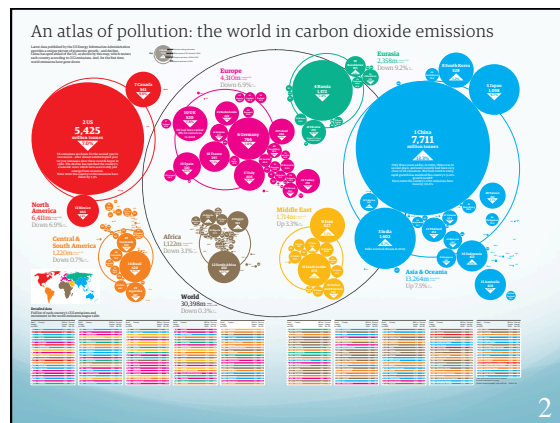
PHIL 224
Environmental Ethics, Week 12
 Paul Thagard

- Use of laptops (tablets, etc.) is discouraged, and limited to the last two rows.



"It sort of makes you stop and think, doesn't it."

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Climate Change is a Hard Scientific Problem

- Potentially disastrous consequences: Extreme weather, drought and famine. Sea level increases. Infectious diseases. Animal extinctions
- Uncertainty about future developments: computer models, unintended consequences
- Conflicting interests: developed vs. developing countries
- Problems of getting countries to agree: Durban conference 2011

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Reasons for Denying the Problem

- Motivated interest: politicians don't want to use government actions to limit economic activity.
- Worry-driven inference avoidance: ordinary people don't want to think about consequences of climate change.

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Why Climate Change is a Hard Ethical problem

- Tragedy of the commons: if all countries pursue self-interest, everyone loses.
- Problem of future generations and discounting
- Problem of distribution of costs and benefits
- Problem of responsibilities for past actions

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What is to be Done?

- International agreements to reduce carbon emissions
- Dramatic drop in use of fossil fuels: Carbon tax, cap and trade, legislation
- Development of alternative energy sources: Solar, wind, tides; nuclear; geothermal & enhanced
- Geoengineering: Carbon capture, solar radiation management

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Methods of settling ethical issues (Brook)

1. Identify problems and collect facts.
2. Identify relevant ethical principles.
3. Lay out criteria for costs and benefits.
4. Apply the principles and criteria to the facts.

Application: is nuclear power ethical?

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Relevant Principles

1. Fairness: those who benefit should bear the costs.
2. Liberty: infringe on people's lives as little as possible.
3. Equal worth: all people have same value.

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Deep geological disposal of wastes

1. Achieves fairness and protects future liberty.
2. Has wide scope in protecting across beings, time, space.
3. Discounts future generations less.
4. Costs paid by those who benefit.
5. Reduces risks and uncertainty.

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Alternative Regulatory Process (Oppenheim)

1. Comprehensive assessment of a new biotechnology.
 - Examine needs and benefits.
 - Identify possible effects.
 - Assess alternative means.
 - Propose set of principles.
2. Develop a precautionary screen.
 - Apply precautionary and value principles.
 - Examine questionable product types.
3. Evaluate specific products.

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Basic value principles

1. Continued existence of nature. Protect ecosystems, diversity, genetic material.
2. Cultural sustainability.
3. Open political process.
4. Freedom from want and economic vulnerability.
 - Needs, distribution, self-reliance.

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