

Taking Responsibility for the Future: Care and Value Conflicts

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Why Do We Need a Future-Oriented Concept of Responsibility?

The urgency of our need to rethink our understanding of our responsibilities to the future is rooted in the unequal distribution, through modern technology, of goods and harms between present and future.¹ Contemporary industrialised societies are characterised by a fundamental conflict of interests between present and future. Their technologies produce long-term consequences that will affect future generations and their environment. However, their economic, political and legal institutions have, ever since the Industrial Revolution, been increasingly losing their capacity to comprehend the ethical significance of this technological power (Adam 1998, ch. 5; Pellizzoni 2004, p. 553). As we shall see, this conflict takes on forms that do not affect 'the future' in some abstract sense.

Many of the aforementioned consequences are characterised by long periods of latency and result from complex interactions between causes, as in the bioaccumulation of chemicals (Colborn et al. 1996; Koppe 2001), the effects of radiation or the emission of greenhouse gases. Such effects are the result of the ever-increasing power of industrial technologies to penetrate into and change the basic structure of organic and inorganic matter, both intentionally and unintentionally. Once chemical, nuclear, genetic and nano-technologies become part of social and natural systems, unintended effects emerge that could never have been foreseen in the laboratory. As a result, it has gradually become apparent that uncertainty about the risks associated with technology is inseparable from industrial capitalism for two reasons. Firstly, science has to rely on knowledge of the past for creating complex technologies that, once they are out in the real world and are merging with natural and other social processes, will produce thoroughly unpredictable and irreversible futures. Secondly, the pressure on businesses to innovate in order to maintain profit margins encourages them to tighten their focus on present interests. So, at the same time as the capacity to create different futures grows, vision becomes more and more restricted to the present and near future, as speed of decision in response to market conditions is valued far more than long-term planning. Planned obsolescence, product divergence and built-in overcapacity become the watchwords of production. Not only is the future increasingly filled by

the unintended outcomes of actions undertaken in a context of uncertainty, the production of such outcomes is speeded up by economic imperatives to increase profits now and put off costs until later.² Effectively, the ruling economic imperatives of the present institutionalise irresponsibility, with the present seeking only to profit at the expense of the future.

A link between social relations and the effects of technology was made by Hans Jonas, who argues that for much of human history the meaning and limits of ethical discourse had reflected the spatial and temporal boundaries of human action. Where the effects of one's deeds are limited to contemporaries with whom one immediately shares public space, then certain specific concepts of duty, blame and liability are required. So the nature of interactions between individuals in the public spaces imagined by Hellenic republicanism and Lockean liberalism are reflected by concepts of blame and liability that seek to make actions *imputable* to individuals. Similarly, the social contract is imagined by the liberal republican tradition, from Locke to Rawls, as one between inhabitants of a locality, or at most, a nation or people with a particular constitution and body of laws. However, when the context of action extends to include people on the other side of the world, near and distant future generations, and the natural systems needed to sustain them, then, Jonas suggests, such concepts are in need of revision. To interpret the social contract as incorporating solely those who belong within a single national community is no longer appropriate, and indeed with this new context, hidden biases of the classical liberal and republican traditions concerning moral considerability come to light.

With respect to the spatial reach of action, much has been written in recent years about the inadequacy of concepts of responsibility that simply seek to impute blame or liability to individuals (O'Neill 1996, ch. 4), (Young 2006, pp. 102-3) – I have no time today to comment on this. I turn instead to the problem of its temporal reach, which encompasses harms to both humans and non-humans.

The Assumption of Reciprocity

Instead of criticising the failure of the present to adequately address the interests of the future, the dominant trends in public policy decision theory help justify a bias towards the interests of the present. These trends derive intellectual support from post-Enlightenment innovations such as cost-benefit analysis, founded on the individualist and hedonist psychology of utilitarianism. When based on utilitarian presuppositions about pure-time preferences and the foundational status of instrumental reason, a bias towards the interests of the present is thought to be both rational and morally justified.

Although they are traditionally seen as implacably opposed to utilitarianism theories of natural rights arguably fail to redress the balance. What could help formulate a firm response to the utilitarian discounting of the future is a solid defence of the moral considerability of the future. Unfortunately, rights-based theories face problems here, because they share with utilitarianism several key assumptions about what makes for moral considerability, all of which focus concepts of responsibility upon harms done to living persons.

- Moral agency is primarily a cognitive achievement: it relies on a specific property, the capacity to decree for oneself a rule of conduct to follow (Kant 1993, pp. 40-1), which also entails the capacity to have done otherwise than how one actually acts (Chisholm 1966, pp. 30-44).
- This cognitive capacity is held to be the source of the equal intrinsic worth and dignity of agents, and thus of their moral personhood (Korsgaard 1996). From this dignity derive the special entitlements that are given the name of rights, and which all moral agents possess equally.
- The duty not to harm another by depriving her of her rights holds between all agents within a political community. As such, it is an equal and reciprocal duty.
- Rights only belong to members of a political community of moral agents who understand what it is to claim a right (Carruthers 1992; Scruton 2000).
- The entitlement to not be harmed includes the right to not be impeded in using whatever non-harmful means are at one's disposal to satisfy preferences, and thus to pursue one's interests.

This strict rights-based interpretation the meaning of responsibility effectively excludes from consideration both present and future non-humans and future humans by defining the bounds of harm solely in relation to living moral agents. That the latter are excluded from the political community within which rights are claimed is widely recognised within the literature on intergenerational equity as a serious problem. Because rights, to be legitimately held, must typically be claimed either by an individual or by someone appointed by them, they cannot (it has been argued) coherently be held either by non-humans or by humans who do not yet exist, as individuals from neither class can claim anything for themselves or appoint someone else to do so for them (MacLean 1983, pp. 183-4; Steiner 1983, p. 154). This leaves space only for the assertion of rights by the living, and encourages them to leave unconsidered the future consequences of the claims they stake.

The issue here is similar to one to which Marxist and feminist critics of utilitarian and rights-based approaches have drawn attention: the formal

equality promised by these theories papers over the cracks of real power inequalities (Marx 1976), and uses a reductive definition of moral considerability that promotes some particular interests over others. For rights-based theories and utilitarianism, human beings tend to be conceived as possessing fixed interests that they manage by means of disinterested, unemotional rational calculation. Rationality is defined as efficient preference satisfaction and utility maximisation, which is subject to restrictions concerning the boundaries between individuals that cannot be crossed without causing morally significant harm. These considerations are held to constitute the formal equality of individuals as moral agents.

But if we consider the relationship between present and future, a basic power inequality is evident. The idea of equal and reciprocal responsibility implies the Hobbesian or Lockean idea that all moral agents have a passive and equal power (which they can either exercise or not) to commit harm. However, in relation to the future, everyone has a different degree of power to transform it by participating in its creation, in ways that may count for or against the well-being of future persons. This power is active, not passive, and is constantly being exercised. In terms of the capacity to harm, the relationship between present and future is not therefore reciprocal: rather, it is inherently unidirectional and non-reciprocal. Further, in the face of the uncertain futures created by utility-maximising actions in the present, such as radical technological innovation, the boundaries between actions that are legitimate and ones that create harms are harder to draw. The only concept of responsibility that is appropriate, given the active capacity of the present to create the future, must therefore also be non-reciprocal and focused on the responsible creation of futures.

It is therefore clear that the particular interests favoured by reciprocal responsibility are those of persons alive now, particularly those with more political and economic power to create futures. If rationality rests on efficient preference satisfaction, then a shorter temporal frame of reference for decisions is more rational. If moral reasoning is defined, on this basis, as a calculative procedure concerned with managing quantitative trade-offs, then in conjunction with contemporary legal systems and technologies, it tends to erode any moral consideration of the future.

Non-Reciprocal Responsibility Understood as Care

This means that to rethink responsibility in terms suitable to the new temporal context of social action, we require a different conception of moral considerability to the individualist one defined in the last section. This must recognise that the boundaries between present acts and future harms are increasingly difficult to draw. I will argue that a different understanding of human subjectivity and identity to that presupposed by utilitarianism and

rights theories can therefore assist us here. In allowing us to extend the zone of moral considerability beyond the limits of the present, it will also allow us to extend it beyond the class of human persons as such. Hence, I will use the word 'individual' to refer to anything that is morally considerable within this perspective, rather than just human persons.

One useful option is to rethink responsibility and subjectivity in terms of the capacity to care. Care ethics, as originally articulated in the 1980s by feminist theorists like Carol Gilligan (Gilligan 1982) and Nel Noddings (Noddings 1984), has been subjected to various penetrating criticisms, not least by other feminists (Hoagland 1991). Nonetheless it contains several key insights that deserve further development, including the idea that care is a comprehensive way of understanding the inherent future-orientation of human beings. It is possible to link this idea to an Aristotelian conception of the good life that allows us to think of our relationship to the future in concrete terms, and which overcomes the much-criticised tendency to relativism and conservatism inherent in traditional care ethics. I now want to outline the elements of this approach, which are developed at more length elsewhere (Groves 2006a, 2006b).

For care ethics, the meaning of lives is inseparable from their narrative unity, their history and above all their projected potential. This allows it to undermine the duality between emotion and reason present in utilitarianism and the rights-based model, resulting in a different understanding of what reason is and does. Care ethics can thus be linked with Heidegger's definition of care as the 'totality' of our involvement with the world (Heidegger, 1998, p.182). For Heidegger, care is a continuous projection of the potential of human lives into a constantly unfolding future (Heidegger, 1998, pp. 327-335). As the temporal structure of an individual life, it forms the background against which someone can experience an object, a person, or an event as *mattering* to her in some determinate way. According to Heidegger, care is the condition for all distinctively human ways of encountering the world, and indeed for humans having specifically human interests. Without it, no interpretive perspective on the world is possible, including the allegedly disinterested standpoints of the scientist or the moral philosopher. As such, it forms the primary motivation for and interpretive condition of ethical life.

In this way, Heidegger lays out a constitutive dimension of experience that cannot be captured within an abstract analysis of the universal properties of moral agents upon which human moral considerability allegedly depends. The feminist articulation of care adds to this a concrete social analysis of the way in which we live this dimension of experience, arguing that as subjects of care we experience the world as meaningful through our relationships with concrete others. What things mean is a question that is always being resolved

from within a dense web of emotional entanglements that provides the matrix for our ethical development. The feminist analysis of care presents the meaning of things and of people as simultaneously actual and potential, constituted by the history of our interactive relationships with other particular human beings, and by how we live these relationships in the present. From within this web of dynamic relations, we learn early on that responsibility means an urgent, non-reciprocal obligation – the feeling of being called to tend to a relationship by providing another with something they need, whether this is affection, sympathy, support, guidance or whatever. As Carol Gilligan has pointed out (Gilligan 1982, p. 38), this responsibility is not about restricting one's freedom in order to avoid harming someone; instead, it is about extending one's sphere of action in order to ensure the continued wellbeing of another, and therefore concerns concrete needs before it concerns abstract rights. This capacity to care is a learnt form of practical judgement that integrates emotion, imagination and reflection. In caring, we pay attention to the particulars of a situation, including the separate and common histories of the participants, and their separate and common potential futures. Contrary to some critics, the primary focus of care is not therefore on protecting existing relationships, but on preserving their potential to develop and flourish. This is why care finds its model in parent-child relationships: in caring, one tends to the potential for growth that others possess. In addition, as a learnt mode of responding to others, care leads beyond existing relationships to the formation of new ones. In encountering a stranger, one is also able, in a restricted sense, to sense and appreciate if they are in need and whether one should do anything in response. In this way, caring means that the horizon of meaning of one's own life becomes intertwined and implicated in that of the concrete other (Frankfurt 1982).

I want now to develop these insights further in a broadly Aristotelian direction. If emotionally grounded relationships are constitutive of subjectivity, then this implies notions of value that are typically left under-articulated by most writers on care. Through caring, we discover that the individual existence of particular, concrete others is a constitutive condition of the meaningfulness of our own lives: we experience their flourishing and well-being as inseparable from our own happiness and well-being (O'Neill, 1993, p. 24). We therefore value them in a way that is neither instrumental nor absolute. If something serves, in so far as it possesses its own individuality, as an essential ingredient of something else, then it has neither instrumental nor absolute value, but is rather *constitutively* valuable: the concrete other falls into this class. In order to contribute to the meaningfulness of our own lives, the other with whom we have a relationship must exist in her own right and be treated appropriately. For example, a friend would not be a friend if I treated her as entirely subordinate to my

wishes. In fact this would be to behave against the spirit of friendship. A friend is thus constitutive of friendship, just as the concrete other in general is constitutive of the meaningfulness of my life, and thereby my potential for living a worthwhile life of flourishing, Aristotle's goal of *eudaimonia*.

With this concept of constitutive value in hand, it is possible to take the care perspective further, and to show how it can make a contribution to understanding responsibility in the new historical situation which Jonas has described. Constitutive values derive from the capacity for projection of meaning which Heidegger and care ethicists make into the basic structure of human subjectivity. To evaluate an individual as constitutively valuable implies that its own potentiality for meaning is valued. If something has absolute value, then the implication is that this aspect of its meaning is a feature of its actuality in the present. If something is viewed as instrumentally valuable, in the way that food or a tool are so viewed, then its potential and meaning is assessed in relation to an external future goal to which it forms a single step. But to view another individual as constitutively valuable is to have regard for her specific immanent potential for development and for generating meaning, which is formed within her interactions with other individuals, as being of value in its own right. To care for another is therefore to do what is required in order that their potential should continue to unfold in a way that enhances their wellbeing. This active responsibility exercised in judgement and action is threefold: we assess what is needed for another individual to flourish, what outcomes would count as being constitutive of their flourishing, and what overall their flourishing consists in. This third is particularly important: the potential of another is not an empty category. It is always projected determinately in specific directions, based on our knowledge of their history.

Further, it is not just other *people* that we judge to be constitutively valuable. Things (such as landscapes or artworks), institutions (such as a democratic constitution) and ideas (such as liberty or identity) are three examples. Independent of any instrumental value, such individuals can be judged to have a many-sided potential for contributing to meaningful lives, and insofar as this is the case, their own flourishing becomes a matter of concern and is safeguarded. The non-reciprocal responsibility one feels towards a friend is mirrored in this way of taking responsibility for other elements of the world.

A landscape may be designated an area of special concern, and thus protected from attempts to reduce it to something purely of instrumental value, e.g. by quarrying it. A collector refuses to sell a painting because of the value she sees in it as an object of contemplation or a representative of a living art tradition. Such objects are also objects of care, and our relationships with them are as concrete as those with people, having integrated emotional,

imaginative and intellectual dimensions. It is felt that things can go badly or well for them, and that their fate is bound up with ours. If things turn out badly for them, we feel diminished as a result.³

Care is thus a basic mode of interpreting the world as of ethical significance, and operates by means of a specific mode of valuing. It suggests ways of reasoning about the ethical standing of others, both human and non-human that recall Otto Neurath's non-foundationalist metaphor for philosophy as the rebuilding of a ship that has already put out to sea (Neurath 1932). This is because caring tries to make room for a variety of ways of furthering concern for constitutive values within an always-already concrete socio-historical context, and denies that there is a single, foundational ethical language transcending this context that provides general rules which can settle all moral conflicts (Taylor 1982). Nonetheless, it can produce more general ethical principles of action.

Care and Moral Principles

Care ethics has traditionally been criticised for its over-emphasis on the need for sensitive and attentive responses to the particularities of face-to-face contexts of action. This, critics have charged, means it typically fails to recognise that even in such contexts practical judgement needs universal *a priori* principles. Given that the problem of future-oriented responsibility arises precisely from the fact that the consequences of social action now extend far beyond face-to-face contexts, the care perspective might be seen as irrelevant for our needs in this paper. However, it also implies a distinctive understanding of the role of the future in the structure of value. Because this is the case, a care perspective can produce specific general rules for framing choices between alternative courses of action on the basis of whether or not they might produce futures that are good for objects of care, even though it does not provide foundational *a priori* rules for settling conflicts.

If something is experienced as constitutively valuable, the requirement that we take responsibility for its potential necessarily leads beyond our specific commitment to it. For example, to care about a loved one means being committed to how they are looked after when sick, which might lead us to campaign for the public provision of healthcare, to join a political party which makes this an essential part of its campaigning platform, and so on. Caring as practical judgement about what is demanded of us thus necessarily involves us in both instrumental reasoning and action, and in making further judgements about what other things are constitutively valuable. As a result, we have to extend ourselves in space and time to cultivate new relationships, which may lead us to revisit and revise our previous commitments. In extending care, we have to assess, based on experience, the evolving systemic relationships between a plurality of values over time.

For example, suppose our campaign for better public healthcare leads us to consider the amount of tax which is lost every year through corporate tax evasion and the level of air-pollution caused by factories sited near residential areas. If our loved one is involved in economic practices that see her benefit from either or both of these, then our assessment of what she requires of us will change as a result, as will our relationship with her. Nonetheless, in caring for her we would find it ethically problematic to take a disconnected stance, in which we abstract away all aspects of our personal involvement and simply condemn them for their wrongdoing. Confronting her in this way might have a role to play, but only within a continuously unfolding ethical context which is not provided by the laws against tax evasion alone.

Through our capacity to care, we become committed to a plurality of objects. In addition to this extension of care in relation to individual things we care about, we will also discover that, thanks to their position in a system of values, many of the things to which our care extends are not just instrumentally and constitutively valuable for *one* single individual, but for individuals more generally. Care thus tends to link the private with the public, sometimes in unexpected ways, rather than keeping them separate.

If we consider the variety of individuals we might find constitutively valuable, then it is clear how care both motivates and requires action leading far beyond the level of simply conserving existing relationships. It leads us to gradually move towards a multi-level and systemic view of how our constitutive values fit together, and how the relationships between them can be understood. From individual people, we move to an intersubjective context; from this, to a social, institutional and historical one. From there, as our contemporary situation makes clear, we must move to an environmental and ecological one. And in all this, we must not forget that this assemblage of values is a mobile, unfolding collectivity: each valued object is a specific potential encrusted with present actuality, and as such is continuously moving into its future. As such, we see again that all care is therefore about the future. The future is not therefore an abstraction, an empty space, simply defined as something which is *not yet*. On the contrary, it is always concrete, the future of something that we care about, and therefore has a determinable rather than purely indeterminate character (Johnson 1921, ch. 11). The future is always determinable and singular, the dimension of time in which the cared-for potential of constitutive values will be fulfilled and sustained, or allowed to vanish.

Because this is the case, we can answer the familiar question ‘what has the future ever done for me?’ If our own flourishing is bound up with the things, people and ideals to which we are committed, then there is a sense in which our lives can be said to continue to go well or badly even beyond our own

deaths through what happens to these constitutive values. The future beyond the limits of our own lives, embodied in what we find constitutively valuable, influences the meaning of our lives. If we became convinced that our grandchildren would be forced to live on an earth devastated by war or climate change, then our own lives now would fall under a shadow. Similarly, if I am a scientist, and were to become convinced that such a future would mean that the institutions of science, and with them, scientific knowledge itself would largely vanish, then I would also feel diminished by the prospect. Part of our sense of whether or not our own lives are going well now is bound up with our expectations for the ongoing futures of what we care about, even beyond our own deaths. In this sense, we feel that how the future turns out can add to or subtract from the value and meaning of our own lives (O'Neill 1993, ch. 3). The stronger this sense of participating in projects which connect us with future generations, and therefore the sense of sharing a narrative with them, the stronger our sense that near and distant futures both matter to us now.

Because what is of constitutive value matters to us as embodied future, i.e. as potential or determinable as well as actual, we need to extend our care not just to those things in the present which can support and enhance its flourishing, but to provide for futures in which this flourishing can continue. Consequently, as we expand the scope of our practical judgements and extend our web of care, we recognise that the nature of caring itself generates general principles that serve as guides to action. Firstly we have to act so as to preserve and enhance the potential of what we find valuable, where 'valuable' means of value both to the flourishing of specific individuals living now and to the flourishing of individuals generally now and in the future. Secondly, we need to act so as to preserve and enhance the capacities of future generations to care as such. The ultimate principle of care is the imperative identified by Hans Jonas: 'never must the existence or the essence of man [*sic*] as a whole be made a stake in the hazards of action' (Jonas 1984, p. 37).

In other words, action has to aim to create conditions in which individuals can flourish, and therefore also to create conditions in which care, as the future-orientation of human individuals, can flourish. We should act not only to preserve our constitutive values, but also to preserve the capacity of future humans to care in their own way, and to revise their assessments of what they consider constitutively valuable.

Not only does care have implicit within it a dynamic movement outwards, pushing the circumference of its circle of moral considerability further and further out into the present and the future, it implies also taking care that care itself retains flexibility, rather than hardening into mere conservatism. For

example, the scientist cares about the institutions and practices of science as she knows them, but this does not entail simple conservatism: she will also be concerned that the legacy of scientific research to which she contributes is passed on in a living form, one which comprises within it openness to criticism. We also need to remain prepared to revise continuously our estimation of what is considered constitutively valuable for a good life, as we discover the complexities of situations.

From this perspective, harm can be defined as, not as a momentary actual transgression against a right, but as acting so as to erode an individual's concrete potential for flourishing. The boundary between present actions and future harms is therefore redefined on the basis of continuity between past and future. It is the determinable futures contained within a constitutive value that are harmed here. For example, in deciding to quarry a landscape valued as a rare habitat and for its aesthetic value, we cease to recognise any meaning in any of the evolving relationships that have been established between it and us. As such, we deny to it the place it has come to occupy in our web of constitutive values, and refuse to recognise its individuality and its immanent future. We now need to look more closely at this definition of harm by using it to reinterpret the conflict introduced at the beginning of this paper.

Approaching the Conflict

The basis of this conflict, as we saw, lies in the bias of many social practices towards present interests, which generates short-termism and at the same time creates long-term, unintended future consequences. Having outlined a care-based account of the relation between present and future, we can now recast this conflict as one between two kinds of value and two forms of identity.

Standard policy tools for solving conflicts, like the utilitarian and rights-based approaches we examined, frame conflicts by giving them a meaning that reflects a particular set of social practices. They view conflicts as arising from the difficulties involved in maximising utility or fulfilling rights when resources are scarce. In other words, conflict is produced when the means needed to satisfy the preferences of a number of individuals cannot be distributed in such a way as to satisfy them all. Here, resources are seen instrumentally as means. If something is valuable as a means, then it can in principle easily be exchanged for something else that can serve the same purpose, meaning that such objects are strongly comparable in value.

The exchangeability of instrumental goods is made even easier when the end they serve is thought of as quantifiable, such as pleasure or utility, and where gains and losses can then be assessed by pricing. If two goods provide different amounts of utility and thereby quantifiable benefits, then not only

are they strongly comparable, their respective value is entirely commensurable in terms of a common measure, and they can be ranked ordinally and cardinally.

Once a common measure is established, then it is possible to effectively increase the stock of resources by using technologies whose costs can be either spatially or temporally redistributed. As noted earlier, CBA and future-discounting allow the costs of action to be moved into the future. The upshot of this process is to make exchangeable, instrumental value the measure of value as such. In this way, a rigid dualism of values is created, separating values that can be financially measured (and which are therefore judged to be rational preferences), from those that cannot and are therefore judged to be either irrational or simply non-rational. Conflicts like that between present and future are therefore generated by effectively imposing one supposedly foundational evaluative framework upon other existing frameworks. The result is that the range of social meanings that contribute to the forming of values is disregarded, in favour of one meaning of value (O'Neill 1993, pp. 119-121), that is, value as instrumental and exchangeable. This, as we saw in the previous section, is a distinctive way in which the present harms the future.

Having re-examined some aspects of the social meaning of constitutive value, we can now subvert this dualism of rational and non-rational values and re-contextualise the meaning of instrumental value. Within this new context, the conflict of interest between past and future appears differently. As we have seen, constitutive values are plural and, in respect of the singular futures implicated in them, are *sui generis*. They are therefore definitely not strongly comparable. In fact, they should be seen as incommensurable in Joseph Raz's sense: they are not of equal value, and nor do we have any means of comparing them in any strong sense and thus assigning fixed positions to them in a hierarchy of values (Raz 1986, pp. 325, 350-1).

More importantly still, however, part of the social meaning of constitutive values is that they are not exchangeable, either on the basis of commensurability or strong comparability (Raz 1986, pp. 350-1). To exchange something that is seen solely as a source of utility for something that brings greater utility is a purely calculative transaction in which giving up *x* in order to obtain *y* is simply a matter of quantitative advantage. But to exchange one constitutive value for something else generally only occurs under circumstances of compulsion and necessarily implies the loss of something unique. The social meaning of such a loss signifies that indignation, resistance and, if the valued thing is permanently lost, grieving would be appropriate responses. To lose something of constitutive value will significantly affect how one will later assess the narrative of how things have

gone in one's life. Consequently, if constitutive values are assessed as instrumental values, then they may be seen as already half lost, and indignation and resistance would be appropriate responses here also. It is at this point that the value conflict between present-focused interests and the interests of the future commonly become visible, in the form of an attempt to deny the meaning of a constitutive good and hence to deny the good itself: if protests are raised against the proposed quarrying of a valued landscape, then this is because of its many-sided meanings, concentrated in the particular history of the area and in the determinable futures it embodies.

In response, solutions to such conflicts must seek to recognise within institutional practices the diverse future-oriented values that go to constitute human flourishing, amongst which are values attaching to the futures of non-human individuals. On the one hand, this requires a thoroughgoing critique of the use of policy tools that focus solely on the realisation of instrumental values. This must also try to make visible cases of social practice where this logic of evaluation, and its discounting of the future, is implicitly at work, as in prevalent understandings of the role, value and social dynamics of technological innovation. But this has to be accompanied by an explicit articulation of a substantive vision both of human needs and of what aspirations can guide the ways we find to fulfil them in the direction of a genuinely good life. As I have indicated previously, to succeed in both these tasks will necessarily lead us to extend the degree to which we view our lives as interwoven with our other living humans, with future generations, and with our ecological support systems. After all, it is to the future that we entrust our legacy, the plurality of things we care about.

Notes

¹ This proposition underlies Derek Parfit's analysis of the 'non-identity problem', in Parfit 1983b, p. 167 and 1987, p. 451.

² A growing literature addresses the ethical and political implications of future-discounting and cost-benefit analyses in this regard. See for example Jacobs 1991, pp. 68-70, 81-82; O'Neill 1993, pp. 52-3; Parfit 1983a, pp. 31, 37.

³ On the extension of constitutive value to nature, see Schollmeier 1997 and O'Neill 1993, ch. 2.

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