



Ethics and the Environment: A Public Philosophy Workshop

"It is still not too late to act. It will take a far-reaching vision, it will take courage, it will take fierce, fierce determination to act now, to lay the foundations where we may not know all the details about how to shape the ceiling. In other words, it will take cathedral thinking." - Greta Thunberg

Join us for **Ethics and the Environment**: a free public philosophy workshop that coincides with the School Strikes for Climate planned for Friday 20th September 2019.

The event is open to everyone including strikers, students and sceptics. If you join us, you will take part in 75 minutes of facilitated discussion and activities about some of the controversial ethical issues that arise out of the clear facts of climate and ecological emergency e.g. *Is hope rational? What is the value of experts? and Do future-people have rights?* As this is new work, we will ask for your feedback on the session for a further 15 minutes afterwards.

This pilot workshop launches Open Ethics: a series of public conversations about the urgent ethical issues raised by climate change, ecological destruction and cutting-edge developments in science, technology and engineering - from gene editing to climate engineering.

Booking is essential.

Programme

17:00 – 17:15	Introductions <i>Welcome, ethos, aims, expectations</i>
17:15 – 17:45	Ethics, Environment and Emotions <i>Hope vs Despair Swing-o-Meter</i> <i>Thunberg: Don't hope, panic!</i>
17:45 – 18:30	Ethics, Environment and Arguments <i>The Prisoner's Dilemma and pay-what-you-like</i> <i>The Tragedy of the Commons and the climate</i>
18:30 – 18:45	Ethics, Environment and Action <i>How do we live well, whatever the future holds?</i>
18:45 - 19:00	Reflection <i>Can philosophy help address the climate crisis?</i>

Film

You can view a roughcut video of the session here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnUPjEWXSzA>

Materials

- Name badges, red and black markers
- Spreadsheet for collecting names with GDPR data questions
- Other laptop
- Printed quotes
- Prisoner's dilemma tickets for next workshop
- Further Reading handout example (copies be emailed out)

Workshop Plan

16:45 – 17:00 Set up

- Chairs 60 arranged in three sections in lecture style in both halves of the room
- Name badges 'yes' to filming names in black, 'yes' to filming names in black,
- Warn participants: This session will be filmed for educational and fundraising purposes. Please indicate if you do not wish to be filmed and you'll receive a coloured name badge and you will be edited out of the final film.
- Name badges 'yes' to filming names in black, 'yes' to filming names in black,
- Collect GDPR compliant data for mailing list

17:00 – 17:15 Introductions

Welcome, ethos, aims, expectations (5 minutes max)

- Thanks for coming.
- We're representing Thinking Space, a non-profit that has supported philosophy in the community for 12 years. We're offering this workshop for free because we think public philosophical discussion around these issues is too important to wait to secure funding. If you want to contribute towards the cost of the room hire, you are welcome to do so at the end. But there is no expectation that you do at all. We're just happy that you made it.
- As well as a body of work, we understand philosophy as *an activity* which is why we try to get you to do as much as the philosophising as possible. It is also why this workshop doesn't feature a lecture or any advanced reading. Not because this material isn't stimulating, but because we think the place to *start* is with the everyday feelings, thoughts and actions that we're familiar with in relation ethics and the environment. We can recommend readings at the end, if you want to explore the academic literature further.
- Talking about the environment requires a level of knowledge and understanding about science, politics and economics that can exclude people. We aim to connect this conversation to the values in all of this. Often these are values that are familiar to – and often shared by – all of us. We encourage you to choose your language carefully and speak as clearly as you can to help make this discussion as accessible as possible.
- Our workshop is two hours long. We will work in small groups on three activities that explore the ethical dimensions of the ways we feel, think and act in response to the climate emergency.
- There is no expectation that you will agree but we encourage you to participate respectfully taking it in turns to speak, using the following signals to indicate that you'd like to participate and ensuring that you are concise. Please don't be offended if the facilitator feels they must bring someone else in. Please support your ideas with reasons where you can, connect your contributions to previous ideas voiced in the session and cite any empirical evidence to refer to.
- We are filming this workshop to assist colleagues in our network hoping to set up similar workshops. We will also use the film to promote our work in the hope of securing some funding to allow us to do similar sustainable work in schools. If you have not already done so, please indicate if you don't wish to be filmed.

Hope vs Despair Swing-o-Meter (30 minutes max)

1. Erect a *Hope vs Despair Swing-o-Meter*
2. Form 3X groups of 10ish with Grace, Jane and Elliott facilitating
3. Ask: ***When you consider the future in light of the climate and ecological crisis, where would you place yourself (i.e. where would you place your emotional response) between hope and despair?***
4. Consider the following examples in small groups. Ask the subgroup: ***Why does this make you more or less hopeful or despairing?***
 - a. **Aristotle:** 'What is common to the greatest number has the least care bestowed upon it'
Trump: 'The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive'
Thunberg: 'By stopping flying you not only reduce your own carbon footprint but also that sends a signal to other people around you that the climate crisis is a real thing.'
Ki-moon: 'Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security, and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.'
 - b. **School Strikes Placard:** 'If you don't act like adults, we will'
Climate Action Tracker: Av. Warming by 2100 graph
Sagan: 'Extinction is the rule survival is the exception'
Merkel: 'We must now agree on a binding review mechanism under international law, so that this century can credibly be called a century of decarbonisation.'
Nintendo: Everything not saved will be lost
 - c. **Klein:** 'Slavery wasn't a crisis for British and American elites until abolitionism turned it into one. Racial discrimination wasn't a crisis until the civil rights movement turned it into one. Sex discrimination wasn't a crisis until feminism turned it into one. Apartheid wasn't a crisis until the anti-apartheid movement turned it into one.'
Attenborough: 'I think there is a stronger movement in this country and indeed worldwide - a stronger recognition of how important the natural world is than there has ever been in my lifetime certainly.'
National Institute for Space Research: Graph showing rise of amazon fires
Hardin: Ruin is the destination
5. (Optional, if there's time) Return to the whole group and place a few representatives on the swing-o-meter with some discussion of why they feel the way they do.
6. Whole group discussion with Thunberg Quote ('I don't want your hope. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I do. Every day. And want you to act. I want you to behave like our house is on fire. Because it is.')

Should we feel hopeful about the future?

17:45 – 18:30 Ethics, Environment and Arguments

The Prisoner's Dilemma: A pay-what-you-like ethics workshop (15 minutes max)

1. Pick out 10 volunteers to model. Everyone else watches.
2. Distribute two choice cards: *FIVER TICKET* and *FREE TICKET*
3. Grace explains the set up: (Put this on a slide)

We need £40 to hire this room for a future workshop. If we price tickets at £5 and expect around ten people to show up, we can cover this cost and make enough for refreshments afterwards. But we appreciate that not everyone is in the same boat financially and we don't want to legislate to make the price obligatory. So we operate on a pay-what-you-like basis. People can choose to pay the ticket price or have a free ticket.

- If everyone chooses a *FIVER TICKET*, the room costs are paid so the workshop can go ahead and there is enough left over for refreshments (**Small benefit for all**)
 - If most choose a *FIVER TICKET*, but one or two people choose a *FREE TICKET* the room costs are paid so the workshop can go ahead but there are no refreshments. (**Large benefit for some, Small harm for everyone else**)
 - If three or more people choose a *FREE TICKET* the room hire can't be covered and the session has to be cancelled (**Large harm for all**)
4. Decide round one, show cards anonymously to Jane
 5. Repeat round two
 6. Repeat round three
 7. Elliot collates scores and shares them as a quick graph on the white board
 8. (Optional) Example to share with the group if they vote in the common interest.
https://www.economicnetwork.ac.uk/showcase/vazquez_prisoners

The Tragedy of the Commons and the climate (30 minutes max)

1. Paired talk: What has any of this got to do with the climate crisis?
2. Present the Tragedy of the Commons

To understand this, we need to talk about cows.

in 1965 (just over fifty years ago) the American biologist and philosopher Garrett Hardin resurrected a parable he found in the 1833 work of by the British economist William Forster Lloyd.

The parable focuses on common grazing pastures and describes a worrying phenomenon that occurs when certain resources are shared but profits or benefits are privatised.

Farmers who graze cows on this common pasture share the grass, but each owns their own cow. These cows represent a profit, say £100 each at market. This creates a strong incentive to graze as many cows as possible. By doing so they could treble or quadruple their income.

Of course, the grass is finite. If too many cows graze, each cow gets less and the pasture become degraded, thereby providing even less sustenance. Perhaps the skinny cows grown

under these circumstances are only worth £90 at market.

But here's the crucial consideration. By squeezing in one more cow, I stand to gain another £90 while my neighbours lose just a fraction of the value of their herd. The losses are shared by everyone, but the benefits are enjoyed only by me.

This encourages everyone to try and graze one more cow.

There is only one logical conclusion in such an arrangement. That, argues Hardin, is ruin. The pasture is unsustainable, it can't support any cows at all. That's not just bad news for cows. All the farmers lose everything in the end.

3. (Only if necessary) Comprehension: In threes try to think of an analogous commons-like situation. E.g.
 - Overfishing *e.g. the blue fin tuna*
 - Logging and forest clearance *e.g. in the Amazon*
 - Traffic congestion in rush hour
 - Carbonization of the Earth's atmosphere
 - Human population growth
 - Antibiotic use
 - Light pollution
 - Burning fossil fuels
 - Spam emails
 - The office kitchen *e.g. failing to clean up*
4. In subgroups: Initial responses
5. Questions in subgroups
 - **Is the current climate crisis an instance of the *Tragedy of the Commons*?**
 - What are the assumptions behind the parable as applied to the climate crisis? About human nature? About material resources? About political or social structures?
 - How useful can a simple analogy be given the complexity of our situation?
 - **Is a climate tragedy inevitable?**
 - What are the implications of Hardin's argument for our future? Do you agree?
 - Is it rational to refrain from using resources when doing so might disadvantage me? If so, why don't we do it? If not, why should we do it?
 - Is what we know about human nature, sufficient to predict the future?
 - **Should we be hopeful about the future?**
 - If climate tragedy was inevitable, is it a mistake to remain hopeful?
 - Hardin argues that the way forward involves '*mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon*' (i.e. unilateral legislation). Do you agree?
 - Are there any alternative ways forward? Can tragedy be averted?
6. Whole group discussion of key interests highlighted by co facilitators

18:30 – 18:45

Ethics, Environment and Action

How do we live well, whatever the future holds? (15 minutes max)

1. Working in pairs, invite the group to recall the example they gave of something they value deeply. Invite them to consider how they might act to conserve that and their other values in

light of the things discussed this evening.

- In sub groups ask:
How can we live well, whatever the future holds?
 - What might a good life look like in a decarbonised future?
 - Could anyone flourish in a climate tragedy of the commons? What would this amount to?
- 2. Whole group feedback of salient points initiated by invitations from facilitators
- 3. Coming together as a whole group: Revisit the *Hope vs Despair Swing-o-Meter*

18:45 - 19:00 Reflection

Can philosophy help address the climate crisis? (15 minutes max)

1. Still together as a whole group ask: **Can philosophy help address the climate crisis?**
2. Film and scribe responses and include reflections from the facilitator too.
3. Then work on written responses to the following
 - What did you expect?
 - How did this compare?
 - What specifically was interesting?
 - What specifically was useful?
 - What specifically was missing?
 - What specifically could have made the session better?
 - Would you be interested in doing this again?
 - If so, what would you like to cover next?
 - Can you recommend (and/or connect us with) another context for this work?
 - Would you be willing to support future sessions by any of the following means:
 - Attending another session?
 - Hosting an event at your home, school or workplace?
 - Publicising future events online and in-person?
 - Paying a small entrance fee?
 - Paying the entrance fee of a fellow participant?
 - Connecting us with a possible funder?

Further reading:

Academic philosophy papers

- **The Tragedy of the Commons**
G. Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons' in *Science*, New Series, Vol. 162, No. 3859 (Dec. 13, 1968), pp. 1243-1248. Available online at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1724745>
Also for free at:
https://sites01.lsu.edu/faculty/kharms/wpcontent/uploads/sites/23/2017/04/HardinG_1968_Science.pdf
- **It Makes no Difference Whether or Not I Do It**
J. Glover and M. J. Scott-Taggart, 'It Makes no Difference Whether or Not I Do It' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* Vol. 49 (1975), pp. 171-209. Available online at:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4106873>
Also for free at: <https://academic.oup.com/aristoteliansupp/article/49/1/171/1774256>

- **Famine, Affluence, and Morality**
P. Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality' in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol. 1 (Spring 1972) pp. 229-43. Available online at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2265052>
Also for free at: http://personal.lse.ac.uk/robert49/teaching/mm/articles/Singer_1972Famine.pdf
- **Is Common-Sense Morality Self-Defeating?**
D. Parfit, 'Is Common-Sense Morality Self-Defeating?' in *Journal of Philosophy* 76 (October 1979) pp. 533-45 For free at: <http://www.stafforini.com/docs/Parfit%20-%20Is%20common-sense%20morality%20self-defeating.pdf>

Philosophy journalism

- **Philosophers on Climate Change** By Justin Weinberg in Daily Nous
<http://dailynous.com/2015/12/08/philosophers-on-climate-change/>

Popular philosophy

- **Open University:**
<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/philosophy/the-prisoners-dilemma-detail>
- **Stanford Encyclopedia**
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/prisoner-dilemma/>
- **World Economic Forum**
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/06/the-moral-calculus-of-climate-change>

Other academic papers

- **Moving climate change beyond the tragedy of the commons**
K. Brown, W. N. Adger and J. E. Cinner, 'Moving climate change beyond the tragedy of the commons' in *Global Environmental Change* Vol. 54, Jan 2019 pp. 61-63. Available online at:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378018313116?via%3Dihub>

Other journalism

- **Humans need to become smarter thinkers to beat climate denial** in *The Guardian*
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2018/feb/06/humans-need-to-become-smarter-thinkers-to-beat-climate-denial>

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Thinking Space c.i.c.
Public Philosophy Projects

101 Beechwood Road, Sheffield S6 4LQ
info@thinkingspace.org.uk
www.thinkingspace.org.uk

twitter.com/Thinking_Space
facebook.com/ThinkingSpacePhilosophy
instagram.com/Thinking_Space