

# O'neill states: what is waiting for us in the future?

[Technology](#), [Future](#)



O'Neill states that Famine is said to be inevitable if people do not curb their fertility, alter their consumption patterns, and avoid pollution and consequent ecological catastrophes. O'Neill argues that the generation or eras now are responsible for the coming eras because as of now, their future is dependent on what we do now, ultimately making us responsible for them. What we utilize as far as resources, living, etc as an end result impacts what will come after us, just as what they do will impact whoever comes after them. I agree with this because apropos to her argument, if we have the power to increase their chances by not spending money frivolous, giving to charity, and wisely using and distributing resources, then we ought to do so since it is in our power. Western affluent societies bring unjustified harm to others from misuse of earth's resources and if this continues, it will result in future famine, death, and poverty which would be our fault since it's in our power to prevent it but did not attempt to do so.

O'Neill argues from the assumption: persons have a right not to be killed unjustifiably. To the conclusion: we have a duty to prevent and postpone famine deaths if within our power. The right not to be killed can be justifiably overridden in certain circumstances: unavoidable killings or self-defense. Unavoidable killings occur in situations where a person doing some act causes some death(s) they could not avoid, or that would have happened regardless. For example: B is the carrier of a highly contagious and fatal illness, and is in a situation where B cannot avoid encountering and killing either A or C even though B can choose who dies. In relevance to self-defense, a minimal right or self-defense is a corollary of a right not to be

killed. An example or assumption could be: if A has a right to defend himself against B, then third parties have a duty to defend A's right.

O'Neill also touches on the bases of well equipped and under equipped lifeboats. A well equipped lifeboat has supplies for everyone to survive until rescue-this is the analogue to the current earth. An under equipped lifeboat is not supplied for everyone to survive until rescue-this would be apropos to future earth's condition if our current trajectory continues. Your rights and duties are going to change depending on what lifeboat you are on. So, if you are on a lifeboat with enough resources for everyone, you have a certain right to a certain quantity of water, whereas if there isn't, it is not obvious you have a right to a certain amount of water. The same applies with duty, you have a duty to not interfere with someone else's right to their fair portion. Between the two, the application of moral principles fluctuate. So, what kind of lifeboat is earth?

O'Neill states If we imagine a lifeboat in which special quarters are provided for the first-class passengers, and on which the food and water for all passengers are stowed in those quarters, then we have a fair, if crude, model of the present human situation on lifeboat earth. For even on the assumption that there is at present sufficient for all to survive, some have control over the means of survival and so, indirectly, over others' survival.

So currently, according to O'Neill, earth can be considered a well equipped lifeboat. There are enough resources for us to survive right now, even though some people control the means of survival which holds true to earth. Wealthier nations including the western, sitting on valuable resources like oil

etc in some sense have control indirectly of others access to that, and if other countries depend on that for survival, then they ultimately control that as well depending on agriculture for economic survival. If you depend on gas for agricultural equipment and you do not have it, then you are dependent on the countries that do. Be that as it may, we have enough resources to go around as of now. On a well-equipped lifeboat, any distribution of food and water that leads to a death is a killing and not just a case of permitting a death.

However, even on an well-equipped lifeboat, there may be justifiable killings. Whereas it stands right now, we have enough resources to prevent people from dying from preventable diseases and starvation. It just so happens that those resources are not fairly distributed. In fact, it would not really take that much of a transition from the upper class to prevent these avoidable deaths like starving, famine, etc. On under-equipped lifeboats, some deaths are unavoidable-it just is not possible for everyone to survive. But, sometimes there is no particular person whose death is unavoidable. This leads to a distinction between killing and letting die. Killing is defined as an act that is a cause of a death that would not have occurred had the agent of the action had no influence or committed another act. Letting someone die can be described as when one is allowed to die when their death would take place, unless someone intervenes.

Another point O'Neill mentions is sufficiency situations. What would that be you might ask. It can merely be described as the analogy with earth and property rights: Many would claim that the situation on lifeboat earth is not

analogous to that on ordinary lifeboats, since it is not evident that we all have a claim, let alone an equal claim, on earth's resources. Perhaps some of us are stowaways...i shall assume that even if persons have unequal property rights and some people own nothing, it does not follow that R's exercise of his property rights can override A's right not to be killed. O'Neill points out real life situations in which economic activities lead to deaths: foreign investment situation and commodity pricing case.

The brunt of O'Neill's argument is that in both of the situations, there are non-justified killings, where the perpetrators (a) don't act alone, (b) actions don't result in immediate death, (c) it isn't certain if someone will die and (d) the deaths aren't intended. So, economic decisions can violate someone's right not to be killed even when following through with (a) through (d). The other takeaway from this section could be that someone might be killed in a situation of sufficient resources by the way others have arranged the distribution of means of subsistence. So, for example, we have enough water for everyone to go around, but it has been arranged so some people do not have access to it, so they die of thirst.

Apropos to the sufficiency situation would be scarcity situations. The scarcity situation: not everyone who is born in a scarcity situation can live out the normal span of human life causes could be excess population, deficient natural resources, etc. Globally we are in a sufficiency situation but there is regional scarcity, just like regional overpopulation. For instance, there is regional scarcity of water. Places that get enough rain and aquifers are frequently reimbursed are fine. The southwest tends to not do as well-it's

mainly a desert for that reason. The moral issues O'Neill addresses with respect to scarcity situations: are deaths from the inevitable future famines killings? If the answer is yes, are the killings justified or unjustified? In other words, if there are inevitable future deaths from famines, are we morally responsible for them? If so, what ought we do about it? There is a sense in which decisions we make now will impact the future and future people just as decisions made in the past impact us now.

For instance, the industrial revolution which brought great technological change which in turn also brought lots of pollution. The same is relevant with the automobile and the use of oil. Decisions made hundreds of years ago are impacting us now.

In conclusion, it is evident that the answers to the previous questions partially depend on whether or not the the impending famine or death is inevitable. Famine is said to be inevitable if people do not curb their fertility, alter their consumption patterns, and avoid pollution and consequent ecological catastrophes. O'Neill states. This certifies that famine is preventable. Therefore, if future famine is preventable, western affluent societies are morally responsible for it if it occurs since we contributed to it.