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Hopeless Hope:
Acting for Future Generations

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Problems

The reality of the Anthropocene

What is the relevance of Hans Jonas' philosophy for the „Hothouse Earth“?

How can we exercise our responsibility for future generations?

The Anthropocene

We are altering the biogeochemistry of the planet itself, destabilizing climate and influencing co-evolution at the planetary level



Hothouse Earth

Recent climate research has revealed the **self-reinforcing feedback mechanisms** of Earth's system that may result in a **“Hothouse Earth”** pathway characterized by “much higher global average temperature than any interglacial in the past 1.2 million years,” and “sea levels significantly higher than at any time in the Holocene” (Steffen et al. 2018).

Climate collapse may increase war and ethnic conflict, and the frequency of environmental disasters, and cause a return to a subsistence economy – even in “first world” countries, along with the collapse of governmental institutions. It may also promote the rise of authoritarian regimes and drastically reduce the human population anywhere from 70% (from 7.5 billion to 2 billion, which would bring the population to a sustainable level), to complete extinction (Greer 2016).

The Ethics of Responsibility

The ethics of responsibility involves not only the existence of future human beings but also the way they exist.

The conditions of the existence of future generations should not cause their capacity of freedom and humanness to disappear.



Hans Jonas
(1903-1993)

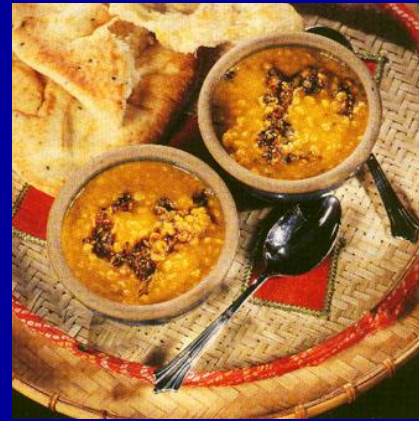
To achieve meaningful change in the humanity-nature nexus we have to reinvent our economic and social functioning. The basic question is how can we become ecologically conscious agents which operates within limits, that is, uses only our “fair earth share” and contributes to the richness of life on Earth?

What we can do for future generations?

- **Living frugal lifestyle**
- **Restoring natural ecosystems**
- **Preserving the cultural heritage of humankind**
- **Inventing life saving knowledge**

Frugal lifestyle

reducing the
materials aspects of
our activities,
both individually
and collectively



Restoring natural ecosystems



Preserving the cultural heritage of humankind

- **Languages**
- **Aboriginal knowledge**
- **Spiritual traditions**

Creating life saving knowledge

- **Responsible science and technology**
- **Art for sustainability**
- **Religion for peace**

Improving the position of future generations enhances the future of our own generations too.

Thank you!