

Toby Ord

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Areas of Specialisation

Normative ethics, practical ethics

Areas of Competence

Meta-ethics, formal logic and set theory, metaphysics, epistemology

Academic Positions

- 2019 – **Senior Research Fellow**
Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford University
- 2014 – 2019 **Research Fellow**
Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford University
- 2011 – 2014: **James Martin Fellow**
Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, Oxford University
- 2009 – 2012: **Postdoctoral Research Fellow**
British Academy
- 2009 – 2012: **Junior Research Fellow**
Balliol College, Oxford University
- 2006 – 2014: **Research Associate**
Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford University

Education

- 2005 – 2009: **DPhil in Philosophy**
Balliol College & Christ Church, University of Oxford
Thesis: 'Beyond Action:
applying consequentialism to decision making and motivation'
Supervisors: John Broome & Derek Parfit
Examiners: Roger Crisp & Brad Hooker
- 2003 – 2005: **BPhil in Philosophy**
Balliol College, University of Oxford
First class honours in coursework; highest possible mark for the thesis
Specialisation: Moral Philosophy, Metaphysics and Epistemology,
The Rise of Modern Logic
Thesis supervisors: John Broome & Krister Bykvist
- 1997 – 2002: **BA in Philosophy & BSc (Hons) in Computer Science**
University of Melbourne
First class honours in each

Books

- *The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity*, (London: Bloomsbury), 2020.
- *Moral Uncertainty* (co-authored with Will MacAskill, and Krister Bykvist), (Oxford: OUP), 2020.

Selected Journal Articles & Book Chapters

1. Dissolving the Fermi Paradox (co-authored with Anders Sandberg, and Eric Drexler). *Under review*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1806.02404>
2. Statistical normalization methods in interpersonal and intertheoretic comparisons (co-authored with Will MacAskill and Owen Cotton-Barratt). Forthcoming in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 2020.
3. The moral imperative towards cost-effectiveness in global health. Reprinted in Greaves and Pummer, eds. *Effective Altruism: Philosophical Issues*, (Oxford: OUP), 29–36, 2019.
4. An upper bound for the background rate of human extinction (co-authored with Andrew Snyder-Beattie and Michael Bonsall). *Scientific Reports* 9:11054, 1–9, 2019. doi:10.1038/s41598-019-47540-7
5. Giving isn't demanding (co-authored with Andreas Mogensen & Will MacAskill) in Woodruff, ed. *The Ethics of Giving: Philosophers' Perspectives on Philanthropy*, (Oxford: OUP), 178–203, 2018.
6. Why maximize expected choice-worthiness? (co-authored with William MacAskill). *Noûs* 00:00 1–27, 2018. doi:10.1111/nous.12264
7. Symmetric decomposition of asymmetric games (co-authored with Karl Tuyls et al). *Scientific Reports* 8 1015, 2018. DOI:10.1038/s41598-018-19194-4
8. Universal health coverage and intersectoral action for health: key messages from Disease Control Priorities, 3rd edition (co-authored with Dean Jamison et al). *The Lancet* Dec 2017, 3–15, 2017.
9. Moral uncertainty about population axiology (co-authored with Hilary Greaves). *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 12 135–67, 2017.
10. Moral Trade. *Ethics* 126 118–38, 2015.
11. A new counterexample to prioritarianism. *Utilitas* 27 298–302, 2015.
12. Bubbles under the wallpaper: healthcare rationing and discrimination (co-authored with Nick Beckstead). In H Kuhse et al (eds.) *Bioethics: an anthology*, Blackwell *Philosophy Anthologies*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell), 406–12, 2015.
13. Overpopulation or underpopulation?. In I Goldin (ed.) *Is the planet full?*, (Oxford: OUP), 46–60, 2014.
14. Global poverty and the demands of morality. In J Perry (ed.) *God, The Good, and Utilitarianism: Perspectives on Peter Singer*, (Cambridge: CUP), 177–91, 2014.
15. Rationing and rationality: the cost of avoiding discrimination (co-authored with Nick Beckstead). In N Eyal et al (eds.) *Inequalities in Health: Concepts, Measures, and Ethics*, (Oxford: OUP), 232–9, 2013.
16. Infectious Disease (co-authored with Dean Jamison, Prabhat Jha, and Ramanan Laxminarayan). In B Lomborg (ed.) *Global Problems, Smart Solutions: Costs and Benefits*, (Cambridge: CUP), 390–426, 2013.
17. Probing the improbable: methodological challenges for risks with low probabilities

and high stakes (co-authored with Rafaella Hillerbrand and Anders Sandberg). *Journal of Risk Research*, 13(2) 191–205, 2010.

18. The scourge: moral implications of natural embryo loss. *American Journal of Bioethics* 8(7) 12–19, 2008.
19. The reversal test: eliminating status quo bias in applied ethics (co-authored with Nick Bostrom). *Ethics* 116 656–679, 2006.
20. The many forms of hypercomputation. *Journal of Applied Mathematics and Computation* 178 142–153, 2006.
21. The diagonal method and hypercomputation (co-authored with Tien Kieu). *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 56 147–156, 2005.

Policy Reports

22. Managing existential risk from emerging technologies (co-authored with Nick Beckstead). In M Walport (ed.) *Annual report of the government chief scientific advisor 2014. Innovation: Managing Risk, Not Avoiding It. Evidence and Case Studies*. (London: Government Office for Science), 115–120, 2014.
23. *Making fair choices on the path to universal health coverage* (co-authored with the other members of the WHO Consultative Group on Equity and Universal Health Coverage). WHO. 2014.
24. *Unprecedented technological risks* (co-authored with Nick Beckstead, Nick Bostrom, Niel Bowerman, Owen Cotton-Barratt, and William MacAskill). Future of Humanity Institute. 2014.
25. The moral imperative towards cost-effectiveness in global health. (Washington DC: The Centre for Global Development). 2013.
www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1427016.
26. Considering Cost-effectiveness: the moral perspective. In A Glassman and K Chalkidou (eds.) *Priority setting in health: building institutions for smarter public spending*, (Washington DC: The Centre for Global Development), 15–19, 2012.

Special Lectures and Keynotes

I have given invited talks on philosophy at universities including Oxford, Cambridge, Princeton, Harvard, Penn, Rutgers, LSE, King's College London, Stockholm, Melbourne and Monash. Notable lectures include:

1. Keynote speaker: 'The Precipice: existential risk and the future of humanity', *Effective Altruism Global* (London, 18–20 Oct 2020).
2. Keynote speaker: 'A history of effective altruism', *Effective Altruism Global* (Berkeley, 5–7 Aug 2016).
3. Invited speaker: 'How to save hundreds of lives', *Global Scholars Symposium, Rhodes House* (Oxford, 18 May 2014).
4. Invited speaker: 'How to save hundreds of lives', *TEDx: Cambridge University* (Cambridge, 8 Mar 2014).
5. Invited speaker: On a team with Peter Singer and Dame Margaret Anstee opposing the motion 'This house would help Britain before Burundi', *The Oxford Union* (Oxford, 2 May 2013).
6. Invited speaker: 'Taking charity seriously', *Google* (Cambridge MA, 25 Mar 2013).
7. Keynote speaker: 'Aid works (on average)', *Oxford forum for international development*, (Oxford, 8–10 Feb 2013).

8. Invited speaker: 'How to have ten thousand times the impact: the pivotal importance of cost-effectiveness in delivering aid', *Oxfam Great Britain*. (Oxford, 24 Mar 2011).
9. The King's Lecture in Ethics, 'World Poverty', *King's College London*. (London, 16 Mar 2010).

Selected Media Appearances

My work on the ethics of global poverty and on risks of unprecedented technology has been featured in the media on more than 100 occasions in newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. These include:

1. *Times Higher Education* (UK magazine). 23 Feb 2020. Interviewed about The Precipice. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/focus-existential-threats-philosopher-tells-researchers>
2. *Financial Times* (UK newspaper). 5 Feb 2020. Profiled as part of a list of '10 inspiring philanthropists'. <https://howtospendit.ft.com/art-philanthropy/207871-how-to-give-it-good-list>
3. *Vox* (US news website). 2 Dec 2019. Interviewed for a ten-year retrospective about the Giving What We Can pledge. <https://www.vox.com/2019/9/26/20880334/is-this-the-most-important-century-in-human-history>
4. *The AI Does Not Hate You* (book). 29 Sep 2016. Featured in a book by Tom Chivers about people working to prevent existential risk from unaligned artificial intelligence (pages 50–55, 106–107, 228, 257).
5. *NBC* (US news site). 15 Jul 2018. Article about my paper on the Fermi paradox. <https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/science/are-we-truly-alone-cosmos-new-study-casts-doubt-rise-ncna891286>
6. *The End of the World* (podcast). 9 Jul 2018. Interviewed by Josh Clark about my work on existential risk, featuring in episodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9. <https://www.theendwithjosh.com>
7. *The Week* (UK magazine). 25 Jun 2018. Article about my paper on the Fermi paradox. <http://www.theweek.co.uk/space/94543/humans-probably-only-intelligent-life-in-the-universe>
8. *Quartz* (US news site). 25 Jun 2018. Article about my paper on the Fermi paradox. <https://qz.com/1314111/we-may-have-answered-the-fermi-paradox-we-are-alone-in-the-universe/>
9. *The Economist* (international magazine). 7 Jun 2018. Interviewed about my work in effective altruism. <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/06/07/how-to-do-the-most-good-possible>
10. *80,000 Hours Podcast with Rob Wiblin* (podcast). 6 Sep 2017. A two hour interview about my work on existential risk and longtermism. <https://80000hours.org/podcast/episodes/why-the-long-run-future-matters-more-than-anything-else-and-what-we-should-do-about-it/>
11. *Strangers Drowning* (book). 29 Sep 2016. Featured in a book by Larissa MacFarquhar about people who live altruistic lives (pages 88–95).
12. *The Daily Telegraph* (UK newspaper). 17 Dec 2015. Interviewed about my role at the Future of Humanity Institute. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/wanted-three-boffins-to-save-the-world-from-the-ai-apocalypse/>
13. *The Guardian* (UK newspaper). 22 Sep 2015. Interviewed about effective altruism and Giving What We Can for a feature article.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/22/extreme-altruism-should-you-care-for-strangers-as-much-as-family>

14. *The New Yorker* (international magazine). 29 May 2015. Interviewed about my role at the Future of Humanity Institute.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/11/23/doomsday-invention-artificial-intelligence-nick-bostrom>
15. *Analysis* (BBC Radio 4). 20 Oct 2013. Interviewed for a philosophical perspective on the role of government in the charity sector.
16. *Washington Post* (US newspaper). 31 May 2013. Featured in an article about effective altruism and earning to give.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/05/31/join-wall-street-save-the-world/>
17. *Sky News* (international TV news). 15 Dec 2012. Interviewed about effective charity and the downturn in charitable giving due to the financial crisis.
<http://news.sky.com/story/1025840/charities-fear-for-survival-as-donations-drop>
18. *BBC Breakfast* (BBC 1: UK national TV). 12 Dec 2012. Live interview in studio about charitable giving.
19. *New York Times* (US newspaper). 5 Dec 2012. Column about giving effectively with extensive reference to my work and Giving What We Can.
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/12/05/putting-charities-to-the-test/>
20. *The Guardian* (UK newspaper). 24 Dec 2011. Full page feature article about my involvement with Giving What We Can on the cover of the Saturday section.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2011/dec/24/toby-ord-bernadette-young-joy-of-giving/print>
21. *Wall St Journal* (US newspaper). 28 Nov 2011. Interviewed for an article about Giving What We Can. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204528204577010061347756838.html>
22. *The Independent on Sunday* (UK newspaper). 8 May 2011. Selected for the Independent's 2011 'Happy List: 100 people who make Britain a better and a happier place to live'. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/news/the-100-happy-list-2011--the-100-2280696.html>
23. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (US academic newspaper). 14 Feb 2011. Interviewed for an article about Giving What We Can.
<http://chronicle.com/article/The-Tithe-That-Binds-a/126344/>
24. *The Financial Times* (UK newspaper). 28 Jan 2011. Interviewed for a story about Giving What We Can. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/25a4ecd6-28ef-11e0-aa18-00144feab49a.html#axzz1Cbn1h4Kn>
25. *The Australian* (Australian newspaper). 24 Dec 2010. Interviewed for an article about Giving What We Can. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/academic-cuts-wage-forever-so-others-may-live/story-e6frg6so-1225975604261>
26. *NBC* (US news network). 21 Dec 2010. Featured in an article on giving.
http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/business/Ordinary_people_extraordinary_giving-112282414.html
27. *Daily Politics* (BBC 2 television). 7–8 Dec 2010. Filmed a short piece and did a studio interview for a five minute story on my approach to giving.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11948231>
28. *BBC News* (BBC website). 7 Dec 2010. Interviewed for a story about Giving What We Can. [Was the most popular story for the day on the BBC website]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-11950843>

29. *The Sunday Times* (UK newspaper). 28 Nov 2010. Interviewed for an article on Giving What We Can. http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Society/article462245.ece
30. *The Observer*. 10 Dec 2009. Interviewed for a piece on Giving What We Can. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/jan/03/30-ways-to-improve-your-life>
31. *World News Today* (BBC World News: international TV). 23 Nov 2009. Interviewed for a segment about Giving What We Can.
32. *The Daily Telegraph* (UK newspaper). 21 Nov 2009. Quoted in an article about Giving What We Can. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/jemima-lewis/6624077/Toby-Ords-philosophy-is-one-we-all-could-learn-from.html>
33. *BBC News* (international TV). 14 Nov 2009. Live television interview for a story on Giving What We Can. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8360098.stm>
34. *Mail on Sunday* (UK newspaper). 14 Nov 2009. Interviewed for an article about Giving What We Can. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1228043/I-1m-charity-says-Oxford-don-33-000-salary.html>
35. *Businessweek*. 12 Jan 2009. Quoted in an article regarding my work on low-probability high-stakes risks in relation to the Large Hadron Collider. <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-01-12/atom-smasher-exposes-hole-in-earth-s-defenses-kevin-hassett.html>
36. *New Scientist*. 8 Jan 2009. Interviewed for a feature article about my work on low-probability high-stakes risks in relation to the Large Hadron Collider. <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20126926.800-how-do-we-know-the-lhc-really-is-safe.html?full=true>

Consultation and Policy Advice

1. *Disease Control Priorities Network*. 2012–17. I was a member of the Advisory Committee to the Editors, which met twice a year to share insights on cost-effectiveness and global health.
2. *DFID*. 2016. I advised the Minister for International Development on the importance of cost-effectiveness in development, and what this means for DFID. I also worked with senior government officials to help determine how best to measure impact of academic research that was to be counted as part of the UK's Aid budget
3. *Prime Minister's Office*. 2012–16. I had many meetings at 10 Downing St with senior policy advisors to the Prime Minister. In these, I gave advice on philanthropy in the UK, international aid, how best to replace the Millennium Development Goals, and risks due to emerging technologies.
4. *UK Cabinet Office*. 2014. I advised the Cabinet Office on better ways to assess and compare major risks facing Britain for their annual Risk Register.
5. *UK Government Office for Science*. 2014. I helped with the Government Chief Scientific Advisor's Annual Report for 2014, preparing a chapter on existential risk.
6. *World Health Organisation*. 2012–14. I was part of a working group on providing concrete ethical guidance for how developing countries can best achieve universal health coverage.
7. *DFID*. 2012. I advised the Secretary of State for International Development on the importance of cost-effectiveness in international aid.

8. *Centre for Global Development*. 2012–13. Advice on the moral importance of cost-effectiveness in international aid, including writing a public discussion note.
9. *Oxfam*. 2011–12. Advice on ethics and cost-effectiveness at Oxfam Great Britain.

Awards & Honours

- 2020: Chosen for the *Financial Times* 'How to Give It: the Good List' '10 inspiring philanthropists'
- 2014: Alumni Rising Star Award, University of Melbourne
- 2011: Chosen for the *Independent on Sunday* 'Happy List 2011' '100 people who make Britain a better and a happier place to live' Designed as a response to the *Sunday Times* Rich List
- 2006 – 2009: Senior Scholar, Christ Church College
- 2005: Jowett Arts Prize, Balliol College
- 2003 – 2006: Dervorguilla Arts Scholar, Balliol College
- 2003 – 2006: Clarendon Scholar, University of Oxford

Academic Experience and Activities

- 2012 – now: **Co-founder and Trustee of the Centre for Effective Altruism**
I co-founded the Centre for Effective Altruism, which runs projects such as Giving What We Can, 80,000 Hours, and the EA Global conference as well as stewarding the wider effective altruism movement. I have been a trustee since its establishment.
- 2009 – now: **Founder of Giving What We Can**
I founded *Giving What We Can*, an international society for people committed to donating at least 10% of their income to wherever it can do the most to help others. This involves advocacy for giving much more than is typical, and research into the empirics and ethics of priority setting. I have provided advice on these matters to senior officials at 10 Downing St, DFID, the WHO, and other organisations. We currently have more than 4,000 members (from 43 countries), including prominent academics in moral philosophy and development economics. The society's members have so far donated more than \$100 million to the most cost-effective programs and have committed to give more than \$1.5 billion. My continuing role is as a trustee for the Centre for Effective Altruism.

Teaching Experience

- 2005 – now: **Tutorials, University of Oxford**
Ethics (for Balliol & St Anne's)
Formal Logic (for Corpus Christi)
Mill's Utilitarianism (for St John's)
Introduction to Logic (for Univ & Christ Church)
- 2009 – now: **Lectures, University of Oxford**
I have given one-off lectures on: effective altruism, global poverty, climate change, the ethics of vegetarianism, the value of the future, and the relationship between ethics and economics.
- 2011 – now: **Seminars, University of Oxford**
I co-convened eight-week 2-hour graduate seminars on moral uncertainty, on effective altruism, and on population ethics. I also run

seminars each year for the BPhil class *Practical Ethics*.

2011 – now: **Examining, University of Oxford**

I have been an Assessor for the BPhil (2013–14). I have marked finals scripts for the *Ethics* paper and examination essays for the BPhil subject *History of Philosophy 1800–1950*. I have also been the internal examiner for a DPhil thesis.

2011 – now: **Supervisions, University of Oxford**

Supervisor for a masters thesis in the ethics of career choice.

Vice-supervisor for an MPhil student in Law whose work involves the moral status of animals.

1998 – 2002: **Teaching Assistance, University of Melbourne**

Artificial Intelligence

Logic and Computation

Algorithms and Data Structures

References

Prof. Peter Singer, Ira W DeCamp Professor of Bioethics (Princeton University)

Prof. John Broome, Emeritus White's Professor in Moral Philosophy (University of Oxford)

Prof. Nick Bostrom, Director of the Future of Humanity Institute (University of Oxford)

Prof. Julian Savulescu, Uehiro Chair in Practical Ethics (University of Oxford)