

# The Place of Environmental Ethics in Research and Practice

by what mechanisms and in whose best interests?

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- URL: [www.colinsoskolne.com](http://www.colinsoskolne.com) (*archive of PPT presentations*)

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# Acknowledgement

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**THANK YOU, TESA**

**Taiwan Ecological Stewardship Association**

**AT WHOSE KIND INVITATION I AM VISITING  
TAIWAN**

- *Nancy Tzu-Mei Chen*
- *Yuping Chen*



# Framework for this lecture

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- **The public health context — questions of values and ethics in health sciences and in policy formulation**
- **The Way Forward**



# Lenses through which we apply our training

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- ❑ **Macro-level lens (from 40,000 feet)**
  - *State, country or global-level*
- ❑ **Meso-level lens (from 1,000 feet)**
  - *Regional, city or community-level*
- ❑ **Micro-level lens (on the ground)**
  - *One-on-one-level*

**EVERYTHING IS CONTEXT-RELATED**



**Is science value-neutral?**

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**Or, put another way:**

**Is science value-free?**



# A 1997 published work of relevance

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- **Weed, Douglas L.** Under-determination and incommensurability in contemporary epidemiology.  
*Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*,  
Vol. 7(2); 1997:107-127



## **TWO EXAMPLES – Values-based?**

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- **Alcohol & Breast Cancer**
- **Induced Abortion & Breast Cancer**

# VALUES ... CONTEXT

A10 The Edmonton Journal, Tuesday, March 12, 1996

## Opinion

Publisher: Linda Hughes  
Editor in Chief: Murdoch Davis  
Managing Editor: Sheila Pratt  
Associate Editor: Duart Farquharson



SAME PLANET, DIFFERENT WORLDS.





# Core Values & Mission Statements

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- **They provide the anchor for our activity and collective motivation**  
*... maintain, enhance, and promote health in communities worldwide ... work to protect the public health interest above any other interest ...*



# The **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES** of **BIOETHICS** include:

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## **RESPECT FOR AUTONOMY**

- Requires respect for individual rights and freedoms (Also: **Veracity & Fidelity**)

## **BENEFICENCE**

- Requires doing good / Consider consequences of interventions in people's lives and of findings

## **NON-MALEFICENCE**

- Requires doing no harm

## **JUSTICE**

- Requires fair and equitable allocation (of risks & benefits) to all without discrimination



# The FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES of BIOETHICS include (under Justice):

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## ■ ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLE

- *Who is taking the risks?*
- *Who is deriving the benefits?*

## ■ THE POLLUTER PAYS PRINCIPLE

- *incentive to internalize costs*

## ■ THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

- *act to prevent even if evidence is limited*

## ■ THE SEVENTH GENERATION PRINCIPLE

- *consequences seven generations hence*



# Primary Principles in Public Health

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- **Protect the most vulnerable in society** (e.g., unborn, children, Inuit, frail elderly)
- **Involve communities in our research** (ensure community relevance of our work)
- **Integrity in Public Health**
  - **Serve the public health interest above any other interest**



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# **A natural tension exists among all of the principles**

**We simply cannot perfectly  
satisfy all four principles fully  
on any single issue, but we  
must try to optimize each,  
transparently**



# Why Ethics in the Professions?

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- **Keep ourselves on track and keep our house in order**
- **Socialize our students**
- **Professional accountability**
  - **According to norms of behaviour**
  - ***And, while we do our research***
    - **IN WHOSE BEST INTERESTS?**  
**WHO IS TAKING THE RISKS?**  
**WHO IS DERIVING THE BENEFITS?**



# THE NORMAL RANGE OF HUMAN CONDUCT

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**VERY POOR**



**VERY  
GOOD**

**AND EVERYTHING**

**IN BETWEEN**

**DISHONEST**



**HONEST**

**POWER CORRUPTS. ABSOLUTE POWER  
CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY!**

(Lord Acton's premise)

**NO ONE IS IMMUNE!**



# Prescriptive codes

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*versus*

**Aspirational codes**





# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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- Thou shalt have no other Gods before me**
- Thou shalt not bow down before graven images**
- Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain**
- Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy**
- Honor thy father and thy mother**
- Thou shalt not kill**
- Thou shalt not commit adultery**
- Thou shalt not steal**
- Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor**
- Thou shalt not covet**

Moses, Mount Sinai



# The Buddhist Code of Moral Conduct

by [Vajiranavarorasa](#)

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*The First Precept:*

**Abstaining from taking the lives of living beings**

*The Second Precept:*

**Abstaining from taking that which is not given**

*The Third Precept:*

**Abstaining from sexual misconduct**

*The Fourth Precept:*

**Abstaining from false speech**

*The Fifth Precept:*

**Abstaining from distilled and fermented intoxicants  
which are the occasion for carelessness which also  
includes drugs**



# THE GOLDEN RULE - *adapted*

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- **What is hateful unto you, do not do unto your neighbour**

*Hillel, Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, 31B*

- **Treat others as we would want them to treat us or our loved ones**

*Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12*

- **Treat others justly so that no one would be unjust to you**

*From the Prophet Mohamed's Last Sermon*

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- **Do our level best**
  - **Assert ourselves if we find that someone has done ill**



# **ETHICS GUIDELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EPIDEMIOLOGISTS**

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- I. OBLIGATIONS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**
- II. OBLIGATIONS TO SOCIETY**
- III OBLIGATIONS TO SPONSORS AND EMPLOYERS**
- IV. OBLIGATIONS TO COLLEAGUES**



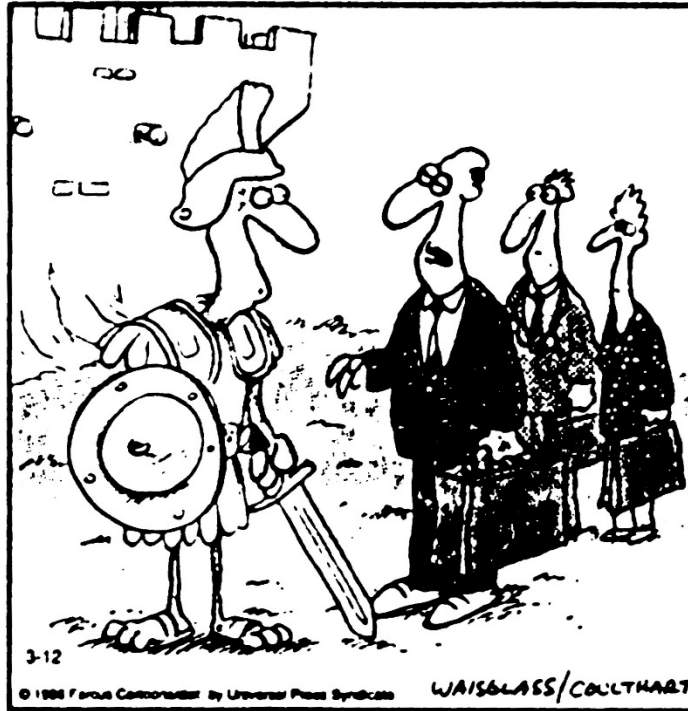
# Oversight and Watchdog Bodies

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- **(Health) Research Ethics Boards**
- **Institutional Review Boards**
- **and the like**

# Farcus

by David Waisglass  
& Gordon Coulthart



"We don't loot and plunder  
like that anymore."



7 December 2006 11:56

## Exxon spends millions to cast doubt on warming

By Andrew Buncombe in Washington and Stephen Castle in Brussels

Published: 07 December 2006

The world's largest energy company is still spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund European organisations that seek to cast doubt on the scientific consensus on global warming and undermine support for legislation to curb emission of greenhouse gases.

Data collated by a Brussels-based watchdog reveals that ExxonMobil has put money into projects that criticise the Kyoto treaty and question the findings of scientific groups. Environmental campaigners say Texas-based Exxon is trying to influence opinion-makers in Brussels because Europe - rather than the US - is the driving force for action on climate change.

"ExxonMobil invests significant amounts in letting think-tanks, seemingly respectable sources, sow doubts about the need for EU governments to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Olivier Hoedeman, of the Corporate Europe Observatory. "Covert funding for climate sceptics is deeply hypocritical because ExxonMobil spends major sums on advertising to present itself as an environmentally responsible company."

It has long been known that the oil giant, which in 2005 recorded an all-time record for quarterly income, has spent millions of dollars to fund climate sceptics. Exactly how much is unknown but some estimates suggest \$19m (£9.7m) since 1998.

In its 2005 report, Mr Hoedeman's group details payments by ExxonMobil to two organisations the International Policy Network, which received \$130,000 and the Centre for the New Europe (CNE), which received \$50,000.

The Observatory suspects Exxon has also funded other groups engaged in undermining legislation. Its report said: "There is mounting evidence that many EU-focused think-tanks are heavily funded by corporations and this raises serious concerns about their agenda and their independence." The two groups cited in the report have long been accused of denying climate change. Greenpeace's ExxonSecret website notes that in 2004 the network issued a press release criticising the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, saying it had "intentionally exaggerated its estimates of temperature increases by using highly implausible scenarios of future growth in emissions of greenhouse gases".

Greenpeace also lists a 2004 posting on CNE's website which claimed: "The Kyoto Protocol is failing because it is ineffective, costly, and unfair. It is also 'scientifically flawed'."

Last year The Independent revealed how a US-based lobbying group which received substantial funding from Exxon was seeking to develop a Europe-wide network of think-tanks, journalists and major businesses to act against legislation to counter climate change. The organisation claimed its approaches had been flatly rejected.

Kert Davies of Greenpeace said: "Europe is leading the world right now in terms of climate policy. Exxon know that if they can [enlist] lobbyists they may be able to slow things down. That is the tactic right now."

Such is the concern about ExxonMobil that earlier this year the Royal Society, considered Britain's leading scientific academy, wrote to it asking that it stop funding groups that have "misrepresented the science of climate change by outright denial of the evidence".

Elen Bisnath, a network spokeswoman, confirmed that the organisation had accepted \$130,000 from the oil company. She said: "We are an independent think-tank and we are contributing to the scientific debate on climate change."



# Virtue Ethics ...

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- **Wisdom is knowing what to do next; virtue is doing it.** *David Star Jordan*
- **What is right is often forgotten by what is convenient.** *Bodie Thoene*
- **It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.** *Mark Twain*





# Character vs. Actions

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**Virtues do not replace ethical rules. Rather, an account of professional ethics is more complete if virtuous traits of character are identified, such as:**



# VIRTUES OF PROFESSIONALS

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- **Humility** – Respect the input and opinions of others /Self-effacement
- **Fidelity** – Honour one's commitments /Promote trust
- **Justice** – Act fairly
- **Patience** – Take time to hear others' viewpoints
- **Industry** – Do your level best /Excel
- **Veracity** – Tell the truth /Be honest
- **Compassion** – Empathize
- **Integrity** – Demonstrate good moral character
- **Serve** – Protect the most vulnerable /Serve the public interest
- **Prudence** – Err on the side of caution /Demonstrate good judgment



# The Earth Charter

A **soft law** instrument ... to save us from ourselves

## Preamble

- *Respect and care for the community of life*
- *Ecological integrity*
- *Social and economic justice*
- *Democracy, non-violence, and peace*

## The Way Forward

**<http://www.earthcharter.org/>**

Accessible in ~70 different languages including Chinese:

**[http://earthcharter.org/invent/images/uploads/echarter\\_chinese.pdf](http://earthcharter.org/invent/images/uploads/echarter_chinese.pdf)**



# *I. Respect and care for the community of life*

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- 1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.**
- 2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.**
- 3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.**
- 4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.**



## ***II. Ecological Integrity***

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- 5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.**
- 6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.**
- 7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.**
- 8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.**



### ***III. Social and Economic Justice***

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- 9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.**
- 10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.**
- 11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.**
- 12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.**



## *IV. Democracy, Non-Violence and Peace*

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- 13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.**
- 14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.**
- 15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.**
- 16. Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.**



# The Earth Charter

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- **Enabling of MDGs attainment; and now SDGs** <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- **Linkages among health, poverty, and conservation**
- **Inter-dependencies are recognized**





# *Rights-Based Arguments in Support of The Earth Charter*

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- **The Earth Charter is the only document that:**
  - *Supports Ecological Integrity rights*
  - *Has Biocentrism at its core*
  - *Integrates the dependence of human health on Ecological Integrity, and hence “the right to life” for present and future generations*
  - *Extends a right to precaution in policy-making (benefits to whom? risks to whom?)*
  - *Explicitly defends future generations*

*Fully addresses Buddhist and other religions’ concerns too*



# The Earth Charter

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- **Encourages interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to addressing complex social policy questions that also integrate health**
- **<http://www.earthcharter.org/files/charter/charter.pdf>**



# The Earth Charter and Environmental Epidemiology

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- **Prevention in focus –**

**for the support of *all* life and its  
inter-dependence**

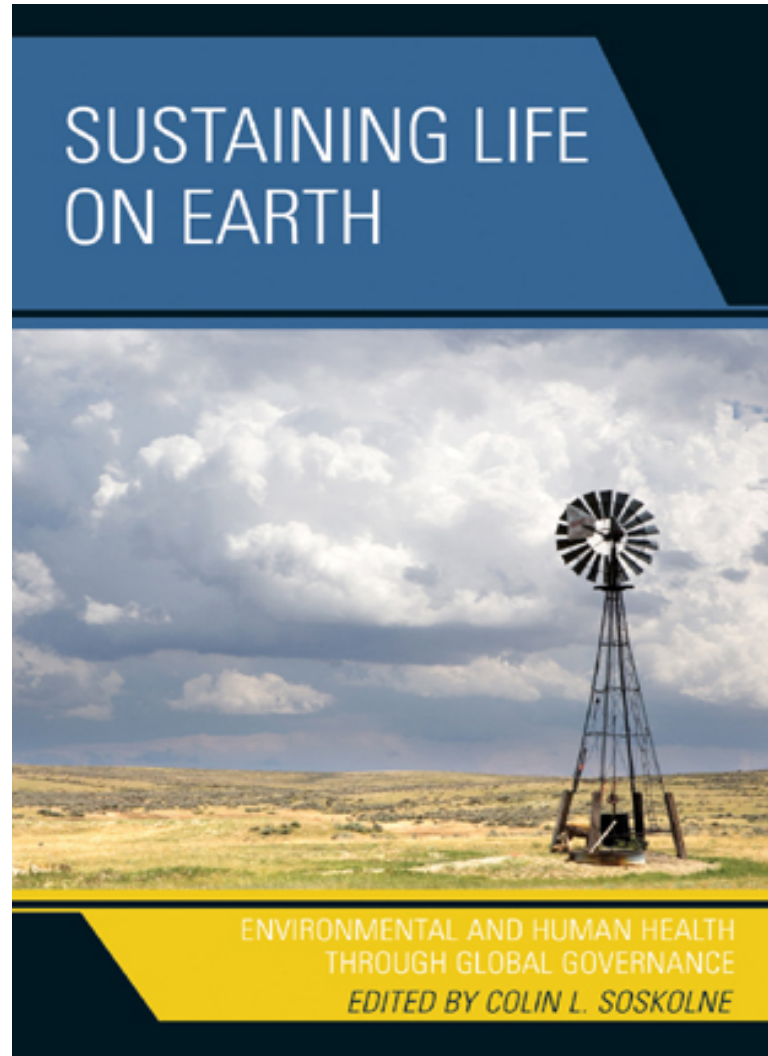


# Transdisciplinarity

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- *Transdisciplinary approaches to Human Health are approaches that integrate the natural, social and health sciences in a humanities context, and in so doing transcend each of their traditional boundaries. Emergent concepts and methods are the hallmark of the transdisciplinary effort.*

# Lexington Books (2008)





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# Discussion