

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. The Lindy Effect. *Under review*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2308.09045>
2. Dissolving the Fermi Paradox (co-authored with Anders Sandberg, and Eric Drexler). *Under review*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1806.02404>
3. Shaping humanity's longterm trajectory. Forthcoming. In Barrett et al (eds.) *Essays on Longtermism*, (Oxford: OUP).
4. The edges of our universe. 2021. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2104.01191>
5. What should we agree on about the repugnant conclusion? (co-authored with Stéphane Zuber et al.), *Utilitas*, 2021. doi:10.1017/S095382082100011X
6. Quality adjusted life years based on health and consumption: a summary wellbeing measure for cross-sectoral economic evaluation (co-authored with Richard Cookson, Ieva Skarda, Owen Cotton-Barratt, Matthew Adler, and Miqdad Asaria), *Health Economics* 30:70–85, 2021.
7. Statistical normalization methods in interpersonal and intertheoretic comparisons (co-authored with Will MacAskill and Owen Cotton-Barratt). Forthcoming in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 2020.
8. The moral imperative towards cost-effectiveness in global health. Reprinted in Greaves and Pummer, eds. *Effective Altruism: Philosophical Issues*, (Oxford: OUP), 29–36, 2019.
9. 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
10. 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.
11. Why maximize expected choice-worthiness? (co-authored with William MacAskill). *Noûs* 00:00 1–27, 2018. doi:10.1111/nous.12264
12. Symmetric decomposition of asymmetric games (co-authored with Karl Tuyls et al). *Scientific Reports* 8 1015, 2018. DOI:10.1038/s41598-018-19194-4
13. 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.
14. Moral uncertainty about population axiology (co-authored with Hilary Greaves). *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 12 135–67, 2017.
15. Moral Trade. *Ethics* 126 118–38, 2015.
16. A new counterexample to prioritarianism. *Utilitas* 27 298–302, 2015.
17. 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.
18. Overpopulation or underpopulation?. In I Goldin (ed.) *Is the planet full?*, (Oxford:

OUP), 46–60, 2014.

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. The scourge: moral implications of natural embryo loss. *American Journal of Bioethics* 8(7) 12–19, 2008.
24. The reversal test: eliminating status quo bias in applied ethics (co-authored with Nick Bostrom). *Ethics* 116 656–679, 2006.
25. The many forms of hypercomputation. *Journal of Applied Mathematics and Computation* 178 142–153, 2006.
26. The diagonal method and hypercomputation (co-authored with Tien Kieu). *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 56 147–156, 2005.

Policy Reports

27. *Future Proof: the opportunity to transform the UK's resilience to extreme risks* (co-authored with Angus Mercer and Sophie Dannreuther). The Centre for Long-Term Resilience. 2021.
28. Proposal for a new 'three lines of defence' approach to UK risk management. Extreme risks working paper 2021-1, Future of Humanity Institute. 2021.
29. Existential risks to humanity. In P Conceicao (ed.) *Human Development Report 2020*. (New York: The United Nations Development Programme), 106–11. 2020.
30. 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.
31. *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.
32. *Unprecedented technological risks* (co-authored with Nick Beckstead, Nick Bostrom, Niel Bowerman, Owen Cotton-Barratt, and William MacAskill). Future of Humanity Institute. 2014.
33. The moral imperative towards cost-effectiveness in global health. (Washington DC: The Centre for Global Development). 2013.
www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1427016.
34. 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. Opening Keynote. *Effective Altruism Global: Bay Area* (25 Feb 2023).
2. Keynote. *Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs Strategy Day* (25 Jan 2022).
3. Inaugural Lecture. *Hong Kong Catastrophic Risk Centre* (20 Jan 2022).
4. The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity. *Congresso Futuro* (17 Jan 2022).
5. The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity. *How the Light Gets In* (29 May 2021).
6. Safeguarding humanity. *Intelligence Squared* (4 Mar 2021).
7. How can we face the risks ahead? *Bristol Festival of Ideas* (20 Nov 2020).
8. Could future pandemics pose a threat to humanity's entire future? *Parliament of Victoria* (online, 9 Oct 2020).
9. The Precipice. *All Party Parliamentary Group for Future Generations, UK Parliament* (27 Jul 2020).
10. The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity. *Cambridge Union* (Cambridge, 11 Mar 2020).
11. Keynote speaker: 'The Precipice: existential risk and the future of humanity', *Effective Altruism Global* (London, 18–20 Oct 2020).
12. Keynote speaker: 'A history of effective altruism', *Effective Altruism Global* (Berkeley, 5–7 Aug 2016).
13. 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).
14. Keynote speaker: 'Aid works (on average)', *Oxford forum for international development*, (Oxford, 8–10 Feb 2013).
15. 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 200 occasions in newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. These include:

1. *The Today Programme* (BBC Radio 4: UK radio). 26 Jan 2023. Interviewed about existential risk from AI.
2. *TIME*. 10 Aug 2022. Article featuring my work on effective altruism. <https://time.com/6204627/effective-altruism-longtermism-william-macaskill-interview/>
3. *New York Review of Books*. 25 Feb 2021. Review of my book, *The Precipice*. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2021/02/25/power-catastrophic-thinking-toby-ord-precipice/>
4. *The New Yorker*. 21 Nov 2020. Profile on me and my work on existential risk. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/how-close-is-humanity-to-the-edge>

5. *LA Review of Books*. 9 May 2020. Review of my book, *The Precipice*.
<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/in-optimism-lies-urgency-toby-ord-future-humanity/>
6. *Science*. 8 May 2020. Review of my book, *The Precipice*.
<https://blogs.sciencemag.org/books/2020/05/04/the-precipice/>
7. *BBC Newshour* (UK national TV). 3 May 2020. Interview about existential risk.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w172x2yn9jg47h6>
8. *El Mundo* (Spanish newspaper). 1 May 2020. Feature article about my work.
<https://www.elmundo.es/papel/futuro/2020/05/02/5eac204c21efa090398b4690.html>
9. *Sky News*. 1 May 2020. Interview on existential risk.
10. *The Observer*. 26 Apr 2020. Feature on my work on existential risk.
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/apr/26/what-if-covid-19-isnt-our-biggest-threat>
11. *The Ezra Klein Show*. 9 Apr 2020. Interview about existential risk.
12. *The New Yorker*. 6 Apr 2020. Review of my book, *The Precipice*.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/06/the-precipice-the-magical-language-of-others-the-glass-hotel-and-then-the-fish-swallowed-him>
13. *Axios* (US news website). 26 Mar 2020. Feature on me and my work.
<https://www.axios.com/toby-ord-the-precipice-coronavirus-existential-risk-8751aaca-a3e1-4ee4-95f8-369def7c7588.html>
14. *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australian newspaper). 20 Mar 2020. Review of my book, *The Precipice*. <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/the-future-of-humanity-has-reached-a-tipping-point-argues-new-book-20200318-p54bdq.html>
15. *The Financial Times* (UK newspaper). 19 Mar 2020. Review of my book, *The Precipice*. <https://www.ft.com/content/0ce83954-6851-11ea-a6ac-9122541af204>
16. *The Sunday Times* (UK newspaper). 8 Mar 2020. Review of my book, *The Precipice*.
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-precipice-by-toby-ord-review-how-civilisation-could-end-l88ssndzk>
17. *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>
18. *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>
19. *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/>
20. *Prospect Magazine* (international magazine). 16 Jul 2015. Mentioned in article about effective altruism. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/the-rise-of-the-rational-givers>
21. *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/>
22. *BBC Breakfast* (BBC 1: UK national TV). 12 Dec 2012. Live interview in studio about charitable giving.

23. *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/>
24. *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>
25. *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
26. *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>
27. *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>
28. *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>

Consultation and Policy Advice

1. *DeepMind*. 2011 – now. Advised on the ethics and safety of AI.
2. *UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office*. 2023 – now. Member of advisory panel on AI.
3. *OECD*. 2023 – now. Member of advisory panel on AI.
4. *United Nations*. 2022. Spoke at the General Assembly for the thematic consultation on Our Common Agenda (4 Feb) and also for the Expert-level briefing on the Declaration on Future Generations (30 Jun).
5. *OECD*. 2022. Spoke at Ambassadors Meeting on longtermism and Global Existential Risks.
6. *UK Cabinet Office*. 2020–23. Advised on how the UK could improve its management of catastrophic risk.
7. *United Nations*. 2021. Advised the Secretary General’s Office on how the UN can best represent the rights and interests of future generations.
8. *UK Civil Service*. 2021. Advised incoming members of the Senior Leaders Scheme on what the UK could do about existential risk.
9. *Royal Academy of Engineering*. 2021. Advised on improvements to the UK government’s handling of risk.
10. *Joint Committee for National Security Strategy*. 2021. Advised on the UK’s handling of extreme risk, especially biorisk.
11. *UK Parliament*. 2021. Advised the Philosophy and Culture of Aid Inquiry on aid effectiveness.
12. *US Senate*. 2021. Advised a Senator’s office on policy around existential risk.
13. *Prime Minister’s Office*. 2020. Advised on what the UK government could do to manage extreme risks.
14. *House of Lords*. 2020. Advised the Select Committee on Risk Assessment and Risk Planning on how the UK could improve its management of catastrophic risk, and

submitted evidence to their review.

15. *Parliament of Victoria*. 2020. Advised members of the state parliament of Victoria (Australia) about pandemics and existential risk.
16. *UK Parliament*. 2020. Advised members of both houses of parliament about the importance of existential risk, and what we can do about it.
17. *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.
18. *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
19. *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.
20. *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.
21. *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.
22. *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.
23. *DFID*. 2012. I advised the Secretary of State for International Development on the importance of cost-effectiveness in international aid.
24. *Centre for Global Development*. 2012–13. Advice on the moral importance of cost-effectiveness in international aid, including writing a public discussion note.

Awards & Honours

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| 2020: | The Precipice was chosen by <i>WIRED</i> as one of their 'Best science and tech books of 2020' |
| 2020: | The Precipice was featured as book of the week by Fareed Zakaria (<i>CNN</i>) |
| 2020: | Chosen for the <i>Financial Times</i> 'How to Give It: the Good List' '10 inspiring philanthropists' |
| 2014: | Alumni Rising Star Award, University of Melbourne |
| 2011: | Chosen for the <i>Independent on Sunday</i> 'Happy List 2011' '100 people who make Britain a better and a happier place to live' Designed as a response to the <i>Sunday Times</i> 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 – 2022: **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 – 2022: 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)