"Freedom and Responsibility - Sustainable Prosperity through a Capabilities Lens"[1]

Ingrid Robeyns[2]

Are we at liberty to live our lives completely as we wish? Or are there constraints we have to be aware of as we want to avoid harming others and respect principles of ecological justice? And are lifestyles that embrace basic principles of ecological justice always dull and simple lives, where many enjoyable things are beyond reach, and which therefore entail a regress in our quality of life? Or is there a possibility to live lives that are at the same time sustainable and just, and that also allow us to be happy and flourishing?

This set of questions is one of the most central in the task of thinking about sustainable prosperity. To many people's minds there is an inevitable trade-off between living ecologically sustainable on the one hand and living with higher levels of wellbeing on the other. If that trade-off is a real one, then those striving towards a more sustainable future are facing an uphill task, since ecological sustainability will only be possible by lowering people's well-being—something most people have so far been unwilling to do. But is this trade-off real or is it spurious? Is it possible to lead good lives that are simultaneously just and ecologically sustainable?

That's the question I seek to answer in this essay. I will argue that it is possible to live good lives that are also just and ecologically sustainable, if we understand well-being and human flourishing in terms of human capabilities (while giving more weight to the non-material capabilities), and if we are willing to take the necessary steps to change our behaviour and institutions to overcome moral disengagement with our current lifestyles, which are unjust and.

The argument goes as follows: according to the capability approach, the good life is not about having a set of consumer goods, but rather about having access to a set of valuable capabilities, which are freedoms to undertake valuable activities (e.g. holding a decent job, being able to engage in politics, being able to spend time in unspoilt nature) or freedoms to enjoy certain states of being (being healthy, being respected for one's religious affiliation or sexual orientation, being able to live in a loving family and a supportive social network. Some capabilities are closely related to what we normally understand as a person's standard of living, for example having good-enough food, clothing and shelter; another example is mobility, that is access to means of

[2] Ingrid Robeyns is Professor of Ethics of Institutions at Utrecht University. She is the chair of the Chamber Ethics/Practical Philosophy of the Dutch Research School of Philosophy (OZSW). Until early 2014 she was a professor of Practical Philosophy at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and Director of the OZSW

transportation. But other capabilities have to do with our social interactions and the nonmaterial dimensions of our quality of life, such as whether we are active and involved in our neighbourhood, a church, or a voluntary organisation, and how much time we spend with friends and family members. If we shift the way we are thinking about well-being towards those non-material capabilities and if we think about how we can realise the same capabilities with smaller ecological footprints, then we can still enjoy equal or even higher levels of well-being, while putting less pressure on ecological resources and ecosystems.

But before I describe the opportunity that the capability approach offers for helping us to think about lives that are good, just, and sustainable, we first need to consider how societies currently frame discussions on lifestyles, and why our lifestyles inevitably invoke issues of justice.

Freedom and the Harm Principle

Modern liberal societies are organised around the principle that citizens should be able to enjoy freedom to decide on how to live their own lives. Of course, there are some collective rules that we need to respect in order to make livingtogether possible and peaceful. For example, as long as the laws are just, we need to respect the law. Or we should not cause injury to a person or harm the interests to which they have rights, such as their legitimately acquired property. The 'harm principle', stating that our liberties may be restricted only when we cause harm to others, dates back at least to John Stuart Mill, and has been widely embraced by liberal democracies. It would also entail that we do not treat others unfairly, e.g. by discriminating against members of some groups. These are constraints that we accept on our own decision-making; but the general view is that even within those constraints, there is still a very large range of choices that people can make for themselves, and where others shouldn't interfere.

Our lifestyle is one of those things that is generally taken to be a matter of private choice. The choice of your profession; whether you own a large, energy-inefficient house or try to make your house energy-neutral; whether you eat vegan, vegetarian or meat; what modes of transport you use; whether you go on holiday by plane or by train—those things are generally taken to be a matter of private choice that are not other people's business. As long as you can and are willing to pay the cost of a particular lifestyle choice, and as long as you do not harm another person, you should be free to pursue your own plans.

Unfortunately, this standard common-sense view is only tenable if we fully appreciate how much harm we are nonintentionally inflicting upon others by living our lives the way we currently do. Hence, the standard common-sense view that we can make our own decisions fully individually is not applicable in most cases which concern the use of ecological resources. Our lifestyles are and should be a matter of collective concern, and we should not be entirely free to pursue our lives as we wish. The reason for this moral claim is the following. Take the average lifestyle of a person living in Europe, the US, Canada or another affluent post-industrialised country ('rich

countries', for short). Those lifestyles are based on an over-appropriation of natural resources and ecosystem services. For example, we are exhausting the supply of a range of minerals, and we are overusing the capacity of the atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gases. We are also drastically decreasing the biodiversity of the Earth, by acting in ways that lead to the extinction of some animal species. These are well-known facts. Yet what is much less acknowledged is that these actions are not just merely unfortunate, sad, or bad, but rather that these actions are unjust.

Taking More Than One's Fair Share

There is a very large literature in philosophical ethics arguing why this is the case; let me focus on one line of argumentation to show why the average lifestyles in rich countries are unjust, which is that well-off people are taking more than their fair share of scarce natural resources. There is only one planet, and there is no clear reason why anyone should be entitled to a larger share of natural resources than any-one else. The Earth's natural resources and the valuable ecosystems (such as the oceans full with fish and the atmosphere which can absorb our greenhouse gasses) are an environmental 'commons': they belong to all human beings in common, and hence access to this common and use of the services it offers to the human species, should be shared. No-one has done anything special that gives them a right to the natural resources of the Earth (none of us has created the Earth, for example, or could pose a claim based on 'effort' or 'desert' when it concerns greenhouse gas emissions). Yet we all have a vital interest in being able to use those environmental commons, since they are needed for the production of many material resources that can drastically improve our quality of life, such as electricity, houses, roads, food, and many, many more. Hence, all people currently alive, as well as the people who will be alive in the future, all have prima facie an equal moral right to use those natural resources.

This should be the default position: it is only when an individual or group can convincingly show that they need more natural resources to lead the same quality of life, and that this need for additional natural resources is something for which they cannot be held accountable, that one could consider the view that some persons or some groups should be entitled to more natural resources than others. This default rule requires more discussion, since there will likely be disagreement about what counts as an exception to the rule. For the time being we bracket the discussion on what the exceptions to the rule of equal right to natural resources are, and first continue with the general outline of the analysis of our main question.

Natural resources are scarce, and this scarcity will intensify in the next decades due to global population growth, and also because lifting the global poor out of poverty will require more commodities that will almost inevitably increase their use of natural resources. Right now the global poor are emitting very low amounts of greenhouse gases—simply because they don't have access to electricity, can't afford to eat meat, and don't have access to cars, trains, let alone planes. The same holds for ecosystem services – such as the fishes that the oceans provide us, or the capacity of the atmosphere to absorb our emission of greenhouse gasses. There, too, scarcity increases because we are using more of those ecosystem services than the rate at which those ecosystems can regenerate themselves.

In order to make this overuse of natural resources vivid, let us make this more concrete by calculating what this equal share would be, for the case of greenhouse gas emissions. The 'carbon budget' is the remaining amount of greenhouse gas emissions that can be made if we do not want the accumulated emissions in the atmosphere to give rise to a temperature increase on Earth of more than 2 degrees Celsius—what is commonly agreed to be the upper limit above which there is a significant risk of a dangerous form of climate change. According to the calculations of Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty, if we divide that carbon budget among all the people who will be alive between now and 2100, we each have an annual entitlement to emit maximally 1.2 ton CO_2-Equivalent emissions. Currently, the inhabitants of North America emit on average 20 ton; in Europe 9 ton. A person who belongs to the 2 billion global poor emits considerable less than 1 ton. So, inhabitants of rich countries are emitting massively more greenhouse gasses than what we could consider their 'fair share' to be. This is caused by our lifestyles—our energy consumption, the use of airplanes, all the material stuff we buy, our consumption of meat and foods that are flown in from far away, and so forth. Hence, lifestyles that are based on a large share of natural resources are unjust towards those other humans (living now or in the future) who want and need their fair share of natural resources.

Denying Our Responsibilities

To most of us, the claim that we are taking more than our fair share is a conclusion that we are unwilling to accept. This denial can be explained with several mechanisms.

The first mechanism is our common-sense view of what it means to cause harm. We tend to believe that if we do not directly and visibly harm someone else (e.g. assault, theft), and if we compensate for unintentional harm (e.g. traffic accidents), that we are under no strong moral obligation to adapt our actions and lifestyles. The above arguments, that we are taking an unfair share, clash with our self-image as responsible, hardworking and honest citizens who are not involved in unfair lifestyles and the perpetuation of injustices. Moreover, it is hard for us to see that one could do harm to others without having any intention to do so. Since none of us has the intention to cause harm, we find the idea that we may actually be doing so implausible, perhaps even insulting.

The second mechanism is that we very quickly realise that, if we were to accept the above reasoning, we will have to change our lifestyles dramatically, and we are unwilling to give up on our current habits, especially the luxuries that we enjoy. So we directly employ psychological mechanisms to deny that there is an issue of moral responsibility at work here—we even refuse to seriously engage with the question, or else we make some minor adjustment, and pat ourselves on the back.

A third mechanism explaining why we deny our responsibilities is a lack of basic knowledge. Many citizens, especially in areas where entire populations only watch news channels that spread false information and have pro-unregulated capitalist biases, are being helped to stay in denial of the basic facts as they have been studied in painstaking detail by, for example, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). There is also a tendency to know less of those things one hasn't

seen or experienced— and much of the harms done by ecologically unsustainable lifestyles is not visible to the eye.

A fourth mechanism is moral disengagement, which is a process by which people reconstruct their normative assessment of the unfair and harmful effects of their ecologically unsustainably lifestyles in order to evade their moral responsibility. So we may say that it makes no sense to travel from Utrecht to London by train (which is longer and more expensive than flying), because the airplane will fly anyway and hence the greenhouse gases will be emitted anyway, independent of how we choose to travel. As individuals—we tell ourselves—we are powerless to make any significant change. Or we may tell ourselves that surely science will find a solution for carbon storage before we have exhausted the remaining carbon budget, and that hence we shouldn't worry about driving our car. Or we could tell ourselves that we have only a duty to roll back our ecological impact if others do so too, and since others don't, we also don't have to. Or we could tell ourselves that only governments have the power to make an effective change, so we should not feel morally obliged to take action as long as our governments are not implementing legislation coercing or strongly incentivising us to do so.

The result of these mechanisms is that we continue to massively lead lives that are ecologically unsustainable. We are unwilling to change our lifestyles because we like meat and don't like lentils; or because we enjoy our holidays in the Caribbean and don't want to swap those for holiday destinations that can be reached by train; or because we don't want to save the money needed to insulate our house or to put solar panels on its roof. In other words, many of us are unwilling to make our lifestyles sustainable since it would lower our standard of living. This is not to deny that for a significant section of the population, there is no scope in their budget to make changes to their lifestyles which require investments, such as buying an electric car rather than a second hand car that drives on fosile fuel; or there is no scope to invest in solar panels. But some ecology-damaging types of consumption, such as eating meat or flying, are no longer only habits of the financially well-off, but have become elements of the lifestyles that have become the norm of vast sections of the population in rich societies. What are we to think of this? How can we change our behaviour so that we safeguard the ecological qualities of the Earth for future generations, and stop taking more than our fair share and violate the human rights of others? Is there a way to motivate us to change our lifestyles so as to make them ecologically sustainable, and can that be done in a way without sacrificing other important values such as our basic liberties, and in a way that doesn't lower our quality of life?

Why Hammering Down the Moral Truth is of Little Use

Although the philosophical literature on climate ethics and environmental justice overwhelmingly supports the analysis that our current ecologically unsustainable lifestyles are morally impermissible, it does not follow that hammering down that moral truth will lead to the changes that are needed. Philosophers explaining why they believe that it is true that our current ecological unsustainable lifestyles are unfair and violating human rights, are unlikely to change many people's lifestyles. In order to allow people to change their lifestyles such as to move towards a more sustainable quality of life, they have to be motivated, they have to be given hope,

they have to be seduced or playfully invited to change their habits. Arguing in explicitly normative language, using language of justice and obligations, often tends to alienate large groups of people, rather than motivating them to take steps into the right direction. Philosophy may in this respect be of limited help, since much of academic philosophy is about finding out what we should believe and what truths (if any) there are, but is often silent on what should follow in terms of behavioural or institutional change.

For example, it is unlikely that a governmental agency merely conveying to people that eating meat is equivalent to a massive use of water and greenhouse gas-emissions, is going to significantly change their eating habits. Nevertheless, the government has important levers at its disposal, especially in the area of taxation (to internalise the negative ecological externalities). Yet some of those can only effectively be done at an international level, such as ending the unjust and harmful (direct and indirect) subsidies that the fossil fuel industry enjoys, which is a significant brake on the energy transition.

Another important factor is that proposals for effective change have to be based on an understanding of people as social and moral beings. We are more likely to change our behaviour if we act in groups, or if we perceive that others approve or disapprove of our behaviour. Social norms are a very important mechanism that steers human behaviour. Social norms are expectations which we impose on each-other, whereby the violation of that norm leads to strong forms of disapproval; this triggers shame and other forms of unpleasant emotions in the person violating the norms, which explains why most people stick to social norms. Many forms of ecologically unsustainable behaviour are currently not subject to social norms. There is no widespread social disapproval of the consumption of meat, the excessive use of cars (or fuel-inefficient cars), or flying by airplanes. We regard a family's investment in solar panels on the roof of their house as a private decision, not a decision that affects all of us. But norms can change. Take public attitudes towards the desirability of vegetarian food. In the recent past, people requesting vegetarian (let alone vegan) meals were often seen as 'odd' or 'eccentric'. There are still public places where vegetarian meals are not available, yet societal attitudes towards vegetarianism and veganism are shifting quite dramatically. It is quite possible that a few generations down the line will find it astonishing that our generations felt that eating meat was ethically unproblematic—just like, perhaps, a few generations before us felt that it was OK for parents to smoke in a room where children were present, or even teachers smoking in class.

So what is the upshot? Our behaviour is in many ways more responsive to systems of reward and punishments, and social expectations and practices, than to reasoning. Of course, in order for the creation of certain incentives to be justified, we must have a plausible account for why it is morally right to try to steer our behaviour into a certain direction. Moral philosophy can help us in answering that question, for example by helping us to think through the question what fairness and justice entails, or introducing basic moral standards such as human rights. That is the first role moral philosophy can play in the transition to sustainable lifestyles.

Changing Our Notion of Prosperity

Yet there is a second role for philosophy in answering the set of questions that were posed at the beginning of this essay. In the balancing that we are doing between living more ecologically

sustainable lives, and not lowering one's welfare levels, we are using an implicit set of notions about well-being, the quality of life, welfare and the living standard. If we are more clear in how we understand these concepts, and what interpretation or specification we give to those concepts (this is what philosophers call the spelling out of conceptions), then we can revisit the alleged trade-off, which makes us so resistant to changing our lifestyles into a more ecologically sustainable direction.

Let us use the following set of distinctions: the standard of living refers to the material side of our well-being: it is the level of material goods that we can enjoy. Hence the standard of living reflects what set of housing, food, cloths, consumer goods, transport, and other material goods our disposable income can buy. If we add non-material dimensions, we get the broader notion of well-being or quality of life. This includes elements such as our mental and physical health, the amount of stress we experience, the quality of our relationships, the opportunity we have to enjoy our neighbourhood and the surrounding environment, opportunities for aesthetic pleasure (including nature), and so forth.

How can moral philosophy help us to address the question which I set out at the beginning, namely the question whether it is possible to lead good lives that are simultaneously just and ecologically sustainable? The key to an affirmative answer to this question may well lie in a particular philosophical theory to well-being, called the capability approach. This view of well-being and freedom has been proposed around 1980 by the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen. He argued that when thinking about the quality of a person's life, we should ask whether that person can undertake activities as well as enjoy states of beings that are, upon reflection, considered valuable. Sen calls these real options to be and to do our capabilities. They are real options or real opportunities, related to those aspects of our lives that focus on our state of being, and on what we can effectively do. If we focus not on the option or opportunity but on the outcome or realisation, we call them functionings. Hence, the real opportunity to live in a decent house would be a capability; effectively living in a good house would be a functioning.

Sen argues that policy making and the design of social institutions should primarily focus on capabilities, since we want to grant people the freedom to make their own choices. Hence we should have a genuine opportunity to higher education, but no-one should be coerced, feel forced, or be told they should pursue higher education. There are various good reasons why this may not be the best choice for some persons, for example because they have more talents to succeed as a craftsman or an artisan, or because they feel compelled to continue the work on the farm on which they grew up.

An important strength of the capability approach and the one that is key in understanding how we can lead better lives which are at the same time just and ecologically sustainable, is that the capability approach brings the material and nonmaterial dimensions of the quality of life together. It has the tools to stop the vicious circle in present-day capitalist consumer societies to narrow down well-being to the material side of life. It invites us to ask what makes our lives go better, rather than simply being carried away by a materialistic culture which is ecologically

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unsustainable. This will require reflection, and an understanding of the mechanisms at work for why most of us always want more in material terms.

The Role of Positional Goods and Symbolic Goods

There are many reasons and mechanisms why many people always want more material goods; let us focus here on two important reasons. Those reasons will illustrate what the capability approach can do to help us address the tension which was earlier described, but will also show that it isn't enough to simply reconceptualise prosperity through a capabilities lens, but rather that additional social transformations are needed.

The first issue is that many 'non-material capabilities' which are related to existential needs or have social or identityconferring functions, do have a material basis. Consumer goods are not merely functional, but instead are the symbolic resources for important 'non-material' functionings—especially psychological and social functionings, such as one's place in a web of social relationships. If those consumer goods have a significant ecological footprint, then it will only be possible to persuade citizens to give up on those consumer goods if there are alternative ways to realise the same capabilities. This will most likely require societal transformations: we will have to derive the same symbolic values that enable those social and psychological functionings in an ecologically friendly way.

Secondly, many material goods are so-called 'positional goods'—their value depends on the distribution of that good in society. For example, if everyone drives a small car, then I don't feel a need to drive a larger car, since it is neither dangerous to drive a small car (my small car will not be crashed when hit by another small car) and the difference can also not signal social status. But if other people are driving bigger cars, then this will be taken to signal their higher social status, and also make it less safe for us to drive a smaller car—hence we will adapt our preferences and also want a larger car.

Most capabilities are not positional: if I can enjoy a hike in nature, it doesn't matter to me whether or not you are also hiking that week. If you are in good health, it doesn't affect how I feel about my poor health. If you are able to warm up your house to a comfortable temperature, that is no reason for me to want to heat up my house warmer than yours. So when thinking about our well-being or the quality of our lives, we should focus on functionings and capabilities, rather than on the material stuff that makes up the standard of living. It doesn't follow that material stuff is not important, but it is only important to the extent that it is a necessary resource for the generation of capabilities.

An Ecologically Sustainable Lifestyle: "More Time, Less Work"

If we move to a more ecologically sustainable lifestyle, we will discover that we will have to give up, or at least drastically reduce, some of aspects of our standard of living. For example, as long as there is no technology that neutralises the harmful effects of greenhouse gasses, or as long as there is no technology that makes it possible for large aircrafts to fly on renewable energy, we will have to drastically reduce the number of flights we can make. One return flight London-

San Francisco is roughly equivalent to 1,3 tonnes CO2-equivalent greenhouse gas emissions—which, as follows from the calculations of our fair shares by Chancel and Piketty mentioned earlier, is the same as the total emissions a person can make in one year for food, housing, energy, car use and everything else, if we were to divide the remaining emission budget equally among all. If we agree that 1,3 ton GHG-emissions per year is our fair share, we will have to be extremely selective on what we will 'spend' those emissions. In the current economic system with its food industry, a vegan diet equals 1,06 ton CO2-Equivalent greenhouse gas emissions, rising to 1,4 ton for vegetarians and 2,63 ton for those eating on average 100 gram of meat a day. Under current technological and organisational circumstances, most of our fair share will already be taken by food consumption alone. So unless entire industries are radically restructured so as to lower those emissions footprints, or until technological miracles happen which make it possible for airplanes to fly on renewable energy, not taking more than our fair share implies that we will have to drastically change our lifestyles and cut emissions. In other words, for the time being, lifestyles that cause not more than 1,3 ton CO2-equivalent greenhouse gas emissions are materially sober lifestyles; this seems hard to deny. Even if we were to be more optimistic and assume that we will have made the transition to a carbon-neutral economy by 2050 and hence can spend, say, on average 3 ton emissions per person per year, it still requires a significant reduction from the 9 ton currently spent in Europe, or the 20 ton spent in North America.

However, do these ecologically sustainable lifestyles imply that we will lead lives with lower well-being? Not if we reevaluate the material and non-material dimensions of well-being, and if we organise society in different ways that change the material prerequisites that are needed for certain capabilities. Let's look at those two issues in turn.

First, there is ample opportunity to improve our quality of life on the non-material dimensions. Those dimensions—such as spending time with others, investing in the relations in our neighbourhood, spending time hiking in nature, spending more time producing arts and practicing music—generally require less money and fewer natural resources but more time. Of course, there are no pure nonmaterial capabilities—with a handful of exceptions all capabilities, including those to do with affiliation and being part of a community, require some material resources. Still, there is a significant difference between the time-deprived consumer who translates the notion of giving herself a treat into going on a shopping spree to buy stuff she doesn't really need except to feel better after having worked too much, versus someone with a slower and greener lifestyle who invites a friend over for a hiking weekend. If we need consumer goods (whether these are books, cloths or a sofa), searching for second-hand commodities (which does not create additional emissions, in contrast to the production of new stuff), also require less money and more time.

Second, the way societies are organised has to allow people to lead lives with a smaller ecological footprint. For example, countries where the governments have massively invested in biking infrastructure (such as Denmark or the Netherlands) are making it much more attractive for citizens to cycle to school or work. Similarly, countries where the local government guarantees to install an electric charger if a resident indicates that they will switch from a car driving on fossil fuel to an electric car, takes away a very important hurdle for consumers who would like

to drive while minimising emissions. The same capability (in the current example: being mobile) can be realised with many different functionings (cycling, using trains or busses, driving a car on gas or rather on electricity), and different functionings correspond to a different material basis. This is what Martha Nussbaum has called the 'multiple realisability' of the capability approach: one and the same capability that we acknowledge as important for citizens, may be realised in many different ways. Put somewhat more technically, each capability can be realised by way of many different functionings, and those functionings will most likely have different ecological footprints. The challenge for advancing sustainable prosperity understood through the capabilities lens will therefore in part entail facilitating and choosing those functionings that have the lowest ecological footprints. Note that it is not merely the government that is playing an enabling role here; companies and organisations too can enable 'greener' functionings or discourage functionings that are ecologically more damaging, while at the same time keeping the same capabilities available for all.

In sum, the vision that emerges is one in which the nonmaterial capabilities become more central in our actions and in the way we (individually and collectively) think about the good life, and whereby it becomes easier to choose for functionings with a limited ecological footprint in order to attain the same capability. Such a vision and such a societal transition would be attractive to many people who are currently suffering from the high-pressure materialist culture that comes with contemporary capitalism. For example, there is a large number of adults who suffer from burn-out symptoms. Many parents of young children would like to spend more time with them, but the structure of the jobs on offer either makes those jobs come with a huge penalty for working part-time, or else force the parent between choosing for either paid work or family care. There are visions possible of the way we structure the economy and societal institutions that would give people more time (and hence more of the non-material capabilities), at the expense of less labour-income (and hence less of the material capabilities, which are causing the ecological unsustainability). But it is very hard, given societal structures, for a single person or family to make that choice; it would require for the entire society to move to another societal equilibrium.

Revisiting the 'Equal Moral Claim': Ecological Resources or Equal Capabilities?

We can now revisit the earlier claim that, as a default, everyone should have an equal moral right to the same amount of natural resources. But if what counts is people's capabilities, shouldn't we make sure everyone has the same capabilities, or perhaps functionings, and hence this may imply that some should be entitled to more natural resources than others?

It is certainly true that the capability approach has advocated for unequal distributions of (economic) resources if this is needed to make sure that people have the same capabilities. The paradigm case is a person with an impairment, mental disorder or disease: often they need more financial resources so that they can pay for the additional goods or help that they need in order to secure similar capabilities, e.g. to pay for a wheelchair, medication, therapy. But how would this basic insight from the capability approach that different people need different types and amounts of resources to have the same capabilities translate for the case of ecological resources and questions of ecological sustainability?

It may be necessary to make a distinction between additional ecological resources that are needed in a way that is unavoidable and beyond the controle of those who need the additional resources. Think of the need of residents of delta areas for the resources needed to build additional infrastructure to protect those residents against the rising sea levels. Or think of the needs of residents of very hot areas for the resources needed to cope with extreme heat. Everyone should have access to the capability to live in an area that is secured against risks of severe flooding, and everyone should have access to the capability not to have to live in conditions of extreme heat.

Yet it doesn't follow that this implies that whatever amounts of additional ecological resources a group would ask, they would also be morally entitled to it. One could say that, given that so many countries are still at lower medium levels of economic development, the ecological resources will globally be extremely scarce until the technological miracles materialise; hence it is plausible to argue that everyone has a duty to realise their desired capabilities in a way that has the lowest (or in any case a very low) impact on the ecosystems. Hence, if it is possible to guarantee the capability not to have to live in conditions of extreme heat in ways that do not require CO_2-emitting air conditioning, e.g. by renovating housing, then this may be a better way to realise this functioning.

Rich countries therefore cannot claim that they should be given larger emission shares on grounds of the claim that the realisation of some capabilities require more ecological resources in rich countries than in poor countries. Only if these additional emissions (or other natural resources) are unavoidable for the realisation of a certain capability, could such a claim be made— but first one should look for different material bases for the same capabilities. If anything, countries with currently low levels of economic development, who have so far emitted very little, may argue that they should be given a larger share of the global emissions budget, since the rich countries have already build their industries and infrastructures, while they have not. Consequently, for residents of rich countries, there is certainly not a strong case to be made that they should be entitled to larger emissions budgets; if anything, rather the contrary. The required changes in consumption patterns and lifestyles are genuinely important and urgent.

Yet What About the Poor?

An obvious objection to the "more time, less work" vision sketched above is that this may be fine for the upper middleclass and the rich—but unfeasible for the poor and lower middle-class, since they need their income from paid work to stay out of poverty. This is an important objection. It therefore seems to follow that the "more time, less work" scenario is only possible when it entails an effective anti-poverty strategy. Without such a strategy, it is adding insult to injury to tell the working poor that they will flourish more if they would work less and spend more of their time with their family and friends. That is only true after a certain minimal standard of living (the material capabilities) are secured.

It is hard to see how the change to sustainable prosperity can be reached without tackling inequalities in wealth and income. The wealth of the richest people that is spent on luxury items does not serve any basic capabilities, but is likely to create excess ecological damage, e.g. by

having a private jet or by having a huge house that needs to be warmed. One could argue that above a certain threshold, there is no well-being loss in taxing away that 'surplus money', yet that effectively redistributing it to the most disadvantaged would create a significant gain in their quality of life, just as investing it in effective interventions to enhance ecological sustainability would make our collective lifestyles less unfair and less harmful. In addition, the range between minimal and maximal wages should decrease, such that it is possible to earn a decent income from labour, while also having enough time left to enjoy the non-material capabilities, and to be able to collect one's commodities in an ecologically friendly way, e.g. by using a car with shared ownership or public transport—modes of transportation which also require more of one's time.

How to Make the Transition to Ecologically Sustainable Lifestyles?

So where are we in our search to answer the question whether it is possible to lead good lives that are also just and ecologically sustainable? We have seen that the tension between ecologically sustainable lifestyles (which are a moral obligation since otherwise they harm others) and materialistic lifestyles are real, but that this tension can be significantly weakened if we use another notion of prosperity, namely prosperity in terms of capabilities, with a strong focus on the nonmaterial capabilities. While debate and discussion are very important, it was also argued that for the necessary transition to ecologically sustainable lifestyles, moral reasoning by itself will not be very effective. So if information campaigns by the governments, moral reasoning by philosophers, or preaching by religious leaders won't be sufficient to change our behaviour, how will we then make the transition to sustainable lifestyles? This question is too big to answer here, but let us make a start by looking at a few possibilities: institutions that are changing incentives; changing habits and social norms; technological change, and collective action.

In the area of lifestyle change, human behaviour responds to incentives, much more than to moral principles and reasons. For example, we can preach that we have to consume or use less fossil fuels, meat, or plastic—but it is much more effective to increase taxation to steer our behaviour towards the consumption of goods that are more ecologically sustainable.

Another important element is technological change, such as the development of tasteful alternatives for meat that have a low eco-impact, or developments that resulted in the increased efficiency of solar panels. Some drivers who regularly drive long distances right now rule out an electric car since the radius is too small; but new technologies may change that in the future.

The third possibility is to set up structures and initiatives that seduce people to try out an aspect of a new lifestyle, without having to fully commit to it straight from the start. If we want to change a habit, we should not be trying to make a drastic change, but rather take a first step, and if that step is taken, to increase the threshold where one puts the challenge. Changes in habits then resemble the process of taking stairs, step by step, rather than taking an elevator, where one effortlessly moves to one's end goal in one go. Someone who is a meat-lover will very unlikely

manage to become a vegetarian overnight; but if he can be seduced to try a vegetarian meal once a week, he may come to like it and may then become a flexitarian, which should significantly reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from his food-consumption. More generally, moving towards a more sustainable lifestyle requires us to change some habits as well as social norms, and both are often not changed by changing laws, but rather by collective discussion in combination with changing our beliefs, as well as by the use of narratives that express hope and motivate us and encourage our change of habits.

There is a great potential for producers, social enterprises, as well as civil society organisations to contribute to this change. For example, some car producers have introduced displays that reward the drivers with a smiley if they drive a car in a fuel-minimising way. In the Netherlands, Urgenda (a network-organisation of individuals, enterprises and organisations working at the forefront of ecological sustainability) took the Dutch government to court in order to put pressure on the government to come up with an effective plan for protection of our climate. Hence, if we ask who the actors of change are in the transition to an ecologically sustainable society, the answer should not simply be 'the government', but should rather be 'anyone who can contribute to effective change'. In theory, one may come up with arguments why the government should take the lead, for example because overfishing and excessive emissions are collective action problems which can only be solved if an external party imposes a coercive limitation on our actions. But in the actual situations in which governments are doing too little, too late, the obligations to act fall upon anyone in a position to make a contribution at no excessive personal cost.

These measures should make it much less burdensome for individuals and families who want to change their life-styles to make them more ecologically sustainable. However, the economic changes that are needed, in particular the protection of the poor for whom these ecologically sustainable lifestyles are now out of reach, requires changes in institutions that determine the income and wealth distribution. Some form of minimal economic fairness, such as not exploiting workers by requiring that they systematically work overtime, or paying workers enough so that they can shift to life-styles that require more time away from work, may therefore be a precondition to make the route to sustainable prosperity possible. Either this requires drastic measures to reduce economic inequalities, such as those proposed by the late welfare economist Tony Atkinson, or else this requires a radical rethinking of how we distribute the material goods that our capitalist economies provide us, by introducing a more redistributive alternative to the current welfare state, such as a basic income. Either way, it is clear that thinking about sustainable prosperity cannot be separated from thinking about economic inequalities and injustices.

In this process, moral philosophy can help us in making clear how we take certain ideas about welfare and the quality of life for granted, and how these dominant ideas are impeding the ecological transitions that are needed, and what alternatives there are. Moral philosophy can also help us in assessing claims that some individuals or countries may make for a larger share of the scarce common resources. And moral philosophy will hold up a mirror to those who are trying to escape their moral responsibilities by offering rationalisations of the status-quo. Thus, the social and behavioural sciences, which can help us to redesign societal institutions, incentives

and our habits, should collaborate with moral philosophy in the common project to help us to live lives that are good, just, and sustainable