

Principles of Generational Justice

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1. Five Principles of Justice

Generational justice is justice in a particular area: It concerns the relation between the generations. Hence in the simplest case, maxims of generational justice could be seen as the application of norms of general justice. Yet there are numerous competing norms of justice, especially concerning distributive justice [cf. Lumer 1999b]. There is, for instance, the achievement principle: 'To each one according to his achievements', the principle of needs: 'To each one at least as much as to satisfy his or her basic needs!', egalitarianism: 'To all goods of equal quantity!', or a variety of norms of sustainability like: 'Each generation shall only use as much renewable resources as can be renewed within the period of usage and only as much non-renewable resources as it can provide equivalent substitutes!' These norms are not only a confusing tangle but also in need of justification. Only if such justifications are at hand it may be manifest which of these norms can be seen as valid.

The first step of justification is to deduce such norms from even more general and abstract moral principles behind them. In the following, five such principles shall be presented, briefly motivated and differentiated from other critically competing principles. Subsequently, it shall be examined what follows from them with respect to present problems of generational justice.

Principle 1: Ethical hedonism, welfare orientation: The welfare of human beings and more highly developed animals is the only thing intrinsically (i.e. in itself) morally relevant.

“Welfare” here means the (individually sensed) well-being multiplied with its duration.¹

Principle 1 determines what carries an intrinsic moral value or a moral value in itself (i.e. independent of its consequences) and what can be considered as a final moral goal. In other words, principle 1 expresses what is *really* important. Thus, other things than welfare – like income, material resources or stable ecosystems – are also important, but not in an intrinsic way but only for the reason and to the extent of influencing welfare. In the first place, the *factual* degree of influence

¹ Or a bit more precisely: Welfare is the integral of well-being over time. In a still more precise version of this principle the problem of a possible manipulation of welfare by an experience-machine has to be solved, i.e. a machine providing us with many pleasant feelings that do not correspond to reality, though [cf. Nozick 1989, ch. 10]. One suggested solution is *corrected hedonism*, i.e. to discount positive well-being that was created manipulatively (or via some other restriction of our mechanisms that lead to well-being) according to the degree of manipulation (or restriction) [Lumer 2000, 495-519]. Furthermore, the way of measuring well-being has to be specified [measurement on ratio-scale level: Lumer 2000, 436-447; on rating-scale level: Wessman et al. 1960].

(which e.g. can be ascertained by social sciences) is important, not the opinion of the affected subjects.²

The fact that almost all ethics and, without exception, every human being see a certain kind of human welfare as an intrinsic good is a weak reason for moral hedonism. In so far human welfare is a rather undisputed intrinsic good; controversial is just the question if there are still other intrinsically relevant goods and if so, what they are. – A stronger reason for ethical hedonism is that our sympathy with other people is apart from interests of co-operation the most important basis for morality [Lumer 2002b]. But sympathy cares precisely for the *welfare* of others.³

Alternatives to ethical hedonism are particularly *uncritical preferentialism* [e.g. Bateman / Arrow 1999; Jones-Lee 1982; critique e.g.: Brecher 1997] and *need-orientation* [Braybrooke 1987; Feinberg 1973], which postulate that the fulfilment of any actual human preference and the fulfilment of human needs respectively have intrinsic moral value. However, uncritical preferentialism is problematic in that it centres on *unfiltered* preferences, which themselves are based on intrinsic preferences and empirical assumptions. These empirical assumptions are often wrong. Furthermore, the total preferences are often not elaborated. Hence there is little reason to include these assumptions and the particular way of forming a total preference in the basis for moral judgements. However, hedonism takes into account the stable intrinsic preferences since they have the individually own welfare as their object.⁴ Even when we make a present to somebody with benevolent intentions, we do this in view of the consequences *we* expect for the welfare of the affected person and not directly in view of his or her assumptions and wishes. An argument against need-orientation is that the term “need” is extremely vague: Do we have a *need* for a hot shower or for self-realization? A first, extremely broad specification of the term “need” declares anything we wish for to be a need and thus leads to the already criticized uncritical preferentialism. A quite narrow specification sees “needs” just as “basic needs” as for instance breathing, eating, drinking, sleeping, living etc. But “basic need” is unspecific as well – is our basic need for food satisfied if we eat each day the same? Is reproduction a basic need? Anyhow there are more things morally and intrinsically relevant than exclusively the satisfaction of our basic needs. If somebody is very content with his or her life because he or she carries out just the right profession or realizes projects of life important to him or her, many people consider this to be morally relevant – though it is not a matter of satisfying basic needs.

Principle 2: Beneficiary universalism: All human beings (and in a limited degree more highly developed animals as well) should be equal beneficiaries of the morality of a subject.

The principle of beneficiary universalism gives an answer to the question *whose* welfare is morally relevant and who shall be beneficiary of a morality: just the temporally and spatially limited more or less big group the moral subject forms part of, or as a different extreme advocated here, mankind as a whole and the higher animals. Beneficiary universalism does not claim that the moral

² What is proposed here is neither value objectivism [e.g. Scanlon 1993] nor qualitative hedonism [Mill 1861, ch. 2, par. 5-8] but corrected hedonism [cf. above, fn. 1]. It is not objectivism because intrinsic desirabilities are determined relying on subjective preferences [cf. below, fn. 4], and only the relation to their causes shall be established objectively. It is not qualitative hedonism because the personal desirability of hedonic experiences is determined by the subject's preferences and not e.g. according to the majority vote of the experts. – According to corrected hedonism, would it be better to be a fool satisfied than Socrates dissatisfied? [Cf. Mill 1861, ch. 2, par. 6.] In certain cases yes but clearly not generally, because foolishness in corrected hedonism leads to some discounting of positive hedonic experiences [see above, fn. 1].

³ Defences of hedonism as the right theory of moral or personal desirability are e.g.: Brandt 1979, part I; Brandt 1989; Kahneman / Wakker / Sarin 1997; Lumer 2000, 241-548; Sumner 1996.

⁴ Rational hedonism can even be justified with the help of a *critical* preferentialism. Two different approaches to doing so are: Brandt 1979, Part 1; Lumer 2000, chapters 3-5.

commitment of a person in fact has to be of benefit for anybody but that under practically equal circumstances the affiliation to a certain group must not decide who shall be the beneficiary of moral commitment. For practical reasons, the greatest part of our moral commitment falls to people who are close to us and not to those temporally and spatially far away. However, beneficiary universalism among other things excludes temporal discounting, i.e. a minor consideration of the fate of future generations.

A quite formal reason for beneficiary universalism is that actually it forms a condition for a global and intertemporal co-operation in order to realize moral goals: A reduced consideration of their own fate and the fate of persons close to them will not be accepted by potential partners of co-operation far away and thus won't contribute to the realization of this morality. – A weak material argument for beneficiary universalism is that the decision for a specific group of beneficiaries is based on the fixing of ego-ideals, i.e. it depends on whether you see yourself e.g. primarily as an Englishman, as a member of a certain generation or as a cosmopolitan and therefore support other members of your identification group. Consequently, the decision for beneficiary universalism arises from the decision for the most demanding ego-ideal. – Finally, sympathy, too, is basically universal; its limitation originates only from the minor confrontation with the welfare of far away people [cf. Lumer 1999a].

Alternatives to beneficiary universalism are *present-centred ethics* (like *contractualism* that demands that morality or legitimate institutions shall correspond to the content of fictive contracts between the contract parties [e.g. Gauthier 1986]), which only look at the interests of contemporary people, *temporal discounting* [Wenz 1988], according to which future welfare counts but less and less the further far in the future it is – comparable to a diminished value of a today earned monetary sum due to inflation (negative interest) –, and *parochialism* [moderate version: e.g. Rawls 1999], which exclusively or at least to a high degree supports the interests of a determined, often locally defined group, for instance a nation. None of these positions is contradictory in itself, still they are based on only little demanding ideals. An approach of generational justice is only possible by transcending the concentration on the presence, and a true generational justice requires temporal universalism and rejecting temporal discounting. Once the temporal universalism has been accepted, a spatial limitation as it is made by parochialism can hardly be justified any more.

Principle 3: Prioritarianism (or priority view): The moral value of an action or a norm is roughly determined by the thereby produced change in human welfare (possibly animals as well) . However more weight is given to changes in welfare for subjects in general (i.e. with respect to their complete life) worse off – though not infinitely more weight than to changes in the welfare of subjects better off. This weight gets the stronger the worse somebody is off.⁵

Hedonism determines *what* has intrinsic moral value, namely welfare, while prioritarianism says *how* this welfare should be assessed. Though increasing welfare is always valued positively and decreasing welfare negatively, this does not happen proportionally to the modification. Changes of

⁵ The idea of prioritarianism is supported e.g. by Nagel 1977 and Parfit 1991; 1997. Justification and quantitative specification: Lumer 2000, 589-632; Lumer 2006. Prioritarianism can be operationalized the simplest way with a concave moral desirability function: The x-axis shows the welfare of a whole life, the y-axis shows its moral desirability. The curve rises monotonously but to a more and more diminishing degree. Thus, the same growth in welfare for somebody better off means less growth in moral desirability than the same growth in welfare for somebody worse off.

welfare of persons worse off are weighted stronger than those of persons better off. This is a principle of distributive justice. It matters whose welfare is improved, and worse-off people have precedence in this matter.

An intuitive argument for prioritarianism is that help should rather be given where it is needed the most. – A motivating justification for this principle lies in the characteristics of the most important source of our morality: sympathy. Our sympathy is touched much stronger when it comes to people who are in great need [see explanation in detail in: Lumer 2000, 589-632].

Alternatives to prioritarianism are among others *utilitarianism* [cf. e.g. Bentham 1780/1789; Harsanyi 1977; Mill 1861; Smart 1961, sect. 4], which equates moral desirability with (anonymous) individual desirability and thus equalizes all improvements of welfare of the same degree without considering the initial level of the affected persons; the *maximin* (or *leximin*-) *principle* [e.g. Kolm 2002; van Parijs 1995, 25-27; 30-33; Pfannkuche 2000, chapter 4; partly in Rawls 1971, 302 f.], according to which the welfare of the worst off people has to be maximum or as extensive as possible with the consequence to give absolute priority to improvements of the situation of those worst off over any improvements for better-off persons; and, finally, *egalitarianism* [e.g. Temkin 1993; Trapp 1988, 308 f.; 346 f.; 356; Dworkin 1981; Pojman / Westmoreland 1997], according to which the individually good should be distributed as equally as possible (and, additionally, the sum of the individual good should be as high as possible). One problem with utilitarianism is that it disregards the interpersonal distribution of welfare so that it is blind with respect to distributive justice. In comparison to that, the maximin principle can be seen as an improvement. But with regard to the fact that it prefers tiny improvements for persons in the worst position to huge improvements for better-off ones, even if these are in the second-worst position, this principle is inefficient. Compared to this, prioritarianism forms a synthesis of utilitarianism and leximin and keeps the advantages of both approaches – efficiency and priority for worse-off people – without possessing their disadvantages. The main problem of egalitarianism is that it does not make clear at all why an equal distribution should be *intrinsically* good [Frankfurt 1997]. (An equal distribution of *goods* leads to a maximization of welfare in several fields and is therefore partly *extrinsically* morally good, but there is no justification for an equal distribution of welfare itself, in particular if it is a low welfare.) Because of this lack in justification it remains arbitrary how various forms of inequality shall be assessed comparatively and how the extent of inequality shall be traded off against the grand total of utilities.

So far, the explained principles dealt with moral valuation. The last two principles centre on moral *acting*, i.e. on how moral values shall be put into practice by acting.

Principle 4: Principle of limited commitment: Moral commitment should reach at least a bit beyond socially valid moral duties, i.e. moral duties supported by formal (legally sanctioned) or informal sanctions. A further increase of commitment (towards a maximum commitment) is not a moral duty.

The fourth principle looks at the individual effort made for morality: To which extent should we commit ourselves morally? It is necessary to limit our moral commitment, because otherwise beneficiary universalism would lead to moral duties that ask far too much of us. The principle of limited commitment does not demand to spend all one's energies for morality; we would not even expect this of saints. Still, it is not content with the mere fulfilment of moral duties already supported by social sanctions. In other words, this principle demands two things: Already socially established and morally good norms have to be complied with, and moral commitment should go at least a bit beyond these achieved standards. The idea behind these two claims is to raise moral commitment more and more in the historically long term and to maintain achieved standards through sanctions. Very often we only have relatively weak autonomous motives to act morally, for

instance sympathy, respect of others, (moral) sense of duty, indignation and vindictiveness [see Lumer 2002b]. The motivation for moral acting is considerably increased by social norms protected by sanctions because now our desire to avoid sanctions forms another strong motive. This institutionalization releases (motivational) capacities to commit oneself *voluntarily* to keep up morally good norms socially already valid and to introduce additional good norms [Lumer 2002a, 93-95]. In this way and from a historical point of view, valid moral standards can be raised more and more in the long term, i.e. in the course of millennia.

The principle of limited commitment can be justified with the fact that it demands the maximum of what can just be demanded of rational subjects. Who demands less does not do enough for morality. Who demands more overstrains the rational and at the same time morally good will so that there is no rational reason for a person to comply with this demand.

Alternatives to the principle of limited commitment are the *maximization principle* [e.g. Smart 1961, 33; Trapp 1988, 208; 297; 299 f.], according to which one must do the morally best at any time, *individualistic contractualism* [e.g. Gauthier 1986], which postulates that moral duties arise from rationally profitable co-operation, and (transhistorically) *fixed canons of duty*, as they are represented for instance by liberalism [e.g. Nozick 1974, 10 f.] or Kantianism [Kant 1797a]. The maximization principle overstrains moral subjects (it would e.g. demand of First World citizens to give all their income to Oxfam except a small subsistence part and to get involved nearly completely for this issue in their spare time) and is rationally unacceptable. Individualistic contractualism is morally too weak, demands less than we think is morally necessary and does not consider the morally good will. Fixed canons, finally, are not flexible enough and do not adapt to social changes. Consequently, these principles demand either too much or too less – with the exception of periods of an appropriateness by chance.

Principle 5: Efficiency or economy principle: Moral commitment should be efficient and employed where the ratio of cost to moral benefit is the most favourable.

The efficiency principle should determine the use of the freely disposable individual moral commitment (while complying with valid moral norms) as well as the kind of new moral norms to be implemented and the improvement of already valid moral norms. Among other things it demands to invest available public finances in a morally efficient way and prohibits their waste, e.g. for campaign goodies.⁶

The justification for the efficiency principle is simply that one should preferably realize more than less morally good things with the available limited and fixed budget (see principle 4).

The most important alternative of the efficiency principle is a certain form of *deontologism*, which demands that we should never ever violate moral norms justified in a different way (e.g. the prohibition of lying), even if by doing so an enormous moral benefit could be achieved or a huge moral loss could be avoided [e.g. Kant 1797b]. But either the norm held up by deontologism is efficient in its existing form – then the efficiency principle, too, would

⁶ Sometimes it is assumed that the efficiency principle allows the violation of several fundamental human rights as long as it is morally efficient. Situations in which only the calculated sacrifice of one person (who has no relatives or friends) could save the live of several other persons would be exemplary cases [Hare 1981, sect. 8.2]. However, the efficiency principle first of all requires the compliance with valid and efficient moral norms, and fundamental human rights are quite efficient moral norms. In addition, massive violation of fundamental human rights – like sacrificing a human being – would be an infringement of the principle of limited commitment, because an unacceptably demanding commitment would be forced upon the affected person.

forbid its violation; or it can be made more efficient by adding modifications and exceptions (that do not violate the principle of limited commitment) – then insisting on maintaining and keeping to the inefficient norm would be fetishism.

According to the idea underlying the principle of limited commitment, socially valid (i.e. reinforced by sanctions) morally justified norms serve to put abstract moral principles into concrete terms, to stabilize moral commitment and to direct it towards an efficient deployment. A new norm of generational justice to be implemented that perhaps could be justified with these principles is for instance the *command of a sustainable use of resources*, which says in an original version: Each generation shall only use as much renewable resources as can be renewed within the period of usage and only as much non-renewable resources as it can provide equivalent substitutes! At first glance, such a norm is morally efficient as it takes precautions against the waste of resources that could be used by future generations for a considerably higher improvement of their welfare. If this is really the case is an empirical question, though, that is not easy to answer [see sect. 4 below]. Furthermore, keeping a particular stock of resources is not an end in itself but should serve to maximize moral desirability. That is why more highly developed norms of sustainability always contain restrictions and exception clauses that allow a flexible overspending of roughly determined contingents, for example: “... provided that the ratio of the benefit for the future generations to the costs for the present generation is adequate.” Vague formulas like this one can be specified in return with the help of the explained principles.

2. The Positive Intergenerational Savings Rate as a Common Practice and Moral Norm

Which demands for generational justice relevant to the current situation arise from the explained principles? To answer this question the common practice and the current valid moral norm concerning intergenerational justice has to be considered: the positive intergenerational savings rate.

According to hedonism, we have to look at the welfare of persons, which results from multiplying the mean well-being by life duration. Welfare in Western Europe presumably has quite constantly grown in the course of the last centuries. This is due to, among other things, *economic and technological progress*, which reduced destitution, shortened working hours, made work itself easier, and in the end provided more consumer goods; it is due to *medical progress*, which prolongs lifetime, and to *political and social progress*, which ensures human and civil rights as well as peace, extends equal opportunities as well as education and guarantees the redistribution of income from top to bottom. On the other, negative hand, there is the consumption of resources and nature and the pollution of the environment – facts that curtail the positive overall balance, but do not reduce it to zero nor even turn it into a loss.

This general improvement of the situation of future generations happens to a great deal naturally: The present generations achieve a progress in the first place for themselves, but because

of the simultaneous existence of several generations, on a general social level it gets difficult to withhold the achieved progresses from the at present youngest generation. Still it is possible, especially on an individual level. For selfish reasons, parents can refuse their children an education that enables them to achieve a higher welfare, and they can squander the inheritance at the end of their lives. But normally they do not do so, and as far as that goes the improvement of the situation of future generations is deliberate. According to the mentioned criteria, this deliberate improvement is morally justified and just: Although the following generation, as a consequence of this improvement will be better off than the currently dominant one – a fact that, according to prioritarianism, *prima facie* speaks against intergenerational saving –, the gains in welfare by intergenerational saving in the long term are so high that it is the morally better alternative. That way, an informal moral norm of intergenerational saving (on a certain minimum level) became established, which can be summed up as follows: Each generation shall leave as many goods (especially capital, but also technologies, resources, education, knowledge and wisdom etc.) to the following generation that this, as well as subsequent generations can improve their welfare in comparison to each preceding generation! Who wastes the potential inheritance of his children in his last stage of life might not act legally wrong but still is looked at askance (that shows that *informal* norms do ban such behaviour) and, additionally, acts immorally according to the principle of limited commitment, because this informal norm is also morally good.

3. The Current Development: A Reduction of the Intergenerational Savings Rate

Some current developments seem to lead to a reduction of the intergenerational savings rate. I only mention the prevailing pension policies of many industrial nations, the disproportionately high youth unemployment in OECD countries, the unrestrained consumption of non-renewable resources and the still hardly restrained emission of greenhouse gases. What makes the consumption of resources and the emission of greenhouse gases worse is that the costs are imposed almost exclusively on the future generations of the *Third World*. This holds because Third World countries have more difficulties to afford the expensive substitutes for used up raw materials; furthermore, the first of the two most serious influences of the greenhouse effect on the welfare of future generations is the increase of food prices due to food shortage, which raises the number of the absolutely poor and consequently the number of deaths due to poverty (with business as usual there will be about two million additional deaths in the second half of the 21st century); the other one comes in the form of severe famines caused by droughts that will claim many lives, too [Lumer 2002a, 23-26; 71; 73]. These two effects will make itself felt almost exclusively in Third World countries. This implies that the usual justification for the consumption of resources and nature, namely that future generations will profit most from the progress paid for with this consumption, is not valid in these cases.

It shall be emphasized once again that from the point of view of future ethics, the – moderate – consumption of non-renewable resources is not criticized as such and has to be counted among the costs of progress, which altogether will be advantageous in particular to future generations. In comparison to the level achieved up to now, the mentioned developments presumably amount to a reduction of the intergenerational savings rate even for the First World, though. I furthermore surmise that these developments won't lead to a *decrease* in welfare in the medium and long term but only to a deceleration of the growth in welfare. Yet, the assumed decrease of the intergenerational savings rate contradicts the principle of limited commitment. It infringes the informal moral duty to maintain the intergenerational savings rate existing so far and therefore it is a forbidden moral step back.

Much more serious though are the losses for future generations of the Third World. The mentioned developments lead to a considerable lowering of welfare for many members of this group. For instance, the unrestrained greenhouse effect will claim over 100 million lives just in this century, for the most part in Third World countries [Lumer, Greenhouse 23-26]. So far and particularly for this development, the First World is the most responsible party. This is of course a grave violation of valid moral norms (e.g. the prohibition of killing, the polluter-pays principle that prohibits externalisations of damages and many more) and thus of the principle of limited commitment.

4. The Most Urgent Problems and the Next Steps

The lowering of the intergenerational savings rate and the externalisation of damages could be corrected through shifting today's investments from consumption to the lowering of resource consumption, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions etc. Once we begin to shift investments in a morally progressive way (and so return to complying with the principle of limited commitment) the direction of this commitment has to be reassessed. Both prioritarianism and the efficiency principle demand to make investments where they are needed most and where they are as efficient as possible. Beneficiary utilitarianism, in addition, demands not limiting the field of possible investments, thus not excluding anybody as a potential beneficiary.

Which commitment is morally the most efficient and thus should be chosen from the point of view of justice can only be found out by detailed welfare-ethical investigations. Yet, several plausible conjectures can already be advanced.

1. Even when continuing the current policies, first, the next future First World generations will still be better off than the currently dominant generation, and, second, the latter will be a great deal better off than future Third World generations. The first part of this hypothesis can be substantiated as follows. Factors that until now have contributed to raise welfare in the First World are: increases in income and consumption, a higher degree of liberality in everyday life, an improved education and a higher life expectancy. These developments will presumably persist, though in a moderated way. Counter tendencies are a worsening of the pension situation, growing national debts and

increased youth unemployment. Nevertheless it is not very probable that the growing national debts and the aggravated pension situation will eat up the (inflation-adjusted) net income growths. And it is true that the well-being of the long-term unemployed falls alarmingly on average (according to a ratio-scale measurement from normally 0.1420 units to 0.0643 units, that is by 55% [Lumer 2002a, 29-31]). But if we include the duration (of 10 years) and the share of the population (of about 10%⁷) affected by the presently increased youth unemployment in comparison to adult unemployment, the average total loss (of 0.55 years (= 10 years · 10% · 55%)) is still minor than the prospective increase of life expectancy.⁸ – Argument for the second part of the hypothesis: In contrast to some assumptions, which take happiness to be relative in the sense that for life satisfaction only the comparison with the level of the (mostly national) reference group is essential, so that historically and on an international scale there won't be any differences in average life satisfaction, comprehensive international and historical comparative studies found out that there is a positive correlation between income and life satisfaction, where the latter is closely related to the well-being [Veenhoven 1984, 145-154]. So as a matter of fact, average well-being in the Third World is lower than in the First World. As an additional reduction of welfare comes the significantly lower (as compared to First World people) life expectancy of Third World people.

2. Not only because of the greater poverty in large parts of the Third World but also because of the more easily attainable improvements of welfare, in the Third World the ratio of cost to moral benefit is the most favourable. Often quite small investments can lead to significant income increases.

3. In the Third World many damages provoked by the greenhouse effect only become social problems because of the widespread poverty. (For instance, the greenhouse effect will lead to a growth in food prices, which in its turn will claim many lives of the poor [see paragraph 3].) Therefore, direct investment in the Third World's development, apart from the direct positive consequences this would have, would probably be an efficient means to considerably reduce damages due to the greenhouse effect.

4. All this could mean that direct investments in the Third World's development (including a limitation of the growth in population) perhaps are currently the most important contributions to generational justice. It goes without saying that this would not exclude policies of generational justice in First World countries.

5. The next important contributions (i.e., according to the definition given above, morally highly efficient) are the abatement of the anthropogenous greenhouse effect and, on a national level, the

⁷ Youth (aged 15-24 years) unemployment in all "developed regions" is higher than adult unemployment. In 2000 the ratios of youth unemployment rate to adult unemployment rate in "developed regions" without former East Bloc ranged from 1.1 (Germany) to 4.2 (Norway) (other countries with high population figures: France 2.3, Italy 3.7, Japan 2.2, United Kingdom 2.7, United States 3.1) The differences between youth unemployment rate and adult unemployment rate ranged from 0.8% (Germany) to 21.7% (Italy) (France 11.7%, Japan 5.0%, United Kingdom 7.4%, United States 6.3%) [ILO 2003, Code 48; differences: author's calculations on the same base]. So the 10% assumed above are a bit higher than the actual mean difference.

⁸ Due to the unequal distribution of youth unemployment, the prioritarian calculation of moral losses again magnifies these losses, but probably by less than 20%.

containment of the current youth unemployment [see some comparisons of efficiency in: Lumer, 2002a, 80-83].

6. The anthropogenous greenhouse effect is caused to a great deal by the excessive consumption of certain resources in a wide sense, including excessive use of sinks (fossil fuels, wood clearing, methane emissions (from the cultivation of rice and livestock breeding), nitrogen oxides (from fertilization and combustion)). How the use of *other resources* and a corresponding policy of austerity would influence the prioritarian moral desirability (cf. above, the norm of sustainability in sect.1) can hardly be estimated because of the influence of hardly predictable technological developments. So far, this influence has neither been examined. Thus, concerning the efficiency of the corresponding measures of economizing relative to the measures already discussed, we cannot give a plausible estimation.

If these empirical hypotheses are right, according to the expounded principles, the morally most important and morally obligatory steps towards generational justice are: 1. considerable support for the development of the poorest countries, 2. the containment of the anthropogenous greenhouse effect and 3. the reduction of youth unemployment. It remains unclear how important the reduction of the consumption of resources is in proportion to these three measures.

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