

## *Utilitarianism for a broken world*

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In this paper, I apply my recent work on utilitarianism and future people to the ethical challenges of climate change.

In my book, *Future People* (OUP, 2006), I introduce a context-dependent lexical level – a protected moral sphere where individuals can pursue their own projects at the expense of aggregate well-being. Climate change threatens a broken future, where some basic human needs go unmet, and our present way of life is not possible. In a broken future, justice must be re-imagined, and a lower lexical level is required. More immediately, present people must make sacrifices *now* – lowering our own lexical level to raise it for future people. I conclude that climate change is morally unique because it leaves us with a lexical level that we cannot both honour and bequeath, and that the central task facing contemporary utilitarian philosophers is to reinvent liberal values and institutions for a broken world.