

HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN RIGHTS

Lifeboat Ethics

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Hardin, G. (1998, Spring). The Feast of Malthus. *The Social Contract*, 8(3), 181–187.

Hardin, G. (1974, October). Living on a Lifeboat. *BioScience*, 24(10), 561–568

Questions

1. In “The Feast of Malthus”, Garrett Hardin argues that individual rights are inconsistent with the survival of the human species.
What is Hardin’s argument defending this claim? How is Thomas Robert Malthus’ story of the feast supposed to help illustrate this argument?
2. In both “The Feast of Malthus” and “Living on a Lifeboat”, Hardin applies the previous argument to an international context.
How does Hardin do this? In particular, what is Hardin’s argument rejecting the provision of foreign aid to developing countries? How is the allegory of the lifeboats supposed to help illustrate his argument?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.