

Preface

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Is it possible to make the future world better if we save resources and the environment for future generations? Is there a moral obligation to have children? These questions concern us in face of the danger of environmental degradation and an excessively aging population combined with the diminishing number of children. These questions and practical concerns generate interest in population ethics.

What is population ethics? Population ethics is described as population *axiology*. Axiology is concerned with philosophical questions about value and goodness: what things are good, how good they are, and how to count them. Population axiology is a theory of how to evaluate populations, including future generations, in terms of the value of states of affairs, given that the number of people, the quality of their lives, and their identities may differ. Future generations as populations make it difficult to rank populations in a principled manner, because we cannot presume the same identity and the same number between present generations and future generations. Most ethical theories and principles that have argued that most viable approaches and ethical arguments, such as the social contract theory and the harm principle, cannot apply in cases involving future generations as such; these theories and principles have, at least so far, taken for granted the same identity and the same number of people.

This special issue “On Population Ethics” is based on the workshop on “Population Ethics” held on January 12, 2015. In the workshop, Gustaf Arrhenius, a most renowned philosopher on population ethics, gave a lecture titled “On the Possibility of a Satisfactory Population Ethics.” Makoto Suzuki and Kaoru Ando gave extensive comments on Arrhenius’s paper respectively, followed by discussion with the audience. This special issue includes Arrhenius’s *Précis* of his forthcoming book, *Population Ethics: The Challenge of Future Generations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), and Suzuki’s and Ando’s commentary papers on *Population Ethics*. Undoubtedly, these essays can be regarded as important contributions to the development of philosophical theories and principles on population ethics.

In addition to the special issue, Anne-Lise Mithout contributes to this combined issue a paper “The Transformations of Special Schools for the Blind in Times of Inclusion: A French-Japanese Perspective.”