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Arguing about climate change : judging the handling of climate risk to future generations by comparison to the general standards of conduct in the case of risk to contemporaries

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Curriculum vitae

Die Umwelt ist alles, was der Fall ist.

I was born in Amsterdam on 26 July, 1966. Before the age of six I had already decided I would devote the rest of my life to physics. That 'rest of my life' lasted until completion of my doctoral studies in 1994.

Around the age of sixteen I decided that life was like a salmon swimming upstream against the current of nature, which moves from order to growing disorder. And what better way to express oneself as a human being than by bringing order to the phenomena around one as a physicist?

At the age of twenty-one, however, environmental issues began to absorb my full attention. The question arose, and did so forcefully, of whether there was in fact any point in making a contribution to physics if there was no prospect of a healthy future in which such a science could advance. Although my love of physics in no way declined, I did not feel the true solution to our environmental ills lay in discoveries to be made in physics or engineering. What was required was a change in *our way of thinking*. While working on my doctoral studies I therefore took up philosophy, obtaining a degree in environmental philosophy in 1995.

Having gained my PhD in physics, I set out looking for a job in which I could do something to help resolve the environmental crisis. The economics department of the environmental consultancy CE Delft invited me to come along for an interview. In my letter I had included one sentence on the importance of economic understanding for resolving our environmental problems, although I myself lacked any such understanding. Over the past fifteen years I have been given the opportunity to become an environmental economist at CE Delft, though with no diploma to show for it.

From the age of twenty-one I have lived as an environmental ascetic, in accordance with my belief in Kant's categorical imperative, that one should act only according to such rules as one might wish the whole world to endorse. At the same time I came out for my ideals, proactively. When I was about twenty-five I decided you can also come out for your ideals by living them, without thrusting them on those around you. Following my marriage at the age of thirty I came to realise that in a situation of cohabitation – at any scale – when elaborating one's own life one must seek compromises when those with whom one lives hold different ideas.

Living with others in accordance with your principles with respect for other kinds of principles held just as dearly by those around you remains for me one of the greatest challenges in life.

Since 2005 we own a car.