

The Lottery of Life
Migration Crisis in Europe
Ida J. Langer
Lynn University

The Lottery of Life

With only a few exceptions in history, humans have always been, and will always be selfish. Whether we agree or not, people are naturally self-centered and will act in a way that benefits themselves in the end. Even if the act is to help someone else, an individual's motivation is most likely to gain satisfaction and fulfillment in return; whether it is intentional or not. However, if egotism will remain inherited, the act of self-interest that still benefits someone else is yet the better option, no matter what the motivator may be. The world is unjust, and many suffer from poverty, violent environments, and corrupt governments. If the earth were a completely selfless place, possibly poverty and injustice would be eliminated. In the 21st century, Europe has experienced an extreme number of migrants arriving, desperately calling for help because of the depravity of where they come from. However, the responses around the countries in Europe have varied, and selfishness may be the main factor to why. For example, a few countries realize the benefits of allowing migrants to enter; and consequently, these countries decide to give support. Others may provide help to maintain the values and good morals in the culture. Unfortunately, most countries in Europe have seen the movement as a threat and therefore refused to assist. Consequently, the few countries that have been providing support, care, and aid are now suffering from the large responsibility and burden due to the lack of collective effort. Overall, ethics in regards to migration are complex though it affects many factors including human lives. Therefore, it has been difficult for leaders around Europe to agree and deal with the issue productively. For a better understanding, philosophical theories such as the lifeboat theory and the real tragedy of the commons can help expand the knowledge of ethics and decision-making in difficult situations. This paper aims to explain different moral theories and prove that it is humanity's collective responsibility and ownership to help out with the

migration crisis in Europe. The paper will cover every human's right to live, scarcity, recent migration, consequences of the crisis along with a few different moral theories.

The Right to Live

In the near future, millions of people will have left this earth due to death. Some deaths will occur because of illness, age, and other uncontrollable causes. Some people are going to be murdered or killed by other people's actions. Certain cases are going to be justified while others won't. Most people would argue that the death cases that we cannot control, such as aging, cannot be blamed on anybody though it is unavoidable. Some would even argue that killing through self-defense could be justifiable (Nell, 1975). However, who gets to decide what case is controllable or not? Sometimes deaths happen due to the absence of a person's or many people's action. In these situations, it is harder to determine who's there to blame, therefore, many times no one gets the accusation. Nell (1975) ones stated, "I shall assume that persons have a right not to be killed and a corresponding duty not to kill" (p. 273). In other words, one cannot expect a right, and not provide that right for others. There is a general understanding in the world that killing is wrong. Starting many years ago, through religion, murder has been considered a sin. For example, Matthew 5.7 (King James Version) states "Thou shalt not kill: for whosoever killeth shall be culpable of judgment." However, not only an apparent murder is killing. According to Nell (1975) "Sometimes deaths are produced by some persons or groups of persons in distant, usually affluent, nations" (p. 279). These cases are difficult for several reasons. For example, the killer is not a single person, the death does not occur immediately, no one will know if the death would have happened either way, and the killing may not be intended. Nevertheless, death is death whether it is a direct killing or allowing killing to happen. It is easy to agree that we shall not kill, however, what most people fail to do is to face up to the many

implications that follow that statement. Today, individuals die from starvation while others throw away food daily. One may argue that this case is a type of killing.

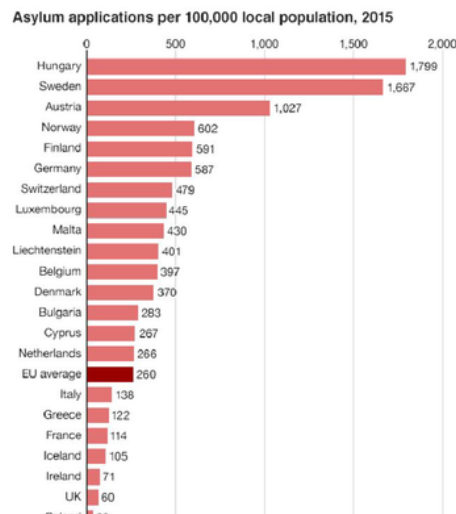
Scarcity

Even though global scarcity has not hit yet, some may argue that it is coming. Regardless, food and water scarcity is a current issue in some places around the world. It is known that there is an unequal disbursement of the world's resources. And so, even if economics is not a weapon that directly kills, the actions regarding economics can lead to consequences that kill others. Furthermore, Nell (1975) argues that "it is not far-fetched to think that at present the economic activity of some groups of persons leads to others' deaths" (p. 282). Furthermore, the author goes on by giving the example of oil prices being raised in the Arab world. On the one hand, raising the oil prices will reduce the use of windfall, affect the pollution and further on kill individuals in undeveloped countries. On the other hand, one may argue that the success and the lives saved in the Arab world justify those killings elsewhere (Nell, 1975). Another current example of indirect killing is the migration in Europe and the rejection of the individuals in need.

Recent Migration

For a better understanding of the migration crisis, it is important to know where the people come from, why they leave and where they end up. Most migrants come from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, countries that suffer from poverty, conflict, and violence. People flee the disaster in the hope of a better and safer life on the other side of the journey (Why is EU struggling with migrants, 2016). Countries that are helping the most and have taken in a large number of migrants are Germany, Sweden, and the UK. According to, BBC News, "Germany received more than 1.1 million asylum seekers 2015 - by far the highest number in the EU" (Why is EU struggling with migrants, 2016). After Germany follows the UK, who, according to

Oxford University, has taken in around 565,000 individuals since 2011 (as cited in, Cavendish, 2015). Thirdly, Sweden is a country with strong morals and values which shows in situations with desperation. In 2014, Sweden received more refugees than any other country except Germany and had continued providing help. A concerning issue is the growing number of unaccompanied minors (Sweden & Migration, 2017). In other words, more children arrive in countries alone with families left in the war zones. Furthermore, "Every sixth person of the current Swedish population was born in another country" (Sweden & Migration, 2017). This shows the effect that the migration has on the population due to the fact that only a few countries are helping. Interestingly enough, one of the most discussed topics in Sweden today is integration and what happens after immigration while other countries have not even accepted to help in the first place. For a more visual understanding, below is a graph that shows the number of accepted asylum applications in different countries around Europe year 2015. The most disturbing part of the statistics is the drastic difference between the EU-average and the top ten countries.



Picture: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/03/europe-refugee-crisis-explained/>

Outcomes for the Helpers

Now when it is clear which countries that help out the most with the refugees, it is essential to look into what the results are for these nations may be. It is not a surprise that instability is starting to show in the countries that are sacrificing a lot of resources to the refugees. For example, there has been an increase in beggars on the streets mainly due to the Romani people. The welcoming hands from Sweden, Germany, and the UK are also taking a toll on these countries' resources, not only regarding money but also healthcare, education, and cultural aspects (Sweden & Migration, 2017). Nonetheless, the migration is affecting each culture through the individuals that enter and is most likely going to have a hard time adapt to the norms, language, and even laws. As a result of the burden, European countries are tightening the border controls leaving refugees stuck in countries such as Greece. Consequently, this creates an instability not only for Greece but also the refugees and the expectations of being taken care of post-arrival. Furthermore, Greenville (2016) an American political scientist and professor at Harvard argues that,

The lack of EU solidarity and absence of a collective response to the humanitarian and political challenges imposed by the influx further laid bare the limitation of common border control and migration and refugee burden-sharing systems that have never been wholly and satisfactorily implanted (p. 317).

In other words, European countries are having to make drastic changes that are going against the norms and the ways of how it has always been done. Furthermore, the changes are going to impact the identity of each country and how these countries treat people. Even in Scandinavian countries who are known for their open-mindedness and high acceptance rate are starting to see a

shift. For example, in Sweden, nationalist parties and racist leaders such as Jimmy Åkesson has gained more followers over the past few years than ever before. Overall, racism may not be the case, but even a little increase is too much of an increase. Additionally, the hot debates are making citizens turn backs to leaders or each other. Conflicts of this sort can lead to a vulnerable population along with an unstable government.

Outcomes Overall

However, it is impossible for any country to stay utterly distant from the consequences of the crisis. The migration is provoking the morals and norms that could be considered the base of the European identity and the core of the countries' uniqueness. Greenville (2016) explains, "Modern Europe is supposed to be a 'zone of peace' and a bastion of universalistic liberal norms, a protector, and promulgator of human rights and a purveyor of an inclusive, cosmopolitan European identity" (p.332). The movement is making it hard for countries to remain peaceful and open-minded. The reputation of Europe as a continent is being challenged in many ways due to the pressure of the migration. First of all, one may question the values and protection of human rights in the European countries that yet have not taken in one refugee or contributed to the issue. Secondly, for the countries that are keeping open borders and welcoming arms, it is becoming hard to remain a strong culture and stable norms. Consequently, this raises a conflict between holding on to the good morals while watching the country's identity fall or to go against the human rights by rejecting the migrants only to save what is inside of the borders. Instead, the negative outcomes of the migration crisis could be avoided if the burden was distributed to where each country did something but enough to help more humans in need and at the same time allow the characters of Europe stay the same.

The People

Again, it has already been established that every human has the right to live. However, people seem to forget that concept under challenging scenarios. It is important to remember that the individuals that are desperately trying to enter the well-established European countries are human beings in need and have the same right as the people that are making the decisions on the other side. It is easy to get caught up in what is happening overall and look at the people as numbers and statistics, but when looking closer, one has to understand that the migrants are people that simply got unlucky with where they were born. Not to forget, these people have an extreme amount of courage, perseverance, and determination by deciding to leave home and everything they ever knew. In other words, these people work hard to remain a right that so many others take for granted. It is not a surprise that these individuals have gone through a lot and may suffer from different trauma-related distress and diseases. However, it all depends on how the European countries view the situation. It seems that the commonly held view is that migrants are harmed individuals that will be a burden for society either financially or by increasing crime rates and poverty rates. After providing some healthcare to get the people healthy and mentally stable, the migrants can be a considerable contribution to the new society. As mentioned earlier, these people are strong, independent and hard working. According to author Matsangou, "there are further examples that illustrate that refugee workers increase wages for the local population" (2015, p.1). For example, using migrants as a workforce can boost the economy because of the additional push power. Moreover, if a country treats the migrants as citizens, the society can gain from having them. The chances are that the refugees will qualify for low-skill jobs, to begin with, and increase a countries capital. Matsangou (2015) argues that whether a refugee is a burden or not depends on the person itself and how the individuals are begin treated. Furthermore, Matsangou states "When they are given the right to work, access to

capital, and educational opportunities, they are likely to have the greatest impact” (p.1).

Therefore, if only a few countries keep taking care and providing the refugee's jobs without help from others, the standard and quality may drop. However, if several countries help out and hire refugees, low-skill jobs will be given to people that want them, and the standard is going to increase. Migrants and refugees may become a threat to society if they do not receive care and help to get out of the misery that they are coming from. Many are going to suffer from trauma, distress and other harms that can make anyone commit certain unwanted acts. Therefore, investing in providing treatment for the refugees is going to be a short-term cost until they are in the right state of mind and can start contributing to society.

The lifeboat theory

When dealing with difficult ethical regarded issues, one may find it helpful to look at the psychological standpoint of the concern. Especially when discussing the migration, psychology is huge because the matter has affected both individuals and whole societies. Additionally, a nation may find it hard to make decisions regarding the concern because peoples' lives are in play. Not only are the decisions affecting the migrants and refugees, but the results may also move individuals and societies that used to be established and solid. One interesting theory is called the lifeboat theory and was explained by Harding (1947). Even though Harding's theory is a case against helping the poor, the philosophy can help understand the thought-process that it takes to reject human beings in need. Ultimately, Harding's theory compares the strong nations to a lifeboat with only a certain number of seats. However, the demand of getting on the lifeboat is higher than the capacity of the boat itself. Consequently, conflicts arise. First of all, who gets to be on the boat and who doesn't, and who is in charge of that decision? Additionally, one may argue that the only way to reach complete justice is to let everyone on the boat, but instead, that

would result in everyone drowning. This metaphor relates to migration because some European countries have only let the original population stay on the boat and rejected the rest. On the other hand, countries such as Germany has let too many on the boat and is struggling to keep the ship above water. Furthermore, Hardin (1974) states that "If we divide the world crudely into rich nations and poor nations, two-thirds of them are desperately poor, and only one third comparatively rich, with the United States the wealthiest of all" (p.1). In other words, the world is already sinking, but is there a way that we can allow the big ship, the earth, to remain floating by using collective effort and share the resources? Consequently, other questions arise such as, "does everyone on earth have an equal right to an equal share of its resources?" (Hardin, 1974). Moreover, no one is in control of where to be born or how they spend the first period of life. However, the selfish humanity rather forgets about the fact that anyone could have been born on the dark side, and chooses to hold on to the enrichment of life that was given to them and not share.

The Real tragedy of the commons

It is not a surprise that the world is suffering from a population problem, but there are many different theories and ideas of how the issue can be resolved or how it is too late. While Harding, (1974) argued that the only way for the population to be protected is to control and regulate reproduction, Gardiner (2002) disagrees. In *The Real Tragedy of the Commons*, Gardiner presents a scenario with a certain structure named the prisoner's dilemma. Theoretically, the dilemma includes two individuals that have been accused to have committed a crime together. When facing the trial, this scenario allows four different outcomes depending on the two's confession or denial. Gardiner (2002) explains the four outcomes as,

1. I confess, the other prisoner doesn't. (I go free)

2. Neither of us confess. (both gets 1 year)
3. Both of us confess. (Both gets 2 years)
4. I don't confess, but the other prisoner does. (I get 10 years)

Each prisoner has to make the decision without knowing what the other person will do.

Consequently, the two will have to determine whether the best outcome will come from cooperating with the other person and share the burden or to think selfishly in order to get the least number of years while risking getting the highest. Similarly goes for the migration crisis in Europe if providing help equals a confession in a dilemma, and rejecting migrants would be the same as no confession. The only difference would be that outcome one, and four would have to swap. In other words, the nations in Europe have to make individual decisions on how to deal with the migrants. Each country is dependent on what the other countries' actions are. In regards to the structure of the dilemma with an exchange of option one and four, it would mean that if country number 1 decides to help and no other country does, country number 1 is stuck with ten years of burden. Considering option number two, where no country in Europe provided help, the continent may be somewhat suffering for the first year and then be okay. Lastly, if all countries collectively take on the responsibility of the migration, it would result in two years of burden, in theory, matching the outcome for the prisoners if both were to confess which is the second-best outcome for everyone not risking that any country suffers for the longer period of time on its own.

Overall, Europe is dealing with a difficult situation because the migration crisis affects the economy, culture, and human lives. The countries are forced to make morally challenging decisions, and all nations depend on one another and their actions. At the moment, not enough countries are agreeing and helping, leaving a few countries with all the burden and responsibility.

Furthermore, these countries will not be a solid helping hand for much longer because they will be suffering too much. There has already been a shift where Germany, for example, is applying stricter border control because the burden is becoming too much. There may not be one right answer to the situation, but it is known that what is happening at the moment is not working. When Gardiner (2002) presented the prisoner's dilemma, it showed that collective effort takes everyone further. Because humans are naturally selfish, people also become blind to what is most beneficial in the long run because we want the reward right away. If humanity opened up their eyes and realized that it is not only our ownership and responsibility to take care of one another and share the resources, it is also the only way that we are all going to survive in the long run. Death may be unavoidable, but if humanity believes that everyone has the right to live, everybody is responsible for minimizing as many killings as possible, even the ones that are not necessarily perceived as murder.

References

- Cavendish, C. (2015, Mar 08). Britain and Europe must slam the brakes on mass immigration. Sunday Times Retrieved from <http://lynn-lang.student.lynn.edu:2048/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1661218943?accountid=36334>
- Gardiner, S. (2002). The Real Tragedy of the Commons. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30, no 4 (387-416).
- Greenhill, K. M. (2016). Open arms behind barred doors: Fear, Hypocrisy and Policy Schizophrenia in the European Migration Crisis. *European Law Journal*, 22(3), 317-332. doi:10.1111/eulj.12179
- Hardin, G. (1975). Lifeboat Ethics. *The Hastings Center Report*, 5(1), 8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3560937>.
- Matsangou, E. (2015). *Refugees are an economic benefit, not burden, to Europe*. *Worldfinance.com*. Retrieved 28 October 2017, from <https://www.worldfinance.com/infrastructure-investment/government-policy/refugees-are-an-economic-benefit-not-burden-to-europe>
- Nell, O. (1975). Lifeboat Earth. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, [online] 4(3), pp.273-292. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265086> [Accessed 2 May 2010].
- Roberts, B., Murphy, A., & McKee, M. (2016). Europe's collective failure to address the refugee crisis. *Public Health Reviews* (2107-6952), 37(1), 1-5. doi:10.1186/s40985-016-0015-6
- Sweden and migration | sweden.se. (2017). *sweden.se*. Retrieved 26 October 2017, from <https://sweden.se/migration/#2013>

Why is EU struggling with migrants and asylum? (2016, March 3). *BBC News*. Retrieved 25

October 2017, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24583286>