



Position for a Post-doctoral researcher in ethics

Climate change presents humankind with one of its greatest challenges. The earth is experiencing global warming and its consequences will be dramatic. There is a strong scientific consensus about what should be done to mitigate climate change – reduction in the emission of Green House Gasses (GHG), particularly those associated with burning fossil fuels for electricity generation and transport.

To reduce GHG emissions people will need to modify their behaviours and lifestyles, particularly people living in countries where the per-capita emissions are highest. However, they are not doing so, or at least not sufficiently to ensure global warming is kept at safe levels for future generations. The reasons for this are complex and involve geopolitical and social factors, but key among the reasons is that environmental ethics has not become embedded in the discourse of how people consider climate change and its effects.

Among the ethical issues that arise are that a single individual's actions make little overall difference leading them to ask: "Why should I bear inconvenience and have a lower quality-of-life if my impact is so small overall?" The same question is also asked at a national level: why should a country reduce its emissions and jeopardize its economic growth when others do not; this would give 'free-riders' an economic advantage, at least in the short-to-medium term. A further ethical issue is the effect of climate change on the non-human world: for example, what value if any does humankind put on biodiversity and to what extent ought human beings curtail their activities to allow other animals and plants to live natural lives. Finally recent work has emphasised that, besides climate change and biodiversity loss there are other thresholds that are exceeded or threatened by human activities.

In this project we try to further understand the ethical challenges for human behaviour in the Anthropocene and to develop responses based on ethical principles. We begin by recognising that human behaviour is a function of the economic and social models. Intrinsic to this is the identification of the individual as a consumer of goods and services. Economic growth (GDP growth) is the dominant objective of many societies, at least as articulated by governments. Growth requires increasing production carried out by corporations seeking investment returns for investors, alongside increased consumption of goods and services by individuals promoted by marketing, advertising and media industries. Integrated into the consumer society, and in some ways running counter to it, are ideas of sustainability, circular economy [including ideas of recycling, right-of-repair], and ethical consumption.

In particular we are interested in how to establish right living in a world where the economic models of continued growth and consumerism are accepted, or how to construct a countervailing narrative based on ethical thinking. We would like to apply that understanding in the Irish context (i.e., small open European economy; prosperity achieved relatively recently; significant indigenous industry in beef and dairy; major multinational industries in ICT and pharma) and a political system strongly predicated on maintaining a high quality of life for a growing population.



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

This is a three-year position for a researcher with a PhD in ethics or a related discipline. The overall area of work will be in environmental ethics. The project will focus on developing ideas in ethical consumerism and how it relates to climate change. A good outcome of the work would be a stronger articulation of the consumption dilemmas faced by individuals and groups who seek to live ethically in the Anthropocene, and the development of new models/frameworks for ethical consumption.

Candidates will be given considerable freedom to pursue their research and publications within the general theme described above. The Postdoctoral researcher will be expected to organise a seminar series, in collaboration with the Principal Investigators. During the project an 'Environmental Ethics Initiative' will be established involving the PI and other faculty members who have an interest in environmental ethics, and the Postdoctoral researcher will participate in this. Later it is intended to have PhD student and the postdoc will be expected to contribute to the supervision team.

The salary will be as follows with an appointment made in accordance with experience since award of the PhD.

Point 1 €41,208 , Point 2 €41,785 , Point 3 €43,699 , Point 4 €44,921 , Point 5 €46,180 , Point 6 €47,477. Appointees will avail of the Irish public sector pension scheme with an additional 20% of salary paid into the scheme by the project. A travel and publication budget is available for the project. The project will be carried out in the School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies with Professor Linda Hogan as the Principal Investigator.

Applications should be in the form of a covering letter, a current CV, and the names of two referees. It should be received by 11th December 2023 to:

Professor Linda Hogan FTCD, MRIA
Chair of Ecumenics
School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies
Trinity College Dublin
Dublin 2
Lhogan2@tcd.ie

Informal enquiries are encouraged and may be made to Professor Linda Hogan at Lhogan2@tcd.ie