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"The Disvalue of 'Contingent Valuation' and the Problem of the 'Expectation Gap'"

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"Contingent Valuation" is a method often used to make decisions about environmental issues. It is used to elicit citizens' preferences at the location of a specific facility, new road and the like. I argue that even if we could elicit a truly informed and "free" choice, the method would remain flawed, as 1) all "local" activity also has far-reaching environmental consequences; 2) majority decisions may support choices that adversely affect minorities; 3) even with full information, consenting to harms like significant alterations of our normal functioning or health, or genetic mutations, may not be morally acceptable.

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