

Project n. 1

Present rights and future generations: ethical implications of climate change

The anthropogenic nature of the global temperature rise observed since the 1950s has been acknowledged for more than thirty years; the risks associated with it, both for the planet's ecosystems and for the human beings who inhabit it, are now evident. Alongside research in biology, economics and engineering, the challenge of sustainable development requires an ethical reflection on human beings and their responsibility towards the environment, other human beings and future generations; more precisely, it requires a rethinking of the lifestyle and scale of values of the contemporary individual.

Climate change threatens the fundamental rights or interests of present and future people; furthermore, we attribute an independent value to the planet's ecosystems and their preservation. Aware of the anthropogenic origin of this phenomenon, we consider our actions subject to moral judgment.

The moral reflection on climate change can be declined along several lines of research, including the following:

1. The individual and climate change: consequentialist and deontological principles at the basis of the commitment to the environment; motivation and moral reasons for the care and preservation of ecosystems; rethinking moral virtues for the challenges of sustainable development; relationship between the individual and nature in world cultures.
2. Individual responsibility and collective responsibility in climate change: the problem of inconsequential outcomes of individual action; collective action, joint commitment, forms of collective intentionality; the role of the individual in global problems: the epistemic conditions of moral responsibility, the duty to inform oneself about the future outcomes of one's actions and to know the causes and consequences of climate change, the blameworthiness of ignorance.
3. Ethics of future generations: the foundation of the rights of people who do not yet exist; caring for the other who is distant in time and space; the conflict between the rights of present and future people.

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