

Summary and Concluding Remarks

Climate change is the single biggest threat to human well-being and probably the biggest challenge of the 21st century. That given, this book asked: What ought regular individual agents do with regard to climate change? In this concluding chapter, I will first outline how I proceeded in this book by summarising the central findings of each chapter. Based on that, I will briefly explicate my response to the research question of this book. Next, I broaden the perspective to global climate policy by roughly asking what policy institutions can do to foster promotional activity. This chapter closes with two final remarks regarding political will and effectiveness.

Summary

Chapter 1 started by providing a rough overview of basic scientific facts about climate change by highlighting three aspects: the urgency to act, the impacts and risks, in particular with regard to human well-being, and the fact that climate-induced impacts will increasingly be felt in all regions of the planet. Next, I followed the dominant moral narrative and focused on the question whether individual agents have a duty to refrain from polluting actions directly. By providing a rough overview of the status quo of the philosophical discussion, I suggested that it is time to move away from accounts that try to prove causality of individual actions. Yet, I stressed that this does not mean either to forgo causality altogether or to leave individuals without moral duties at all.

Taking up on that, chapter 2 accelerated the challenge of identifying individual duties for cases of collective harm. Focusing on the avoidance of further climate-induced suffering, I emphasised that no individual agent will be able to prevent harm on her own. However, taking Gilbert's (2006, 2009) theory as an example, I showed that the central condition for assigning collective responsibility in the strong, conventional sense, namely intention in a rather broad understanding, is not fulfilled either. The challenge is that even though neither concepts of individual responsibility, nor standard concepts of collective responsibility are sufficient to justify either individual or collective duties; climate change requires action – collective action. Cripps (2013) has developed a theory that aims to solve this challenge.

Chapter 3 introduced Cripps' theory and I claimed that it is strongest for rethinking individuals as collectivities. That way, Cripps moves away from the intentionalist concept of collectivities. Building on an interest-based

normative foundation, Cripps defines mutual dependence as a criterion for non-intentional, weak collectivities. Accordingly, weak collectivities are assigned weakly collective duties. With regard to climate change mitigation, Cripps argues, the Young and the Able have a weakly collective duty to cooperate based on their collective self-interest (Young) and their ability to act (Able) and the Polluters have a weakly collective duty to organize themselves as necessary based on their weakly collective responsibility to prevent serious harm. Given that none of the three collectivities is yet able to act collectively, Cripps defends the primacy of individual promotional duties as derivatives of the weakly collective duties. Promotional duties are assigned to members of the weak collectivities and aim to initiate required collective action. In distinction to mimicking and direct duties, the key reasons for the primacy of promotion are connected to effectiveness, fairness, and efficiency. Discussing three objections, I argued that the demandingness-objection with regard to individual costs is the most serious one – even with regard to promotion. Following, I argued that Cripps is not fully able to cope with the strength of the demandingness objection, which is for two aspects: the lack of transparency with regard to the justification and the lack of a hierarchy of entitlements. In connection to that, I suggested the modification of the normative foundation (chapter 4). Further, I claimed that weak collectivities (chapter 5) as well as promotional duties (chapter 6) require discussion, advancement, and, if necessary, modification and defence.

Chapter 4 introduced Gewirth's (1978) rights-based moral theory as an alternative normative foundation. Based on rational considerations, Gewirth provides a substantial justification of a supreme moral principle, the PGC, claiming that all agents have equal moral rights to freedom and well-being. In application, the PGC provides an adequate framework to explicate and evaluate morally relevant actions and institutions in a consistent and conflict-solving way. Though Gewirth's theory varies from Cripps' normative foundation with regard to several aspects, I demonstrated that Cripps' idea of weak collectivities is compatible with a rights-based foundation. Drawing on Gewirth, I suggested the modification of the cost-expressions of the three guiding moral principles for the Young, the Able and the Polluters and emphasised that promotional action ought to initiate top-down *and* bottom-up change. Accordingly, climate action of individual agents is about pushing the effects of collaboration between individuals and institutions. Focusing on the Polluters, I further examined whether duties impose too much of an individual cost. In order to provide guidance on reasonable costs, I defined several fields of tension that shape the discussion. Following, I argued that demandingness is rather a challenge with regard to doing one's