

Climate Change and the Philosophical Pitfalls of Grounding Duty to Future Generations

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Do you think future persons should be considered part of our moral community? What about those who have passed away? Is considering the rights and interests of future generations the same as considering those of the past? Why or why not?

The author claims that the “question about how current people’s actions harm, or directly impact, future people encounters a paradox.” Can you explain what the paradox is?

Are we blameworthy for failing to better preserve the environment? If so, who do you feel we owe that obligation to? Is it ourselves, other living creatures, the Earth, future generations, or something else?

The author claims that both utilitarian calculations and talk of rights fail to properly address the harm? Why? Do you agree? The author goes on to suggest that to better assess our moral duty we should “simply ask what we would have endorsed were we to find ourselves in the same situation.” Why? Do you agree? What distinguishes the author’s approach to the problem from the two other suggestions that are dismissed?