

THE UNAVOIDABILITY OF GLOBAL JUSTICE

Part I described the practical and ethical challenge of climate change. Chapter 1 summarised how global warming and climate change will become growing problems in the future, with the adverse impacts being felt most severely by those countries and people least responsible for causing them. Chapter 2 briefly examined how ethics and justice have become important in world affairs. Drawing on several accounts of justice, it showed how climate change is a profound matter of international and indeed global justice – or, more appropriately, *injustice*. Part II looked at justice in the context of international environmental agreements and regimes. Chapter 3 described the evolution of international environmental justice, which has been applied by states in the context of climate change because international justice has been perceived to be necessary for garnering the widest possible collective international action to limit global warming and to deal with its effects. As summarised in Chapter 4, governments have generally agreed on the importance of overarching justice principles, notably common but differentiated responsibility. However, the implementation of international climate justice by states has fallen far short of what is required ethically and practically, failing to address climate change in a robust way. Indeed, greenhouse gas emissions and the pace of climate change are *increasing* markedly. Taken together, the chapters in Part II located the failure of the climate change regime largely in its preoccupation with the rights and duties of *sovereign states*, and the consequent tragedy of the atmospheric commons resulting from the short-sighted logic of perceived national interests.

With that tragedy in mind, I have argued that there is a crucial *practical* role for world ethics in the international response to climate change. An approach to the problem based on world ethics and global justice may be much more politically viable than current practice. This is

a case where doing what is right is also what is likely to achieve agreements among states and other actors that will be implemented with the desired effects.

Starting Part III, Chapter 5 identified and described an alternative way of viewing global climate change: cosmopolitanism. To be sure, international justice remains important. But it is far too narrow an approach because, in its myopic focus on states, it fails to recognise the locus of climate change – namely, people. This is a mistake that cosmopolitanism is well suited to overcome. Cosmopolitan concern with human rights and duties comports with the realities of climate change, in particular the role of hundreds of millions of individual polluters everywhere who pollute because they want to, not because they need to. These polluters include most people in the developed countries but also the rapidly growing population of new consumers in developing countries. As we saw in Chapter 6, cosmopolitanism not only directs our attention to much more than states; it does something that international climate doctrine has failed to do so far: recognise the practical and ethical significance of the rights and duties of all individuals, including the duties of many millions of capable and increasingly affluent people living outside the developed states who are becoming major contributors to the problem. Drawing on both the reality of the state-centred climate change regime and the desirability (moral and practical) of a cosmopolitan alternative, Chapter 7 described some features of a cosmopolitan corollary to international environmental justice in the context of climate change. The corollary is an attempt to correct biases built into the climate change regime by bringing people into debates and policies at both national and international levels. If states are to do more to address climate change effectively, they ought to help facilitate cosmopolitan justice.

However, even if the cosmopolitan corollary is actualised by states, we cannot leave it all up to them. Something else is needed for global climate justice to be achieved soon: citizen action. Consequently, in this chapter I briefly return to those actors who are by definition central to cosmopolitanism and who should be, by necessity, central to action on climate change: human beings.¹

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The historical evolution of justice beyond borders has progressed through several stages that look something like this: first, states had very few if any obligations to other states, apart from non-intervention and respecting emissaries. This stage lasted well into the twentieth

century. Second, affluent states accepted some obligations to poor states, certainly to aid in case of widespread famine and major natural disasters. This stage arguably became entrenched in the last half-century, in large part because technology and modern transport enabled states to aid one another relatively easily. Third, affluent states accepted (although they have too rarely acted upon) some obligations to individuals abroad who are very badly off, such as those persons suffering from endemic poverty or widespread human rights abuses. We now seem to be in a fourth stage, in which there is some agreement that affluent *individuals in wealthy states* have obligations to people in poor states suffering from severe poverty and other major ills. This is an important and positive development manifested in many governments' official development assistance and the work of non-governmental organisations. What we should hope for now is an extension of this to include the obligations of affluent individuals *everywhere* – that is, a fifth stage of *cosmopolitan* justice that does not merely see people in poor countries as objects of assistance but, if they are affluent, also sees them as objects of obligation to end, as much as possible, harm to others and to assist those who are badly off in their own countries *and* elsewhere. This fifth stage – truly global justice – may be vital if the world is to address climate change effectively.

Thomas Pogge (Pogge 2008: 209) summarises the injustices of climate change: 'The global poor get to share the burdens resulting from the degradation of our natural environment while having to watch helplessly as the affluent distribute the planet's abundant natural wealth amongst themselves.' This points to an important conclusion: if we are to address global climate change successfully, we will have to acknowledge that justice extends well beyond borders. Our future requires that our responses to the globalisation of environmental changes and their consequences include a globalisation of justice. This need not mean that global justice replace justice within states, but it does mean that justice beyond them can no longer be given minor consideration when solutions to climate change are deliberated, formulated and implemented. Global justice – the rights of all people everywhere to their due, and the duties of people everywhere depending on their capabilities – will have to be at the centre of all aspects of climate change politics and policy.

Robin Attfield (2005: 42) argues that, if cosmopolitan ethics are required, so too is 'an awareness of global citizenship, capable of motivating matching action and a corresponding sense of identity, rather as national citizenship has often served to motivate national patriotism and corresponding forms of communitarianism'. Global citizenship, which involves commitment to a global ethic that transcends

national borders, 'is morally as important as it has always been, and for practical purposes increasingly urgent too' (Attfield 2003: 160). The notion that people might have and act on a sense of global citizenship is not new. Hayden (2005: 15) notes that even the Stoics rejected 'the mutual exclusion of the local and the world communities, and thought it both possible and desirable for individuals to consider themselves citizens of their local communities as well as citizens of the world'.

The idea of world citizenship emphasises the 'individual's duty to act with consideration for the environment, for distant strangers and for unborn generations [and] defends the ideal that there are obligations to avoid acting in ways that result in the domination and exploitation of other peoples' (Linklater 2002: 264). Andrew Dobson (2004: 1) argues that 'ecological citizenship and global justice are intimately linked [and] when properly understood they entail each other'. Good global citizens ought to 'accept that one's actions may have indirect (and largely unintended) effects on both distant and future peoples', with the significance of those actions lying 'partly in their contribution to cumulative impacts' (Dower 2003: 93). Angel Saiz (2006: 13) believes that notions of global citizenship emerge from 'green thought', because environmental issues challenge traditional conceptions of citizenship, requiring as they often do transnational responses. Janna Thompson (2001: 145) speaks of the planetary citizen: 'someone who assumes her share of responsibility for the collective achievement of good which she and virtually everyone else values'. According to Derek Heater (1996: 215), 'in the case of global environmental citizenship, the right of access to and enjoyment of a common planetary environment is matched by the obligations of conservation and a whittling down of national sovereignty ... Without the obligation on the present generation to conserve, the global environmental rights of future generations will be infringed.'

While a sense of global citizenship is probably on the rise, it is not likely to be strong enough or widespread enough, or to come soon enough, to lead to the kind of responses that are necessary to avert the worst effects of climate change. Consequently, states have their role in fostering individual behaviours in keeping with the duties of global citizenship. This is necessarily a contrived global citizenship, but difficult times such as this require that we live with contradictions of modern life rather than ignore them at our peril, and indeed at the peril of others weaker and more vulnerable than ourselves. Cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolitan corollary to international doctrine ought to be squarely focused on what defines the underlying moral theory: the universal rights *and* responsibilities of persons. Ideally, of course, people would

voluntarily act on their duties as global citizens. To start with, affluent people who pollute more than necessary (which means almost all of us who are affluent) would reduce their environmental footprints. But this is a tall order for the period of time in the near future that we have left to begin very seriously tackling climate change. Consequently, states will have to be part of the process whereby people act as global citizens even while a sense of duty as global citizenship evolves, as it almost certainly must if the future is to be bearable for the worlds' poor and vulnerable.

Thompson (2001) acknowledges that finding the right ways to act on planetary responsibilities will not be easy, and that states will still be in the picture. But, even if the means by which individuals could fully realise 'their role as planetary citizens' do not exist, they can still 'aim toward this idea and try to make it a reality' (Thompson 2001: 144). 'Planetary citizenship' and the cooperation it engenders provide 'at least a psychological and moral basis for transcending' differences that may arise from, for example, national affiliations (Thompson 2001: 145). Indeed, as Atfield (2005: 47) points out, the common reliance of all people on the global environment 'has the implication that the different nations, creeds and communities are bound together by shared interests, awareness of which can increase people's motivation to recognise their global citizenship'. Climate change does not give us time to wait for a culture of planetary or world citizenship to develop slowly, but the cosmopolitan corollary at least offers states incentives, or at least mitigates and removes many political obstacles, to start developing the necessary institutions, to lay down new codes of conduct and to encourage their citizens to 'think globally, act locally'.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

From the cosmopolitan perspective, individual persons have fundamental rights that precede 'rights' of states. This will come as a comfort to those whose fundamental rights, such as the right to subsistence, are violated as a consequence of climate change. But cosmopolitanism also identifies persons as *moral agents* with duties to act in certain ways (Evans 2003: 25). If this agency is to effect a reduction in global warming and the resulting injustices of climate change, affluent people everywhere will have to live differently. For example, we will have to enjoy airline travel much less, or not at all, because it quickly puts us over our fair share of lifetime greenhouse gas emissions. One easy new behaviour that the affluent could adopt would be to stop eating animals, because meat production uses large amounts of fossil-fuel energy and produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Affluent individuals also ought to

push for political and economic changes that will lead to widespread environmental action by more individuals (Wapner and Willoughby 2005). Even where this is not so easy, as in authoritarian states, affluent individuals can still act to restrain their consumption, thereby contributing to what should be a global collective effort of the affluent. Put another way, just because one cannot change one's national system or because the international climate change regime does not yet encourage or enable individual responsibility, there is no excuse to live like most Americans or Australians. To do so, at least in a material sense, is immoral; it is a violation of cosmopolitan justice and a recipe for climate disaster.

At present, many of us follow (although we seldom admit as much) the moral concept of 'us-here-now'; 'to deny that we have obligations to any but the present generation or those living now, to deny that we have obligations to non-humans, and to deny we have obligations to human beings outside our own society' (Dower 1998: 161).² This is unjust. Living a life of *sufficiency* is the better ethical and environmental course. While affluent global citizens need not completely renounce their material way of life, we ought to 'weaken our relentless pursuit of and attachment to it. So we need to re-evaluate our commitment to material affluence, for the sake of the environment, for the sake of peace and for the sake of the poor' (Dower 2007: 210). Wolfgang Sachs (2001) identifies an obligation of the affluent everywhere: 'the global middle class, which includes Southern elites, have got to search for forms of well-being which are capable of justice'. He argues that

the move toward models of frugal use of wealth among the affluent is a matter of equity, not just of ecology. However, conventional development thinking implicitly defines equity as a problem of the poor. But [in] designing strategies for the poor, developmentalists [have] worked towards lifting the bottom – rather than lowering the top. The wealthy and their way of producing and consuming weren't under scrutiny, and the burden of change was solely heaped upon the poor. In future, however, justice will be much more about changing lifestyles of the rich than about changing those of the poor. (Sachs 2000: 25)

We ought to consume what we need from the Earth to survive and to fulfil our basic needs, and perhaps a bit more, doing all that we reasonably can to limit the impact of that consumption. The affluent ought to consume what we need, full stop. By behaving this way, affluent individuals *everywhere* would be actualising global justice and acting as good global citizens.

Affluent individuals also ought to *aid* those who are suffering from climate change and those who will suffer in the future. We should, along

with governments, aid current sufferers because we have probably benefited from economic wealth that was generated from past environmental exploitation and that is causing present harm. We should aid people who will suffer in the future because our emissions of greenhouse gases will harm them, particularly the poor. As Thomas Pogge (1998: 510) puts it, 'those, usually the affluent, who make more extensive use of the resources of our planet should compensate those who, involuntarily, use very little' because the 'better-off – we – are *harming* the worse-off insofar as the radical inequality we uphold excludes the global poor from a proportional share of the world's natural resources and any equivalent substitute' (Pogge 2005: 40).³

Cosmopolitan climate justice means that obligations to act on climate change, and to aid those (individuals) harmed by it, apply to nearly all affluent individuals regardless of where they live. If governments do more by way of using taxes, regulations, infrastructure and education to change behaviours, many people will be pushed to do the right thing. However, if governments are not fully up to the task (which could be the case until environmental conditions grow very bad indeed), affluent individuals will have to find it within themselves to act on cosmopolitan obligations. Insofar as possible given where we live and the structures that rule our lives, we should act responsibly by cutting our greenhouse gas emissions if we are already emitting more than our fair share (as we almost certainly are) or, if we are not emitting much more than our fair share of greenhouse gases, by limiting them to somewhere near that level. Even if it is not clear where this limit should be set, affluent people should do everything we reasonably can to limit our greenhouse pollution. Non-essential polluting activities should be avoided. The increasingly common practice of paying for 'carbon offsets', usually by giving money to non-governmental organisations that support forests and other carbon sinks, is not an adequate response for capable global citizens because, as Hermann Ott and Sachs (2002: 173) put it, 'the cosmopolitan notion focuses on self-limitation for the sake of a good global neighbourhood'. According to Brian Orend (2006: 212), 'being a good international [and, we might add, *world*] citizen *does demand some self-restraint*'.

In sum, if a person's emissions of greenhouse gases are above an acceptable global per-capita average (currently and for their lifetime) *and* his basic needs are met and he is significantly above the poverty level in his local community (how this level is defined is, of course, important), then he has an obligation to bring those emissions at least down to (or as near as possible to, given his circumstances) an acceptable global per-capita amount that would prevent climate upset. If his personal

lifetime emissions exceed his share of the global per-capita limit, he is also obliged to aid those who suffer from climate change now and especially in the future (at least insofar as his excess emissions were something he could control), and arguably he ought to do this even if his personal emissions have been low. Obligation to act – to limit our own contributions to greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere – is a negative responsibility because we 'participate in, and profit from, the unjust and coercive imposition' (Pogge 1998: 502) of climate change on those who will suffer from it the most, and the obligation to *aid* those who are suffering or will suffer from climate change is a positive responsibility because we 'could improve the circumstances' (Pogge 1998: 502) of those sufferers (to give only two justifications among a number, as we have seen).

We may be products of our local communities, but this fact need not preclude us from having communal sentiments and even strong loyalties to more than one community. We can have strong loyalties to family members *and* to a larger community (for example, neighbourhood, town, village, nation, state). We can also have loyalties towards both our national community and the global community. Indeed, some cosmopolitans have argued that we fall within a number of concentric circles, each associated with a different kind of loyalty, attachment or identify – the self and the family being closest, humanity being farthest away (but still there). While we may be more likely to care about and assist fellow family members or fellow citizens of our national community, it does not follow that we would be willing to do so – or ought to do so morally – regardless of the costs to others far away (Brown 1992: 186). Today we are increasingly the products of international society; many young people especially are immersed in, shaped by, and identify with ideas and ideals, personalities, styles and forms of popular culture that have no boundaries. Insofar as these things shape people's identities, they can foster greater sympathy for, and affiliation with, the larger world community. What is more, a sense of local community loyalty may be expanded to a sense of global community when focused by menaces that remind us that we all live in one world. If Martians were to attack Earth and collective action were required to repel that invasion and to cope with it, I suspect that the sense of community among all humanity would be much stronger. Climate change is analogous to an attack from Mars, albeit in slow motion.

Additionally, sympathies to a larger community – a sense of altruism towards people in other countries, especially the poor – can be a by-product of specific types of domestic communities (Lumsdaine 1993). Countries that have generous arrangements for domestic social welfare

(for example, the Scandinavian states) are especially generous with their official development assistance. Not coincidentally, these are the same countries that have been most forthcoming with efforts to help less affluent countries develop in an environmentally sustainable fashion. Countries that are generous at home are generous abroad. This shows that we may be a product of the domestic communities in which we were raised, but this does not mean that we will not have a feeling of obligation to other people far away. One's domestic community can even cultivate such sentiments. This is an important development, suggesting, perhaps paradoxically, that (some) national communities themselves may be in front of (most) persons in seeing that a globalised world cannot be governed effectively if we fail to acknowledge and act upon, in a universal way insofar as practicable, the moral worth of every human being.

If one is not moved by the need to act for the well-being of others, it is worth being reminded that there is almost nothing to lose and much to gain from doing what global environmental justice demands. Despite dramatic increases in average income and gross domestic product per person in the developed countries of the world over the last half-century, people's satisfaction with life and happiness has not increased, demonstrating that affluence, as opposed to meeting one's real needs, is not directly linked to people's feelings of well-being (Speth 2008: 129–34). Contrary to common wisdom, once people's basic needs have been met, plus a cushion for security and some modest luxuries, money and consumption do not buy happiness. But helping others does have its rewards in the form of self-satisfaction, and consuming only what we need gives us the knowledge that the environment upon which everyone relies, including ourselves, is more likely to be able to sustain us.

As James Garvey (2008: 150) points out, when one enters a funk from the apparent hopelessness of doing anything oneself to fight climate change, it is worth bearing in mind that the effects of one's behaviour are measured over a lifetime:

against the claim that individual choices cannot matter much, is that nothing else about you stands a chance of making a moral difference at all. If anything matters, it's all those little choices. This rejoinder shows up all over the place, just about anywhere you hear the claim that nothing a single person can do could possibly make a difference. The little effects are the only effects you'll ever have. The only chance you have of making a moral difference consists in the individual choices you make.

The total impact of a life lived high on the hog compared to one lived simply adds up, and, when multiplied by a billion or more other

relatively affluent people in the world, the impact is gargantuan. It is the difference between a livable planet for all and truly monumental suffering for billions.

CONCLUSION

As every day passes and increasing numbers of people join the ranks of the world's affluent classes, a cosmopolitan ethic of climate change becomes more urgent. *International justice* is necessary but inadequate, and the focus on it by diplomats, activists and scholars may be part of the problem. This points to the need for ways of transgressing sovereignty and for solutions that do not depend upon the state-centric assumptions that prevail in climate change negotiations and policies. The preoccupation with states is, of course, understandable. We live in a world of states in which national governments try to do what is required to manage common problems. But this preoccupation is a kind of myopia or even a psychosis of sorts; it is a mental straitjacket that 'forces' us to think of problems and their solutions in terms of states instead of in terms of human-based causes, consequences and remedies.

Without ignoring the role of states and other institutions to actualise climate justice, we should stop talking almost exclusively about national responsibilities and obligations. We should talk much more about individual obligations (of affluent persons) and consider these obligations when making policies and attempting to educate people about climate change. We also ought to spread the burden and stop letting affluent people in certain places avoid responsibility. Most people in the affluent countries are, of course, the most to blame. But it may be counterproductive to keep telling the Western middle classes that they should drive their cars less while they watch the developing world's roads fill with the same vehicles.

Even those who call for incorporating equity and justice into solutions to climate change usually do so in terms of states: justice among states is required because climate change is an injustice among them. This emergence of *international environmental justice* is an important step forward historically. Alas, it is only a small step because it has been actualised only minimally owing to the selfishness of its objects – states themselves – and because it ignores so many people who cause and experience the injustices of climate change. Even after more than two decades of international negotiations and much earnestness on the part of diplomats, government officials and activists, there is very little to show for all this activity relative to the scale of climate change and its severe impacts. Very little has come from the climate change regime so

far by way of concrete and deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions required to stem global warming, let alone the very large transfers of funds and technology to poor countries and people needed to spread the cuts widely and to help the most vulnerable cope with inevitable climate change. By ignoring individuals and indeed global justice, the climate change regime has backed states into a corner. This was all predictable given the nature of states to promote their narrow, usually short-term interests most of the time – at times even over the interests of their own citizens. Thus we need to go beyond international justice to consider fully, and to implement fully, *global* justice as well. We are all in this together, which implies quite a lot for every capable person, along with capable states, international organisations and other actors.

In this book I have not advocated what many cosmopolitans aspire to – world government. But it may come to that. Without alternatives to failed climate change policies based upon international doctrine, we may very soon reach a point where a global supranational entity is the only way to overcome the tragedy of the atmospheric commons. Even David Miller (2007: 269), hardly a proponent of cosmopolitanism, has said that, 'if global warming accelerates to the point where the continuance of human life in anything like its present form becomes doubtful, people might be willing to sign a Hobbesian global contract giving a central authority the power to impose fierce environmental controls on all societies'. But before it comes to that, 'we need to ask what might motivate ordinary people to impose the necessary restrictions on themselves' (D. Miller 2007: 269). One thing that might motivate them, as well as their governments, is a new contract that places cosmopolitan aims, and persons everywhere, at the centre of the climate change regime.

The general question of international climate justice is settled. Nobody is arguing very vigorously that the developed countries do not have special obligations. Much debate about the details remains, to be sure. However, the general question of global, *cosmopolitan* climate justice is still very much unsettled. We have not decided whether certain *people* have responsibility for justice towards others, especially if those people and the others we are concerned about are both living in poor countries. At the very least, insofar as one accepts a simple standard of ethics that identifies behaviour harmful to others in this context as being wrong, we have, by definition, an ethical deficit. We have devoted so much diplomatic and philosophical capital to arguing for international justice that we have avoided looking at the actual locus of environmental harm, which is largely the individual and, from an ethical perspective, especially the affluent individual with a major impact on

climate and a choice about whether to end or exacerbate that impact. The solution to our ethical deficit, and to climate change, is, at least in large part, cosmopolitan justice. Ultimately what that means is a combination of political *and* personal morality, and behaviour to match.

We might not be able to solve climate change – we might not be able to prevent most of the adverse effects, including the monumental human suffering and economic costs it will entail in coming decades – if we do not embrace *global* justice. Doing so may be ethically, practically and politically *essential*. Insofar as climate change is the most important problem facing humankind, as well as other species sharing this planet, there can be no more profound argument in favour of world ethics. Human survival and world ethics go hand in hand; it is unlikely that we can have the former without the latter.

NOTES

1. We might accomplish the same environmental objectives even more successfully if we were to put all species at the centre of climate policy, but one assumes that bringing in non-humans to this extent would not have the political advantages of the human-centred cosmopolitan corollary. Thus doing so might not be the most realistic approach, given what little time we seem to have left to avert catastrophe.
2. I am using Dower's wording here, not his sentiments. As a cosmopolitan, he rejects this conception.
3. The radical inequality is defined as the better-off enjoying significant advantages of, and the worse-off being excluded from and not being compensated for a lack of access to, the natural resource base (see Pogge 2002c, 2008).