

Fragnière on individual responsibility

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Climate change and environmental ethics
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Outline

Individual duty and the climate crisis

Duty to reduce carbon footprint

Duty to promote and support collective action

Conclusions & some thoughts

Points for discussion

Does the climate crisis entail duties for individuals?

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- ▶ Debate has been focussed on duty rather than backward-looking responsibility.
- ▶ Two main duties: (1) duty to reduce individual carbon footprint; and (2) duty to support and promote collective action against climate change.

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 4. Same amount will be emitted anyway.

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- ▶ Most authors conclude that we have at least some duty to reduce our individual carbon footprint.
- ▶ However, barely anyone says moral agents should bring their carbon footprint to zero. Main reasons for this are that such duty would be both overly *demanding* and outside of *control* of an individual.

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- ▶ Top-down approach: change institutions.

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- ▶ Elizabeth Cripps: promotional (collective) efforts are not 'throw-away acts' like in the case of GHG emissions, but contribute to a collective endeavour.

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1. Most authors support the conclusion that an individual has some responsibility both to reduce their carbon footprint and to support collective action against climate change.
2. The duties will, however, depend on the particular circumstances of an individual, and must therefore be decided (at least partially) on a case by case basis.
3. There is no consensus which of the two duties (reducing the carbon footprint or collective action) takes precedence in case of a conflict.

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- ▶ Many of the counterintuitive conclusions and problems faced by the mainstream (western) ethical theories seem to arise from an obsession with the individual (tragedy of the commons, non-identity problem, objections discussed by Fragnière). I therefore suggest to read the problems these ethical theories face when dealing with the commons or collectives as symptoms of the crisis of individualism.

Points for discussion

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2. Fragnière views the debate on the individual responsibility as an attempt to respond to Jamieson's revision of 'common sense morality'. How would you envision this revision?

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Do you think we have a *moral duty* to do any of these?

Source text

- ▶ Augustin Fragnière. *Climate change and individual duties*. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 7(6), 798-814.