

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

THE GLOBAL COMMONS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY CRISIS

STUDY EXERCISES

1. Which approach is more appropriate when it comes to tackling global environmental problems—a cosmopolitan stance or a communitarian one?
2. What might it mean to be a global citizen? What role can individuals play in respect of tackling environmental problems?
3. Why is international cooperation so important for tackling the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis?
4. Consider the conditions that might be needed for international cooperation: what might a global level-playing field be like?
5. After reading chapter six of Attfield's *Environmental Ethics*, see the boxed text on p.181. You are encouraged to consider whether the equal entitlements approach together with the population principle (that is, contraction and convergence) comprise an appropriate basis for international agreement on global warming. What is your view on this?
6. Nigel Dower emphasises the moral commitment of individuals in respect of the issue of climate change:

[T]he ethics of climate change should not merely focus on what countries ought to achieve but also on what individuals ought to do, independent of and prior to any legal compulsion or social sanction... This is for two reasons: first, without this focus and a consequent change in what individuals do and believe, the necessary changes in countries' policies will not be enough; second, it is the cumulative impact of individuals' behaviour that will make the difference (Dower, 2010, p.28).

- (a) Do individuals have an obligation to change their lifestyles and behaviours to reduce their carbon footprint where they are able to do so?
 - (b) If so, what might be the content of these responsibilities? For example, *what* changes would we need to adopt?
7. In response to Dower, Robin Attfield argues that whilst some green acts are obligatory, 'many of the relevant obligations belong neither to individuals nor to governments, but to companies and corporations, which should be held accountable not only legally but also morally much more often than they are' (Attfield, 2010, p.37).

Do you agree? Who should shoulder the burden of reducing emissions—individuals, or companies and corporations, or both?

References

Nigel Dower, 'Robin Attfield: Changing the Ethical Climate on Climate Change', in *Creation, Ethics and Environment*, eds. Rebekah Humphreys and Sophie Vlacos (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

Robin Attfield, 'Reply to Dower', in *Creation, Ethics and Environment*, eds. Rebekah Humphreys and Sophie Vlacos (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).