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### **Comments on Lucas Stanczyk, “On the Moral Challenge of the Climate Crisis”**

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Lucas Stanczyk wants us to think about how our actions now can complicate our future ability to address wrongdoing or rectify injustice, using anthropogenic climate change as a case to illustrate how “kicking the can down the road” (which we are certainly doing in failing to take adequate mitigation actions now) not only harms those victims through the increased climatic disruptions that we are failing to avert but can also wrongfully harm those (including our future selves) tasked with trying to reduce or avoid those primary harms by diminishing their abilities to do so. And he wants us to think about it in a particular way, as an intergenerational harm that is best conceptualized in terms of intergenerational justice, where distinct cohorts of persons threaten or are threatened by the other in a way that has not yet been well-explored in climate ethics, giving rise to an unconventional kind of obligation of one generation toward the other. In addition to threatening a younger cohort of existing persons with direct harm from our failure to adequately reduce our ongoing contributions to climate change, as has by this time been widely explored within the climate ethics literature, Stanczyk details how we members of an older generation are also threatening that younger generation’s future ability to respond to wrongdoing or injustice. Our obligations toward this younger cohort are therefore not exhausted by the standard mitigation duties that climate ethicists have been writing about for a quarter century, related to minimizing direct harm from anthropogenic climate impacts, but also include duties to maintain the material and/or institutional ability (whether or not it should be thought of as *our* future ability is a question to which I’ll return) to address future climate-related injustice. Regarded in this way, our tendency to kick that can down the road now involves two moral failures rather than one: it directly contributes to wrongful harm or injustice but also involves a secondary wrongful harm or injustice in that it undermines the future capacity to mitigate that primary harm. We fail a younger cohort and/or our future selves by making them perpetrators as well as victims of climate-related harm or injustice.

Stanczyk suggests that “the difficult moral problems lie” not in the domain of “win-win” solutions where self- or national interests align with strong mitigation imperatives but rather in justifying changes other than those “that will make most of us better off, if only the politics allow” [2]. Climate imperatives are not merely prudential, reducible to enlightened self-interest, discernable through longer time horizons and attainable through the harvesting of low-hanging fruit or the rhetoric of green growth, but are also fundamentally ethical in that they quintessentially involve the imposition of restraint on some for the sake of others. Morally adequate efforts to prevent future climate-related harm require some kind of *sacrifice* by present persons on behalf of future others (or, in keeping with Stanczyk’s argument, young existing persons at some point in the future, since he is deterred by Parfit’s non-identity problem from making claims on behalf of those not yet born). He identifies the “core imperative of intergenerational justice” as the duty to “put in place all those restrictions on existing rights and freedoms that, unless they are put in place, will require even more serious sacrifices having to be made later by today’s

younger people, lest they fall afoul of the very same imperative in the future” [2]. Insofar as some amount of sacrifice is necessary but this sum can be allocated over time in such a way that deferred sacrifice transfers burdens onto persons in the future, intergenerational justice seeks a more equitable allocation through a prohibition upon such deferrals. The restrictions that serve to prevent current persons from deferring their fair share of this necessary sacrifice are primarily targeted toward reducing “carbon-intensive present-day consumption,” he argues, and are “necessary to prevent even more serious sacrifices having to be made later for the purpose of enacting justice and securing every living person’s rights to be free from avoidable famine, drought, resource wars, and so on” [2]. To three categories of critical observations about his development of this argument I shall now turn.

### **Agency, responsibility and the nature and scope of duties**

Before turning to this provocative and potentially generative insight about duties to not to defer needed sacrifices, we might ask (as something of an icebreaker question for climate ethics but also to clarify how this obligation is to be conceived and justified): *Who or what are the agents that have this intergenerational duty?* Stanczyk identifies several distinct kinds of agents at various point in the paper, suggesting the need for some clarification. At some points the agent in question appears to be power elites only (e.g. “the adults powerholders in the present generation” and “the people who were in charge 30, 40, 50 years ago” [2]), locating agency in a group defined by socioeconomic or political status that would comprise a small subset of any generational cohort, but at other times the relevant agent is cast as the non-elites that are concerned with what we ought to do “when we admit to ourselves that the powerful will, predictably, not do” as they ought. Sometimes his focus appears to be on the state, as when posing the question of “what our governments presently ought to do” [2], while at other points his collective agent is cast as a wider set of current adults (as when writing about the obligations of “our generation” [3] toward our younger cohorts) and in still other places he identifies individual alongside collective agents (as when asking about “how you and I ought to reason about our moral obligations” and in noting that his question is about what “we, together and individually, should do” [3]).

I raise the agency question here given its centrality within climate ethics over the past two decades but also because the duty itself may depend on the nature of the agent, with various agents having duties that vary and depend to some degree on the performance of other agents. Those of us that write about climate justice tend to focus on the collective duties of states or societies (including duties of members of societies with respect to their states) whereas those working in climate ethics have more frequently focused on individual agents and duties. Intergenerational ethics might therefore be thought of as primarily about the intertemporal duties of individual agents toward individual moral subjects whereas intergenerational justice (the term that Stanczyk uses) instead focuses on the collective agents as well as recipients of obligations, where these collectives are defined in terms of generational cohorts. Of course not everyone parses justice from ethics in this way and distinctions between them could be cast in other ways, as well. Collective agency could be conceived as the sum of individual agencies within a group and collective duties as fully reducible to individual ones without remainder, as it sometimes is, so it may not matter whether the agents that bear this duty are cast in individual or collective terms. However, the confluence of literatures on individual and collective responsibility with those on climate ethics suggests otherwise, necessitating the question about how the agent(s) in question are being conceived in order to understand their duties and responsibilities vis-à-vis the harm to which they contribute.

I will be interested to hear how Stanczyk defines the agents in question, and he would hardly be the first to draw on multiple and even competing forms of agency. Parfit's non-identity problem assumes an individualistic orientation toward the recipients of duties, given its reduction of non-maleficence to impacts on particular individuals, whereas his repugnant conclusion is based on calculations of total utility rather than its distribution, taking seriously what Rawls calls the separateness of persons in one (as personal identity individualizes persons) but not the other (as aggregate utility aggregates their experiences). Critics sometimes lament the focus on individual ethical duties, such as Broome's carbon neutrality imperative, for individualizing or privatizing what (they argue) should be cast as collective or political responsibility. Sinnott-Armstrong and Kingston argue that there can be no such individual duties to restrain carbon-intensive consumption (or "joyguzzling"), only collective and political ones, noting also the fragmented agency behind collective phenomena like carbon emissions as well as the complex causality that frustrates any ability to attribute harm experienced by any victim to anthropogenic drivers (much less to any individual actions). But collective agency and collective moral responsibility is also notoriously difficult to defend, with dynamics of agency and responsibility between groups and their members necessitating considerable care in constructing this ethical architecture, and creating a kind of conceptual gauntlet through which climate ethics papers must pass. My sense from reading this paper is that Stanczyk has in mind a collective duty even if he occasionally describes it in individual terms, and that it is not differentiated between elites and non-elites (despite his description as such) although its salience for the latter is partly a product of the former's antipathy. And in a point to which I'll return, while he defines this agency in terms of generational cohorts in order to capture the intertemporal nature of environmental harm but in an attempt to avoid the force of the non-identity problem, I think that there may be better ways to differentiate agents from recipients of duties that allow his insights regarding indirect harming and equitable intertemporal allocations of sacrifice to apply to a wider set of cases.

Such agency and responsibility questions may also help to clarify the nature of the duty in question, for as Stanczyk suggests such duties may vary among these different kinds of agents. What those in power have an obligation to do must differ from what the rest of us ought to do when the powerful fail in their obligations to protect us and others, since non-elites lack access to the forms of state power that elites decline to utilize, lacking also the private economic power that defines nongovernmental members of a power elite. We could voluntarily restrain our carbon-intensive consumption, as some do, but without legal or policy requirements to do so and subject to the collective action problems characteristic of such voluntarist and consumer-driven action. Broome's case for personal carbon neutrality is justified by consideration of the direct harms of climate impacts rather than the indirect effects on our ability to discharge our duties or maintain just institutions but may otherwise be similar to the duty that Stanczyk here aims to articulate and defend. When it comes to state policy failures, some argue that we ought to obey the laws and policies that justice requires, even if lacking positive law status, self-imposing limits on the rights and liberties that allow unlimited carbon emissions. Is something like this what Stanczyk has in mind? Do some persons or groups have a duty to "pick up the slack" (i.e. do more than would otherwise be morally required) when others fail to fully do as they ought, making the duties of some agents dependent on the performance of other agents in a different way? Contrarily, do all within a collective like the current generation of adults have a single set of collective duties toward the younger generation, or should these be differentiated (as between rich and poor, residents of the global North and global South, big versus small emitters, and so on)? What makes any of us responsible for harm that is here being attributed to a generation of adults when none of our individual contributions are either necessary or sufficient to it, and would none would manifest without the prior contributions of other,

earlier generations? All are familiar questions to those working on issues of agency and responsibility for climate-related harm, and some seem compatible with the aim and scope of the duties of restraint that Stanczyk describes, but each unpacks that preventative or remedial duty in a somewhat different (and perhaps incompatible) way, again calling for some clarification of what the duty looks like in this case.

### **To whom or what is the duty owed and how is it discharged?**

Moving on to what Stanczyk takes to be the recipients of such duties (also cast in generational terms as some younger set of existing persons, if also in some flux as some members graduate into the older cohort and new members join the younger one), might this be too big or too small of a collectivity to do the theoretical work that is needed? It could be too big if the defining characteristic is its vulnerability to “famine, drought, [or] resource wars,” as many within the current generation of younger persons are relatively secure from such threats (if not from some of the lesser impacts of climate chaos). But the set could also be too small insofar as this generational membership is the defining characteristic, since many of those not yet born also face such vulnerability, which is also highly dependent upon actions or failures by our generation to act. I’m more concerned with its smallness, as all are to some degree vulnerable to climate chaos even if their relative vulnerability (which as a function of adaptive capacity is related to wealth and power as well as residence within vulnerable regions) is low. Here I wonder about Stanczyk’s decision to limit the purview of intergenerational justice to younger contemporaries rather than including the not-yet-born, as is typical within the literature (and as is implied by his reference to “future generations” [2], which usually includes those not yet born rather than being limited in this way to a single younger generation in relation to a single older one), given what appear to be the defining characteristics of those to whom the duty is owed.

Has he conceded too much to the non-identity problem, which appears to be his motive for constraining his purview in this way? [A side note to mention here: when I first saw his reference to “the problems of population ethics” [2] I expected a discussion of its historical embrace of racist and neocolonial policy prescriptions about the “population problem” or the misogyny associated with some neo-Malthusian politics, which to my mind offer a more powerful reason to avoid getting mired in “population ethics.”] A number of scholars (this one included) have proposed alternate strategies for avoiding the force of Parfit’s problem, several of which do not bracket the claims of future persons (as opposed to the future claims of now-young persons) in this way. None of these other strategies for avoiding the problem are really discussed in the paper, or even mentioned, despite their blanket dismissal as unsatisfactory.

Others find existing and potential *intragenerational* impacts to provide a sufficient basis for relying on global or distributive justice foundations rather than seeking to ground mitigation duties in such a fraught normative framework as intergenerational justice. Apart from its focus on future (which may merely be a way of establishing them as potential but not yet determined) impacts, why seek to ground such duties in (constrained to a small fraction of those vulnerable to climate-related harm resulting from our mitigation failures) intergenerational considerations in the first place? Still others (often motivated by other difficulties in establishing responsibility for climate-related harm but sometimes also in the face of the non-identity problem) sought to ground mitigation imperatives in alternative justice frameworks like beneficiary-pays principles or the notion of unjust enrichment. While Stanczyk is clear that he only aims to present an approach that is the “only satisfactory” way of justifying moral limits on carbon pollution “as requirements of intergenerational justice” [2], I would want to hear more about why other

normative bases for such limits are not also worth considering, as well as why other attempts to ground them in intergenerational justice (with different ways of accommodating the non-identity problem) fail.

Leaving aside the question of whether Stanczyk has made the case for his constrained intergenerational approach as *necessary*, would it be *sufficient* for grounding strong mitigation duties? Here I would still have questions. While I agree with Stanczyk's claim that "it's false that climate disasters attributable to today's emissions will befall *only* people who will be born in the future" [10], it may also be false to attribute any "climate disasters" to "today's emissions" because definitive attribution of weather events that cause human impacts to anthropogenic sources is elusive, because links between those events and their impacts includes further complicating causal variables, and because "today's emissions" (i.e. those of the current generation of adults) would not be harmful were it not for those emitted by previous generations. It would also be false to claim that human impacts of climate change are limited to the current younger generation, as future persons (regardless of their identities) as well as current adults are both vulnerable to such impacts. Certainly, our younger contemporaries are vulnerable to our failure to take adequate mitigation actions, if not uniquely so, and insofar as they can be expected to live further into the future than we are then they are vulnerable to more such impacts. But this greater vulnerability cannot distinguish that cohort from either existing adults or the not-yet born, as many from both such groups are likely to be more vulnerable than many from the current younger cohort. Similarly, the mere fact that we might harm members of the younger cohort in the near-term future doesn't distinguish them from current adults that we are also likely to harm in similar temporal scales. Casting the ethics of climate change as fundamentally an intergenerational problem implies distinguishable sets of perpetrators and victims, of harmers and harmed, with the generational differences between the two groups being the most significant variable in determining who falls into each set. Several demographic variables other than current age (e.g. race, income, gender, national membership, country or residence) are likely to be at least as significant in determining relative vulnerability to climate-related harm, with some likely to be much more significant. While it certainly has an intergenerational dimension, the dominance of other variables in accounting for differentiated vulnerability as well as culpability makes it more compellingly an international problem or one of socioeconomic inequality within societies.

Finally, Stanczyk (invoking Cafaro) suggests that philosophers and political theorists as well as "climate policymakers and researchers" have "rarely seriously discussed" limits on human consumption growth and population size [6-7], then appears to narrow this charge first to "many experts" and finally to "economists" [7]. Certainly, economists have struggled to accommodate ecological limits within their scholarly theories more than have other social scientists or those in the humanities or natural sciences. But many economists are quite well aware of such limits, and some (including mainstream economists, as opposed to dissidents from ecological economics like Harman Daly, some with Nobel prize-winning credentials) have written extensively about them. Certainly, Cafaro's remark that such questions have been "systematically avoided" by environmental philosophers and political theorists is inaccurate, as we can now identify multiple generations of increasingly sophisticated work on what might be referred to as the ethics of consumption or its impacts beyond the revival of neo-Malthusianism in the late 1960s. Indeed, following his assertion about the silence of critical scholarship on questions about population size and consumption rates Stanczyk briefly focuses on the issue of consumption restraints that he earlier cast as "the core imperative of intergenerational justice" before turning almost entirely to population ethics and those two problems raised by Parfit, with almost no mention of the normative literature on consumption and ethical limits on its impacts. To be sure, there are reasons to avoid

getting mired in debates that have taken place over the past half-century about *why* and *how* to limit population and consumption growth, but readers that are versed in such debates will not be persuaded by the suggestion that little has yet been written about such issues, and readers from philosophy and political theory will not see the paper's critique of the work of several (unenlightened) economists as also impugning the work of scholars that have been articulating similar critiques for decades. More of engagement with the existing literature is needed to distinguish Stanczyk's approach from those taken elsewhere in the population and consumption literatures and to identify the gap that this paper fills.

### **Indirect duties regarding deferred sacrifice**

Stanczyk makes two interesting moves in defending a quasi-intergenerational obligation to maintain just institutions. First, he avoids locating the harm of mitigation failure in the direct impacts of climatic disruptions (i.e. the costs of storms and floods on human social, economic and ecological systems), locating it instead in what is essentially the distribution over time of deferred maintenance costs—that since younger persons would otherwise face greater sacrifices later as a result of older people's refusal to take on greater burdens sooner we now have reasons of intergenerational justice to undertake them earlier. This is a novel claim that in my view warrants greater attention, and perhaps also linkages to other literatures on epistemic obligations as well as other factors that cause new or more extensive obligations to arise and/or prevent us or others from being able to successfully discharge our moral duties. Making such connections would broaden the paper's reach and impact and might allow for some constructive cross fertilization. Second, he avoids problems with entertaining claims by merely possible future others by grounding restrictions on current consumption on mere anticipation of future claim rights rather than allowing nonexistent persons to be recognized as having right claims now. Although we may disregard the moral claims of those not yet born, Stanczyk accepts, to whom we have no current intergenerational obligations, we can (and must) anticipate "that future people will have moral claims on everyone as soon as they come into existence" [12]. Future people don't count morally, he suggests, until they come to exist and thereby acquire rights, but since we can anticipate those future right claims they ought to weigh on our present decision (but we don't owe them anything, until we do). Combined with the expectation that these claims will become increasingly difficult to satisfy over time (deferring more necessary sacrifice with each failure to undertake remedial action) the longer we ignore them, current austerity is justified with reference to future effects on existing persons rather than appealing to the rights of future generations, which Stanczyk does not think we can validly do.

Stanczyk seems to be motivated by three different reasons for disregarding the claims of future persons in his imperative of intergenerational justice. One is the non-identity problem, which he aptly treats as inapplicable to younger contemporaries whose identities are now fixed. Another appears to turn on the claim that future persons cannot currently make rights claims, given his suggestion that these originate only after such persons come to exist even if we can anticipate this occurring. But he also cites a third reason—that failing to act now on merely anticipated future right claims, he argues, would run afoul of a priority scheme between basic and non-basic interests ("otherwise, we will be wrongly indulging less important interests in luxury consumption at the expense of survival interests that are comparatively much more important" [11]). Of course, a similar claim could be made in an intragenerational justice context: that the failure by the world's affluent to undertake more ambitious mitigation now in effect privileges their luxury consumption interests at the expense of the survival interests of the world's poor

(a conflict that is sometimes cast as one between luxury and survival emissions), so this prioritization scheme is not unique to intergenerational justice approaches to climate mitigation. But Stanczyk avoids casting this as a conflict between the binding rights of current persons and the merely possible future rights of what at the time of the decision are merely possible future persons by focusing on the two older children in his thought experiment about the procreative decisions facing a one-household society.

For reasons that are featured in the non-identity problem, the parents cannot be viewed as harming the third child, whose existence depends on that procreative decision, but should instead be seen as harming/wronging the two existing children in requiring their greater future sacrifice in more onerous household food rationing (for some reason Stanczyk does not indicate that at least one death from deprivation becomes unavoidable with that choice, instead describing the outcome in terms of needs for unpleasant rationing, which diminishes the stark dilemma involved and may undercut the force of his analysis). Presumably, the same was true of their decision to have a second child, too, as that act of luxury consumption would have increased scarcity and therefore necessitated greater austerity for the first child, just as that first child would have done the same for those that might otherwise have enjoyed more abundance from a smaller population residing on a fixed territory. Since “the parents in our story will themselves have been wronged by their parents if, in order to fuel the grandparents’ runaway luxury consumption [i.e. procreative choices], the grandparents avoidably contributed to over-farming and thereby reduced the earth’s carrying capacity” [12]. Curiously, this “over-farming” and not the “runaway consumption” of having more children that they could feed would be what diminished the land’s carrying capacity, but here they’re described as necessarily connected and even conflated into a single decision, rather than one giving rise to a dilemma for which the other was one horn. And the causal arrow is reversed in suggesting that the over-farming “fueled” (read: caused) the procreative choice, when the converse is much more likely. Importantly for Stanczyk’s argument, the grandparents never directly wronged their children or grandchildren—they merely harmed their future selves by deferring sacrifices that they evidently never undertook, and which therefore must not have been strictly necessary. Their choices put their children (the parents in this story) in the same position of having to choose between their procreative freedom (assuming this to be synonymous with the preference to breed) and less future household food rationing, which again looks like imprudence (in that it harms one’s future self) rather than a moral wrong. For this chain of events to ever manifest in intergenerational harm (which might thus be captured by intergenerational ethics) a child must be harmed by the actions of their parent (or some member of a younger cohort must be harmed by the actions of a member of the older cohort, which shifts the focus away from procreation as the offending action), but so long as each generation defers that sacrifice to the next generation in Stanczyk’s version of the story this accumulated sacrifice can be deferred. When or how does such harm transpire?

One possibility involves thresholds, given Stanczyk’s apparent focus on events approaching, exceeding or reducing carrying capacity. In his example, the parents are considering whether to have an additional child when their society is already at carrying capacity (stipulated as limited to four humans). In this case, adding an additional person to the society would foreseeably result in rights-violating deprivation, suffering and death. Being at the threshold would therefore seem to make all the difference—it would neither harm nor wrong anyone to have a fifth child if the carrying capacity was at ten humans, as this would entail no new sacrifice in order to protect the rights of existing persons. But what if that capacity was five, such that no deprivation (or unpleasant rationing) was necessary but new limits on procreative freedom became necessary to avoid exceeding carrying capacity? Here we encounter the familiar

“zipper argument” that impugns as harmful reproductive choices that approach but do not yet exceed carrying capacity, since these limit future such choices, which in turn impugns those procreative acts leading up to that earlier point, and so on. Given Stanczyk’s sympathy with those other two problems from Parfit it is surprising that he doesn’t appear to view this attribution of significance to approaching or exceeding an ecological limit as another “mistake in moral mathematics,” as Parfit does. Thresholds cannot be what prevents perpetual deferral of accumulated ecological debt.

Stanczyk’s case differs from Onora Nell’s otherwise-similar “Lifeboat Earth” argument in that its focus is on population rather than consumption and its role in exacerbating scarcity, and I wonder whether its emphasis on population might detract from its related but distinct aim of developing a kind of ethic of consumption. Nell asks whether it would be wrong to waste vital resources on a lifeboat that was barely adequate for meeting the subsistence needs of its passengers (spoiler: this results in wrongful death) rather than asking about whether the creation of an additional passenger should be similarly regarded (unlike Garrett Hardin’s version of the lifeboat dilemma, where rich people on well-equipped lifeboats should decline to rescue poor ones that would exacerbate scarcity, which would run afoul of the priority scheme that Stanczyk proposes since it would prioritize the comfortable abundance of the privileged over the basic survival interests of the poor). Waste of vital resources is by definition avoidable as well as potentially harmful, making it also wrongful when causing avoidable deaths, so ought to be restricted under conditions of even moderate scarcity (which is often identified as an essential condition for the maintenance of just institutions) lest moderate become severe. But rescuing a starving person when a society of four has food enough for eight is different, despite being avoidable and potentially harmful.

Invoking duties of restraint on current consumption for the sake of future others in the context of intergenerational rather than intragenerational justice does invite an objection that is commonly made against prescribed austerity for the sake of future others—that unknowns or uncertainties (about future technologies, preferences, impacts of scarcity, etc.) make it possible that the imposition or voluntary assumption of present sacrifices may effectively redistribute welfare from the better to the worse off. If we are allocating the burdens of foregone consumption (as a resource or welfare opportunity) over time then we need to know more about future material conditions, technologies, or adaptive capacities before we can assign those burdens equitably, and there are at least conceivable futures (some would argue that these are grounded in a progressive historical arc) in which more of those sacrifices should be deferred into an otherwise-more-advantaged future rather than being borne by persons today. We’ve all heard some version of this: What if we were to impose enormously costly (in terms of foregone welfare) mitigation burdens now only to later discover a zero carbon fuel source that would allow us to painlessly decarbonize our energy system, rendering those sacrifices unnecessary? Put another way, why does uncertainty not trouble Stanczyk here when it troubles him so much with non-identity?

While I have always found this argument to rely upon an unwarranted Promethean optimism about the human future while being naïve about ecological limits to its tacit assumption about unlimited growth, I’ve also always felt compelled to provide an anticipatory reply to it, given its ubiquitousness in debates of this sort. Stanczyk declines to engage such an objection, but also appears to assume it away in his thought experiment used to illustrate what he calls the principle of disjunctive wrongs, relying as it does on assumptions about static agricultural yields from the family’s degraded farmland (along with its tendentious characterization of procreative decisions as matters of luxury consumption). Yet we cannot be certain that new agricultural techniques or technologies might not make higher yields available that could satisfy the basic subsistence needs of its additional member without sacrificing those of the

parents or older siblings, and one may identify historical periods of agricultural innovation that did exactly this. Stanczyk's decision to ignore this objection does not appear to be precautionary—as with formulations of the precautionary principle that call for worst case assumptions under conditions of uncertainty—so much as it appears to reflect a contrary certainty about the world having peaked in its agricultural productivity such that this additional labor input could not be converted into additional crop yields. To be sure, there are good reasons for *not* counting on techno-fixes to extend carrying capacity and to instead take a more precautionary stance, but this really needs to be expressed in terms of an ethic of decision-making under conditions of uncertainty rather than cast in terms of the parents electing to privilege “less important interests over interests that in the circumstances were even more important” [12]. Here, inexcusable ignorance and recklessness from unwarranted optimism are more likely to capture the wrongness of this procreative decision than is the uncharitable assumption that the parents were knowingly harming their later selves and their own children from an indefensible priority scheme that favored luxury consumption over basic subsistence.

### **Final thoughts on this version of the moral challenge**

Stanczyk is clearly on to something new and interesting here, but he also covers some well-trodden theoretical ground and at times the latter obscures the former. Focusing more clearly upon this secondary kind of intergenerational (or intragenerational) kind of harming, which compounds the injustice of the global North's ongoing mitigation failures, would allow for connections to be made to and conceptual resources to be drawn from a wider philosophical literature than is surveyed here. Most of my comments above involve requests for greater clarity rather than constituting objections to the argument as presented, and my references to other literatures are likewise intended to suggest several points at which the paper could constructively engage with related analyses. Climate change does seem to me to provide an illustrative case for the paper's core argument, but the argument could apply to other accumulative problems (environmental and otherwise) and (as I have suggested, probably not all that subtly) has implications for distributive justice within as well as between generations, and could potentially benefit with more engagement with resource justice and ethics of sustainability literatures in political philosophy and theory (as Stanczyk's argument in many ways resembles Dobson's in *Justice and the Environment* as well as several that are developed in his edited volume *Fairness and Futurity*). My hope is that this workshop will facilitate constructive engagement with the paper's ample potential.