

Climate Change and Our Moral Obligations to Future Generations: A Critical Analysis.

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[**Abstract:** Climate is a fundamental element of the environment. Human being's sound living depends on a healthy and sustainable climate. However, our climate is losing its natural balance day by day. As a result, it is posing its harmful effects on us by different types of natural calamities. Apart from the several natural processes, anthropocentric (human-caused) activities are the main cause of it. Different types of natural disasters that are occurring in the environment, for instance, hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, mudslides, floods, wildfires, volcanic eruptions, and weather events like extreme droughts and monsoons – are likely increasing in frequency due to climate change. On the other hand, sea-level is gradually rising because of global warming and affecting all of us in various ways. Sea-level rise has potentially harmful consequences for the inhabitants of this surface. It not only will force the coastal population to migrate from coastal zones to inland zones but also it will affect the global population as well. Along with the sea-level rise, downpour and winter storm are also occurring in many places. These are some of the risks modeled by climate change. Therefore, climate change is a complex problem that should be –addressed by the physical and life sciences, psychology, economics, and politics. Moreover, climate change also raises ethical questions such as our obligations, rights and duty to preserve a sound climate for future generations. The main aim of this paper is to provide arguments on behalf of our moral obligations to protect a balanced and secure climate for future generations from an ethical perspective. In this paper, I will intend to discuss climate change and future generations, our moral obligations to preserve a sound climate for future generations, rights of future generations to live in a healthy climate as well as some ways for establishing justice toward future generations regarding climate change and finally, I will confer upon the role of present generations for sustaining a sound and healthy atmosphere of the climate.]

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Introduction:

Everyman is inevitably considered as a part of the environment from birth to death. The environment protects us with several elements such as sun, air, soil, water, plants, and climate. These components play an inseparable role for our sound living. In this sense, climate is one of a vital element and it carries great value. However, if we raise questions like how much we are careful of providing sound protection to our climate or how much we are conscious of keeping a balanced condition of our climate for future generations. The answer will be that we are not so aware for maintaining a healthy balance of the climate with the growing development of the world. "The fifth assessment report of IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) projects that the global mean sea level may rise by 0.52–0.98 m by the end of the 21st century. The NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) projection of sea-level rise is up to 2 m by 2100. The ice sheets across the world hold sufficient water to raise the sea level by several meters. Antarctica and Greenland ice sheets are the two largest ice sheets containing nearly 99% of the freshwater ice on the earth. It is estimated that if the Greenland ice sheet melts completely, sea level may rise about 6 m, while the melting of the Antarctic ice sheet may cause a sea-level rise of about 60 m. It is estimated that the Antarctica ice sheet alone can contribute more than a meter of sea-level rise by the year 2100 and more than 15 m by the year 2500."¹ As a result, the discussion of climate change has now become a global issue. It raises several queries about our moral obligations to future generations as their sound living depends on the present generation's activities. If we leave a sound climate for them they will get an inhabitable climate. Otherwise, their healthy and sound living will hamper. Besides this, future generations have equal rights to live in this climate although the rights of our later generations to live in a sound climate have been disputed by the philosophers from various aspects, however we cannot disregard our obligations to the people who will arrive in future and their rights to live in this climate from moral point of view. It is also very unjust to leave a nature for future generations that is very worse in condition. We cannot consume existing natural resources according to our wish which helps the climate to change. We want to establish justice for the upcoming generations regarding climate change. This article illustrates climate change and our moral obligations to future generations from ethical viewpoint as well as provides arguments for establishing justice toward the future people regarding climate change.

Climate Change and Future Generations:

Climate means the natural circumstance of the temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, rainfall, and other meteorological elements in an area of the earth's surface for a long time. Generally, it is the average situation of a region for thirty years. On the other hand, "Climate change is the long-term alteration of temperature and typical weather patterns in a place. Climate change could refer to a particular location or the planet as a whole."²The temperature, humidity, atmospheric condition, and other elements changes with climate change. This change can affect one region, many regions, or the whole planet.

Climate change is slowly breeding as emergent devastation. We are confronted to face the threat of it. There are several causes of climate change. Natural processes and anthropocentric (human-caused) activities are one of them. Different types of natural process such as, volcanic erosion, differences in the earth's orbit are one of the causes of climate change. Besides, the excessive emission of carbon dioxide gas (CO₂), deforestation, wildfire, unsustainable economic growth by human beings is the cause of climate change. In the history of the earth, the process of climate change by human beings is increasing day by day. Consequently, nature is both losing its normal balance and it is affecting human life as well. For example, "Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) are gases that gradually break down ozone gas in the stratosphere above us. This layer of ozone in the stratosphere screens life on earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation the sun emits. The ozone layer is destroyed by CFC gases, which have been used in aerosol cans, refrigerators, air conditioners, industrial solvents, and industrial foam blowers. When released into the air, CFC gases rise and in 7 to 10 years, they reach the stratosphere, where they destroy ozone molecules and remain for 75 to 130 years, continuing all the while to break down additional ozone molecules."³Thus, chemical material especially Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) can influence chemically in the ozone layer and break down it because when we use this chemical in the refrigerator, air conditioning, aerosol cans, plastic bags and packaging it affects the stratosphere level and then it damages the ozone layer. After that, it works for filtering the dangerous effects of dye rays and the continuous effects of dye rays are the cause of human cancer and damage their DNA. It also affects the lives of other animals and plants. Millions of animals are experiencing losses because of unexpected floods or drought. In fact, climate change is not only affecting present generations severely but also it will affect future generations too.

On the other hand, Future generations are the unborn generations. They denote to the human beings who do not exist in the present time but they will arrive on this earth in the near or distant future and they will live in this climate likewise us. Allen Tough says about future generations in his essay named *What Future Generations Need from Us*. According to Allen Tough, “if we could see humanity many decades from now, we could see people of all ages playing, working, talking, building, learning, laughing, crying, loving. We call these people ‘future generations’. This is not some abstract and meaningless concept: at any given time in the future, actual people will exist. They will be living busy lives on earth or elsewhere in our galaxy, not just in someone’s imagination.”⁴ In other words, Allen Tough considers that there is no doubt that future generations will exist and will perform all activities in this climate. They will live in this globe with all the elements of this atmosphere.

Therefore, there is a close relationship between future generations and climate change because future generations will arrive and they will try to exist with all the essentials of this climate. If the climate changes they will not get a sound climate and it will hinder in their healthy living and present generations will not be able to retain a good relationship with future generations and most plausibly we cannot leave an inhabitable climate for them. UNESCO, an Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization of the United Nations, celebrate World Philosophy Day every year on the third Thursday of November from 2005. The main theme of the discussion of UNESCO’s World Philosophy Day 2012 was on future generations. The participants focus on the topic of the responsibilities of the present generations towards future generations. To provide importance on the context of future generations they illustrate, “for decades the macro-economy and information technology have caused us to live exclusively in the present. Immediacy, simultaneity and the rapidity of communication mask the passage of time and prevent projection into the future. The rupture of social links, which we see in survival of the fittest deranged individualism, also breaks the links between the generations. To think about the future has become a rare abstraction, except when we think of it as a threat. Our task is to construct thinking about the future which is based on the re-establishment of links.”⁵ We have obtained some significant issues from their discussion concerning our responsibilities to future generations. The participants draw the life circle of present generations where their links with future generations are very devastated

because of the macro-economy, use of information technology in every sector, and swiftness of communication skill. Afterwards, they give emphasis on the reinstallation of our relations with future generations. Thus, present generations must have moral obligations to preserve a healthy atmosphere of the climate for future generations.

Our Moral Obligations to Preserve a Healthy Climate for Future Generations:

As human being, morality plays an integral role in our character. Morality deals with duty, rights, and obligations. From our moral consideration, we obey duty to one another as well as we are morally obliged to other human beings of this earth. We cannot bring catastrophe for anyone or harm other's life by our acts from moral point of view. Likewise the people around us, future generations are the upcoming people of the earth. We cannot bring disaster in the life of future generations by damaging this climate in various ways.

Everyman has moral intuition. Moral intuition consists of some moral beliefs. These moral beliefs are very strong, constant, and immediate. Moral intuition arises through heuristic processes but best understood as an unconscious attribute of substitutions. By our moral intuition, we do judgment and this judgment involves something reasoning and analysis. It also includes an apparent instantaneous moment of moral perception for example, when we hear about a chemical company which continuously dumps toxic chemicals into the nearby fishing rivers for many years and we make a statement like a chemical company cannot do such type of disrespectful action for the people whose lives rely on those fishing rivers- is a judgment comes from our moral intuition because morality never suggests us disregard anyone or bring disaster in anyone's life. Likewise the example of the chemical company, we cannot deny our moral obligations to future generations by injuring our climate in different ways. Our moral intuition suggests us follow the principle of obligations toward future generations. The principle of obligations stands for "whenever a person A's free action can significantly harm some person B or B's important interests, A has a conditional moral duty not to act in that way."⁶ We are surviving with all the elements of this climate and fulfilling our important individual interests but our actions will certainly affect in the life of future generations. For instance, if we cut down trees in a large number and use them for living luxurious life, future generations will face the harmful effects of greenhouse gases, droughts and so on

because of the lack of sufficient trees in nature. So, we cannot do this for changing the natural balance of our climate as it will bring harm for future generations. We have to consider that we cannot affect our contemporaries by our acts.

When past people were living, it was their present and the people they had obligations to them who had not yet come into existence. In short, they had obligations to people who were future to them. Similarly, we have moral obligations to the people who will arrive in the future. We can preserve this climate thinking about our ancestor's obligations to us. Our predecessors have preserved this climate for us. If they used this climate only for their interests we could not survive in this climate still today. Likewise them, we should preserve our climate for future generations. Peter Singer considers preserving climate in his book named *Practical Ethics*. He says to protect the climate considering as an inheritance from our ancestors. According to Peter Singer, "a virgin forest is the product of all the millions of years that have passed since the beginning of our planet. If it is cut down, another forest may grow up, but the continuity has been broken. The disruption in the natural life cycle of the plants and animals means that the forest will never again be as it would have been had it not been cut. The gains made from cutting the forest-employment, profits for business, export earnings and cheaper cardboard and paper for packaging- are short-term. Even if the forest is not cut down to build a dam to create electricity, it is very likely that the benefits will last for only a few generations, for in time new technology will render such methods of generating power obsolete. Once the forest is cut or drowned, however, the link with the past is gone forever."⁷ Peter Singer considers that we should not cut down the existing forest. We should preserve the forests as it assists us to build a connection with future generations. We can be benefited by cutting down trees and use them for other purposes for a little time but we cannot build up a good relationship with our distant generations if we cut down them. Therefore, it is better to preserve forests than destroying it. We cannot ignore our obligations to future generations as our ancestors could not refuse their obligations to us.

We are obliged to conserve natural resources for future generation: even if they are disappearing at present. Conservation is the only approach to confirming a supply for the impending generations. We can conserve existing natural resources for them and it will prevent us from consuming what is theirs. "Conservation refers to the saving or rationing of natural resources for later uses. Conservation, therefore, looks primarily to th

future: to the need to limit consumption now to have resources available for tomorrow.”⁸Conservation of a sound climate suggests that we have to be careful and kind regarding the use of our natural resources. We should not use existing natural resources only for our interests’ especially scarce natural resources. We have to use existing natural resources properly and we also have to conserve for future generations. In this case, we can use renewable resources for fulfilling our demands as some natural resources are non-renewable and limited, for example, groundwater is a natural resource. The world’s supply of groundwater is decreasing day by day in Asia, South America, and North America. Consequently, we can edge using groundwater as well as we can hold new procedures for using the water which has already polluted. If we use groundwater profusely we cannot preserve them for approaching generations. Thus, we can utilize damaged water through purifying instead of groundwater and save the earth’s water for future generations.

Besides the conservation process, we have to focus on the reduction of pollution because reducing pollution is a method of conservation. With the growing development of the world, we are indebted to the next generations to lessen pollution from our climate because pollution consumes all the elements of the environment and hampers conservation, such as; pollution consumes pure air and water and hinders the conservation of these components. Furthermore, we have to decrease diverse sorts of emissions from the environment even though it will deter us from gaining fruitful economic growth. Nevertheless, we must have to reduce pollution from our surroundings. This is because, if we cannot make sure of a healthy climate for living, our money will be valueless to us. Moreover, human life crucially depends on some fundamentals such as, breathable air, drinkable water, and eatable food. These elements are inseparable for our living. “The following schematic example illustrates some of the complexities that confront us when environmental interests clash with economic interests. An industrial plant, representing a (small, large, massive) financial investment, producing a product that is (unessential, very desirable, essential) to society, and providing a (small, large, enormous) number of jobs, pollutes the environment in a (minor, substantial, major) way. In such of these several cases is the continued operation of the plant morally unacceptable? Certainly, the general public interest in the quality of the environment must be recognized. But what of the economic interests of the owner, the employees, and potential consumers? In sum, how is the collective human interest in a polluted

free environment to be equally weighed against competing for economic interests? At this point, many are inclined to appeal to the kind of cost/benefit analysis that is characteristic of utilitarian thinking.”⁹ Thus, there are certain complexities with profitable economic growth and the environment. One is opposite to another. If we want to gain economic interests we cannot be able to protect the environment from pollution. However, the important point is that a healthy environment is more valuable than economic interests even though it may create more opportunities for the social members as well as it may fulfill their interests but this interest is for short time. Actually, fruitful economic growth will bring great havoc for sustainable economic growth along with the environment as well as it will ensure a less-unsustainable climate for future people. So, we should focus on a healthy and sustainable environment as well as economic growth not on profitable economic growth.

All nations have to come forward for reducing pollution from the climate. They have to acknowledge their moral obligations to the people who will come in future and they have to take responsibilities according to their degree of pollution, for example, “most importantly, a single nation, the United States, is responsible for 20 percent of all emissions (which total 26 billion metric tons each year). Another, China, contributes another 15 percent, with the nations of the European Union jointly adding another 14 percent. If we look at per-capita carbon emissions, China’s contribution is much lower.”¹⁰ Thus, the United Nations and China will take the responsibility of reducing 20 percent and 14 percent carbon dioxide gas emissions accordingly. Mainly, our outlook towards the climate should be changed. We have to reduce climate change from a moral standpoint. Otherwise, the most severe consequences will probably be experienced by future generations but some will also be felt by people alive at present. Jardins claims that we should preserve our climate for upcoming generations. He provides importance to the limitations of our behavior in this case. According to Jardins, “Future generations might be said to have rights to the degree that we acknowledge and accept limitations on our behavior for the sake of their interests.”¹¹ Jardins reckons that the rights of future generations depend on the level of our acknowledgment and acceptance of the limitations of our conduct for them. If we accept that future generations have equal rights to consume natural resources likewise us we will be able to limit our demands and preserve the natural resources properly for them. In fact, it depends on our acceptance of their rights.

Therefore, we need to enlarge our moral sphere to incorporate the extended sense of obligations if we want to minimize climate change and preserve a sustainable climate for future generations.

The Rights of Future Generations to Live in a Healthy Climate:

We have to recognize that we have moral obligations to future generations as well as they have equal rights to live in a healthy climate. They will be a significant part of this climate in the future and they will try to survive with all the elements of this climate. They must feel the need of fresh air, drinkable clean water and so on for their healthy living likewise us. That is why; they have equal rights to all the resources of this climate. Conversely, we are violating their rights by depleting and damaging all the natural resources. We are taking what is theirs. Thus, we cannot consume natural resources of this climate for our purposes. We have to preserve those for our contemporaries as they have equal rights to all the natural resources of this climate and live in a healthy climate. Emilie Gaillard, a lawyer who believes in the concept of future generations and has been working on the rights of future generations for twenty years. She says, "Yet this is not entirely new—the concept of future generations has existed in essence since 1945 within the concepts of crimes against humanity and the common heritage of humanity. A particularly interesting connection was made in 1972, with the integration of human and environmental rights in the Stockholm Declaration. The concept of future generations then emerged explicitly with the formal expression of the sustainable development goal, particularly since the Rio Conference in 1992."¹² Gaillard believes in the existence of future generations and wants to establish their rights. She relates the idea of future generations with the term sustainability and divides their rights into two categories. One is environmental and another is bioethical. She says that sustainable development will ensure a long-lasting environment for future generations and bioethical rights will provide them a long-term protection as a species of this earth.

In the twentieth century, the discussion of climate change has taken a significant place in applied philosophy. Philosophers provide importance on the rights of future generations to this climate. Feinberg starts the discussion regarding the rights and interests of future generations in his essay named *The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generation* in 1974. Feinberg says, "we have it in our power now to make the world a much less pleasant place for our descendants than the world we inherited from our ancestors. We can continue to proliferate in

ever greater numbers, using up fertile soil at an even greater rate, dumping our wastes into rivers, lakes, and oceans, cutting down our forests, and polluting the atmosphere with noxious gases. All thoughtful people agree that we ought not to do these things. Most would say we have a duty not to do these things, meaning not merely that conservation is morally required (as opposed to merely desirable) but also it is something due to our descendants, something to be done for their sake. Surely, we owe it to future generations to pass on a world that is not a used up garbage heap. Our remote descendants are not yet present to claim a livable world as their right, but there are plenty of proxies to speak now on their behalf.”¹³ Feinburg illustrates that present generations is now able to demolish all the natural components such as soil, water, forest areas but all rational persons will reject it because we are morally obliged to conserve a sound climate for our descendants even though they do not exist now. Moreover, we can consider them as our spokesperson, custodian, and trustee.

Conversely, there are several arguments in philosophy which makes the rights of future generations and our obligations to them disputed and questionable. One of the three is given below.¹⁴

1. The argument from ignorance.
2. The argument from disappearing beneficiaries.
3. The argument from temporal location.

1. The Argument from Ignorance:

The first argument which does not accept the rights of future generations is the argument from ignorance. This argument claims that we do not have any obligations to the people who are unknown to us. In addition, we do not have any responsibility to the people who are ignorant of us. “Ann Ehrlich and Paul Ehrlich hold this indifferent outlook regarding future generations.”¹⁵ Ehrlich claims that people whom we do not yet know cannot have any rights to us. Actually, Ehrlich refuses the rights of future generations and says that it is meaningless to oblige present generations for obeying responsibilities to them. Gregory Kavka supports the argument from ignorance in his essay named ‘*The Futurity Problem*’:¹⁶ Kavka considers that as we are ignorant of the hopes, interests, and aspirations of future generations we are less obliged to obey the responsibilities to them than the present generations. Kavka rejects the rights of future generations based on their interests, hopes, and ambitions and provides more importance on the obligations to present generation in his argument. He claims that how we can be sure

about the interests of the people who will arrive in the distant future. Or how their interests will be similar to ours. They may choose different types of living. Even they may not like to think likewise us. They exist in the long distance from the present time. Furthermore, Kavka regards that they may not accept what we will leave for them. Thus, he refuses and says that we are not obliged to observe responsibilities to future generations on the basis of their hopes, interests, and desires. Additionally, Kavka discards the idea of future generations based on their uncertain existence. He says, "Future generations signify about the people who are now non-existent even they may not exist ever."¹⁷ In his argument, Kavka considers that the existence of future generations is the uncertain possible concept. We cannot apply any moral rights to the non-existent people. On the other hand, the moral rights of present generations are more considerable than future generations in case of insufficient resources. He gives an analogy about it. ¹⁸ For example, a poor couple has already two or three children and they are hopeful to birth more children in the future. Kavka claims that will it be fair for that couple to become frugal regarding the use of their wealth thinking about the use of their upcoming children? It will not be fair according to Kavka. He seems that morality never suggests depriving the interests of present children and conserve for future children. We cannot minimize the interests of the present generations thinking about the people who are non-existent now. So, Kavka agrees to give preferences to the present generations than the future generations who are absent nowadays.

Jardins refuses the argument from ignorance in his discussion which does not accept the rights of future generations to live in a healthy climate. According to Jardins, "in civil law, we hold people responsible for actions that result in unintended but foreseeable harm to others."

¹⁹Jardins holds that we should not harm others unintentionally. If we harm anyone by mistake, it must injure them. In the case of future generations, we can say that they are ignorant to us but we cannot disregard their rights to this climate. Our activities must influence them. The present generations is obliged to save a sound and polluted free climate for them. Jardins also says that the most essential elements for our living are clean air and water, moderate climate, protection from poisons, diseases, and so forth. If these elements damage by human-caused activities, they have to take responsibility for this. For instance, a man starts dumping toxic waste in the land. After a few years, people of that area become a victim of the toxic air coming from the land. In this situation, the polluter defends himself using the argument from ignorance. "I do not know who will be hurt. I did not even know these

people would have a particular interest in health. How can I be said to have had an obligation to them.”²⁰ Jardins considers that the response of the polluter is fully illogical. Anyone cannot be harmed by others' ignorance. If so, he is regarded as a guilty in the general sense. Thus, Jardins agrees to provide the rights of future generations and does not want to endanger the living of future generations.

Another philosopher James Sterba defends the rights of future generations in his essay named *The Welfare Rights of Future Generations*. Sterba points out the rights of next generations from our moral responsibilities to the people. Sterba says, “to say that future generations have rights against existing generations we can simply mean that there are enforceable requirements upon existing generations that would benefit or prevent harm to future generations.”²¹ Sterba supports the rights of future generations in his discussion. He says that we can establish the rights of future non-existent people as we obey our obligations to the distant people, for example, when we spread our helping hand to the flood-affected people; we do it from our moral obligations. However, we did not even see them ever. Likewise the distant people, we can observe our responsibilities to future generations. We have to preserve this climate from our moral obligations to them.

2. The Argument from Disappearing Beneficiaries:

The second argument regarding the rights of future generations is the argument from disappearing beneficiaries. “At first, Thomas Schwartz illustrates this argument and Gregory Kavka supports and explains Schwartz's view in his essay named *The Futurity Problem*.”²² Kavka argues that we do not have any responsibilities to the new existed citizen of the earth. Our obligations to future generations are meaningless. Now future generations are disappearing to us but we are discussing our moral obligations to them that are very absurd. Kavka refuses to obey responsibilities to the people who are disappearing and do not really exist at present. Actually, Kavka regards them as disappearing beneficiary people.

Jardins expresses opposition to this argument and wants to establish the rights of upcoming generations in his viewpoint. “He provides an example referring Kyoto Protocol.”²³ Kyoto Protocol is a convention regarding climate change where the experts emphasize on the emission of 6 types of greenhouse gases. The developed countries agree to reduce 5 percent of carbon dioxide gases from the 1990 year stage. Industrialized countries estimate that they will gain this target within

2008-2012. Carbon dioxide, mitten, nitric oxide will be estimated from 1990 and hy-drofluorocarbon, per fluorocarbon and sulfur hexafluoride gas have to be estimated from 1990 or 1995. He describes that if this protocol can be implemented it will affect all sectors of the economy.

The environmentalists agree with this protocol and hope that it will work for minimizing carbon dioxide gas from the environment. They agree to lessen our reliance on fossil foil to make sure a world where will be no global warming and pollution. Jardins expresses the same opinion with the environmentalists and says, "the moral intuition underlying this decision is that one set of the future will either be harmed or benefited by our decisions."²⁴ Jardins regards that future generations will be harmed or benefited by our decision. However, future people who will be benefited they will live more comfortably than the depreciated people. So, don't we want that the future people will live comfortably? We must want that they will live comfortably. If so, we have to keep our climate pollution free.

On the other hand, the supporters of the argument from disappearing beneficiaries claim that the interests of the future people depend upon a remarkable number of contingencies. That means the good or bad of future generations are related to the number of uncertainty. It also depends on some unforeseen events and it will be an uncertain possibility to fulfill that contingency. Now, we will hold two policies for reducing the emission of carbon dioxide gas but we do not know it will affect the people who will be born in future or not, for example, policy A and policy B.²⁵ The result of the policy A will fall on the first group people and the result of the policy B will fall on the second group people. The future people's benefit or harm depends on the policy we will hold. We can say that the benefited people will be benefited than the harmed people. If the policy becomes different we do not get any benefited or harmed group. In this situation, the benefited group carries no meaning. Actually, future generations are the disappearing people whose existence depends on some contingencies that are very uncertain.

Annette Baier refutes the argument from disappearing beneficiaries and admits that we have responsibilities to the people who will come in the future. He says, "if we acknowledge that all humans have certain interests protected, our actions today may violate the rights of the people of the future. Thus, if we continue to dump massive amounts of pollution into the atmosphere, we will harm people of the future- not by making them worse off than they would have been but by violating their rights."²⁶

Baier considers that all men have some interests. Future generations must have some interests but if we pollute our climate we will violate their rights, for example, the rights of good health. Future generations can claim that they may exist in a good condition but their existence has harmed by our activities and they have deprived of the rights of good health. Actually, Baier argues that our obligations are not to any future people; our obligations are for protecting the interests of them.

Jardins supports Baier's view and reckons that we have to control our destructive activities from moral obligations and acknowledge the rights of future generations.

3. The Argument from Temporal location:

The last argument regarding the rights of upcoming people is the argument from temporal location. Kavka illustrates this argument briefly with the previous two arguments in his former essay. Kavka rejects our obligations to future generations and says, "when we talk about future generations we talk about such people who will exist within time- they will have in the future time but they do not now exist anywhere."²⁷ Actually, Kavka holds that the demand for future generations depends upon the time but time is not a factor to moral consideration. We do not help anyone on the basis of time or location. Moral obligations are not bounded by time or location. Kavka also says, "it would be irrational for me to spend my life savings right now simply because the specific desires that I will have during retirement are desires that will occur only in the future."²⁸ Kavka seems that we should not minimize the demands of present generations for thinking about the demands of future generations. We should not lessen the hopes and desires of the present generations and save for future people. He strongly claims that we are obliged to the present generations but not to the future generations.

Jardins does not agree with this argument.²⁹ He is optimistic about the existence of future generations and there is no doubt that present people will be harmed by dumping the wastes in our yard, as well as future people also must be harmed by the long- term toxic wastes.

Though there are several arguments which do not accept the rights of future generations and maintain that we do not have any obligations to future generations, however, we cannot disregard both our obligations to future generations and their rights to the climate from the approaching circle of all generations in the climate. We were future to our ancestors and they were future to their ancestors. They and we are the same human being of this globe and feel the same rights of all elements of the

nature. We can say from our healthy existence that our predecessors have preserved a sound climate for us. Similarly, there is no doubt that future people will feel the same rights for living in a healthy climate. Though technology is benefiting all of us very strongly and it will make sure more luxurious life for future generations. Nevertheless, natural elements carry more value than artificial elements for instance; pure air is more healthy and preferable to everyone than the air coming from any air conditioner. In addition, anybody cannot live a healthy life without the help of natural elements. Thus, next generations must have moral rights to live with all the pure essentials of this climate as well as we cannot repudiate our obligations to conserve a healthy climate for our posteriors from the moral point of view.

Justice toward Future Generations Regarding Climate Change:

Now the question is that how much it is just to preserve sound climate for future generations. We want to establish justice toward future generations regarding climate change. All thoughtful people will want to establish justice for them because morality always denotes showing justice to the people whether they exist or not. Climate change occurs for the changes of the natural balance of all the fundamentals of the environment. Accordingly, justice toward future generations regarding climate change signifies that we should not deplete all natural resources and consume them for our purposes. We have to consider that all generations have equal rights to consume natural resources properly. In this sense, we are doing injustice to future generations by damaging the climate in numerous ways as like cutting down trees, emitting excessive amount of carbon dioxide gases and polluting the air, water, soil, and other natural resources. Thus, present generations need to establish justice toward future generations in this regard. "Justice, then, requires that we hand over to our immediate successors a world that is not in worse condition than the one we received from our ancestors."³⁰ We cannot leave a world in worse condition because it will threaten the lives of future generations. If we try not to harm our environment by different types of pollution and other various ways, we can conserve a healthy balance of our climate. Therefore, we will be able to leave a sound climate for our near or distant generations and establish justice toward them.

Philosophers have proposed various ways for establishing justice toward future generations from ethical standpoints. John Rawls suggests a way for establishing justice toward future generations. Rawls is a notable name in the history of contemporary philosophy. He determines

a just way for distributing natural resources among different generations in his book named *A Theory of Justice*. He argues that people of each generation should set themselves in the original position. ‘The original position is the appropriate initial status quo which insures the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair.’³¹ Rawls describes that the original position is a state where a rational person can decide what is equal and just for all because he remains ignorant of some especial facts which are entitled as the veil of ignorance by Rawls but he is able to acquire knowledge about some general facts. Actually, the purpose of the original position is to signify equality among human beings as moral being and reach a decision staying in neutral position. According to Rawls ‘‘ask what is reasonable for members of adjacent generations to expect of one another at each level of advance. They try to piece together a just savings schedule by balancing how much they would be willing to save for their more immediate descendants against what they would feel entitled to claim of their immediate predecessors. Thus, imagining themselves fathers, say, they are to ascertain how much they should set aside for their sons and grandsons by noting what they would believe themselves entitled to claim of their fathers and grandfathers.’’³² Rawls describes that when all members of a generation have to keep in the original position then they all have to ask how much they would be willing to protect something for their next generations. The just will also be established in case of future generations when they will think themselves in fathers’ and sons’ relationships. If we follow Rawls’s methods of ascertaining staying in the original position we will be able to hand to the next generations a climate no worse than we received from our predecessors. Then we will be able to establish justice equally staying in neutral position and there will be no injustice to future generations.

Although someone may claim that the concept of Rawls’s original position for distributing natural resources is intuitive and metaphysical as well as it is not an easy task to bring all members of a generation in an original position. Nevertheless, we can try it for establishing justice from a philosophical perspective for future generations. We can choose all rational members of a generation in a conference and ask them to think about the severe effects of climate change from a neutral position. Furthermore, we can show them the destructive natural disasters which are occurring in different times because of the depletion and consumption of the natural resources. Then it is anticipated that they will be able to realize what will be just to do for the future generations regarding climate change.

Justice may establish toward future generations by following the historical process of distribution in case of natural resources. It will assist us to distribute natural resources equally among all generations. Robert Nozick shows justice in case of distribution in his famous book named *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. He holds historical principles for establishing justice in regard to distribution. Robert Nozick says, "the entitlement theory of justice in distribution is historical; whether a distribution just depends upon how it came about."³³ Nozick reckons that the process of distribution will be historical. That means when we will distributive natural resources among all generations we will have to recall how the distribution of these resources had been done by our ancestors in the previous periods. Moreover, "a historical principle is one that says: to understand whether a given distribution of goods is just or unjust, we must ask how the distribution came about; we must know its history. Are the parties entitled by an originally justifiable acquisition and a claim of legitimate transfers, to what they now have? If so, the present distribution is just. If not, rectification or compensation will be needed to produce a just distribution."³⁴ Thus, the historical principle suggests the process of distribution in a just way. It signifies to follow the traditional process in case of distribution. It also indicates taking equal share of the responsibility of compensation if anyone does not turn out just distribution.

If we want to establish justice toward future generations about climate change we can hold Robert Nozick's historical principles because it will help us to distribute natural resources equally among all generations and present generations will be conscious of using natural resources in a proper way. Therefore, there will be no injustice to future generations. Moreover, present generations will not carry the blame from future generations and future generations will get the chance of living in a sound and healthy climate. The implementation process will be like a generation has to distribute the existing natural resources following their history. That means the descendants will distribute natural resources according to the process of their ancestors. When this historical process will be followed by the existing generations, the distribution will be just and present generations will be able to conserve the natural resources for their next generations. It will not be injustice to future generations. Otherwise, future generations may blame us for consuming all the resources of this climate. They also can consider us as a criminal saying that they have rights in this climate but we have misused it.

Intergenerational equity is an ideal of righteousness, fairness, and justice among the generations currently living and the generations yet to be born. It can be applied to the economic, psychological, social, and environmental contexts in terms of treatment and interaction for establishing justice. We can introduce intergenerational equity among all generations regarding climate change. A generation has equal rights to receive the planet at least as good condition as every other generation receives it and to be able to use it for its own benefit and intergenerational equity helps us to make sure what is just or right to do for preserving a healthy balance of the climate for future generations. ‘‘In the context of global climate change, implementation of these principles of intergenerational equity calls for measures to prevent rapid changes in climate, measures to prevent or mitigate damage from climate change, and measures to assist countries in adapting to climate change.’’³⁵ Thus, Intergenerational equity may be an effective concept for establishing justice. It will ensure equity among all generations by adopting crucial measures for preventing the causes of climate change.

These are some of the ways for ensuring justice toward future generations regarding climate change. Justice will prevent us from depleting natural resources and assist us to preserve a healthy balance of our climate as well as defends it from the changes. This is because; a healthy balance of the climate depends on the healthy balance of all natural resources. If we can ensure healthy balance of all the natural resources, we will be able to make sure a healthy climate for our approaching generations.

Conclusion:

Our climate did not change in a day or a night. It took long time for this. So, we have to hold long-term initiatives for bringing a fair atmosphere of our climate though we do not know that future generations will like what we will leave for them or not. Hence, we can protect this climate and take necessary steps for preserving a sound climate for them as they get alternatives in their hands. We must also do what we can to alleviate our impact on the globe as soon as possible. Even though we are not able to mitigate the causes of natural process, we can diminish anthropocentric (human-caused) activities for this, such as we can lessen excessive amount of carbon dioxide gas emission because carbon dioxide gas is the main cause of global warming and global warming is another cause of rising sea-level. We can introduce carbon-neutral technologies to secure a sustainable future for our upcoming generations. We have to use carbon-neutral technologies from our moral

perspectives as if we can bring sustainability for our climate. Additionally, other causes of climate change also have to be in our consideration. In fact, we have to expand our moral capacity and a sense of obligation for obtaining long-standing sustainability of our climate.

Lastly, all inhabitants of this climate have to change their attitude toward this climate and work from everyone's position. Everyone should maintain a respectful mentality to one another and treat one another from an equal standpoint. "The moral heuristic known as the Golden Rule ("treat others as you have them treat you") articulates a parity of perspective- I understand and accept that your circumstances, which are relevantly similar to mine, warrant respectful consideration on my part, with the expectation that you will act with similar consideration and respect towards me."³⁶ This is the most significant moral rule. This principle holds an equal stand for one another. We can apply this moral standard in case of future generations. We can treat the people of future generations likewise us. We can think as we need all pure elements of nature for our healthy living, future generations will also feel the need for a pure climate for their sound living. This is high time we should develop golden rule for bringing a balanced atmosphere of our climate and conserve a sound climate for future generations.

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