Climate-Related Rights and Justice

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I. Introduction

Climate change massively infringes on the rights of people.

The magnitude of the threats climate change poses is on the whole completely underestimated in our societies.

Presupposed rights-based moral theory:
- Each person has equal claim rights to the conditions necessary for being able to lead his or her life.
- But the rights are not all on the same level of importance.
II. Climate ethics as risk and energy ethics

Long persistence time of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere → Warming cannot be stopped by only limiting the emissions of CO₂

Which increase of global temperature may be risked? Which cumulative amount of CO₂ leads to which increase of average global temperature?

2°C (3.6°F)? 1 Tt or 700 Gt of carbon? (1 t of carbon = 3.6 t CO₂)

It is obligatory to limit the increase of global temperature as far as possible.

Necessity of a rapid and massive transformation of the global fossil fuel based energy systems.
III. Critique of mainstream climate economics (1)

Climate Economics search for the optimal amount of global warming: 3° or 4°C?

Background: The optimal amount of environmental pollution.

Which environmental pollution is right or wrong?

Climate-related cost-benefit analysis.
- Costs: Costs of limitation levels of climate change
- Benefits: Monetary value of the future harms a certain limitation will avoid.
III. Critique of mainstream climate economics (2)

Deriving the monetary values of the future harms:
- Willingness to pay to avoid impairments.
- Willingness to accept compensation for risks imposed.
- The value of preventing a fatality.

Question of how to deal with existing risk constellations ≠ question of how to evaluate the creation/ imposition of new risks.

Discounting the monetary values of future harms:
- Present value of the costs and benefits accruing in the future.
- Assumption that the people living in the future will be much better off.

Climate economics as both intellectually and morally wanting.
IV. The perspective of moral rights

The need to compare the different rights of all affected.

Problem to achieve the transformation of the global energy system without harming the poor and thwarting economic development.

The need of a carbon tax (of a system of taxes and tariffs)