Chapter 8

The Binding Nature of the Sustainability Principle: Towards a New Level of Morality

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Abstract

This chapter addresses the question of what normatively binding claims can be associated with the principle of sustainability. It proposes a theoretical reading of justice that requires a new level of morality, namely a global (spatial), intergenerational (temporal) and ecological (material) extension of the scope of responsibility. This makes it plausible that responsibility for those who are distant in space and time, as well as for nature, becomes a matter of conscience. At the same time, it is shown how the binding claims resulting from the principle of sustainability can be internalised in the course of a conscience formation and how the gap between knowledge and action in questions of sustainable development can be closed by means of an emotional underpinning. Finally, it is proposed to transfer the question of conscience to spatial units and tourism through the model of 'Destination Conscience' and to institutionalise the idea of 'inner commitment' or self-commitment. One suggestion is the creation of committees that could be a collective ethical conscience for the future issues.

Keywords: Sustainability; conscience; climate justice; rights of nature; mind behaviour gap; ethics of the future

Introduction

It has been clear for decades that nature and its ecosystems are being deprived of their capacity to regenerate. Science is increasingly trying to quantify where the planetary boundaries lie. They describe 'tipping points' or 'tipping cascades' (Rockström et al., 2009). Beyond certain critical thresholds, ecosystems, ocean currents, wind patterns, etc. are predicted to 'tip over', which in turn would mean that developments would be difficult to control (cf. Folkers, 2018, p. 284). Although this knowledge is available in very different specialist contexts, the 'Great Transformation' (WBGU – German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2011) towards a way of life and civilisation that enables a good life for all within planetary boundaries is still a long way off. Natural resources continue to be exploited, the capacity to absorb CO_2 is overexploited, rainforests are being cut down and oceans are being polluted.

We know what's happening. So, why is it so difficult for us to change our lifestyles? It is not without reason that future generations will ask: 'How could it happen that democratic, open societies, fully aware of the situation and in possession of innumerable means to stop the impending catastrophe, nevertheless went to their doom?'[1] (Ulrich, 2019, p. 37).

The gap between knowledge and action is one of the central problems of ethical reflection. The question of 'how ought demands [...] can become effective motivations for behaviour' arises above all 'because ought demands cannot of themselves compel action in accordance with them, but depend on the willingness of the addressees to follow them' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). And yet, it is obvious to attribute to moral demands 'a certain intrinsic content of motivation' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). This, at least, is the thesis of the so-called internalists (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). This approach to the problem of motivation, which is also widespread in moral psychology, assumes that 'whoever accepts a certain moral demand for himself [...] also has a reason to conform his behaviour to it' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). Accordingly, it is important to understand how moral norms 'can be internalised by individuals so that they have an inner access to them and feel affectionately as well as intellectually committed to them' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 14).

The starting point of this chapter is that 'taking for oneself' aims at an inner formation of the conscience of each individual. In the first step, therefore, the specific focus of conscience is revealed (Section 'The Specific Focus of Conscience'). Since the question of conscience focuses, among other things, on the 'inner bindingness' of a moral claim, Sections 'The Human Rights Perspective and Its Priority', 'Sustainability as a Demand for Justice' and 'Ecological Extension of Responsibility' reconstruct which normatively binding claims can be linked to the principle of sustainability. The aim is, on the one hand, to bring into play an alternative to the relativising weighing practice of the 'three-pillar concept of sustainability' and, on the other hand, to show that the sustainability principle in a justice-theoretical reading requires a new level of morality, namely a global (spatial), intergenerational (temporal) and ecological (material) extension of the

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[1]When quoting from German-language editions, the translation is by the author.

sphere of responsibility. In the final step, the gap between knowledge and action diagnosed in the introduction is taken up in order to provide the previously reconstructed normative claims with an emotional basis (Section 'Conclusion: Bridging the Gap Between Normative Principles and Action'). In this way, it is made plausible that questions of sustainable responsibility for the future can become questions of conscience if they bind us inwardly and lead to an inner commitment.

The Specific Focus of Conscience

The modern understanding of conscience owes its origins to ancient, Judeo-Christian and specifically modern influences. 'Socrates already invokes the dark and mysterious voice of his *daimonion*, which stands by him as a warning counsellor. This divine *daimonion* prevents him from doing anything that might lead him astray or prevent him from seeking the truth. [...] The personal experience of being unconditionally bound by the truth one has discovered later leads to various reflexive theories of conscience. In these theories, conscience is interpreted as a *sacred guardian spirit*, as a *watcher and observer of all our faults and merits* (Seneca), as an *inner court of justice* (Paul, Rom 2:14–16; Kant), as the *voice of God* (Augustine) or, more cautiously, as an *echo of the voice of God* (John Henry Newman) and as a *natural disposition to distinguish between good and evil* (Thomas Aquinas). What all these explanatory models have in common is that they understand conscience as a critical self-awareness and sense of responsibility on the part of human beings, and as an instance of self-examination of one's own actions that admonishes, accuses, or urges one to do good' (Schockenhoff, 2013, p. 156).

Basically, there are two aspects of conscience: On the one hand, it is the ability to judge goals and courses of action as right or wrong or good or bad from a normative point of view. On the other hand, conscience expresses itself as the experience of an inner commitment to do or not to do something. In conscience, 'the general, objective ranking of goods and the demand to take them into account is directly asserted as our own will. [...]. If I unjustly harm, offend or injure another, I directly harm myself. I have, as we say, *a bad conscience*' (Spaemann, 1982/2015, p. 75).

The inner voice of conscience can be accessed by analogy with Luther's dictum 'Here I stand and can do no other'. When we listen to the inner voice, we 'voluntarily commit ourselves to an endeavour [...] in our basic practical positions. We affirm something to which we are affectively and volitively attached' (Seel, 2002, p. 291). This experience can be interpreted with Harry Frankfurt's idea of *wholeheartedness*, acting from the whole heart or with an undivided will. He uses it to describe the motivational power a person has when they have fully decided on a particular option for action and is determined in terms of their will (cf. Rössler, 2017, pp. 48, 74): 'Being wholehearted means having a will that is undivided. The wholehearted person is fully settled as to what he wants, and what he cares about' (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 102). Motivation and wholeheartedness owe

their existence to fundamental concerns: they show what is important to a person in life, what they care about, what they love. According to these considerations, the formation of conscience can be understood as the binding of the will to ethical determinations that give direction and are binding. With the act of will, which is decisive for free will, we affirm what we have identified as 'actually good or bad, right or wrong' (Rössler, 2017, p. 51). The 'I will' that is important for modern notions of autonomy and freedom thus becomes an affirmation. The decision 'I will' thus says: 'This is how it is. This is how it should be. This is how it is good. This is how it is in truth' (Menke, 2022, pp. 190–191). The binding decisions of conscience have 'the status of normative knowledge' (Nida-Rümelin, 2016, p. 369). Nida-Rümelin speaks of 'ethical realism' (2016, p. 372) and normative 'truth claims' (Nida-Rümelin, 2016, p. 369). As an example, he cites the duty to respect human dignity and human rights. These have an objective validity so that 'it is no longer left to the discretion of political communities whether they design their laws in such a way that human rights are respected or not' (Nida-Rümelin, 2016, pp. 369, 372). For Markus Gabriel, too, it is obvious that there are moral facts which are similar to the recognition of truths:

> When I see someone writhing on the floor after being hit with a pipe, I have an intuition that this is not right and that this person needs help. When I see someone being humiliated, verbally abused at work, for example, I immediately have an intuition that this should not be happening. That brings me into contact with simple moral facts.
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> (Gabriel, 2023, p. 60)

Moral realism, according to Gabriel et al. in a *New Institute* plea for a *New Enlightenment*, holds that moral cognitions are not 'mere expressions of socially shared preferences' Gabriel et al., 2022, p. 31) but reveal moral facts that 'provide guidelines to know what to do and what to forbid' (Gabriel et al., 2022, p. 32). The good is thus a 'deontic necessity, something we ought to do under any circumstances' (Gabriel et al., 2022, p. 31).

If the question of conscience is now transferred to institutions and spatial units, as in the idea of 'Destination Conscience', then this can be interpreted in the sense of adhering to ethical standards and taking responsibility for the consequences of actions, as in the idea of 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR). A specific level of meaning that justifies the concept of conscience and goes beyond responsibility strategies is related to the desire and experience of inner commitment. Thus, the idea of a 'Destination Conscience' would not only lead to the definition of guidelines for ethically responsible tourism. In parallel with these 'should' strategies, it would also set in motion awareness-raising processes aimed at creating a mutual attachment to the guiding principles and thus promoting commitment.

The Human Rights Perspective and Its Priority

The 'Great Transformation' towards a way of life and civilisation that enables a good life for all within planetary boundaries can be described as a process of self-awareness or self-transformation. It is 'at its core … to be understood as an ethical task' (DBK, 2021, p. 20) and 'is therefore as much an ethical imperative as the abolition of slavery and the condemnation of child labour' (WBGU – German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2011, p. 2).

When talking about an ethically responsible form of tourism, reference is usually made to the guiding principle of sustainability. A core idea of the sustainability concept is to break with a one-sided focus on short-term economic returns and to adopt an integral and long-term perspective (cf. Schneider, 2021). To operationalise this principle, reference is made to the 'three-pillar concept of sustainability' (cf. Göpel, 2020, pp. 23–24). This means that economic development should be changed so that it is ecologically and socially balanced. Sustainable tourism would then be a form of tourism in which natural resources are protected and social aspects are taken into account. The aim is to achieve a sustainable balance between tourism activities and the natural and social environment. Within the three-pillar concept, however, it is often the case that some take care of the economic aspects, others the environmental aspects and still others the social aspects (cf. Göpel, 2020, p. 25). In the field of tourism, the situation is usually similar. The focus is on purely economic accounting. In addition, CSR and sustainability reports show how improvements can be made on the environmental side or how social issues can be addressed.

From an ethical perspective, the three-pillar concept can be defined as a form of weighing between three seemingly equivalent goods, as a weighing between economic, social and environmental goals (cf. Reder et al., 2019, pp. 46–48). At this point, however, we should pause and consider ethical gradations. For those who are not utilitarians, the trade-off between economic and social goals is not a trade-off between equally important goods. According to a common guiding principle of economic ethics, economic returns are not an end in themselves but a means to an end (cf. Sautter, 2017). The efficient production and distribution of goods and services serves to satisfy human needs and desires and to improve people's quality of life and well-being. Normative principles, such as the demand for justice or respect for the autonomy of other people, on the other hand, have a normatively binding claim; they apply unconditionally (cf. Schönecker, 2013). In this sense, John Rawls in his influential *A Theory of Justice* (1971) opposes ethical approaches that relativise *The Basic Liberties and Their Priority* (1983), i.e. that equate basic liberties with other values, thus allowing liberties and economic well-being to be pitted against each other.

> First, the priority of liberty means that the first principle of justice assigns the basic liberties, as given by a list, a special status. They have an absolute weight with respect to reasons of public good and of perfectionist values. For example, the equal political liberties cannot be denied to certain social groups on the grounds that their

> having these liberties may enable them to block policies needed for
> economic efficiency and growth.
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> (Rawls, 1983, pp. 8–9)

It is not possible to give equal weight to economic goals and normatively binding goals. The weighing of goods or values is ethically relevant. But there are limits to this weighing. There is what Immanuel Kant calls the categorical imperative. This has been interpreted in the 'humanity formula', which still shapes ethics today: 'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end' (Kant, GMS 1785, BA 66–67). The other must not be instrumentalised; it is an end in itself. This normative claim is also the background for the protection of human dignity as formulated in Article 1 of the German Basic Law. The inviolability of human dignity is unconditional, absolute and without exception. Accordingly, there are no 'good reasons' that could justify subjecting people to treatment that violates their dignity. The guarantee of human dignity cannot be weighed (cf. Zoglauer, 2013, p. 177).

However, the unconditional protection of human dignity not only shapes legal opinion; it is also a recognised basic social consensus. The assertion that a development violates human dignity is an accepted argument for denouncing and combating problematic developments. It is not without reason that we expect fair wages to be paid, no exploitative working conditions to be tolerated and human rights standards to be respected. For organisations and companies, this is referred to as the obligation to be guided by standards of governance, i.e. responsible corporate management (cf. Sautter, 2017, p. 525ff.). Linked to this, for example, is the requirement that production conditions comply with the International Labour Organisation's core labour standards. 'These prohibit exploitative child labour, forced labour and discrimination of all kinds and include a guarantee of freedom of association, including the right to collective bargaining' (Group of Experts, 2010, p. 36). The Alliance, which is supported by a large network of social movements and which advocates the introduction of a supply chain law, also calls for binding standards throughout the value chain (cf. Demele & Zimmer, 2020).

If the idea of 'Destination Conscience' is to be integrated into concepts of sustainable tourism, then the question of conscience must first be posed from a human rights perspective, i.e. one that aims to protect human dignity. It is not possible to give a conclusive answer to the question of what concrete claims follow from this. Nevertheless, the human rights perspective provides a binding ethical orientation (cf. Steinforth, 2021, pp. 4–6). This includes avoiding any form of exploitation and discrimination, paying employees fairly and equitably, and giving people real opportunities to participate in development and in social and political processes. Participation is not only recommended by economic or political wisdom but is also ethically required: What should follow from the goal perspective of sustainable tourism must be negotiated in terms of procedural justice.

Sustainability as a Demand for Justice

From a normative point of view, the principle of sustainability can also be interpreted in such a way that, in addition to human rights standards, ecological capacities play the role of an 'absolute weight' (John Rawls). A normative criterion that follows from this is, firstly, *resource justice*, i.e. the claim of all people to equal opportunities in the use of globally accessible resources (cf. Chakrabarty, 2021, pp. 56–60). Secondly, sustainability aims at *intergenerational justice*, i.e. a *temporal* extension of the justice perspective (cf. Vogt, 2021, pp. 488–491; Schneider, 2021). The understanding of justice is extended by a dimension that takes future generations into account – in the sense of the 'first commandment' that Hans Jonas established in his ethics of responsibility, namely the commandment not to endanger the future existence of mankind (cf. Jonas, 1984, p. 36). According to this, the consequences and costs of the overexploitation of environmental space by the present generation must not be exported to the future of generations yet unborn. The classic definition can be found in the *Brundtland Report* (1987) of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development. There, 'sustainable development' means 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Thirdly, the *spatial* delimitation of the concept of justice (*global justice*) comes into focus because, on the one hand, people in the global North make disproportionate use of the available environmental space – measured, for example, by their ecological footprint – and because, on the other hand, those who are least responsible for this have to suffer most from the ecological damage as well as from the impending costs of countermeasures. This raises the issue of environmental justice. It arises in particular with regard to the historical responsibility of the global North for the extinction of species, global warming and the pollution of the oceans (cf. Vogt, 2021, pp. 378–380).

Interpreted in this way, the recognition of the principle of sustainability is a sign of a moral learning process. In this reading, sustainability is linked to the challenge of expanding human sensibility and imagination, that is, to a relationship with time and space 'that goes far beyond our ordinary perception' (Pelluchon, 2021, p. 233). This means that future generations and people living at a distance are included in the sphere of responsibility and become 'objects of our moral appreciation' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 51). In its climate decision of 24 March 2021, the German Federal Constitutional Court opened the way for a legal operationalisation of intergenerational justice with the requirement of 'intertemporal safeguarding of freedom' (cf. Kersten, 2022, pp. 35–39). But it also raises the question of the scope of our moral obligations. Does our conscience stir when the consequences of our patterns of production and consumption, including tourism, are 'externalised in such a way that they take effect only at a spatial distance and are not directly perceptible to us' (Steinforth, 2021, p. 6)? Are we outraged by the cynical 'living well at the expense of others' (Lessenich, 2019)? Do we hear the 'call' of future people who do not yet exist? Do we recognise their right to an environment that allows them to live in dignity? Can we respond, indeed do we feel responsible, to ensure that the maximum limits of global

warming are respected, in particular by limiting CO_2 emissions, and that measures are taken to respect further planetary boundaries?

If we answer these questions in the affirmative, then our commitment to sustainability cannot be limited to weighing economic, social and environmental goals. It is about nothing less than the spatial and temporal delimitation of our sphere of responsibility, about global and intergenerational justice. When we speak of sustainable development, and in this context of sustainable tourism, it must be measured in a normative perspective by whether the fundamental rights of all people are respected and whether all people worldwide can live within the planetary boundaries and will continue to do so in the future.

Ecological Extension of Responsibility

In current social–ecological discourses, the goal perspective of sustainability is criticised for not being ambitious enough, even in its justice-theoretical interpretation. Within the framework of the sustainability concept, the unreflected use or exploitation of nature can be problematised. However, this reflection is still based on anthropocentric models. Even in the case of sustainable use, it is assumed that ecosystems simply exist and function. Moreover, the value of nature is assessed solely in terms of human preferences. The non-human is only valuable insofar as it is important for human flourishing (cf. Chakrabarty, 2021, pp. 63–64). Jens Kersten also asks, 'What comes after sustainability?' (2022, p. 48) In his eyes, the *relativisation* of anthropocentric views and the *relationalisation* of human existence must be taken seriously in order to overcome the 'central challenges of the Anthropocene – species extinction, climate catastrophe, global pollution' (Chakrabarty, 2021).

The resulting socio-ecological relationism does not start with abstract principles and norms but with ontological reflections that are 'about nothing more and nothing less than a different way of being in the world' (Horn, 2018, p. 68).

One of the most important reference authors for a relational understanding of reality is Bruno Latour. His approach sees itself as a project to overcome the separation between the immaterial and the material and between culture and nature (cf. Schneider, 2022). This can be seen, among other things, in the fact that he calls the narrative of relations, which he contrasts with the narrative of modernising and emancipation, a 'narrative of bonding and ecologizing' (Latour, 2010/2016, p. 64). In short, he says: 'Between modernising and ecologizing, we have to choose' (Latour, 2012/2013, p. 8). By this, he means that the goal can no longer be emancipation from natural, material and social ties, as in modernising, but a deeper penetration of the interplay of countless things and living beings, human and non-human actors (cf. Latour, 2012/2013, p. 10). Ecologising requires a completely new relationship between human beings and the world, a relationship in which human beings are no longer indifferent or hostile to the world but are aware of their embeddedness and 'to be sensitive to the experiences' (Latour, 2012/2013, p. 477). As 'terrestrials', Latour continues, we need to trace the hybrid

network of reciprocal relationships that 'enables the living to make the earth habitable' (Latour, 2021, pp. 15–16).

In his encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015), Pope Francis also offers a variety of impulses for an understanding of nature that sees it not only as a resource but also as a relational context of life. Methodologically, the approach of an 'integral ecology' (LS 137–162; Vogt, 2021, pp. 251–257; DBK, 2021, pp. 75–80) is decisive here, according to which the fact that everything is interconnected (cf. LS 16, 42, 89, 91, 117, 138, 220, 240, 246) is at the same time understood as a normative dictum to respect the complex ecological interrelations and effects.

> We take these [eco]systems into account not only to determine how best to use them, but also because they have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system. Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence. [. . .] So, when we speak of 'sustainable use', consideration must always be given to each ecosystem's regenerative ability in its different areas and aspects. (LS 140)

In Markus Vogt's concept of sustainability, networking is not only a descriptive term but also a normative one. To distinguish between the two aspects, Vogt uses the term *retinity* for the ethical meaning: 'Retinity differs', he argues, 'from the general concept of networking by being placed in an ethical context of justification. It is a specifically ethical concept and refers to the imperative to link the development of civilisation to the long-term preservation and functioning of the ecological systems that support it' (Vogt, 2009, pp. 350–351).

The moment ecosystems and other living beings are no longer ascribed only an instrumental value, the figures of environmental ethical justification also change (cf. Krebs, 2017). For Corine Pelluchon, the ethical paradigm shift implies the need for 'a new enlightenment' (Pelluchon, 2021, p. 19). Modern ethics, 'which led to human rights and the recognition of the equal dignity of all human beings, [must] continue in the affirmation of the intrinsic value of ecosystems and other forms of life' (Pelluchon, 2021). As this becomes more and more socially resonant, the moral learning process becomes a question of rights. For the idea of who has rights has also expanded. For centuries, children had no rights nor did prisoners, foreigners, women, the mentally ill, African Americans or indigenous peoples. On the basis of an ecological extension of the sphere of responsibility, nature would then also have to be granted rights (cf. Adloff & Busse, 2021; Kersten, 2022).

However, this cannot be achieved simply by expanding the scope of postulated responsibility but requires a transformation of human self-understanding. Eva von Redecker speaks of a *Revolution for Life* (2020). This aims at a new configuration of living together, which is expressed in a caring attitude. It is not about ruling or dominating but about sharing and participating in life, not about winning but about the need to live for and with someone. Pelluchon develops an

Ethic of Consideration (2019) in which she ascribes a crucial role for the success of a social–ecological transformation to the practice of an attitude of humility and attentive belonging to the shared world.

Conclusion

The previous considerations have attempted to make plausible the fact that the concept of sustainability is developing from a pragmatic concept of the wise use of natural resources to a normatively demanding concept in which the horizon of responsibility is extended globally, intergenerationally and ecologically. Responsibility for those who are distant in time and space as well as for nature becomes a matter of conscience. As mentioned above, this can be seen as a new stage in the development of morality (cf. Vogt, 2021, p. 145). The research of Michael Tomasello shows that this assumption is not just a positing but a challenge that is repeated in the history of evolution. According to his analysis, the decisive evolutionary advantage of *Homo sapiens*, which enabled its worldwide spread around 15,000 years ago, was not a specific biological ability but the development of a morality aimed at cooperation in large groups (cf. Tomasello, 2016, pp. 11–21, 207–239). Its key feature is the transition from a second-personal morality based on tit-for-tat strategies towards individually known people to a general morality of abstract rules. In view of the multiple, globally interconnected crises of the present, humanity is currently facing the challenge of a qualitatively increased complexity of cooperation problems. The future of *Homo sapiens* depends on whether a new stage in the development of morality can be reached. 'Ethics must be extended globally, inter-generationally and ecologically' (Vogt, 2021, p. 145). However, this cannot be achieved simply by starting from a previous theoretical knowledge or from well-founded general principles in order to apply them in practice in a second step. The 'nasty gap' between knowledge and action is the sore point of normative approaches. The moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt speaks of a 'rationalist fallacy' (2012, pp. 88–89).

   In the case of the climate problem, several factors combine to inhibit the motivation to behave in accordance with moral norms: 'the pronounced future orientation of climate responsibility, the social distance to those primarily affected, and the threatening nature of the changes demanded of habitual lifestyles' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 173). The obstacles to intergenerational, global and ecological responsibility cannot be overcome by more moral appeals. Rather, they must be placed on a 'more reliable emotional basis' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 182). Birnbacher suggests three ways in which this might be possible. The first, in his view, is the chain of love, the intergenerational chain of care for the next generation (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, p. 183). The assumption that the care of parents for their children can be a model for future responsibility also plays a role in Pelluchon's ethics of consideration. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's philosophy of natality, she speaks of the newborn as the 'face of consideration' (2019, p. 161,

290). The newborn reminds us that we are 'vulnerable and dependent beings' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 291) inserted into a 'common world' (Birnbacher, 2022).

> It awakens our desire to do all we can to pass on a habitable planet [. . .]. The fragility of a newborn baby points to the fragility of every human being and the need to [. . .] work for an ecologically sustainable society that is just for all human and non-human beings.
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> (Birnbacher, 2022, pp. 291–292)

A second form that Birnbacher brings into play for an emotional anchoring of intergenerational and global climate responsibility is 'the human need for over-arching goals that reach beyond one's own person, one's own living environment and one's own life' (Birnbacher, 2022, pp. 184–185). This motive could also be called the motive of self-transcendence or the creation of meaning.

> Providing for the global future takes these motives into account in a special way, because the individual is affirmed in his or her self-worth and can empathise with an overarching context of meaning. He sees himself as a link in a generational chain, held together by an intergenerational sense of community that includes gratitude in the past as well as recognition of precautionary obligations in the future. This motive can be particularly strong when it is supported by community ties with like-minded people.
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> (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 185)

In this context, Birnbacher points out that the 'commitment to a future that is in principle transcendent of experience [. . .] is similar to the religious commitment to a transcendent God' (Birnbacher, 2022). Pelluchon develops a similar idea. She transforms the 'experience of the incommensurable' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 109) into the experience of being situated in a 'common world' that consists of 'the totality of generations and the living' (Pelluchon, 2019) and implies an 'umbilical connection of the living' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 110). This can mean that the subject 'opens itself to a truth that transcends itself' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 109). Through a 'deepening of the self' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 89), 'transcendence in immanence' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 109), which Pelluchon programmatically calls 'trandes-cendence' [*sic*] (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 113), leads 'to an awareness of the bond between generations and all living beings' (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 89):

> It is the experience of our shared destiny with other living beings, human and non-human, and it is inseparable from the desire to care for them and to leave a habitable world for future generations.
>
> (Pelluchon, 2019, pp. 113–114)

A third form, which in Birnbacher's eyes can contribute to a sustainable responsibility for the future, is the 'appreciation of cultural values' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 184). This too can be understood as self-transcendence (cf. Joas, 1997). When we come to understand and appreciate values in a deep and comprehensive way, we expand our self-concept. We allow ourselves to be defined by something that transcends our mere subjective desires and wills. We are motivated to value and promote values such as compassion, fairness, justice and solidarity – and to see commitment to them as binding. At the same time, facilities, institutions and places where value-bound experiences of self-transcendence are made and given a specific form of articulation can be considered valuable – because otherwise, certain forms of relating to the world and self-relativisation would be lost (cf. Seel, 2008/2014).

> Those who love Bach's music usually also have an interest in ensuring that this music is not lost and that it is preserved and passed on to future generations. [...]: 'To love is, amongst other things, to care about the future of what we love'.
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> (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 184)[2]

The conservative aspect of appreciation also comes into play when we work to preserve our homeland for our children and our children's children. If it is destroyed, opportunities for experience are irretrievably lost. Preventing this and giving the home a future can be a strong motive for ecological and intergenerational responsibility (cf. Krebs, 2011, 2013).

The three forms of bridging the gap between normative principles and action are aimed at the heart of the question of conscience. As described in the first chapter, two aspects can be distinguished: On the one hand, it is the ability to judge goals and courses of action as right or wrong or good or bad from a normative point of view. On the other hand, conscience is expressed as the experience of an inner commitment to do or not to do something. The second aspect is the result of an educational process, which can also take the form of a process of self-transformation. In this perspective, conscience takes the form of a self-commitment.

If the question of conscience is transferred to spatial units and tourism via the guiding principle of 'Destination Conscience', the aspects of global, intergenerational and ecological responsibility mentioned in this chapter can be used for reflexive awareness-raising processes. In particular, the aspect of inner commitment or self-commitment needs to be institutionally anchored. Destinations can also impose obligations that prevent them from succumbing to opportunistic temptations. Contracts and frameworks can fulfil this function. Advisory bodies (councils, commissions and expert panels) are also important in this context. These can be used to 'act as a collective *ethical conscience for the future* that is not

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[2]The quotation in the citation is from (Passmore, 1980, p. 88).

subject to the pressures of lobbying, party politics and election campaigns in the same way as politicians' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 188).

Here the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC) can be seen as a role model (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, p. 189). It is not without reason that the IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. Just as climate researchers describe reality and develop models and measurements for the complex interrelationships between impacts, effects, interactions and repercussions that allow predictions about the exact point in time at which we will cross thresholds, they also influence a response (cf. Latour, 2015/2017, pp. 41–74). By presenting facts, they create a space of global responsibility, thus relativising the 'the old idea that description entails no prescription' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 48). Their data 'concern us so directly that their mere expression sounds like an alarm' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 47).

Another inspiring example is the Citizens' Climate Council (cf. Schroeder, 2022). This is a group of 160 very different people, representative of the population, who in the first half of 2021 attempted to develop possible measures for dealing with the climate crisis in 12 rounds of scientifically based discussions. If such a tool were to be scaled up for different spatial units, much could be gained in terms of new ideas for solutions.

However, experience shows that the path from science-based warnings of future risks to corresponding forward-looking policies is a long and arduous one (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, pp. 189–190). This 'nasty divide' is also simply due to the inability to face new challenges and the reluctance to accept truths that are uncomfortable for oneself and others. In this sense, the primary question of conscience is how the 'age of denial' (Sloterdijk, 2023, p. 72) can be replaced by an 'age of truth' (cf. Schneider, 2023).

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