Intergenerational Tyranny and Climate Change

ABSTRACT

Climate change is often described as a perfect moral storm. One of the central elements is the intergenerational storm, and especially ‘the tyranny of the contemporary’. The perfect moral storm analysis has a good track record in explaining the failures of international climate policy over the last thirty years. However, some question the importance of the intergenerational component. This paper examines the strengths and limitations of the tyranny of the contemporary analysis. Part 1 elaborates on the tyranny of the contemporary analysis in some detail, highlighting features of it that are sometimes neglected. Part 2 considers some central objections. Part 3 explores how the tyranny of the contemporary might be expected to evolve over time, as the climate crisis deepens.