

INTRODUCTION

In the first two parts of this book, we have developed the conceptual foundations of joint production, and we have performed an economic analysis of the phenomenon. It has become obvious that the economic approach to joint production, while yielding a number of valuable and applicable insights, is nevertheless limited in its capacity to develop operational recommendations for environmental policy. Part III broadens the scope of our investigation to incorporate an ethical perspective: it links joint production to responsibility.* In this part, the argument will be based on philosophical reasoning. Accordingly, the presentation will be philosophical in style.

Responsibility and joint production are two terms which are central to a number of different disciplines: responsibility to philosophy – most significantly in the fields of ethics and political philosophy – and law; joint production to physics, engineering and economics. As we shall see in this part of the book, important relationships exist between responsibility and joint production. We, thus, intend to relate the terms to one another in consideration of the character of knowledge, and we draw conclusions for economic and political activity.

Responsibility is a ubiquitous phenomenon. In fact, one hardly needs to point out the ubiquity of responsibility. In practical life, someone or other is constantly assuming responsibility, or is having the assumption of responsibility demanded of them. A whole ethical doctrine of its own – the ethics of responsibility – has developed around this expression. With regard to modern environmental problems, the philosopher Hans Jonas (1979) has suggested an ‘imperative of responsibility’ as a reference point for the orientation of morality and politics.

The second term, joint production, also refers to a ubiquitous phenomenon (see Chapters 2 and 3). Whereas ‘responsibility’ is an expression belonging to the world of human thought and morality, ‘joint production’ refers to a reality of the physical world. At first glance, these two spheres appear to be independent of one another. For a description and evaluation of a situation in physical terms, it seems to be of no significance whether or not someone is responsible for it. Conversely, our ability to assume responsibility and to act in a morally commendable manner

*The four chapters of Part III are translated and revised from Petersen and Faber (2005).

does not appear to depend on circumstances outside of ourselves. Thus, Immanuel Kant (1996a[1785]) can declare that it is one's *good will* alone which makes an action morally 'good', that is morally responsible. For, in the evaluation of an action it does not matter what the action actually brings about.

Even if [...] this will should wholly lack the capacity to carry out its purpose; if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing and only the good will were left [...] – then, like a jewel, it would still shine by itself, as something that has its full worth in itself. (Kant 1996a[1785]: 50)

However, the impression that physical and moral matters are completely separate from one another requires further consideration. For physical matters can undoubtedly have an effect on the moral quality of our actions. This becomes obvious if one considers the phenomenon of joint production.

Chapter 11 lays the philosophical foundations. It clarifies the concept of responsibility and elucidates its relationship to the concept of joint production. Chapter 12 discusses the relevance of knowledge and ignorance with regard to responsible behaviour, and explicates further the phenomenon of joint production. Chapter 13 introduces a distinction between different types of individual and collective responsibility. Chapter 14 investigates how the relationship between political and economic responsibility presents itself under the conditions of joint production. This chapter also contains a summary of Part III.