

The World As We Found It

Chapter 14

Learning Objectives

- After reading this chapter, you will be able to:
 - 14.1 Critically analyze arguments surrounding the issue of global warming.
 - 14.2 Discuss the utilitarian arguments for and against doing something about climate change and its effects.
 - 14.3 Articulate the opposing moral and political positions on global warming today.

Global Weirding?

- When it comes to global warming and climate change, it is often the case that both economic and political factors shade the moral debate and even plant doubts on the validity of science. So, scientists have coined a new phrase "weirding" (since warming is debatable) its cold in the winter and hot in the summer... sounds weird.
- The question of the place of humanity in the world and of our duties to that world has long been fodder for challenging philosophical debates, however, and these debates carry an increasingly urgent tone in the 21st century.

Ethics concepts

- There have been several ways of approaching the question of the moral status of the environment, from Natural Law arguments about our supremacy in nature to a recent wave of ecofeminism that ties together the oppression of women and the oppression of the environment. Claiming moral standing for nonhuman animals—unrelated to humans—has made persuasive arguments, especially when paired with solid utilitarian reasons why one ought not let, for example, a species like penguins die out as a result of global warming.

Not more important than an Oyster

- "You'll feel better if you recycle" is an Aristotelian promise behind more than one ecological campaign. "Be good to Mother Earth and she will be good to you" is a rather sweet slogan for many well-intentioned activists who perhaps fail to notice that the Earth is nobody's mother, that it is a thing with no consciousness and much less feelings. The clever Scottish philosopher, David Hume, wasn't joking when he noted that "The life of man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster."

Former Vice President Al Gore

- "What we take for granted might not be here for our children," said the former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore in his impassioned call to action, *An Inconvenient Truth*. "Our civilization has never experienced any environmental shift remotely similar to this." The book, together with his 2006 documentary of the same title, was in fact a follow-up to Gore's earlier book *Earth in the Balance: Forging a New Common Purpose* as well as other books and articles he has written both before and after his political career.

Global Cooling?

- In the 1970's leading climatologists were very concerned about the change in global temperatures. Leading scientific journals were publishing articles based on data that *the Earth was cooling and we were headed for another ice age!*
- Flash forward 20 years later and scientists and politicians are worried about global warming. If you ask some scientists, they will admit that we are in between ice ages. The next one is coming, be it in a 100 years or 10,000 years.
- Given this scientific fact, does global warming at this moment really matter, and is there anything we can do to really effect global climate cycles that happen over eons?

No Global Warming in Florida

- The *Miami Herald* in 2015 reported that Governor Rick Scott issued orders to state officials including those working for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection not to use the terms "climate change" or "global warming" in any official communications, emails, press releases, or any other information released by state offices. Those orders still stand. In other words, the subject cannot be mentioned. Other states are considering similar measures.

Global Warming

- Global Warming is a reality... for some...

Effects

- Warmer oceans, more tropical cyclones, stronger hurricanes, rising oceans.
- Extremes in weather, change in environment resulting in loss of habitats for numerous creatures.
- More than 110 glaciers have disappeared from Montana's Glacier National Park over the past 150 years, and researchers estimate that the park's remaining 37 glaciers may be gone in another 25 years.
- Half a world away on the African equator, Hemingway's snows of Kilimanjaro are steadily melting and could completely disappear in the next 20 years.
- In the Alps, Andes, and Rockies, glaciers are retreating and disappearing every year.

Acid Rain

- The term "acid rain" is commonly used to mean the deposition of acidic components in rain, snow, fog, dew, or dry particles. The more accurate term is "acid precipitation."
- Distilled water, which contains no carbon dioxide, has a neutral pH of 7. Liquids with a pH less than 7 are acid, and those with a pH greater than 7 are alkaline (or basic).
- "Clean" or unpolluted rain has a slightly acidic pH of 5.6 because carbon dioxide and water in the air react together to form carbonic acid, a weak acid.

Acid in DC

- Around Washington, D.C., the average rain pH is between 4.2 and 4.4.
- The extra acidity in rain comes from the reaction of air pollutants, primarily sulfur oxides and nitrogen oxides, with water in the air to form strong acids (like sulfuric and nitric acid). The main sources of these pollutants are vehicles and industrial and power-generating plants. In Washington D.C., the main local sources are cars, trucks, and buses.



Numerous Other Concerns

- The environment, plant and animal extinctions, human development of natural lands, and fossil fuels are all major issues within this topic.
