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Benjamin H. Housman April 14, 2011

Cooling Down Global Warming: Revisiting Sartre and Heidegger on this Modern Day Challenge

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Abstract

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Global warming is a phenomenon that threatens our very existence as humans on this earth. Our finitude both as individuals and as a collective species resonates when we reflect, typically in dread, on the complex technological age that renders the world as standing reserve and out of our control; as a place that appears to be approaching its collapse should we continue living the lives many of us currently live. The question, then, is: Who is responsible for the current crisis we face and, likewise, how can we go about changing the path of global warming? This paper will posit that both the individual and the collective (i.e. totality of individuals constituting a social ensemble) are responsible for global warming and that a more unified social whole characteristic of a Sartrean group must be formed in order for progress to be made. This paper will also examine the loss of our essence as thought-worthy beings due to our blind participation in this technological, industrialized culture that so heavily contributes to global warming. We must 'step back' to our essential space and revive our meditative thinking that has been overshadowed by the calculative thinking dominating our world today. Ultimately, through educating the public on the science behind global warming and reviving our essence as thought-worthy beings, a stronger ethic of care towards the environment may emerge and policy change may be realized.

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Introduction

This paper covers one of the most pressing demands of our modern society from existentialist, Heideggerean, and pragmatic perspectives. Each of these views has much to offer as we consider how to address global warming—a phenomenon largely overlooked by philosophers even though its implications pose such a serious threat to our existence and the earth's stability. The purpose of this paper, then, is to apply these lucid philosophies to this modern day challenge, which will both facilitate our understanding of the obstacles we face and provide constructive ways to overcome them. As Al Gore likes to point out, we ought to think of the earth as a human body; even though we have only experienced a global average temperature increase of about 0.8 °C in the last century, the earth has a fever and it appears only to be getting worse.

So what can we do to bring the earth back into good health? In this paper, I will argue that three significant changes must be made to stop global warming: (1) We must accept our responsibility, both on an individual and collective level, for causing global warming and transform the social ensemble of this country from a Sartrean collective to more of a Sartrean group; (2) We must learn how to live in this industrialized, technological society—to say yes and no to technology—by revitalizing our essence as thought-worthy beings; (3) We must educate the public on the science behind global warming and adjust our attitude toward the environment through a stronger ethic of care. Certainly we face a test of epic proportions, but if we can realize these changes then we may be able to preserve the stability and integrity of this earth while fighting global warming.

* * *

Before we begin, I must make a prefatory note that this paper operates under the assumption that global warming is a real phenomenon caused by anthropogenic activity. This topic will be taken up in the third chapter, and I encourage those skeptics of global warming to read that chapter first. However, this paper does not seek to engage in a debate over the science or veracity of global warming, for this lies outside the purpose of this investigation.

I. All for One and One for All!

Deep and deeper grows the water
On the stairs and in the hall,
Rushing in with roar and clatter—
Lord and master, hear me call!
Ah, here comes the master—
Sore, sir, is my strait;
I raised this spirit faster
Far than I can lay't.
"Broom, avaunt thee!
To thy nook there!
Lie, thou spouk, there!
Only answer,
When for mine own ends I want thee,
I, the master necromancer!"[1]

Thus writes Johann Wolfgang von Goethe at the end of the 18th Century in his famous poem "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." This poem was written before the birth of the industrial age, before the technological era that surrounds us today, and before advanced machines and global institutions pervaded our society at large. Yet, this poem speaks to the helplessness of an apprentice who is in "over his head"—who creates a powerful force that escapes his control. The poem concludes, quite fortunately, with the sorcerer returning and saving the day. But what if that sorcerer had not returned? What if the apprentice had lacked a sorcerer to rescue him and "bail him out"?

We live in an age today where the very real phenomenon of climate change is occurring all around us. As much as we wish we had a sorcerer to come save us, we do not. There is no magic spell to stop our current level of greenhouse gas emissions, to

[1] Goethe, Johann. *The Permanent Goethe*. ed. Thomas Mann and trans. Theodore Martin. New York: The Dial Press, 1948, p. 348-351.

provide natural resources in abundance, to protect endangered animals from extinction, and to stabilize the extreme temperatures we are witnessing around the world. We are the apprentice with no sorcerer, and it is up to *us* to tame Goethe's metaphorical broom before we drown in its water. This means that we must first embrace the responsibility that comes with creating such a power—own our previous choices that have positioned us in our current historical age and predicament—and work, both individually and collectively, towards preserving our environment.

This notion of responsibility is woven throughout the works of many 19th and 20th Century existentialists, particularly those of Jean-Paul Sartre. While the focus of Sartre's thought evolved throughout his writing, from a very individualistic, person-centered philosophy to a gradually more group-oriented, social philosophy, this theme and attention to responsibility persists all along. Through gaining an understanding of Sartre's existentialism, we may begin to appreciate the complexity of addressing who is responsible for the climate change surrounding us. Thus, this chapter aims to investigate this very question and will argue that the themes and ideas encapsulated in existentialism—particularly in reference to freedom, anguish, responsibility, and guilt—demonstrate that both our individual choices and our larger social dynamic will determine whether we possess the moral will to preserve our environment. In other words, if we wish to resist becoming slaves to climate change, we must own our individual choices and strive to form a more united social whole.

A. The Early Sartre: Decisions…Decisions…Decisions

Let us first, then, examine the theme arguably most central to existentialism—responsibility—and view its development within Sartre's work while also shedding light on climate change. In one of his major philosophical books, *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre describes the anguish felt when recognizing consciousness as consciousness of freedom. Standing on the edge of a cliff overlooking the steep side of a mountain, Sartre says, generates both fear and anguish—fear in that someone other than myself could throw me over, but anguish in that I could throw myself over. An acknowledgment of our freedom causes this anguish; we accept that we have the power, agency, and ability to realize a given possibility, to jump over the edge and commit suicide should we be so inclined or compelled. As Sartre says, "it is in anguish that man becomes the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself" (1972 [1943], 116). This notion of anguish and freedom—this confrontation with oneself, with one's possibilities—also demands a profound sense of personal responsibility for our actions. The possibility of jumping off of the cliff, and the anguish that accompanies my awareness that such a possibility can only be realized by *me* and is currently possible for *me*, means that I am ultimately responsible for what I end up doing. No one is to blame for the decisions I make other than myself, and I bear the weight of making that decision through my freedom.

Sartre's early, individualistic philosophy just described applies not just to specific situations, such as standing on the edge of a cliff, but rather to all situations, to our existence, to our being-in-the-world, and the choices we make in these everyday

situations, whether conscious of it or not, that affect our planet. The most obvious example of such choices would be whether we *choose* to recycle or not, whether we *choose* to walk or drive, etc. These choices are choices made by us as individuals, often with very little to no deliberation, and also often out of habit. Many of us are aware, through education and a growing effort to spread the issue of climate change, that our actions have direct consequences on our environment—choosing to walk, bike, or take public transportation instead of drive means saving the gas that would have been consumed, adding to the already excessive levels of carbon emissions in our atmosphere. Others, however, either deny that climate change is a real phenomenon or have not received the information and education to appreciate the issue.

Let us examine the former category of people—those who understand the issue and are cognizant of the consequences of their actions.[2] Within this group, a small portion consistently and actively make "green" choices (i.e. choose to almost always walk instead of drive whenever possible, recycle whenever possible, etc.). Whether this portion is closer to 5% or closer to 20%, most of us would agree that this sort of "green" lifestyle and active effort towards sustainability represents a small set of individuals within this category. The majority, however, casually recycles, walks only when convenient and maintains a generally apathetic view towards the issue. Why is this; why do so many people who understand the consequences of their actions continue to choose without a strong sense of care for their choices regarding climate change?

For one, many people feel overwhelmed by the global scale of climate change and believe they are powerless towards preventing it. The idea that this one choice actually

[2] The latter category of people—those who either deny climate change or are uninformed—will be taken up in the third chapter of this paper.

impacts the condition of our entire earth—such a mighty, dynamic system—often seems foolish. This notion is nothing novel; with any large system composed of a web of smaller parts, the effect of one small part on a larger whole is often difficult to diagnose. And when such a whole is as large as the earth, and such a part is as small as the choice of one individual among over six billion, it can be difficult at times to value the significance of that choice.

Secondly, and in line with this first reason, many people make choices based on cost-benefit analysis. So, people ask: does the cost of spending an extra thirty minutes of my day biking to work instead of driving really outweigh the benefits of not emitting a small amount of carbon dioxide into our environment? Is the inconvenience really worth it? Many people say no. Thirdly, people ask: why me? Why should I make these sacrifices when I know others who are in the same position as I am are not?

For all of these reasons, people often find themselves repelled from the "green" choice. They dismiss their role as members of a larger whole and reject the personal responsibility that accompanies it. Yet, admittedly, certain situations do demand making the less "green" choice; sometimes walking, biking, or driving simply is not an option, or is such an inconvenience that one must drive. I believe the early Sartre would refer to his notion of 'bad faith' in guiding us on how we should act and live our lives, particularly when confronted with these choices regarding the environment. Sartre introduced the idea of 'bad faith' in his *Being and Nothingness* and used three main examples—that of a woman on a date, a waiter, and a closet homosexual—to illustrate this concept. In all three examples, the individual acts out of bad faith because he or she is acting inauthentically; each person succumbs to self-deception and denies his or her essence as a

person. The woman makes herself an object, a thing 'in-itself', by neither embracing the advances of her date nor resisting, but instead just 'being there' as a rock just *is* there; the waiter tries desperately to imitate the role of a waiter, what a waiter should do, while all along forgetting who he is and what makes him unique; and lastly, the closet homosexual rejects his true identity, is insincere with himself and his friends, and deceives himself.

Indeed, when considering what decision to make, we must resist acting out of 'bad faith' and instead must be true to ourselves. This means, for example, that the classic line "I cannot do anything about it"—the line that many people use to justify not making the green choice—is unacceptable because those who say it are being inauthentic with themselves; they are acting out of bad faith precisely because often they *can* do something about it. In everyday situations, though, when we are actively participating as beings-in-the-world, as beings-in-situation, and must choose, for example, a method of transportation from one place to another, our responsibility lies in acting authentically. This means that we must make personal judgments when evaluating situations in which we are sincere with ourselves. If we choose to drive instead of walk, then we must be honest as to why we made such a choice—we must be authentic in our cost-benefit analysis rather than over-inflating or deflating the value of things considered. In the example mentioned earlier, driving to work rather than biking may be the "right" decision, since one has evaluated the costs of biking (e.g. takes longer, may make one's clothes sweaty, etc.) and determined that those outweigh the benefits (e.g. not emitting carbon dioxide and contributing to climate change). In many ways this sort of ethic of authenticity resides near the domain of virtue ethics, in that the "right" or "moral" choice is one that exemplifies an existential virtue: authenticity. Acting in good faith, therefore,

represents a crucial individual step in owning our choices and asserting our individual responsibility.

B. Sartre's Existentialism is a Humanism

As Sartre grew older and his philosophy evolved, he began to widen his narrow focus on the individual to a broader, social philosophy. The first hint of this shift was a lecture given in 1945 entitled *Existentialism is a Humanism*, in which Sartre addressed many of his critics and laid out the basic tenets of existentialism. While this lecture echoes many of the ideas and themes from his earlier *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre also found himself free-associating with comments stressing humanity as a whole—comments that took on a new and different feel from his earlier individualist approach. For example, Sartre at one point in his lecture states, "And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men" (2007 [1956], 23). He proceeds to say moments later, "In truth, however, one should always ask oneself, 'What would happen if everyone did what I am doing?' The only way to evade that disturbing thought is through some kind of bad faith" (25). Sartre's statements here represent an entirely new perspective he had never expressed before—a perspective in which the individual must universalize his actions so as to exemplify the right action not just for himself, but for everyone. One cannot help but acknowledge how Sartre's comments closely resemble the first formulation of Immanuel Kant's 'categorical imperative': "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 30). Both Sartre and Kant are underscoring the necessity to consider the whole and one's relation to a larger

social structure. Thus, Sartre's thoughts on responsibility expressed here encourage the individual to perceive himself like an ambassador for mankind, acting in such a way that he or she believes everyone should act.

In the context of climate change, Sartre's new philosophical approach provides a different response towards the three main concerns people have in making "green" choices that were mentioned earlier. Regarding the first concern, the overwhelming, global scale of climate change, the "middle Sartre" might say that such an outlook no longer holds as much sway. For if every individual acts in such a way that he or she would want everyone else to act the same way, then one may be more inclined to see the power in numbers rather than focusing merely on oneself. In other words, one's perspective may be more directed towards the whole, towards mankind acting in unison, rather than just one's own actions. This means that rather than obsessing over the futility of individual actions, people may instead concentrate on the strength of many individuals making the right choice together. Having said that, though, not everyone will agree on what the "right" action is that should be universalized; other people may not even possess the care to wonder about this topic. Differing beliefs and attitudes will always exist—such is the beautiful diversity and plurality of the human spirit—but the point worth noting lies, again, in Sartre's shift towards an everyone, towards a collective, rather than just an isolated 'me'.

Regarding the second and third concerns—the cost-benefit analysis and the self-sacrifice—both of these now factor in this new dimension of considering the whole. For example, in one's cost-benefit analysis of biking to work instead of driving, one must now ask (on top of all prior questions and considerations): "What would happen if

everyone drove to work in my circumstances instead of biked?" A person no longer solely considers his or her own personal carbon emissions but rather considers the potential emissions if everyone were to be in his or her situation. Responsibility now takes on a more expansive form, in which the individual feels a sense of responsibility for the 'we' as well as the 'I', and incorporates this consideration into his or her cost-benefit analysis. Additionally, the question presented earlier: "Why should I make sacrifices when I know others who are in the same position as I am are not?" can now be responded with a stronger answer: others who are not making the sacrifices I am making (assuming the sacrifice is reasonable, which can hopefully be deduced by sincere cost-benefit analysis) are acting in bad faith because they are failing to consider a larger social whole.

While Sartre's thought articulated during his lecture steer us closer to a morality that cares for the greater whole—that incorporates the individual within his or her larger collective—it fails to investigate the dynamics of the group and each member's role in it. For example, a point guard on a basketball team knows his role on the team; he knows where he should stand and move to, when he is expected to pass versus shoot (or when he has the prerogative to choose between the two), etc., just as a pitcher knows to stand on the pitcher's mound rather than crouch behind home plate.[3] The point guard may ask, in a very middle-Sartrean fashion: "What would happen if the center and my other teammates did what I am doing?" but another critical line of questioning is: "What can I do as a point guard that the center cannot do? What can I do to enhance the center in his position? What can I do in my position as point guard to make the whole team better?"

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[3] Sartre, in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, actually uses the example of a soccer team to illustrate the social structure and dynamics of a team. See: Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. (London: Verso, 1976), pp. 450-1.

This line of questioning does not just force the point guard to consider what everyone else would do if they were playing his position, but rather forces him to consider the roles of everyone else around him and what connects them. It mediates the members of the group—no longer are they discrete entities, discrete people, but instead they share a purpose and understanding of each player's unique position, circumstances, characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses.

C. The Later Sartre: The Collective, the Group, and the Institution

The later Sartre dives into these sorts of issues and dynamics among collections of individuals. He is quoted as saying in an interview, "I do not believe that an individual can accomplish anything alone."[4] In his later work *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre develops a social model that no longer focuses solely on the individual but rather examines the development of varying social ensembles in society. Sartre discusses in great detail the evolution of social structures, originating out of a 'collective' leading into a 'group' and finally hardening into an 'institution'. To elucidate the development of these social ensembles, from collective to group to institution, Sartre uses the example of the French Revolution. Let us turn to Sartre's description of these various social entities, which will allow us to greater appreciate our present concern, climate change.

Leading up to the French Revolution, the people of Paris constituted the 'collective' [*le collectif*]—the most serialized and alienated type of social whole. This

[4] Ph. Gavi, J.-P. Sartre, and P. Victor, *On a raison de se revolter: Discussion*s (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p. 171. See Thomas Flynn's "Mediated Reciprocity and the Genius of the Third," in Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1981 for English translation.

collective was characterized by a passive social structure, and the individuals composing the collective shared a practico-inert field lacking unified praxis and common interests.[5] As Sartrean scholar Joseph Catalano points out, "a collective is not a mere aggregate of individuals united through purely external means, such as a people meeting accidentally at a crossroads. Nor is a collective a collection of isolated individuals united by their acceptance of a common purpose. The collective is rather the interpenetration of individuals and material environment considered from its relatively passive and inert aspect" (143). Or, as Sartre said himself, the collective is "that two–way relationship between a material, organic, worked object and a multiplicity which finds its 'external unity' [*unité d'exteriorite*] in it" (1976, 269). The important points to take away from these definitions are that a shared external object constitutes the collective and symbolizes the whole's external unity; further, the interpersonal relations within the collective are not characterized by reciprocity, cooperation, and unity, but rather by imitation, seriality, and alterity. Before a strong, organized resistance was formed in Paris, citizens individually looted the arms depot in a disorganized and determined effort to ensure that they beat the 'other' to the scarce supplies of arms. Others who had not yet armed themselves proceeded to imitate their neighbor, and each person was 'other' to the other—each alienated and, in a very real sense, competing for the limited supply of weapons. In the collective, each person is also interchangeable; no one person has a unique function or role within the whole.

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[5] *Praxis* and *practico-inert* are technical terms Sartre frequently used in his *Critique*, replacing the *pour-soi/en-soi* (for-itself/in-itself) dichotomy from his earlier *Being and Nothingness*. In essence, praxis refers to purposeful human activity in its material conditions, while the practico-inert refers to the sedimentation of prior praxes.

As the rebellion in France grew stronger and the people of Paris began to mobilize, a sense of "we" started to emerge. Growing danger and a need to appropriate more weapons were the impetus for the dissolution of the series, at which point the collective spontaneously transformed into the 'group-in-fusion', or the Apocalypse.[6] Flight no longer seemed possible, and a unified counterattack formed. Attention turned to the Bastille for arms, the common object that unified the group through common praxis. In the group, unlike the collective, each sees the other as the same, and what emerges is *mediated reciprocity* through praxis, a common praxis with a plural subject. As the group-in-fusion matures into the solidified group, the group member's functions intensify and a strong sense of group consciousness forms. In order to prevent a breakdown into serialized impotence (characteristic of the collective), the group establishes an oath, or pledge, thereby also giving itself permanence. At this stage, the group has been fully fused—group praxis, a common external threat and sense of community, sameness, and mediated reciprocity all characterize this unified group consciousness.

Inevitably, however, the group hardens into an institution. Serialized relations, hierarchical structures, bureaucracy, completely expressed authority, and nonreciprocal sovereignty permeate the social structure of the institution. As Sartre says, "These [new human] relationships are quite simply based upon serial powerlessness: if I apprehend the institution as fundamentally unchangeable, it is because my *praxis* itself is determined in the institutionalized group as incapable of changing the institution; and this

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[6] For a comprehensive description of this see Sartre's *Critique*, pp. 357-363 (Rée and Sheridan-Smith edition).

powerlessness originates in my relation of circular otherness with the other members of the group" (1972 [1960], 478). As with the collective, otherness now defines the whole rather than sameness and mediated reciprocity; strength and a strong sense of "we" is replaced by impotence and alterity. A rigid, serialized, and hierarchical structure manifests itself in constant demands and a duty to obey orders. Institutions, therefore, merge with the practico-inert field, the very passive, counter-praxis they originally attacked.

Now that we have established the characteristics of Sartre's three social ensembles, we can ask the obvious question: What sort of social ensemble prevails in the United States today within the context of climate change—collective, group, or institution? Thomas L. Friedman's most recent book, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution and How It Can Renew America*, speaks to this very question and argues that in order to overcome the challenge of climate change we must revive a sense of national purpose, allowing us to innovate and work cooperatively towards minimizing our use of energy. According to Friedman, what we need is a "Green Revolution," but such a unified, collective effort towards preventing climate change has not yet been found in America. In relation to Sartre's example of the French Revolution, we have not yet felt that sense of danger or turned to the Bastille for arms; we remain complacent and passive within our social structure as *le collectif*—as serialized, alienated individuals with no real sense of solidarity.

Many other prominent social figures are supporting Friedman's call for common action, such as Al Gore, who sparked the national climate change discussion with his documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Gore, like the early Sartre, emphasizes the power

of our individual choices in his documentary, for he says, "Each one of us is a cause of Global Warming, but each of us can make choices to change that. With the things we buy, the electricity we use, the cars we drive—we can make choices to bring our individual carbon emissions to zero."[7] Gore also recognizes the societal need to change our priorities and uses very motivational language in an effort to mobilize us towards Friedman's green revolution. In a recent 2009 TED conference, Gore concluded his presentation with this sort of call for action: "How many generations in all of human history have had the opportunity to rise to a challenge that is worthy of our best efforts."[8] Both Friedman and Gore are determined to reshape our collective consciousness and invigorate us towards a common purpose that will invoke a strong sense of "we" in our country. In other words, they are trying to change our current social ensemble from the collective to the group.

Where we stand now, however, presents cause for concern, and one cannot help but hear the desperation and, at times, fear in the voices of Friedman and Gore. They both feel the clock's unrelenting tick as we continue to make little progress towards fusing into a strong Sartrean group. Certainly many non-profit organizations, select government agencies, and businesses are working towards fighting global warming, but overall this country does not consider climate change to be a top priority for the government.[9] As such, bold policies have not been created to prevent climate change and precious time is being wasted towards progressive reform and cooperative action. A major cause that explains why the collective has not yet fused into the group and why

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[7] See: *An Inconvenient Truth*, Dir. Davis Guggenheim and Al Gore, 2006, min. 83.
[8] See: *Al Gore's New Thinking on the Climate Crisis*, Ted Conference, posted in 2008, min. 20.
[9] *Ibid*, min. 9.

substantial climate change policies have not yet been enacted lies in the lack of real danger that Americans feel. The French rebels stormed Bastille because they felt a real threat and knew they had a "flight or fight" choice. This "flight or fight" moment—this realization that a grave turning point is not just on the horizon but rather right in front of us—has barely come close to entering our national consciousness.[10] Thus, we remain alienated towards one another, passive in our relation to climate change, and serialized rather than reciprocal in our social relations.

So how does responsibility fit into Sartre's social ontology? While he never explicitly states a theory of collective responsibility in his *Critique*, Sartrean scholar Thomas Flynn reconstructs Sartre's social theory to account for this major theme of responsibility so operative in his earlier work. With regard to responsibility within *le collectif*, Dr. Flynn writes, "[T]he series is the locus of those numerous cases where one blames 'the system' for unpleasant situations…[T]o the extent that we do not act against it (chiefly by forming liberating groups), we are serially responsible for the meanness of the system" (1984, 145). Thus, because a strong, solidified group has not yet been formed in the collective, each individual is responsible for the system insofar as he or she passively goes along with the status quo. Everyone who accepts the science that global warming does indeed exist but fails to contribute towards the desperate movement against climate change is acting in *collective* bad faith, precisely because each of us is connected to and responsible for this global problem.

The hope is that Friedman's green revolution gains momentum and causes the collective to evolve into a solidified group, at which point group responsibility will

[10] In the next chapter, I will explore this lack of distress and realization of the danger, particularly in reference to Martin Heidegger's philosophy.

emerge. Responsibility then will not be serialized and externalized as in the collective; rather, responsibility will be interiorized within the group, and a belief in the classic declaration "all for one and one for all" will translate into progress and reform. As Dr. Flynn states regarding group responsibility, "[E]ach member can be considered co-responsible for the common praxis. To say that 'we' did *x*, is not to deny that I did it, for example, but is merely to specify the effect and the manner of my doing" (1984, 147). This, again, is the goal—to establish a sense of group responsibility and common praxis that, one might argue, emphasizes the "we" over the "I". For now, though, the social ensemble of this country resembles the French villagers prior to the Revolution—largely disorganized, lacking purpose, and serially related.

D. Jasper's Four Forms of Guilt: How Are We guilty?

Karl Jaspers, another famous existentialist writing around the same time as Jean-Paul Sartre, explored responsibility in its more blameworthy form: guilt. In his book *The Question Concerning German Guilt*, Jaspers addressed the diversity of post World War II sentiments in Germany, focusing particularly on the guilt many Germans felt during those years. He begins his discussion describing four concepts of guilt: criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical. As the guilt moves from criminal to metaphysical, both a change in degree and form occurs; metaphysical guilt assumes a more severe degree of guiltiness than criminal guilt, but also assumes a different concept, or kind, of guilt. Throughout Jaspers' investigation, he explores the difficulty in identifying exactly who the guilty parties are, who reserves the right to judge others, and how to determine the level of punishment for those deemed guilty. Jaspers' analysis of German guilt can

shed light on our understanding of the relationship between individual and collective responsibility in the context of Global Warming.

Before Jaspers' conceptions of guilt are applied to climate change, though, we must first clarify and define his four concepts of guilt. *Criminal* guilt results from breaking unequivocal, objective laws instituted in a society; stealing a loaf of bread from a bakery, for example, represents criminal guilt. *Political* guilt results from a shared responsibility among citizens for the acts of the statesmen, under whose law one resides. This second form of guilt is collective, defined by provinciality and nationality rather than crimes committed exclusively by the individual, and can, in instances of military defeat, be imposed by the victorious state (e.g. by the United States after defeating Nazi Germany). *Moral* guilt, however, returns to the individual on moral grounds, asserting that we, as individuals, are ultimately responsible for our choices and actions regardless of the external forces influencing us. Jaspers uses the example of a soldier fulfilling an ethically dubious military order to emphasize this point that the individual bears the moral guilt of his action precisely because he is the moral agent who physically does the act—who consciously chooses to execute the order given to him and performs it. Finally, *metaphysical* guilt, the most profound form of guilt, speaks to the collective humanity we all share as members of the human race, each of us collectively responsible in some way for the offences committed in this world. As Jaspers puts it, "[T]here exists a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his presence or with his knowledge. If I fail to do whatever I can to prevent them, I too am guilty" (32). Metaphysical guilt, then, unites us as humans; we join in bearing the burden of guilt for

our shared wrongs as members of the same species. We must choose, according to Jaspers, "either to risk our lives unconditionally, without chance of success and therefore to no purpose—or to prefer staying alive, because success is impossible" (32).

Jaspers provides us with a useful scheme for approaching guilt in all contexts. While his inquiry centered on the guilt ensuing from World War II and operated primarily in that historical context, his insights can be applied more universally to the kind of guilt emerging from a variety of situations and actions, including global warming. When applying Jaspers' concepts of guilt to an action or situation, the first task remains consistent: what concept, or concepts, of guilt are operating here. As we have established throughout this chapter, everyday we face situations that demand for us to choose between options that yield different effects on our environment (e.g. take the stairs versus the elevator, recycle instead of waste, turn the lights on only when in use, etc.). In all of these examples, no law currently exists directing us to act a certain way, forcing us to carpool instead of take separate cars or recycle instead of waste. Thus, by oftentimes performing the act that yields greater damage to the environment and a greater overall emission of carbon dioxide, we are not violating any laws and therefore cannot be labeled criminally guilty.

Our political guilt, however, is not so cut-and-dry, for we are bearing the consequences of the deeds of our statesmen—deeds that include participating in an industrialized nation that many environmentalists believe fails to prioritize the gravity of climate change. The United States emits nearly 20% of the world's global carbon

dioxide emissions (second to China),[11] and most environmentalists believe the government should be leading a national and global initiative towards abating emissions. However, the United States chose not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol—an international treaty initially proposed in 1997 with emissions reduction goals and a declared effort towards stabilizing climate change—and is the only industrialized country that has still not ratified the agreement.[12] Whether we agree or disagree with the president's reasons for not ratifying this protocol, we, as citizens of this country, are politically guilty.

Our moral guilt exits the domain of the polity and, like criminal guilt, focuses solely on the deeds of the individual. As moral agents, we must defer to our conscience in judging the extent to which we have violated our moral code. This conception of moral guilt is similar to Sartre's notion of bad faith, in that they both force the individual to evaluate his or her actions introspectively and honestly. So, in the examples mentioned earlier—walking versus driving, recycling versus wasting, etc.—we concluded that the subject was not criminally guilty because he had not violated any laws; morally, however, the subject may very well have been guilty. As Jaspers commented in reference to the moral guilt from World War II, "Every German asks himself: how am I guilty?" (63). In the context of Global Warming, every person can ask this very same question: How am I guilty? Failure to eliminate or alter those aspects of one's lifestyle that constitute a person's guilt and can also be reasonably done away with represent a person living in bad faith.

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[11] See: United Nations Statistics Division, Millennium Development Goals indicators: "Carbon dioxide emissions (CO_2), thousand metric tons of CO_2," (collected by CDIAC).
[12] See: Ervin, Justin and Smith, Zachary A. *Globalization*, pp. 87-88.

Lastly our metaphysical guilt, arguably the most profound form of guilt, forces us to question what we could have done to rectify every wrong and injustice in the world, and renders us all coresponsible for the misdeeds of our fellow humans through our bonds of mankind. As Sartre had indicated, we are radically free beings that face an almost endless set of possibilities dictating the course of our lives. With any injustice committed in the world, our metaphysical guilt surfaces because there is always something more we could have done to prevent an injustice from happening. As Jaspers notes, "We come to a point where we must choose: either to risk our lives unconditionally, without chance of success and therefore to no purpose—or to prefer staying alive, because success is impossible" (32). Obviously Jaspers' World War II circumstances did include the very real possibility of risking his life for the sake of justice, and with global warming such an immediate life-or-death risk is not so applicable. However, our metaphysical guilt in the case of global warming cannot be denied because we are all participating in a culture that is not sustainable and we are all united by this common tie, even those who are proving more committed towards leading sustainable lifestyles. We all compose this historical landscape, and thus we are all in some form metaphysically guilty for the actions of our fellow human.

Jasper's four conceptions of guilt—criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical—show that while we are not criminals for many of our everyday choices that affect our environment, we are politically, morally, and metaphysically guilty. This recognition of our guilt, however, should not cause us to feel demoralized and remorseful; rather, it should inspire us to become more active in liberating us of our guilt. Politically, this means encouraging our government through organizational involvement, increased

dialogue, and gaining the support of other citizens so that we can adopt a more resolute stance. Morally, this means reflecting on our deeds and avoiding the choice that our conscience finds dubious. Metaphysically, this means accepting our place in this historical epoch of climate change but using that as a source of motivation to reverse our current trend, allowing future generations to look back on this moment and be proud of mankind's triumph.

E. Time for Progress: Resisting Bad Faith and Embracing a "Green Revolution"

Ultimately, we come back to our original question: who is responsible for climate change? As we have discovered throughout this chapter, we are all responsible for climate change in varying forms and degrees. On an individual level, our choices do matter and we cannot passively say, "I cannot do anything about it"; we must instead resist this impulse towards bad faith and live authentically through owning our choices. Even though we are not criminally guilty for our actions that contribute to climate change, we are guilty in other ways and must accept that guilt, inspiring us to 'make right' the situation humankind has caused. On a larger, societal level, Sartre also appreciated that in order for change to be accomplished, cooperation and group solidarity is critical. This cannot be stressed enough with our current challenge of global warming; a green revolution relies on everyone joining together with a real sense of purpose. The collective social ensemble that currently epitomizes our society cannot continue to exist if we wish to overcome climate change.

In the end, though, while we are all in some way responsible and guilty of contributing to global warming, a major part of the problem also lies in the technological culture that surrounds us—a culture that perceives our environment as standing reserve and obsesses over efficiency, application, and consumption. This topic will be taken up in the next chapter as we consult Heidegger's philosophy of technology.

II. Technology and Global Warming: Heidegger's Call for Thinking to Confront The Danger

> Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses "yes" and at the same time "no", by an old word, *releasement toward things*.[13]
>
> -Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Our relation to technology has fundamentally changed over the past few centuries. Devices such as cell phones, laptops, engines, and televisions all play major roles in our daily lives, to such a degree that it would be difficult to imagine our world without them. The preponderance of these technological devices dominates our lives so extensively that many believe we have become dependent on them, ignoring what it means to be human and reducing our lives to mere cogs in a larger technological machine. This situation poses a serious threat both to our essence as humans and to our surrounding natural environment. Indeed, since the time of the Industrial Revolution, our environment has been exposed to rapidly increasing levels of greenhouse gases that present grave dangers to our glaciers, the survival of many species, agricultural productivity, and our environment as a whole. We are living during a crucial historical period that will define the way we inhabit this earth and our future survival.

It is with this backdrop in mind that we turn to the late work of the renowned German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's philosophical pursuits following

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[13] Heidegger, Martin. *Discourse on Thinking*, ed. and trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, New York: Harper & Row, 1966 [1959], p. 54.

World War II marked a shift in his thinking as he moved toward understanding technology and its position within society and the history of man as a whole. Yet, even as Heidegger adjusted the focus of his philosophical lens to technology, the question concerning Being and the essence of man continued to penetrate his work. What, then, was Heidegger's philosophy of technology and how can it shed light on the threat global warming imposes on our environment? After analyzing many of the main ideas from Heidegger's later work on technology, this chapter will demonstrate that Heidegger's philosophy of technology and the danger he calls attention to must be taken seriously if we wish to preserve our natural environment and humanity. An appreciation for the gravity of this landscape that Heidegger presents will hopefully inspire many to act—and it is in this commitment to what Heidegger calls "meditative thinking" [*bessinnliches Denken*], our essential activity that has been overlooked in the surrounding technological world, that we will make great strides towards caring for our environment. The spirit of Heidegger's work calls for us to regain our essence as thought-worthy beings, and forces us to consider how we can live in a technological world while also preserving our environment—how we can say both 'yes' and 'no' to technology.

A. 'The Thing' and 'Positionality': Living in a Distanceless and Positioned World

To begin our investigation into Heidegger's philosophy of technology, it is necessary to look at Heidegger's provocative Bremen lectures from 1949 entitled *Insight Into That Which Is*, in which Heidegger for the first time lays out many of his key ideas regarding technology. In this series of four separate talks, with respective titles for each lecture—

"The Thing", "Positionality", "The Danger", and "The Turn"—each lecture builds on the previous one and touches on a different aspect of the technological world within the larger context of man's essence and Being. While Heidegger never explicitly mentions the threat of global warming and its relation to technology in any of these lectures, he does provide other examples (such as the atomic bomb) that serve to illustrate the same point; namely, why such an 'ordered' or 'positioned' world is so dangerous. Even though it may superficially appear that Heidegger does not contribute anything to our understanding of global warming, he does, in fact, demonstrate that the technological culture surrounding us conceals many of its dangers. Global warming, like the atomic bomb, the agricultural food industry, and the radio, is just another example that exhibits the manifestation of the ordered and positioned world surrounding us.

In his lecture "The Thing", Heidegger considers the concept of nearness and shows that the shortening of distances pervading society does not make us any nearer to considering the thing as thing. Heidegger says, "Up to now, the human has considered the thing as a thing just as little as he has considered nearness" (1951, 1-5).[14] We have failed to consider the 'thinghood' of the thing—we merely produce, use, and consume things without them being near to us, without thinking about the ways in which the thing represents itself and presences. This is no new occurrence, though. Heidegger says, "[T]he compelling knowledge of science has already annihilated the thing as thing, long before the atomic bomb exploded. The explosion of the atomic bomb is only the crudest of all crude confirmations of an annihilation of things that occurred long ago" (1949, 1-

[14] The publication of this text, translated by Andrew J. Mitchell, is forthcoming; however, the lecture was originally published in German in 1951. Hereafter the date of this citation will be indicated by the 1951 date.

8). These new technological devices, like the atomic bomb or television, do not define technology and do not explain why we have lost our sense of nearness to things; rather, a larger metaphysical, calculative, scientific, and thoughtless culture extending back before the Industrial Revolution, but intensified after that epoch, has persistently restricted us from being near to things. As such, what presences fails to be 'concernfully approached', fails to be near to us, but instead presences as distanceless objects void of meaning, thought, or consideration.

This notion (i.e. the distancelessness of our world and failure to consider the thing as thing) sets the stage for Heidegger's next lecture, "Positionality". Now that Heidegger has established this distancelessness in relation to the thing, he proceeds to expand the scope of this thought beyond one particular thing (e.g. the jug in his lecture "The Thing") but instead in relation to everything—in our entire way of relating to the world. He says, "[This distanceless] stands insofar as everything that presences is *standing reserve*…The standing reserve persists. It persists insofar as it is imposed upon for a requisitioning. Directed into requisitioning, it is placed into application" (1951, 2-3; my italics). This notion of relating to the world as standing reserve is at the core of Heidegger's thought. It refers to a way of perceiving the world that does not consider the thing as thing; instead, it considers the thing for our *application* and thereby encourages us to 'requisition', order, call upon, and marshal our surroundings for the benefit of our use. This notion of application is exemplified not only in the use of a particular technological device (e.g. using a computer for a specific, results-oriented purpose), but more broadly speaking in how we approach the world. We approach the world in terms of how things can be applied, largely for the sake of generating desired results. We then order the

world, as standing reserve, in such a way that those results can be realized and achieved, while all along forgetting about the thing as thing and failing to concernfully approach that which presences.

Heidegger speaks of the agricultural industry and the Rhine River to underscore how things are now standing as standing-reserve to be marshaled and positioned. He says, "Agriculture is now a motorized food industry, in essence the same as the production of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving of countries, the same as the production of hydrogen bombs" (1951, 2-6). Regarding the Rhine River, he says, "The hydroelectric plant is placed in the river. It imposes upon it for water pressure, which sets the turbines turning, the turning of which drives the machines, the gearing of which imposes upon the electrical current through which the long distance power centers and their electrical grid are positioned for the conducting of electricity" (1951, 2-6). While equating the motorized food industry to the production of corpses in gas chambers may be interpreted as a distasteful and offensive comparison, Heidegger's intentional bluntness and lack of reservation emphasizes the gravity and ubiquity of this positioning. No longer do we relate to the Rhine as thing—as the beautiful River that we are connected to, that we dwell around, as part of Being. On the contrary, it is approached for the sake of its consequences, for the sake of producing electricity, which in turn powers our televisions, which in turn defines how we plan our days, etc. etc. Indeed, Heidegger defines this "self-gathered collection of positioning" (1951, 2-11) as *positionality* [das Ge-Stell], and, according to Heidegger, it is in this positionality wherein the essence of technology lies.

So why does it matter that we now live in a positioned world exemplified by our new relationship to the Rhine as standing reserve? Positionality removes us from our natural environment—the environment that provides the materials that we then convert into energy and use to power our devices. When we turn on our computers, lights, cars, etc. rarely do we reflect on the process and resources that allow for us to operate our machines. For example, when we turn the lights on in a room, hardly ever do we say to ourselves: "I am glad we have that hydroelectric plant in the Rhine, which converted that water energy into electricity using a turbine, which was then shot through power lines into my home, producing the effect I am now witnessing with this lit light bulb." Positionality, as exemplified here in the power grid, causes us to take for granted our natural environment. This unappreciative attitude that defines the technological culture we live in today does not encourage people to concernfully approach things and our world—instead it distances us from the very environment that is such a part of our essence as beings in this world. Herein lies the problem: because we are so immersed in this positioned world that induces us to take nature for granted, we do not realize that turning on that light bulb actually has real consequences for our environment, such as producing global warming. In addition, the technological, positioned world also removes us from caring for and guarding our environment, and Heidegger proceeds in his lecture by stressing the danger of positionality.

B. 'The Danger' and 'The Turn'

In his next lecture, appropriately entitled "The Danger", Heidegger claims that positionality *is* the danger; it refuses the world and unguards the thing as thing. This notion of guardianship has been argued by many environmental ethicists to underscore

our responsibility as humans to protect our earth. In many cases the position is asserted with religious motives (i.e., God created us as stewards and we have a responsibility to guard and preserve this earth). Regardless of the theological ties, however, Heidegger strongly believes that man has a responsibility to guard the thing, to guard Being. He says in his originally published 1947 *Letter on Humanism*, "Man is rather 'thrown' from Being itself into the truth of Being, so that ek-sisting in this fashion he might guard the truth of Being, in order that beings might appear in the light of Being as the beings they are…Man is the shepherd of Being. It is in this direction alone that *Being and Time* is thinking when ecstatic existence is experienced as 'care'" (1993 [1947], 234). Heidegger reiterates this notion of guardianship in his Bremen lecture three years later when he says, "In the essence of positionality the thing remains unguarded as thing" (1951, 3-1). Positionality threatens our essence insofar as it steers us away from guarding the earth, from experiencing the world with 'care'. As alluded to earlier, in the context of global warming this means that the modern technological world, described in short as our relation to things as standing reserve to be ordered and positioned, repels us from our essence, as shepherds of Being, and helps explain why we are faced with this environmental crisis.

Part of the danger, Heidegger observes, also lies in our failure to recognize the danger in the first place. Positionality, as ubiquitous and visible as it may be, does not cause distress or shake many people; it is not even on a person's horizon for things to think about and consider. As Heidegger says, "Everyone has their distresses. No one stands in *the* distress; for *the* danger does not appear to exist" (1951, 3-13). Whenever a crisis, danger, or problem exists, the first step towards addressing that issue lies in

recognizing its very existence. Otherwise, as evidenced in Albert Camus' novel *The Plague*, the possibility of confronting the crisis could slip away as it becomes too late to thwart or fight. The danger of global warming, while arguably just beginning to be recognized as a real threat that must be dealt with, conceals itself behind the technological world, which still fails to be considered seriously—which fails to cause any distress. As noted earlier, this danger further conceals itself in that it is disguised by positionality. Thus, before any progress can be made toward changing our relation to the surrounding technological world, we must first feel the distress caused by positionality, observed throughout modern technology, and appreciate this as the danger.

His final lecture, "The Turn", gathers all of his thought from the three previous lectures and provides insight into exactly what Heidegger believes can be done to address the danger. While his tone earlier may have been perceived as pessimistic or despairing, Heidegger begins his fourth lecture by stressing that we are not powerless against technology and that positionality changes. In order for positionality to change—in order for us to regain our role as shepherds of Being, guarding the thing as thing—the human must "find its way back into the breadth of its essential space" (1951, 4-3). What does this mean, though; where and what is this essential space? According to Heidegger, the human's essential space resides in its belonging to being, and the essence of being is thinking, or thought-worthiness. It is here where I believe the Bremen lectures reaches its climax, for after arriving at the essence of the human, he then asks, "What are we to do?" His response:

> [W]e first and only consider this: How must we think, for thinking is the authentic action [*Handeln*], where action means: to give a hand [*an die Hand gehen*] to the essence of being in order to prepare for it that site in which it brings itself and its essence to speech. (1951, 4-4)

Thinking is what must be done, for thinking allows us to dwell near things, reminds us that we must guard the thing as thing, and allows for us to let being be. Such thinking means we relate to the world in a new way, no longer as slaves to technology through positionality, dependent on it for our application and consumption, but rather incorporating the authentic action of thinking into the technological world. The turn that Heidegger refers to, then, represents a turn to thinking and a "turning about" of positionality, or in other words, a shift in how we dwell in such a positioned world.

Essential to this authentic action of thinking is *preparation*—preparing for the essence of being to arrive, preparing a site for things to thing. What does this mean? The traditional sense of preparing—our everyday understanding of this word—refers to an action geared towards something that is to be completed. We prepare our dinner, for example, so that we can then eat a meal, settle our hunger, and complete the action that we had intended. Heidegger's understanding of preparation does not refer to this metaphysical, traditional sense of preparation as pointed towards something completable; rather, thinking as the action that prepares the site for being cannot cease, for being never stops arriving. We must prepare for the clearing of Being [*Lichtung des Seins*]—the site where Being can be more fully revealed and near to us—as this is part of our role as shepherds of Being. This responsibility to attend to Being cannot be viewed in terms of achieving something or completing a task, but instead must be viewed in terms of maintaining and sustaining Being. Thus, this preparation for the site of the clearing of Being is necessary in our turn to the authentic action of thinking.

Heidegger is very optimistic that this change can occur and that we can regain a sense of our essence within this technological world. He quotes the German poet

Friedrich Hölderlin from his hymn "Patmos", where Hölderlin says: "But where the danger is, there grows / also what saves" (1951, 4-6). What grows must be the guarding of the thing, our essence, and a call for thinking, which has been forgotten. Indeed, Heidegger does not want us to overcome or surpass technology; such a movement would be impossible, for the destiny of modern technology has already revealed itself and imprinted its arrival on history. Rather, Heidegger believes that we incorporate the essence of the human into the essence of technology, into the positioned world. The saving power lies in the world wherein the danger also resides. It is in this sense that Heidegger believes Hölderlin's poem speaks to the situation of modern technology and its threat to the essence of man.

Heidegger's Bremen lectures, now taken as a whole, speak to how we currently inhabit the world and the way we relate to our natural environment. While many people now identify global warming as a crisis that must be addressed (and still many others do not), few people truly reflect on our activity and the way we live in this world that causes the rising temperature of our earth's surface. The quick response to what causes global warming is that we are simply emitting too many greenhouse gases. Nothing is wrong with this response; it does not provide erroneous information or mislead anyone, other than the skeptics who dispel global warming all together. Yet, as Heidegger has shown, the concealed cause—the veiled cause deceptively lurking behind the widespread technology of our modern world—lies in positionality, in how we relate to the world, and in how we have lost our essence as thought-worthy beings. Positionality, nevertheless, reveals itself everyday in all aspects of our lives. As Heidegger notes, though, "We think

about [technology] either too briefly or too hastily" (1951, 3-15) and thereby fail to see the world as it is represented—as standing reserve, constantly ordered and positioned.

C. 'Seminar in Le Thor' The Prevalence of Consumption and Replacability

Heidegger echoes many of his earlier thoughts on technology from his Bremen lectures in his seminar in Le Thor two decades later, and supplements his earlier ideas with notions of consumption and replacability. He first speaks of the orderability of forests—how they are no longer integrated into our being but are viewed in terms of utility. A forest is now a systematically planned area designated as a "greenspace", exploited by businessmen and technologists. We perceive this greenspace in terms of supply, in terms of standing reserve. Heidegger believes this way of relating to our surrounding, this way of being, lends itself to seeing objects as replaceable and for our consumption. He says, "Today being is being-replaceable…It is essential for every being of consumption that it *be already* consumed and thus call for its replacement" (2003 [1977], 62). This way of being, this predominance of replacement and consumption, is but another dimension of this overarching culture of positionality and technology. We think in terms of utility, application, and efficiency rather than in terms of guarding the thing itself. We dispose of objects without care; we use an object and then discard it, for its purpose has been served. Consider a water cooler. Every part of that water cooler—the plastic jug containing the water, the metal inside the cooler itself, the plastic cups for drinking the water—is discarded once it no longer performs its function or because we believe it has become contaminated and must be destroyed. Heidegger recognizes that this wasteful

culture has serious consequences for our being, and the consequences are now manifesting themselves quite markedly in global warming. Does this mean that Heidegger was implicitly encouraging an ethic of sustainability and recycling? Possibly, however Heidegger's thought was more concerned with being, ensuring that we do not lose our essence, and that we do not become "slave[s] to the forgetfulness of being" (2003, 63). While his philosophy surely lends itself to an environmental ethic and sheds light on our activity fueling global warming, it was not explicitly directed at preserving our environment. Nevertheless, this abundance of replacement and consumption that Heidegger speaks of is simply unsustainable, for we do not have infinite resources and cannot continue to produce and consume at such high levels.

Heidegger's philosophy of technology, described in his Bremen lectures and discussed further at his seminar in Le Thor, in many ways paints a dark picture of our current mode of living in this world. We have become dependent on technology and now only relate to the world for the sake of how it can be applied. We see our surroundings as orderable, as standing reserve not yet utilized but soon to be positioned for our use and consumption, and fail to appreciate the environment as part of our being. This danger, and lack of distress about it, threatens our human essence as thought-worthy beings, as beings near to the thing *as* thing and guarding it. Yet, even after describing such an unsettling world, Heidegger remains hopeful that we can regain our essence and learn to incorporate our thought-worthy being into a technological world—say yes and at the same time no to technical devices—while still preserving our essential space. First, though, we must find our way back to this essential space and experience thinking in its original form, through its original correspondence. According to Heidegger, then, once

we revive our essence we can live *with* technology rather than as slaves to it and can find a way to prevent the damage of our earth due to global warming. Thinking is the path to letting being be, to allowing the world to world, and to guarding being, and it is here that we must now turn our attention.

D. Reviving our Essential Space: The Path to Meditative Thinking

Now that we have established that Heidegger considers thinking to be paramount, to be our essential space wherein we must dwell and wherein the saving power of man lies, let us turn to investigate this form of thinking described in Heidegger's works. By grasping this thinking more thoroughly, we will begin to understand how Heidegger believes we can say both yes and at the same time no to technology and will then consider this insight within the context of global warming. Must Heidegger's philosophy be adopted to thwart global warming? Is this 'meditative thinking' that Heidegger preaches too passive of an answer, or does it transcend such a distinction between passivity and activity?

In his 1959 work entitled *Gelassenheit*, directly translated as 'releasement' but retitled in English as *Discourse on Thinking*, Heidegger illuminates the thinking referenced in his Bremen lectures and compares it to other forms of thinking. *Gelassenheit* consists of two different works by Heidegger: a memorial address he presented honoring the 175th birthday of the German composer Conradin Kreutzer and a conversation between a scientist, scholar, and teacher entitled "Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking". In his Memorial Address, Heidegger picks up on where he left off in "The Turn" and discusses in very real and practical language the power and danger of the modern technological world. He says, "These forces [of technology],

which everywhere and every minute claim, enchain, drag along, press and impose upon man under the form of some technical contrivance or other—these forces, since man has not made them, have moved long since beyond his will and have outgrown his capacity for decision" (1966 [1959], 51). Man has become arrogant in his perceived mastery over nature, such as in his ability to harness atomic energy; yet, as Heidegger quickly and humbly notes, these forces have been around long before man. Technological advances are growing ever more rapidly and are dominating our lives ever more universally, and Heidegger believes we cannot stop this advancement. He says, "No single man, no group of men, no commission of prominent statesmen, scientists, and technicians, no conference of leaders of commerce and industry, can brake or direct the progress of history in the atomic age. No merely human organization is capable of gaining dominion over it" (1966, 52). Thus, while Heidegger accepts this direction of history and respects its power, he worries that we are unprepared for this growing technological world. We are unprepared because we have failed to face meditatively what is developing all around us.

Heidegger contrasts this notion of meditative thinking with calculative thinking. He believes calculative thinking pervades society today and has been largely privileged over meditative thinking—meditative thinking has lost its place due to an emphasis on calculative thinking. This calculative thinking should remind us of what Heidegger said earlier on *positionality*, for they both point to a certain way of ordering, computing, and planning without reflection and appreciation for the meaning surrounding us. In a sense, then, meditative thinking is defined by what it is not—namely, calculative thinking—but

also by what it is: a reflective, contemplative, engaged, and open form of thinking that *is* man's essential being.

Reviving meditative thinking will not only return us to our essential space, but it will also enable us to both affirm and deny technology—to dwell in a world with technology rather than as slaves to it—because it allows us to experience the world in a way that Heidegger calls "releasement towards things" [*Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*]. Heidegger believes that by assuming this comportment towards technology we will be able to arrive at its hidden meaning, which remains mysterious and concealed to us. He says, "Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery…grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperiled by it" (1966, 55). Releasement towards things, then, refers to a certain mode of dwelling that has been overlooked in our modern age due to the primacy of calculative thinking. But what exactly *is* this mode of dwelling and what does Heidegger really mean by the phrase 'releasement toward things'?

Heidegger admits that the meaning behind 'releasement' conceals and hides itself; yet, through the conversation between the scientist, scholar, and teacher, an understanding of releasement becomes more near to us. The scientist, scholar, and teacher first recognize that releasement must be a certain 'non-willing', a "renouncing of the will" (1966, 59) that is open to what surrounds us, to our exteriority, in its approaching us. This non-willing closely ties in to a certain waiting—a waiting that does not wait for a specific object, but rather waits in openness to whatever presences. While this description of what Heidegger means by releasement may seem wholly passive, the

scientist observes that releasement lies "beyond the distinction between activity and passivity" because, as the scholar notes, "releasement does *not* belong to the domain of the will" (1966, 61). So, according to Heidegger, because releasement refers to a non-willing, it cannot be labeled passive; it must be considered in an entirely new light that shines outside of the metaphysical dualism between passivity and activity. In many ways, Heidegger's description of non-doing parallels the notion of *Wu Wei* in Taoism. Wu Wei, translated as 'creative quietude', 'creative non-doing', or 'the art of letting-be', is exhibited in the movement of the planets around the sun, in that the planets do not will themselves around the sun—it simply happens. This creative non-doing, or embracement of the natural movement that presences around us, can facilitate an understanding of what Heidegger may be envisioning in his conception of releasement, insofar as it lies beyond the will.

Having said that, though, Heidegger never explicitly states how this mode of dwelling described as a releasement toward things will allow us to say both yes and no to technology—how it will guide us towards finding the hidden meaning in technology. Furthermore, while the scientist, scholar, and teacher come to identify that releasement lies beyond the distinction between activity and passivity, the challenge still persists in identifying what such a non-willing would practically look like in society. Since we are neither passive nor active, does this mean we are simply living aimlessly, without any purpose, solely in the moment but reflective nonetheless in that moment, waiting for a "turning" of being to occur in society? Heidegger's message does not to encourage us to become dormant, lazy individuals who simply meditate upon everything in such a way that we lose any sense of action in our own lives. Heidegger says calculative thinking is

needed along with meditative thinking in its own right. Practically, then, releasement signals a thoughtful way of living in the world that *steps back* from the 'ontic', everyday hustle-bustle and finds meaning in what presences around us through careful consideration and a non-doing that lets being be.

E. The 'Step Back' as a 'Step Towards' Confronting Global Warming

Heidegger directly speaks to this notion of a 'step back' in many of his works, but particularly in his 1957 essay entitled "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics". He says, "The step back points to the realm which until now has been skipped over, and from which the essence of truth becomes first of all worthy of thought" (1969 [1957], 49). Stepping back out of positionality, out of solely calculative thinking, out of the plans and schedules of our daily lives, provides an entirely new perspective on how we relate to the world, on how we live in this world, that will enable us to see certain aspects of our world in an altogether new dimension. This step back allows us to pull out of the systematically rigid, planned, and positioned world that consumes us. Through this step back and meditative thinking, we can begin to live resonantly through releasement, escaping the shackles of technology that currently overpower and define our being.

Even if we learn to have this comportment towards things engendered through releasement and become capable of living with technology rather than as slaves to it, will this be sufficient; will global warming cease being a danger? Many people would argue that technology must be reformed and transformed altogether, for even if we learn to live with technology, the levels of greenhouse gases emitted by the technological devices we use on a daily basis is simply unsustainable. As mentioned earlier, though, Heidegger

accepts the technological direction of history and realizes that we cannot simply eliminate technological devices from our daily lives; we cannot instantaneously revert to a pre-Industrial, agrarian society. However, failure to revive our meditative thinking means that calculative thinking would continue to dominate the way we think, thereby only exacerbating the levels of consumption, utility, application, and positionality that define the modern technological world. Failure to 'step back' and a persistence of calculative thinking would only keep us on the same path; global warming would only increase and we would stand little hope of preserving our environment.

Releasement, while it represents a non-willing, does not mean that the will ceases to exist altogether. While one can be open to the mystery of the world, one can also live his or her life but take that which presences and ascribe meaning to it through a meditative thinking. This means that in letting being be, the true essence of being breathes freely and reveals itself. In the context of the modern technological world, we release ourselves to the world by letting the technical devices and phenomena—cell phones, automobiles, power plants, the motorized food industry etc.—enter our lives so that we can understand exactly how they fit into our world. Through such an understanding, we may begin to see those technical devices and phenomena from a new perspective, one that may inspire us to modify them in such a way that we can more essentially guard being. Indeed, global warming fundamentally threatens being; if our roles as shepherds of being means protecting being from that which threatens it, then we must address this culture of modernity overrun by calculative thinking and rooted in global warming. Releasement towards things enables us to live with technology because

it enlightens us on the very dangers inherent in modern technology but separate from its essence.

Heidegger does not intend to suggest that we can provide a quick and easy solution to global warming merely through changing the way we think. He recognizes the scope and force of technology, and feels this danger in all its power. However, adjusting the way we live our lives represents a necessary step towards preventing global warming from destroying our earth. We cannot solve this problem through continually applying metaphysical methods involving calculations, statistics, and numbers to the objectified and alienated environment around us. Such thinking still resides in the calculative and positioned culture of modernity that prevents us from coexisting meditatively with nature.

This 'step towards' hampering global warming and 'step back' to the realm of meditative thinking that has been skipped over will lead to careful activity in the spirit of guarding being and our nature. Heidegger says in his *Letter on Humanism*, "Thinking comes to an end when it slips out of its element…Said plainly, thinking is the thinking of Being" (1993 [1947], 220). He proceeds to say at the end of his letter, "Thus thinking is a deed. But a deed that also surpasses all *praxis*. Thinking towers above action and production, not through the grandeur of its achievement and not as a consequence of its effect, but through the humbleness of its inconsequential accomplishment" (262). Thus, thinking is an action, the highest action, insofar as it is a thinking of Being, which has been forgotten in our current age. But this thinking of Being does not mean that 'deeds' or everyday praxis cease to exist or cease to have any significance in our daily lives. Rather, deeds are now enriched due to *the* deed, thinking, which allows one to access

Being. Deeds undertake a more careful role in our lives and have more meaning behind them since they have been thought in relation to Being.

Does this mean that through meditative thinking we will all arrive at the same solution, the same relation to being and adopt universal deeds that everyone supports? Presumably not. Some people may be inspired to become hermits and radically limit or virtually eliminate the role of technology in their lives altogether; others may adopt certain habits that they believe frees them from technology's authority; and others may devote themselves to developing new technical devices that do not deplete so many resources and do not distance us from Being. However one changes his or her deeds, what remains consistent is that the person has now adopted an ethic of care, has now freed himself from technology's dominion, has recognized the danger in positionality and the largely calculative culture of modernity, and has transformed his or her activity so that it resides closer to the human's essential nature. This way of being grants us the opportunity to save our environment, if and only if the distress is felt widely and profoundly, and may be what Heidegger had in mind when he called for us to say 'yes and no' to technology.

F. How to Say 'Yes' and 'No' to Technology

Heidegger's thoughts on technology may seem utterly abstract and impractical, in that he never provides any specific plans towards confronting particular devices or processes—e.g. reduce carbon emissions to 'x' level per year, only use public transportation, etc.—because such suggestions still reside in the metaphysical realm. Heidegger recognizes a deeper and more prevalent issue; our way of relating to the world as measurable, as standing reserve, as not yet applied, and as not yet consumed. Solutions, then, cannot

solely focus on specific devices because these devices are only objectified symptoms and reflections of a larger, cultural problem. Our efforts must also be directed towards attending to this culture of modernity that threatens both man's essence and our environment.

So what does Heidegger's philosophy offer us? It offers a view of the world that has been overlooked by many due to the speed and lack of thought that pervades society. It shows the ubiquitous positionality and treatment of things as standing reserve that has been unthought. And it highlights the danger in this way of relating to the world—particularly to man's essence, but also to 'the thing' itself. Heidegger calls us to meditatively think on this culture—think on our constant application and consumption and 'release' ourselves to being —before it is too late. Global warming cannot be prevented if we continue allowing technological devices to dominate our lives and remain trapped in this positioned world. Everyone must step back and reflect on the technological culture of modernity, including politicians, CEOs, and world leaders. Through meditative thinking we will find ways to say yes and, at the same time, no to technology—coexist with it—and appreciate the natural materials and environment from which our devices originated. Through meditative thinking people will find ways to balance the technology that we have today with our roles as shepherds, guardians, and thoughtful creatures inhabiting this earth. Part of this lies in preparing the site for the clearing of Being. Saying yes and no to technology means that our activity within such a technological world cannot be focused on the application of things as standing reserve; rather, our essential activity of thinking will help allow us to clear the cluttered, positioned world and let Being shine into our lives. While some of us immersed in this

fast-paced, technological world may view this as a sacrifice, such changes will actually bring us nearer to the thing, closer to our essential space, and will preserve our environment. Without appreciating Heidegger's call for meditative thinking and stepping back out of our current culture, we will remain slaves to positionality and all that comes with it, namely global warming.

III. Pragmatism: The Necessity for Green Policy and Education

If you care enough for a result, you will most certainly attain it.[15]

-William James (1842-1910)

A. Reconciling Pluralistic Attitudes and Scientific Opinion

Up to this point we have explored existential theories of responsibility, social ontology, and Heidegger's philosophy of technology as each relates to global warming. But what about public policy; what about the formal laws that often dictate the norms and behavior of citizens within a society? As we discussed in the first chapter, a green revolution is in order. A green revolution will demand action that alters the state of our current nation and reevaluates our laws towards sustainability. According to Thomas Friedman, the green revolution will hopefully transform laws, thereby causing a dramatic change in the social consciousness of this country. Friedman said, in comparing the civil rights movement to a potential green movement, "Ultimately, it was about changing laws, so that no one had an option to discriminate, and it was those laws that ultimately changed the behavior and consciousness of tens of millions of people. But the civil rights movement started with citizen activism" (398). In order for such a green revolution to occur, as was the case with the civil rights movement, citizen activism in the form of a strong social ensemble resembling Sartre's group must emerge.

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[15] James, William. *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921 [1899], p. 137.

But, alas, we are forgetting an important part of this story: What, exactly, will these green laws entail; how will the government legislate sustainability? It is beyond the scope of this paper to speculate on the efficacy and economics of potential policies like a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system. While new legislation certainly will not resolve Heidegger's concerns about our loss of meditative thinking and treatment of things as standing reserve, it may still contribute significantly towards minimizing our greenhouse gas emissions and fighting global warming. However, before any law can ever realistically be pushed through Congress, a change in the attitude and beliefs towards our environment must occur.

Pragmatism, a largely American philosophy, promotes the belief that we should seek to bring our diverse values, experiences, and perspectives into a harmonious pluralism. For pragmatists, policy serves as a powerful tool for meeting the challenges we experience in society. As Dr. John Stuhr, a scholar in American pragmatism, says regarding the pragmatist's view towards philosophy:

> [I]t must be practical, critical, and reconstructive; it must aim at the successful transformation or amelioration of the experienced problems which call it forth and intrinsically situate it, and its success must be measured in terms of this goal. Thus, for the classical American philosophers, philosophy is primarily an instrument for the ongoing critical reconstruction of daily practice. (3)

Philosophy must reside close to our experience and serve to change our environment in such a way that the problems plaguing society can be overcome through constructive activity. Thus, pragmatism is very much a "doer's" philosophy and does not promote the traditional image of an intellectual lost in theory, detached from the world that surrounds him; rather, pragmatists wish to shake the very norms and rules of society if such a change is called for.

But how can a pragmatic, policy-oriented approach to global warming that also accepts the plurality of attitudes, beliefs, and values in this country ever result in any action without undermining the very diversity of opinion on global warming? In other words, what sort of compromise, or harmonious pluralism, could possibly exist between people with fundamentally conflicting ideologies: those who adamantly believe in global warming and those who just as vigorously reject it? To make this question even more difficult to answer, research suggests that within the last decade a growing disparity between partisan ideologies over global warming has occurred. The trends indicate that Republicans are becoming increasingly skeptical of global warming while Democrats are becoming increasingly convinced of its reality.[16]

This trend was just recently epitomized in a bill (H.R. 910) authored by Republican Ed Whitfield, chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Power, that was approved and sent to the House of Representatives. The bill intends to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from managing greenhouse gas emissions. According to an editorial in a major journal entitled "Into Ignorance", during a recent subcommittee hearing on March 14, "Misinformation was presented as fact, truth was twisted and nobody showed any inclination to listen to scientists, let alone learn from them."[17] The article proceeds to say: "That this legislation is unlikely to become law doesn't make it any less dangerous. It is the attitude and ideas behind the bill that are troublesome, and they seem to be spreading" (266). These growing anti global-warming bills only exacerbate the political stalemate that continues to block progress and change. The

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[16] See: Dunlap, Riley E. "Partisan Gap on Global Warming Grows," Gallup, Inc., posted on their website in May, 2009. See bibliography for more details.
[17] Editorial, "Into Ignorance," *Nature*. 471: 265-266.

"attitude" behind this bill—namely, that global warming either is not real or that it does not pose any sort of threat to us or our environment—exemplifies the very lack of distress felt in our society over this pressing issue. We again come back to this same question: how can we foster a plurality of beliefs and find a harmonious pluralism when political ideologies clash so fundamentally; how can government representatives make any sort of progress when such a blatant partisan divide exists?

Unfortunately there is no easy solution to this problem. Many citizens feel demoralized and pessimistic precisely because of this very clear dissension within our government. Ironically, though, the scientific community is virtually unanimous on global warming; 97-98% of active climate researchers believe that climate change has resulted from human activities.[18] Similarly, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the leading international body for the assessment of climate change, argued in a 2001 report that anthropogenic behavior has caused the rise in global temperatures. The IPCC, to which thousands of scientists contribute, stated in the report: "Anthropogenic factors do provide an explanation of 20th century temperature change…[and] it is unlikely that detection studies have mistaken a natural signal for an anthropogenic signal."[19] Some scientists, in fact, believe that the IPCC's report erred on

[18] See: Anderegg, W. and Prall, J. "Expert Credibility in Climate Change" *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America,* published online June 21, 2010.

[19] IPCC Third Assessment Report, "Climate Change 2001," co-ordinating lead authors: Mitchell and Karoly. Published to the web by Grid-Arendal in 2003. See chapter 12, section 6 for these quotes. More details in bibliography.

the moderate side and underestimated the effects that may occur from warming the planet.[20]

So, what will it take for the virtually unanimous scientific opinion to translate into political belief and action? In other words, what will it take to persuade Republican officials that global warming is real and caused by us? We have already mentioned the need for us to unite through a green revolution, but the strength of this movement is lacking right now due to this tension in public and political opinion about climate change. Ultimately, the pluralistic attitudes towards global warming must collapse into a more unified belief in its reality. As Trevors and Saier Jr. state in a journal article entitled "A Vaccine Against Ignorance," lies against global warming continue to be disseminated even though the scientific evidence is "unequivocal."[21] The solution they propose: education. They say, "Humanity certainly needs to be immunized with a vaccine for ignorance, and we propose that the vaccine is education." Thus, the last two sections of this chapter will investigate two necessary areas of education on global warming. The first area of education must be in public awareness; ensuring that the public has been exposed to the large body of scientific data that shows the anthropogenic cause of global warming. Once public awareness increases and people become better informed, a more unified societal attitude towards global warming that resembles a Sartrean group (rather than our current Sartrean collective) is more likely to emerge and politicians may then be swayed by public pressure and opinion. The other area of education must stress the need for a greater appreciation of our natural environment—it must remind us of our humble

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[20] Biello, David. "Conservative Climate: Consensus documents may underestimate the climate change problem" *Scientific American Magazine*. March 18, 2007.
[21] Trevors J.T., Saier M.H., "A Vaccine Against Ignorance": *Water, Air, and Soil Pollution*. February 23, 2011.

place within this earth's dynamic whole, and call attention to the positioned, technological world that impairs an ethic of care towards our environment.

B. Ignorance is bliss?

Concern for the environment has only recently taken on serious form in the United States. Certainly early American philosophers such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman wrote beautiful and flowery prose that revered nature, helping us garner a more profound appreciation for our natural environment. Likewise, Aldo Leopold's influential essay written in the early 20th century entitled "The Land Ethic" argued for an environmental ethic that preserves the "integrity, stability, and beauty" of the biotic community.[22] However, the event that really captured the attention of the public and government was Rachel Carson's 1962 publication of *Silent Spring*.[23] Many credit this book, which focused on the detrimental effects of the pesticide DDT in our environment, with launching contemporary environmentalism and influencing the government to form the Environmental Protection Agency. So how was this book able to generate the grassroots environmental movement that led to the environmentalism many people identify with today?

For one, the book brought public awareness to a practice that had not yet been carefully evaluated. In a very straightforward way, it *educated* the public; it enhanced everyone's knowledge of a pesticide that people knew generally little to nothing about. This was exactly Al Gore's mission in his campaign against global warming—to educate

[22] We will return to Leopold's ethic in part C of this chapter.
[23] de Steiguer, Edward J. *The Origins of Modern Environmental Thought*. Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2006, p. 1.

the general public on a phenomenon of which most people were ignorant. In the first chapter, I mentioned that the public can be broken down into two main groups: those who are cognizant of their actions in how they contribute to global warming and those who either deny it or are altogether uninformed. Before Al Gore started his campaign, the percentage of the public that fit the latter group—those who deny global warming or are uniformed—was significantly higher than it is now. Gore, like Carson, presented a clear argument, using strong supporting data and leading scientific literature to offer a compelling case for the reality of climate change, and ultimately convinced millions that this issue should not be overlooked. With that said, about a quarter of the population still remains unconvinced that climate change deserves careful attention and action.[24]

Another powerful component of *Silent Spring* was the clarity and concreteness of Carson's explanation of the danger of DDT. We have already spoken at length about the lack of distress felt across our country regarding climate change. The difference between the harmful effects of DDT versus climate change, however, lies in the manifestation of those effects. People were able to appreciate the danger of DDT precisely because Carson showed a clear, visible link between DDT and animal health (particularly in birds but also in humans). The manifestation of those effects could be observed quite directly. As William James said regarding the pragmatic method, "To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve—what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare" (28). For a pragmatist, the conceivable effects of an action dictate what is considered true according to an arrangement of facts (and because

[24] de Steiguer, Edward J. *Origins*, p. 1.

scientific inquiry constantly reveals new results, truth is never absolute). In the case of global warming, unlike DDT, the effects are not as immediately manifested or as obviously linked to our actions. Because DDT operates on such a small scale relative to global warming, many people find it easier to comprehend the causal connection between dangerous chemical use in pesticides and health. Climate change, however, operates on such a massive scale and results from such an array of activities so deeply embedded in our society that many people fail to connect the cause and effect. In other words, the arrangement of facts for the case of DDT was much simpler and more localized than they are with global warming. Even though the data that Gore and the scientific community have compiled is quite persuasive, many people still struggle to find truth in his message because of this indirect cause and effect relation.[25] This poses the most significant problem for swaying those deniers of climate change that the phenomenon is real, but through clear communication and a transparent presentation of the science behind global warming such a problem may be overcome.

Thus, continuing to educate the public and encouraging people to join organizations, adjust their lifestyles, and pressure officials for policy change represents a hopeful path. We cannot allow for a quarter of the population to be ignorant regarding climate change; such ignorance only destroys the natural environment that many of us have taken for granted and also hinders our ability to fuse into a solidified group that can influence political action. As the public increases its awareness on global warming—through formal education in classrooms, dialogue amongst friends and family, greater

[25] Some people also claim that Gore has ulterior incentives in his campaign against climate change and thus construe his message as propaganda. This paper, however, will not address those claims for they lack evidence and appear to be ungrounded.

attention in the media, etc.—the lingering, ignorant belief that it does not pose a real threat to our environment or that it is altogether fictitious may evaporate.

C. Spreading an Environmental Ethic

The attitude most people hold toward the environment today is one characterized by exploitation and use. We spoke about this in the second chapter, as Heidegger highlighted the businessman and technologist's relabeling land as a "greenspace"—as a supply. If any sort of progress towards global warming is to be realized, this current attitude towards the environment must be altered. Such a change, however, should not be for the sole purpose of preventing global warming; in other words, teleological considerations should not be the motivating factor for changing attitudes. Rather, a genuine realization that the environment cannot continue to be exploited and destroyed at current rates should, in and of itself, motivate people to abandon this consumption-driven view of our environment.

In an essay entitled "Famine, Affluence, and Morality", Peter Singer, a contemporary utilitarian philosopher, argues that the moral scheme of affluent countries must be reconceptualized. According to Singer, people today consider donations to charities as an act of "generosity"; Singer says, "The charitable man may be praised, but the man who is not charitable is not condemned. People do not feel in any way ashamed or guilty about spending money on new clothes or a new car instead of giving it to famine relief" (234). Singer believes this "moral conceptual scheme" must be altered; an attitudinal shift must occur in which people no longer view the act of donating as a "good deed," something "above and beyond" or something only a "good Samaritan" would do.

Instead, he challenges this very assumption and believes that those of us living in affluent nations are morally required to help fight these evils. Singer arrives at this point using utilitarian ethics[26], a philosophy Heidegger strongly opposed due to its inherent calculative, metaphysical nature. While Heidegger certainly would not have supported Singer's approach for this very reason, the point worth underscoring from Singer's article is in his demand for a change in our moral attitude—a new "moral conceptual scheme".

This change in our moral attitude must occur in how we perceive the environment as well. Often when people recycle, walk instead of drive, or perform other "green" acts, their behavior is viewed the same way as that of donating to a charity: as worthy of moral praise rather than moral requirement. This, I would argue, is an attitude characterized by collective bad-faith; we are deceiving ourselves in believing that such behavior deserves moral praise when, in actuality, we recognize the moral *necessity* for this "green", sustainable attitude (assuming we have been informed on the dangerous effects of global warming). In other words, we are devaluing our responsibility to preserve the environment and are deceiving ourselves about the morality of our behavior with regard to its contribution towards global warming.

So what makes a "green" attitude and overall care for the environment a moral requirement? Certainly, as just mentioned, failure to adopt this attitude will result in increased global warming and more widespread exploitation of the earth, but, as indicated earlier, an ethic of care should not be adopted solely for these teleological reasons. As

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[26] Singer argues that people in affluent nations would sacrifice nothing of comparable moral importance were they to give money to desperate nations such as Bengal that suffer from a severe lack of food, shelter, and medical care. He believes the consumer society in America has distorted people's values and that fighting poverty and hunger far outweigh the consumerism towards which much of our money has been directed.

Tom Regan argues, the environment has an inherent worth that gives it moral standing, and for this reason we must adopt a stronger environmental ethic that cares for its value. Regan claims that in order for a "genuine environmental ethic" to be possible (as opposed to an ethic for the use of the environment—a distinction that Regan makes quite clear in his paper) two conditions must be met:

> (1) An environmental ethic must hold that there are nonhuman beings which have moral standing.
> (2) An environmental ethic must hold that the class of those beings which have moral standing includes but is larger than the class of conscious beings. (19-20)

This approach to an environmental ethic clashes with anthropocentric or sentient approaches that claim only humans or sentient beings (i.e. animals that can feel pleasure or pain) possess direct moral standing. Regan further claims that utilitarian and deontological moral approaches to the environment fail because they exclusively concern sentient beings (utilitarianism) or humans (deontological). He concludes his essay by saying, "the development of what can properly be called an environmental ethic requires that we postulate inherent *value* in nature" (34).

While Regan's environmental ethic certainly positions us closer to appreciating and caring for our environment, ultimately Regan falls prey to the very anthropocentric stances he had criticized. Bruce Foltz, a Heideggerean scholar, says of Regan's approach, "Regan undermines and betrays his own intentions through the employment of concepts such as 'object' and 'value'" (171). Foltz goes on to say that Regan, along with many other environmental ethics philosophers, fails to examine the actual concept of an environment, which he believes involves a "rich set of interrelations—more than can be comprehended by human ecology or by geography, literature, politics, theology, philosophy, or any other science or discipline" (173). This sort of environmental ethic

that recognizes the direct moral standing of ecosystems from their interrelated, functional integrity is often considered an 'ecocentric' ethical approach, and this perspective resides much closer to Heidegger's thought.

As discussed in the last chapter, Heidegger believes we must regain our essence as shepherds of Being and must dwell poetically *with* nature, as opposed to *against* it or for our sole use. The very Being of all that is around us involves both living and nonliving things, and each is mediated through its very interrelations that collectively constitute the dynamic system that is this earth. As shepherds of being, Heidegger believes that we must preserve these essential relations and prepare for the site of the clearing of being rather than clutter it with excessive technological devices. It cannot be reiterated enough that saying yes and no to technology does not mean destroying technology, eliminating calculative thinking altogether, or disregarding science, but rather it calls for a more appreciative, essential relation to technology that does not render us its slaves.

This sort of humble environmental ethic—one that recognizes the web of beings that together constitute this earth—has been generally lost in our contemporary age due to our detachment from nature. Heidegger was aware of this; the distress he felt over the positioned world stemmed from this very change in our relation to the earth. However, meditative thinking should remind us of our role within this dynamic whole and should cause a change in our attitude toward the environment. As Aldo Leopold, the father of ecocentrism, said in his essay *The Land Ethic*: "By and large, our present problem is one

of attitudes and implements."[27] Respect for this earth and an ethic of care that preserves its integrity and stability must be instilled in our moral consciousnesses if we wish to poetically dwell here, and environmentally conscious actions must be viewed as moral requirement rather than as mere preferences.

So how can this sort of attitudinal change occur; how can we encourage people to meditatively think on their place within this complex, interrelated earth? In an ever-increasing positioned, industrialized world, children must be encouraged to venture out into the wilderness and explore the natural habitats that remain generally untouched by technology. As John Dewey said in his essay *Education as Growth*, "In directing the activities of the young, society determines its own future in determining that of the young."[28] This statement states nothing novel, but it underscores the attention we must pay to our youth so that they gain exposure to the natural beauty that all too often remains veiled behind technology and industry. Our education system must not overlook the importance of this and should encourage school field trips to national parks and other activities that engage students with natural ecosystems. Adults, too, have the capacity to occasionally step back from their busy lives and reconnect with nature. Through experiencing the world beyond its technological realm, we are more inclined to adopt an ethic of care for the environment. This ethical approach, coupled with a more informed

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[27] Reprinted in: Timmons, Mark. *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 521 from Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac, with Other Essays on Conservatism from Round River*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981 [1949].

[28] Reprinted in: Stuhr, John J. *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings & Interpretive Essays*, 2nd edition. New York: Oxford, 2000, p. 491 from "Education as Growth," in *Democracy and Education, John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, Vol. 9, Ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale and Edewardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980 [1916]), pp. 46-58.

public opinion on the science behind climate change, may just transform our contemporary attitude and reverse the global warming we are experiencing today. But, in a pragmatic spirit, I must acknowledge an essential condition of mankind: fallibility. While I am certainly optimistic that a change in our attitude can take place, I cannot be certain that we will rise to the challenge. We can only hope and do what we can to work towards this goal.

Conclusion

Our inquiry into global warming has explored this contemporary issue from a variety of philosophical perspectives of the 20th century. The first chapter focused on global warming from an existentialist's view and sought to answer the question: How are we responsible for global warming and what can we do to fight it? Both the individual and the larger social whole were examined within Sartre's writings. In his earlier work, Sartre stressed the radical freedom of the individual and placed responsibility solely on each of us, for ultimately we form our essence and are accountable for our own choices. In our daily lives, this means that we must resist living in 'bad-faith' and instead be authentic with ourselves, which should translate into environmentally conscious actions that do not contribute excessively to global warming. As Sartre grew older, the scope of his writing expanded as he focused on establishing a theory of social ontology. After applying Sartre's social ontology to our current social structure in America, we determined that the dynamic of this country within the context of global warming resembles a Sartrean collective—lacking unity, externalized, and serialized. In order for changes to be made, I argued that the social structure of this country must transform so that it more closely resembles a Sartrean group with a common mission and an "all for one and one for all" attitude.

The second chapter transitioned to Heidegger's philosophy of technology and called attention to the danger of the technological world surrounding us today. This chapter examined an underlying, veiled cause of global warming: namely, this positioned, predominantly technological world we live in that repels us from our essence as thought-worthy beings. Heidegger proposed that in order to live in a technological world, we

must say yes and no to technology by a releasement towards things through meditative thinking and a 'step back' from our fast-paced, consumption-based culture. The practical meaning of this in terms of how we live our lives was never explicitly articulated in Heidegger's writings; meditative thinking may alter each of our everyday praxes in unique ways. Proper meditative thinking, though, will prepare the site for the clearing of Being and will invoke an ethic of care for the environment within us all.

The third and final chapter underscored the necessity for policy change so that the government can adopt a more active role in managing greenhouse gas emissions. We turned to the pragmatic school of thought, which promotes finding a harmonious pluralism amongst a diversity of beliefs, but then acknowledged the problem of fundamentally opposing ideologies about global warming in both public and political opinion, rending a harmonious pluralism almost impossible to achieve. Many of these beliefs, however, are grounded in ideologies that oppose the virtually unanimous opinion of the scientific community—namely, that global warming is due to anthropogenic factors. Thus, informing the public of the scientific research and data behind global warming through increased education may garner stronger support for policy change and provide the impetus for the green revolution discussed in the first chapter. Even if policies were to change, however, a radical transformation in our attitude towards the environment must occur, and through a stronger ethic of care we may be able to preserve the integrity of stability of this earth.

In the end, my hope is that this paper helped the reader appreciate different perspectives on how we can tackle this challenge of global warming. Certainly we all engage in activities that emit greenhouse gases, but the goal is that we live authentically

within such a technological culture and do not get lost in the jungle that is our present society. Only time will tell if a green revolution, meditative thinking, and an ethic of care emerge, allowing people to find meaning in this technological world. If any of these transformations occur, we will certainly be well on the path that leads to global warming as a thing of the past.

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