

Global warming's ethical dilemma

[Environment](#), [Global Warming](#)



Global Warming and its Ethical Dilemma Global warming is a growing threat of apocalyptic consequences. Over the past two decades our climate has undeniably grown warmer and is not predicted to slow this unprecedented rate of change unless action is taken. Unfortunately, the heat has damaged the crops of developing agricultural countries that cannot afford the setbacks that Americans embrace. If the projected population of our planet is to reach nine billion by the end of this century, how can we fathom providing ample food and water for a world which is already so impoverished and starving due to the results of the last twenty years alone? Peter Singer suggests that this dilemma "forces us to think differently about our ethics". World leaders of the past viewed our resources as immeasurable and the concept of running out of natural resources and polluting our environment did not help shape public opinion. Recent years have shown man's ignorance and the irreparable damage it can cause. CFC's have depleted the ozone layer, even leaving holes in some areas, and devastate many more lives with skin cancer. The shocking revelation of our dwindling supply of fossil fuels combined with skyrocketing prices supports innovating new ideas for energy. Scientists further expand this argument by evidence that industrialized nations that burn fossil fuels are the leading contributors to the exponential climate shift.. Today's technology links people from all walks of life together in ways never imagined. One must accept the view that we are all in this together in order to solve the problem of global warming. Singer examines many options and which one is the best based on being fair and supporting national sovereignty. It does seem fair that whoever has caused the most damage should be liable to do most of the repair. Whoever is deemed at

fault in a car accident is forced to pay a deductible and can look forward to a spike in rates for years to come. But the United States, being the leader in carbon dioxide emissions, as a sovereign nation has not joined the Kyoto treaty to make a move in the right direction in limiting the noxious gases emitted by our cars and machinery. Distributive justice must be used to determine who should be held accountable and what that level should be based on each nation's contribution to the current situation. However, in the "polluter pays" stance, the developed nations would carry a phenomenal burden if they were judged on their contributions throughout history. In order to even the score it is necessary to start at a point when leaders were aware of the harmful effects of burning fossil fuels. Then acceptable emission levels could be calculated and those who continued to exceed a set amount could be reprimanded for their irresponsible actions because they continue to knowingly commit harm. To produce an equal per capita share also produces a great deal of difficulty because a standard of one ton of carbon per person is five times what it ought to be in America but India would be able to produce three times more tons of emissions than what they currently do. In this view America, for once, is the worst off. The majority of our citizens were born into an industrialized society heading down the path to ruining the world around us. Therefore, we would need humanitarian aid to help us in our time of need. But what could possibly be done to ensure the greatest good? The proposal of Singer is that each country be given a quota for emissions and that they be freely traded based on need. The benefits are two fold and motivate both ends of the spectrum. High emissions countries would greatly attempt to lower the amount to avoid trading and paying for

other countries left over emission credits. Countries below their quota would still be motivated to keep the numbers low because it results in monetary gain. For the first time, underdeveloped countries would possess something that industrial nations need and must pay to attain. I agree that there should be a third party involved to oversee that the money gained by leaders of developing countries would be used for growth and prosperity of the masses and not the individual. Al Gore's video proposes a more personal call to action. He is a strong advocate for change and warns of the catastrophes to come if society does not slow this epidemic. He takes his argument beyond just a political aspect but makes it a moral judgment as what each individual wants for the future of this planet. I think Gore's campaign is more achievable because it presents a fixable problem and things anyone can do to help solve it. Singer criticizes how things are but forms a global trade proposal that would take time to become approved, whereas the film is an inspiring look at what can and must be done now. Both sources supply facts that support the validity of global warming and greenhouse gases as being more than a hoax. The graphic imagery of polar ice caps and the personal element of his sister's death to lung cancer as well as his sons near fatal car accident captures the audience and shows the former vice president in a new manner. Comparing the two works, the film was more motivating and easier to understand than the changes Peter Singer believes in.