



The Fate of the Earth in the Balance: The Metaphysics of Climate Change

By Steven F. Hayward

A close reading of Al Gore's views on the linkages between environmental issues and broader social and philosophical currents reveals their problematic political and policy implications. Gore derives our environmental problems from deeper metaphysical and psychosocial currents, a path that will foreclose a number of productive policy approaches to the problem of climate change.

One of the more suggestive thought experiments making the rounds in climate-change policy circles is the “stabilization wedges” framework of Robert Socolow and Stephen Pacala of Princeton University. Published originally in *Science* magazine in response to a previous *Science* article that was pessimistic about our energy and climate future, Socolow and Pacala argued that the daunting problem of greenhouse-gas reductions becomes more manageable if we simply divide the problem into sevenths and implement changes over a fifty-year time horizon.¹

The seven wedges include plausible, but by no means uncomplicated, changes, such as doubling the fuel economy standards of the world's auto fleet from thirty to sixty miles a gallon and limiting driving to 10,000 miles a year or less per auto; more efficient buildings and power plants; carbon sequestration; nuclear power; and, of course, renewable energy and biofuels. Socolow and Pacala offer fifteen possible wedges in all, but note that some are mutually exclusive (i.e., if we move to biofuels or have widespread use of plug-in hybrid-electric or hydrogen fuel cell cars, there will be fewer emissions reductions to be realized from higher gasoline fuel economy performance). When the canceling wedges are all factored in,

the number of non-redundant wedges reduces to seven.

Critics have noted that just about any problem—world poverty, hunger, terrorism—can be divided conceptually into incremental wedges, especially when the means of implementation are left vague or undetermined. The weakness of the Socolow/Pacala framework is that no cost estimates are attached to any of the wedges. Another recently published article in *Science* estimates the cost of some of these strategies for the United States to be \$200 billion a year over the next thirty years for a grand total of \$3 trillion, which is still probably low.² Nonetheless, the Socolow/Pacala disaggregated approach to the problem has helped to break the Kyoto-induced gridlock on the energy strategy and climate policy debates.

It was not surprising, then, that the Socolow/Pacala stabilization wedges appear in former vice president Al Gore's book and movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*. In fact, the Socolow/Pacala scheme is the only policy framework Gore includes. In both the book and the movie, however, only six of Socolow and Pacala's seven wedges show up for duty. One wedge is missing: nuclear power. Gore passes over this omission without comment, so few if any viewers of Gore's film know of this telling omission. One would think that if climate change genuinely threatens the extinction of human civilization, as Gore and others repeatedly

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tell us, all options would be on the table and their tradeoffs weighed seriously. Nuclear power is in use already, with highly favorable results from a greenhouse-gas emissions standpoint. It is not a coincidence that the industrialized nation with the lowest greenhouse-gas intensity (the amount of greenhouse gas emitted to dollar of economic output) is France, which generates about 80 percent of its electricity with nuclear power (compared to about 20 percent in the United States). According to the International Energy Agency, the United States generates 0.55 kilograms of carbon dioxide for each dollar of economic output; the comparable figure for France is 0.29 kilograms—about half as much.³ If the United States had the same greenhouse-gas intensity as France, global greenhouse-gas emissions would be nearly 10 percent lower.

A new generation of nuclear technology has eliminated the risk of catastrophic meltdowns or Chernobyl-type explosions, and fuel reprocessing can reduce nuclear waste to a manageable level. It would seem that only environmental correctness prevents the former vice president and other leading environmentalists from mentioning a technology that numerous energy experts say is an essential component of a serious greenhouse strategy.⁴

Climate Change as a Cultural and Philosophical Issue

This small example of environmental atavism reveals a more fundamental aspect of the public discourse about climate change. At the core of environmentalist animus against nuclear power is a categorical suspicion about technology itself, which is connected to a larger philosophical pessimism about human civilization and man's supposed separation or alienation from nature. We have seen this style of argument during the long controversy over the arms race in the late stages of the Cold War, during which the immense political and technical aspects of the problem were, for a certain cast of mind, entirely subsumed beneath a more general critique of how the arms race was merely symptomatic of a larger crisis of civilization. Unless this larger crisis was

addressed, it was suggested, there would be no hope the arms race could be solved.

It was not but twenty years ago that the large nuclear weapons arsenals of the superpowers threatened the instantaneous destruction of civilization and perhaps human life itself. Today, climate change is said

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to threaten the same things, only more slowly. It is remarkable how similarly the leading advocates for these two problems understand and conceptualize them. In the case of both the arms race then and climate change today, we are told that the issue is ultimately philosophical in nature, and that wholesale changes in our philosophical perspective must necessarily precede political and policy remedies to the problem. Should this perspective be taken seriously? What can it really mean?

The Fate of the Earth in the Balance

The peculiarity of this approach to major global problems is best seen by comparing the two leading popular books on each issue, Jonathan Schell's 1982 bestseller *The Fate of the Earth*, and Al Gore's 1991 bestseller *Earth in the Balance* (whose main arguments reappear in truncated form in *An Inconvenient Truth*). It is not

just the titles that are strikingly similar; a close reading reveals the two books to be identical in their overarching philosophy.⁵ In both, mankind is poised on the abyss, facing, in Gore's words, "the most serious threat that we have ever faced,"⁶ or "the nearness of extinction,"⁷ to use only one of Schell's many apocalyptic formulations. (An index entry—"despair; see also futility"⁸—conveys the mood better than any quotation from the main text.) In fact, if one substitutes "global warming" for "nuclear weapons" in the text of *Fate of the Earth*, the result is so shockingly close to *Earth in the Balance* that one could almost make out a case for plagiarism on Gore's part. Perhaps some publisher will have the wit to meld the two books into one: *The Fate of the Earth in the Balance*.

But such a combination is not necessary. The two books directly intersect in several places. Gore writes, for example, that:

the political will that led to mass protests against escalating the arms race during the early 1980s came from a popular awareness that civilization seemed to be pulled toward the broad lip of a downslope leading to a future catastrophe—nuclear war—that would crush human history forever into a kind of black hole. . . . This is not unlike the challenge we face today in the global environmental crisis. The potential for true catastrophe lies in the future, but the downslope that pulls us toward it is becoming recognizably steeper with each passing year.⁹

In this, Gore was only returning the favor to Schell, who occasionally paused long enough from his lament over nuclear catastrophe to include a few nods to ecocatastrophe. For his part, Schell mentions “global heating through an increased ‘greenhouse effect,’” adding:

The nuclear peril is usually seen in isolation from the threats to other forms of life and their ecosystems, but in fact should be seen as the very center of the ecological crisis—as the cloud-covered Everest of which the more immediate, visible kinds of harm to the environment are the mere foothills. Both the effort to preserve the environment and the effort to save the species from extinction by nuclear arms would be enriched and strengthened by this recognition.¹⁰

Both books display an affectation for gilding their arguments with lots of brief references to major thinkers from a wide variety of disciplines. Consider Schell on Heisenberg:

The famous uncertainty principle, formulated by the German physicist Werner Heisenberg, has shown that our knowledge of atomic phenomena is limited because the experimental procedures with which we must carry out our observations inevitably interfere with the phenomena that we wish to measure.

Schell applies Heisenberg’s scientific insight to all forms of human investigation, writing that “a limit to our knowledge is fixed by the fact that we are incarnate beings, not disembodied spirits.”¹¹ The supposed separation from nature implied by Heisenberg’s idea limits our appreciation for both nature and our predicament.

Gore follows down the same track:

Earlier this century, the Heisenberg Principle established that the very act of observing a natural phenomenon can change what is being observed. Although the initial theory was limited in practice to special cases in subatomic physics, the philosophical implications were and are staggering. It is now apparent that since Descartes reestablished the Platonic notion and began the scientific revolution, human civilization has been experiencing a kind of Heisenberg Principle writ large. . . . [T]he world of intellect is assumed to be separate from the physical world.¹²

Gore opens his hit movie and companion book *An Inconvenient Truth* with an homage to the famous photo of the Earth taken from the moon by the Apollo 8 astronauts in 1968. This image, he tells us, played a key role in galvanizing the world’s environmental consciousness, underscoring the fragility of the planet. As he put it fulsomely in *Earth in the Balance*:

Those first striking pictures taken by the Apollo astronauts of the earth floating in the blackness of space were so deeply moving because they enabled us to see our planet from a new perspective—a perspective from which the preciousness and fragile beauty of the earth was suddenly clear.¹³

Schell uses the same trope:

As it happens, our two roles in the nuclear predicament have been given visual representation in the photographs of the earth that we have taken with the aid of another technical device of our time, the spaceship. These pictures illustrate, on the one hand, our mastery over nature, which has enabled us to take up a position in the heavens and look back on the earth as though it were just one more celestial body, and, on the other, our weakness and frailty in the face of that mastery, which we cannot help feeling when we see the smallness, solitude, and delicate beauty of our planetary home.¹⁴

These are only a few of the many examples that can be drawn of both books’ derivative and allusive nature. Both authors offer up references to Plato, Aristotle,

Augustine, Francis Bacon, Einstein, Descartes, and Hannah Arendt in what might be called, to paraphrase Arendt, the banality of promiscuous allusion, all to bolster a superficial philosophical or anthropological point that is far distant from the politics and policy of either issue.

Most troubling is that both authors depict dissent from their point of view to be a pathology of some kind, foreclosing that there could be any rational basis for a different point of view. Gore compares dissenters to his view of our environmental predicament to garden-variety substance abusers, arguing that people who are oblivious to our “collision” with nature are “enablers” who are “helping to ensure that the addictive behavior continues. The psychological mechanism of denial is complex, but again addiction serves as a model.”¹⁵ Elsewhere Gore compares our “dysfunctional civilization” to dysfunctional families, whose members suffer from “a serious psychological disorder.” While Gore begins this discussion by saying that family dysfunctionality is a metaphor, he ends by applying the concept literally: “The model of the dysfunctional family has a direct bearing on our ways of thinking about the environment.”¹⁶ Schell is close aboard: “A society that systematically shuts its eyes to an urgent peril to its physical survival and fails to take any steps to save itself cannot be called psychologically well.”¹⁷

Both authors call for making their particular issue the paramount global priority in the same terms. Gore argues that “we must make the environment the *central organizing principle* [emphasis added] for civilization. . . . [T]he tide in this battle will turn only when the majority of people in the world become sufficiently aroused by a shared sense of urgent danger to join in an all-out effort.”¹⁸ Schell wrote, “If we felt the peril for what it is—an urgent threat to our whole human substance—we would let it become the *organizing principle* [emphasis added] of our global collective existence: the foundation on which the world was built.”¹⁹

Having laid the groundwork for a wholesale change in our priorities, both Schell and Gore are surprisingly light on the social and political architecture of their alternative world. This is explicitly so in Schell’s case:

“I have not sought to define a political solution to the nuclear predicament. . . . I have left to others those awesome, urgent tasks.”²⁰ Gore’s approach is better supported; he offers a laundry list of specific policy recommendations mostly on energy and resource use, but it falls far short of his desired “wrenching transformation” of civilization. If the broader solution to our predicament is not clear even in outline, it is because neither author fully grasps the magnitude of the critique he is making, such that a political solution—at least, a solution that is compatible with liberal democracy—is impossible. Neither man understands why.

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The Real Source for *The Fate of the Earth in the Balance*

Despite the parade of quotes and references from Plato and Arendt, there is one thinker conspicuously absent from both Schell and Gore’s numerous citations but whose spirit is present on almost every page of both books: Martin Heidegger. Perhaps the absence of a reference to Heidegger is due to reticence or discretion, given Heidegger’s dubious and complicated association with Nazism. Nothing derails an argument faster than playing the *reductio ad Hitlerum* card. More likely it is the abstruse and difficult character of Heidegger’s arguments; Gore and Schell may not realize how closely the core of their argument about the

technological alienation of man from nature tracks Heidegger’s more thorough account in his famous 1953 essay “The Question Concerning Technology.”²¹

Heidegger asks, “What is modern technology?” His understanding of technology is sometimes rendered in translation as “technicity” to convey a defective way of knowing about phenomena, and to distinguish the term from its more common usage to mean mere scientific instrumentality (think gadgets). Heidegger believed that our mode of objectifying nature alienates mankind from perceiving and contemplating pure “Being.” Whatever this may mean—and even Heidegger’s followers admit it is obscure (Heidegger himself wrote that “we are asking about something which we barely grasp”²²)—Heidegger suggests that philosophy has been asking the wrong questions since the very beginning, and the culmination of this wrong track is

modern technology, which completes the alienation of man from nature. This is where Heidegger prepares the way for Gore.

Modern technology, according to Heidegger,

puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such. . . . The earth now reveals itself as a coal-mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. The field that the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order appears different from how it did when to set in order still meant to take of and maintain. . . . But meanwhile even the cultivation of the field has come under the grip of another kind of setting-in-order, which *sets upon* [italics in original] nature. It sets upon it in the sense of challenging it. Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example; uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy, which can be released either for destruction or for peaceful use.²³

Here are Gore's parallel passages:

[O]ur civilization is holding ever more tightly to its habit of consuming larger and larger quantities every year of coal, oil, fresh air and water, trees, topsoil, and the thousand other substances we rip from the crust of the earth. . . . We seem increasingly eager to lose ourselves in the forms of culture, society, technology, the media, and the rituals of production and consumption, but the price we pay is a loss of our spiritual lives.²⁴

And:

Our seemingly compulsive need to control the natural world . . . has driven us to the edge of disaster, for we have become so successful at controlling nature than we have lost our connection to it.²⁵

It is possible to compile a long inventory of close parallels between Heidegger and Gore. For example, Heidegger told interviewers in 1966:

[T]echnicity increasingly dislodges man and uproots him from the earth. . . . The last 30 years have made it clearer that the planet-wide

movement of modern technicity is a power whose magnitude in determining [our] history can hardly be overestimated.²⁶

Heidegger also found the earth-from-space photos as affecting as Gore and Schell:

I don't know if you were shocked, but [certainly] I was shocked when a short time ago I saw the pictures of the earth taken from the moon. We do not need atom bombs at all [to uproot us]—the uprooting of man is already here. All our relationships have become merely technical ones. It is no longer upon an earth than man lives today.²⁷

Gore likes to cite the supposed proverb that the Chinese symbol for "crisis" also means "opportunity." Heidegger was fond of quoting a line from the German poet Hölderlin: "Where danger lies, there too grows the chance for salvation." And is it necessary to mention that Heisenberg's uncertainty principle also shows up for duty in Heidegger's essay on technology?

Heidegger is often said to have advocated a return to pre-Socratic philosophy, though in fact he was skeptical that there was *any* philosophical solution to the problem he perceived. Gore follows Heidegger closely when he criticizes Plato and the Western philosophic tradition for preparing the ground for modern man's estrangement from nature:

The strange absence of emotion, the banal face of evil so often manifested by mass technological assaults on the global environment, is surely a consequence of the belief in an underlying separation of intellect from the physical world. At the root of this belief lies a heretical understanding of humankind's place in the world as old as Plato, as seductive in its mythic appeal as Gnosticism, as compelling as the Cartesian promise of Promethean power—and it has led to tragic results.²⁸

Political Implications

Assuming for the purposes of discussion that Gore's Heideggerian analysis is correct, can a reconnection of intellect and the physical world be accomplished through politics—or led by politicians? Heidegger did not think so, which is why he said it would be impossible for him

to write an ethical or political treatise.²⁹ He doubted democracy offered any hope. In an interview late in life, Heidegger said, “For me today it is a decisive question as to how any political system—and which one—can be adapted to an epoch of technicity. I know of no answer to this question. I am not convinced that it is democracy.”³⁰ Heidegger was contemptuous of postwar democratic reforms—calling them “halfway measures”—including individual constitutional rights, because:

I do not see in them any actual confrontation with the world of technicity, inasmuch as behind them all, according to my view, stands the conception that technicity in its essence is something that man holds within his own hands.

Heidegger thought American democracy was the most hopeless of all, in words that sound in substance exactly like Gore’s complaint:

[Americans] are still caught up in a thought that, under the guise of pragmatism, facilitates the technical operation and manipulation [of things], but at the same time blocks the way to reflection upon the genuine nature of modern technicity.³¹

(Separately, Heidegger wrote that America epitomized “the emerging monstrousness of modern times.”³²)

From here it is possible to comprehend more dispassionately Heidegger’s attraction to the Nazi movement in the 1930s. He had no brief for fascism in general or National Socialism in particular, nor was he an anti-Semite.³³ What he expressed in his famous “Rector’s Address”³⁴ in 1934 was that the “inner truth and greatness” of the Nazi movement was its potential “encounter between technicity on the planetary level and modern man,” and that it “casts its net in these troubled waters of ‘values’ and ‘totalities,’” or, as he put it a 1948 letter to Herbert Marcuse, “a spiritual renewal of life in its entirety.”³⁵ In other words, the “wrenching transformation” of Germany that the Nazi revolution set in motion held the potential for reconnecting humankind with the essence of Being in a primal, pre-Socratic way. Heidegger’s moral blindness to the phenomenon in front of him exposes the hazard of

an excessively abstract approach to human existence. As Heidegger’s example shows, the idea of transforming human consciousness through politics is likely an extremist—and potentially totalitarian—project.

Reviewing the fundamentally Heideggerian understanding of our environmental predicament in Gore’s thought throws new light on the deeper meaning of Gore’s call for a “wrenching transformation” of civilization on the level of thought. Gore would no doubt be sincerely horrified at the suggested parallel between his themes and Heidegger’s moral blindness toward political extremism, and rightly reject it as the implication of his views. He is, thankfully, too imbued with the innate American democratic tradition to embrace any such extremism.³⁶ But it is fair to ask whether he

has fully thought through the implications of his ambitious critique. In the case of both Gore and Schell before him, the Heideggerian approach reveals a certain cast of mind: deeply pessimistic, but utopian at the same time. Our salvation demands submitting to the moral authority of their “vision” to change our “consciousness.” After all, one aspect of Plato that Heidegger approves of is the view that mankind will suffer unremitting disaster until either rulers become philosophers or philosophers become rulers. (Indeed it was the failure of intellectuals to guide the Nazi movement that led to its ruin, Heidegger thought.)

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Gore seems to be making a round trip, looking to end up on either end of this potentiality, envisioning himself either as a ruler who has become a philosopher or as a philosopher who may yet (again) become a ruler.

Is it so farfetched to suggest that this has some problematic, if unintended, political implications? One of Gore’s sound and important arguments in *Earth in the Balance* and *An Inconvenient Truth* is that it is a profound error to suppose that the earth’s environment is so robust that there is little or nothing that mankind could do to damage it seriously. He is right, as was Heidegger, to point out the immense earthshaking power of modern technology. But there is a symmetrical observation to be made of Gore’s metaphysical approach to the problem, which is that it is an equally profound error to suppose that the environment of human liberty is so robust that there is no political

intervention on behalf of the environment that could not damage liberty in serious ways, especially if the environment is elevated to the central organizing principle of civilization. Implicit in this goal is downgrading human liberty as the central organizing principle of civilization. There are no index entries in *Earth in the Balance* for “liberty,” “freedom,” or “individualism.” Heidegger believed the liberal conceptions of these great terms were meaningless or without foundation. There is no acknowledgement in Gore’s book that this is even a serious consideration. Gore’s one discussion of the matter is not reassuring:

In fact, what many feel is a deep philosophical crisis in the West has occurred in part because this balance [between rights and responsibilities] has been disrupted: we have tilted so far toward individual rights and so far away from any sense of obligation that it is now difficult to muster an adequate defense of any rights vested in the community at large or the nation—much less rights properly vested in all humankind or in posterity.³⁷

But Is It Necessary?

Is Gore’s high-level metaphysical analysis necessary in the first place? Do we really have to resolve or unwind the problem of Platonic idealism and Cartesian dualism to address the problem of climate change? The example of the previous case in point—the arms race—suggests an answer. The arms race did not require a revolution in human consciousness or a transformation of national and global political institutions to bring about rapid and favorable changes. The kind of grandiose, pretentious thinking exemplified in *Fate of the Earth* played little or no role in these shifts. The problem turned out to be much simpler. The acute problem of the superpower arms race was mostly a moral problem—not a metaphysical problem—arising from the character of the irreconcilable regimes. As was frequently pointed out, the United States never worried about British or French nuclear weapons. Once the United States and the Soviet Union were able to establish a level of trust and common interest, unwinding

the arms race became a relatively easy matter. Nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear proliferation in unsavory regimes (Iran, North Korea) is still around today, but the acute existential threat of the arms race has receded substantially.

In the early 1980s, *The Fate of the Earth* became the Bible for the nuclear freeze movement—the simplistic idea brought to you by the same people who thought Ronald Reagan was a simpleton. To his credit, then representative and later senator Gore opposed the nuclear freeze. Nowadays Gore has started to call for an immediate freeze on greenhouse-gas emissions,

which he must know is unrealistic. His explanation in a recent speech shows that he missed entirely the lesson from that earlier episode:

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An immediate freeze [on CO₂ emissions] has the virtue of being clear, simple, and easy to understand. It can attract support across partisan lines as a logical starting point for the more difficult work that lies ahead. I remember a quarter century ago when I was the author of a complex nuclear arms control plan to deal with the then rampant arms race between our country and the former Soviet Union. At the time, I was strongly opposed to the nuclear freeze movement, which I saw as simplistic and naive. But, three-quarters of the American people supported it—and as I look back on those years I see more clearly now that the outpouring of public support for that very simple and clear mandate changed the political landscape and made it possible for more detailed and sophisticated proposals to eventually be adopted.³⁸

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The irony of this statement is that since the moral and political differences between the United States and the Soviet Union could not be resolved diplomatically, the way to move relations forward was to convert relations into a technical problem (i.e., negotiations over the number and specifications of weapons systems). Gore remained firmly within the technocratic arms-control community throughout this period, even as Schell and others tried to moralize the arms-control problem with the nuclear

freeze proposal. But the moral confusion (some critics said the premise of moral equivalence) of the freeze idea made it a sideshow at best and a hindrance at worst. On the contrary, President Reagan's resistance to the freeze, as well as the conventions of the arms-control process to which Gore held, were crucial to his strategy for changing the dynamic of the arms race. Having been an arms-control technocrat in the 1980s, Gore today wants to turn the primarily technical and economic problems of climate change into a moral problem.

Gore's argument that climate change is a moral problem and not a political problem is not serious, since the leading prescriptions for treating the problem all require massive applications of political power on a global scale. Skeptics and cynics might dismiss Gore's metaphysical speculations as mere intellectual preening, as many critics did with *Fate of the Earth* in the 1980s. But such an approach to environmental issues may be an obstacle to many practical, incremental steps that can be taken to solve real climate-policy problems. Once one grasps the Heideggerian character of the Gore approach to thinking about environmental problems, the hesitance about nuclear power comes into better focus. Gore and others in his mold dislike large-scale technologies because they are intrinsic to mankind's mastery of nature that is driving our supposed alienation from nature. This same premise also explains the frequently hostile reaction of many environmentalists to suggestions that adaptation to climate change should be a part of any serious climate policy, even though many leading climate scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have embraced adaptation. The suggestion that technologies for climate modification might be developed, which would be the climate policy equivalent of Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, are greeted contemptuously for the same reason.

Will climate policy ultimately be guided by physicians or metaphysicians? Gore's high-profile position on these issues tilts the balance toward metaphysicians. This is certain to generate ferocious resistance to change well beyond merely self-interested industries. Gore would be better off following the advice of Heidegger critic Stanley Rosen, and "step downward, out of the thin atmosphere of the floating island of Laputa or of the balloons in which so many of our advanced thinkers are currently suspended, back into the rich air of everyday life."³⁹ That's a fancy way of saying, "Take a deep breath, Al."

AEI editorial associate Nicole Passan worked with Mr. Hayward to edit and produce this Environmental Policy Outlook.

Notes

1. Stephen Pacala and Robert Socolow, "Stabilization Wedges: Solving the Climate Problem for the Next 50 Years with Current Technologies," *Science* 305 (August 2004): 968. Pacala and Socolow were responding chiefly to Marty Hoffert et al., "Advanced Technology Paths to Global Climate Stability: Energy for a Greenhouse Planet," *Science* 298 (November 2002): 981.

2. Reuel Shinnar and Francesco Citro, "A Road Map to U.S. Decarbonization," *Science* 313 (September 2006): 1243.

3. Author's calculation based on IEA data for the year 2002: *Key World Energy Statistics*, 2005 (International Energy Agency, Paris, France, 2006). The 2005 report, whose data includes information only through 2002, is no longer available on the IEA website. It has been replaced with the 2006 report, the full text of which is available at www.iea.org/dbtw-wpd/Textbase/nppdf/free/2006/key2006.pdf.

4. Gore relented slightly in a recent speech (address, NYU School of Law, New York, September 19, 2006, available at www.nyu.edu/community/gore.html), acknowledging a role for nuclear power, but seeing it as very modest: "While I am not opposed to nuclear power and expect to see some modest increased use of nuclear reactors, I doubt that they will play a significant role in most countries as a new source of electricity. . . . I believe that nuclear reactors will only play a limited role."

5. The parallel between these two books finds its analogue in popular culture: the most prominent anti-nuclear weapon movie of the 1980s was *The Day After*, while more recently the popular movie dramatizing the risk of extreme climate change was called *The Day after Tomorrow*. The movies were remarkably similar in their plotlines and emotional effect.

6. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 40.

7. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Viking, 1982), 95.

8. *Ibid.*, 235.

9. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 49.

10. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, 111.

11. *Ibid.*, 76.

12. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 253.

13. *Ibid.*, 44.

14. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, 154–55.

15. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 223.

16. *Ibid.*, 230.

17. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, 8.

18. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 269.

19. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, 222.
20. Ibid., 219. Michael Kinsley, reviewing Schell (Michael Kinsley, "Nuclear Holocaust in Perspective," *Harper's* [May 1982], reprinted in Michael Kinsley, *Curse of the Giant Muffins and Other Washington Maladies* [New York: Summit Books, 1987], 194–203), noted the inadequacy of this passage, saying, "Good heavens. This sudden abandonment, on page 219, put Schell's hyperventilated rhetoric in an odd light. Is he just going to head off on a book tour and leave us stranded?"
21. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).
22. Cited in George Steiner, *Heidegger* (London: Fontana, 1978), 43.
23. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 296.
24. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 221.
25. Ibid., 225.
26. Rudolph Augstein and Georg Folff, "Only a God Can Save Us," interview with Heidegger in *Der Spiegel* (May 1976), translated and reprinted in Thomas Sheehan, ed., *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1981), 56. Although the *Der Spiegel* interview was conducted in 1966, Heidegger insisted it not be published until after his death, which occurred in 1976.
27. Ibid.
28. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 258.
29. Rudolph Augstein and Georg Folff, "Only a God Can Save Us," 57. In the interview, Heidegger said: "Philosophy will be unable to effect any immediate change in the current state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all purely human reflection and endeavor. Only a god can save us."
30. Ibid., 55.
31. Ibid., 61.
32. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klosterman, 1957), 103.
33. Indeed, it was Heidegger's refusal of Nazi demands that he dismiss Jewish faculty members from Freiberg University that led to his dismissal as rector.
34. Martin Heidegger, "Self-Assertion and the German University," in Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 29–39.
35. See Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy*, 162.
36. Gore specifically rejects the general idea of world government in *Earth in the Balance* in part on the simple practical grounds that the centralized authority it would require would falter on the shoals of the usual problems of large bureaucracy.
37. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 278.
38. Al Gore (address, NYU School of Law).
39. Stanley Rosen, *The Question of Being: A Reversal of Heidegger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), x.