

## UNSTOPPABLE GLOBAL WARMING

(or "How I learned to stop worrying and love burning fossil fuels")

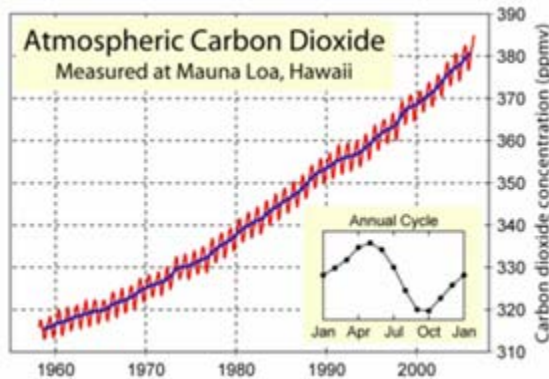
by S. Fred Singer and Dennis T. Avery

2007, Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 245 pages

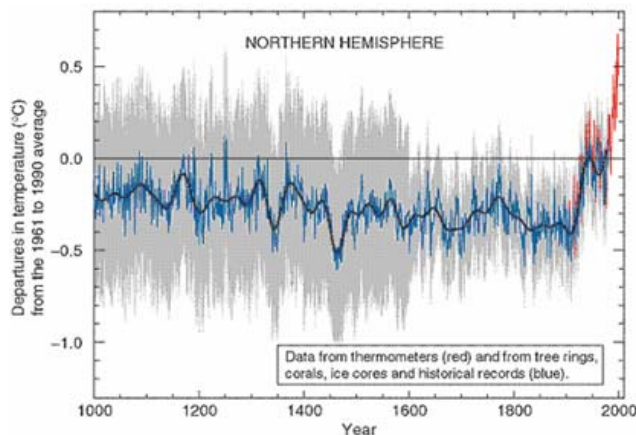
The orthodox global warming theory (GW) holds that humans, by burning fossil fuels mainly for vehicular transport and power generation, are warming Earth's surface and atmospheric temperatures through emissions of carbon dioxide (which reflects radiation energy back to earth).

Many supporters of GW further hold the corollary view that carbon-based warming is enough to imminently (within the 21st century) threaten human well being and needs to be reined in.

Al Gore's book and movie, [\*An Inconvenient Truth\*](#), and my favorite book on the issue so far, Tim Flannery's [\*The Weather Makers\*](#), are among many popular works representing the orthodox GW position. Two graphics of particular importance to this theory are the Keeling Curve and the so-called Hockey Stick graph from the United Nations' International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):



**The Keeling Curve**



**The IPCC "Hockey Stick" Temperature Curve**

Please refer to my Weather Makers review for a brief discussion of the two graphics.

While not explicitly arguing against the GW theory taken as a whole, Singer and Avery, in *Unstoppable Global Warming*, present a sort of parallel theory. They do explicitly cast doubt, in isolation, on every component of GW ... with perhaps the exception that Singer/Avery I believe would concede—though they say nothing about it in the book—humankind is emitting large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The basic arithmetic for CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere:

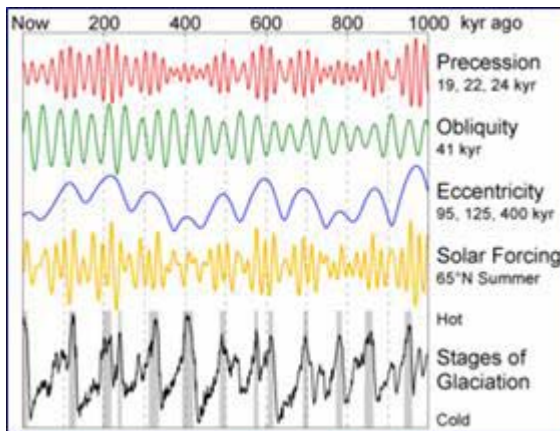
Before the industrial age the approximate average amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere was 280 ppm (parts per million (by mass)), equating to 645 gigatons (billions of tons) of carbon. According to Tim Flannery's book[1], in the 1990s an average 14.6 gigatons accumulated in the atmosphere each year, half of that from burning fossil fuels. Today the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is 380 ppm

corresponding to 869 gigatons of carbon.

—Page 28, 29

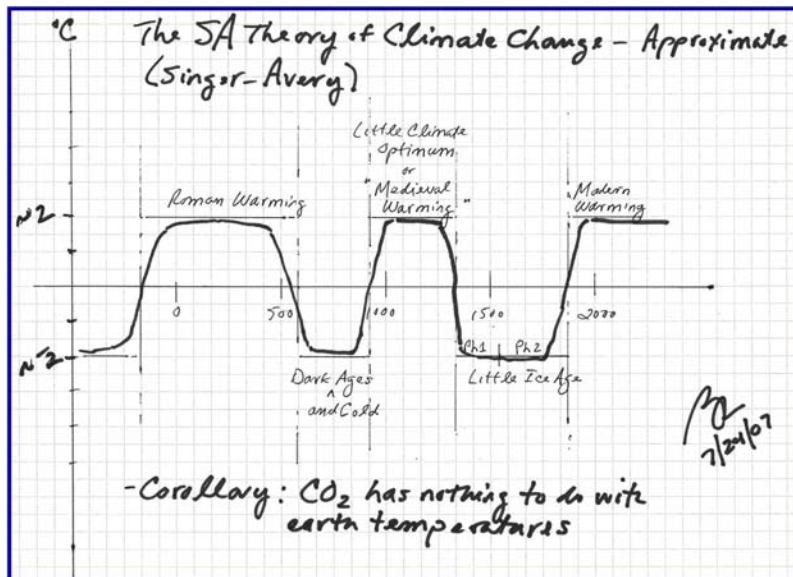
I do not believe Singer and Avery question the raw numbers for carbon in the atmosphere, but I believe they do question that the burning of fossil fuels has much, if anything, to do with CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. (!) Interestingly, Singer and Avery, while vigorously denouncing the Greenhouse Gas theory—and that airborne carbon has anything to do with temperature—do not refer to the Keeling Curve or to any detailed projection of atmospheric carbon.

The Singer-Avery theory (SA) holds that a 1500-year Dansgaard-Oeschger arguably solar-driven cycle of moderate warming and cooling ( $\sim 4^{\circ}\text{C}$  peak-to-trough) is the prime determiner of global temperatures in between larger "ice age" cycles. These larger cycles are known as the Milankovitch cycles (100,000 years, 42,000 years, and 21,400 years) after the groundbreaking work of Hungarian scientist Milutin Milankovitch[2].



**The Milankovitch Cycles**

*Unstoppable* is short on graphics, especially any that have distinct or referenceable markings on the vertical scale. So I have sketched what I believe Singer is arguing:



**The Brian Wright Sketch of the SA Theory**

Since the reader may not be able to see the labeling on the graphic's peaks and valleys: the first peak is Roman Warming (200BC to 600AD), the next valley is Dark (and Cold) Ages (600-900), the next peak is Little Climate Optimum or Medieval Warming (1000-1350), the next valley is the Little Ice Age (1350-1850), and finally we come to the Modern Warming (1850-?).

The idea of Medieval Warming and that temperatures were even warmer then than they are today has become a cause célèbre of the GW skeptic crowd. Flannery here dismisses one of Singer's prize contentions:

"A survey of global temperature records (from ice cores, tree rings, and lake deposits) shows that, if anything, Earth was then overall slightly cooler 0.05°C than in the early and mid-twentieth century, proving that the idea of a global Medieval Warm Period is bunk."—Page 44 of Flannery

Flannery's dismissal is indicative I believe of what most GW theorists think of most of the claims of the SA theorists. As I read *Unstoppable*, I have the overwhelming impression these two are on a mission, almost a vendetta, to contradict every fact or consensus GW science has developed over the past 50 years. E.g. "You say the sky is blue, but Joe Slabotsky of the Central European Academy of Whizbangs says it's been olive green for decades. So there, Mr. Smarty Pants!"

Even though some of the alleged contradictions to GW brought up by Singer—such as cooler overall Antarctica, cooler overall Greenland, the distorting effects of urban heat islands, sea level estimates, etc., and especially a "heat vent" over the Pacific[3]—are worth investigating (and *discussing*)[4], his lack of objectivity is astounding. One clear example of bias lies in the following statement made early:

"By the mid-1980s, however, the First World had already convinced itself of the Greenhouse Theory and believed that ***puny*** human industries had grown powerful enough to change the planet's climate."  
—Page 2. Emphasis mine, "puny" is clearly a value judgment begging the question.

At other points Singer-Avery write so sloppily as to create an impression in the reader of something as now (conveniently) true that virtually everyone knows to be untrue. For example, contrast Flannery's statement of the scientific consensus and Singer's careless assertion below:

"The Greenland ice cap, however, is a true remnant of the continental ice domes of the type mammoths would recognize, and it contains enough water to raise sea levels by around 23 feet."—*The Weather Makers*, Page 144.

"Niels Reeh of the University of Denmark has reported a broad consensus among sea level experts that another 1 degree Celsius of warming would create only a tiny change in global sea levels. ***He says the melting of Greenland's ice sheet would increase sea level by only 0.3 to .77 mm per year.***"—*Unstoppable Global Warming*, Page 48, emphasis mine.

A casual reader can come away from the Singer passage feeling, geez, even if all of friggin' Greenland melts, in a whole century that only raises water levels 77 mm (~3 inches). "Honey, we can stop worrying about the beach house."

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Sorry to make this review so long, but the issue of global warming (and cooling) is extremely important. And far too many liberty-minded people see Singer's ideas—with his vindication (mainly by omission) of the scorched-earth, state-sanctioned environmental ravages of the fossil fuel cartel—as somehow championing the free market against big government. (!) If the evidence of your senses and the best of your scientists tell you you're driving toward a cliff, how can it be pro-freedom to press down the accelerator?

Healthy skepticism *Unstoppable* is not. Its effect, if not its purpose, is to cloud real threats and paralyze any reasonable effort to unfoul the human nest. For thus dropping context and failing to consider overwhelming evidence that GW is real and critical, I regard the authors as irresponsible, at the very least, perhaps even catastrophically so.

Skepticism is important; denial of the laws of identity and causality will get us killed.

Singer-Avery do make a couple of rather peripheral valid points, mainly in the context of energy. We need to behave rationally as we reach *The End of Oil*. That includes being mindful of what's realistic in the transition to the energy technologies of the future. Kyoto and other magic words should not become sacred cows. We need to noodle out the right things; some in the environmental movement have agendas that are inimical to free humanity.

Finally, until I read the book I was unaware of the extent to which the main problem earth-dwellers face on a geological time scale is COLD. (Not that long ago, Detroit was under a mile of ice.) I figure by the time we reach the next Milankovitch iceball era—it's supposed to occur within a few thousand years—we'll have figured out how to adjust the earth's thermostat to a comfortable 57°F come what may.

[1] I believe he is referencing the following source in making these claims: L.R. Kump, "Reducing Uncertainty about Carbon Dioxide as a Climate Driver," *Nature* 419 (2002).

[2] In his *Canon of Insolation of the Ice Age Problem* (1941), Milankovitch identified three principal cycles that drive Earth's climatic variability. The first is a 100,000 year cycle of the "ellipticalness" of the earth's orbit about the sun—currently we're not very elliptical so the variation in the amount of radiation reaching the earth between January and June is ~6%, but at its peak this variation is a significant 20-30%. The second (42,000 year cycle) concerns the tilt of the earth on its axis between 21.8° and 24.4°—we are currently in the midrange. The third cycle (21,400 years) measures the the "wobble" of the earth on its axis—when the axis is pointing toward the star Vega, winters can be bitterly cold and summers scorchingly hot.

{Note, although Singer and Avery refer to the longer cycles, they do not identify Milankovitch as the source of the discoveries. My footnote description is drawn entirely from Flannery's book.}

[3] NASA reported in 2001 that MIT's Richard Lindzen and a NASA research team had found a huge climatic heat vent over the warm pool of the Pacific, the planet's warmest spot. "Does the Earth Have an Adaptive Infrared Iris?" *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* 82 (2001).

[4] It does distress me that I seem to find very little on Web searches that shows GW scientists deigning to defend their theory against such apparent contradictions. If GW is a good theory, you can dedicate plenty of resources to defending it in normal public venues, even if you have little respect for the self-serving nature of those throwing up the flak. (The "self" being served in this case is predominantly the oil companies and various think tanks the oil junta has been lavishly funding for GW disputation. Fred Singer has received substantial funding from ExxonMobil for much of his "climate science" work.)

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*Unstoppable Global Warming | Singer and Avery | Kyoto Protocol*