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## Book Review

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## Book Review

### Erratum

The citation for this review is *4 RISK 357 (1993)* in most commercial databases.

**VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE, EARTH IN THE BALANCE: ECOLOGY AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT.** (Plume 1993) [368 pp.] Acknowledgements, bibliography, figures, foreword, illustrations, index, notes. LC 92-34013; ISBN 0-452-26935-0. [Paper \$13.00. 375 Hudson Street, New York NY 10014.]

This book calls for global efforts to halt the collision between human civilization and the earth's ecology. Gore's basic premise is that "the problem is not our effect on the environment so much as our relationship with the environment."<sup>1</sup> He urges a complete rethinking about our relationship with the earth and argues against proceeding on the assumptions that "nothing we did or could do would have any lasting effect on the global environment,"<sup>2</sup> and that "natural resources are limitless."<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, he maintains that we need to change the way we think about our individual and global relationships to the earth if we are to save the planet for future generations. He also believes that the U.S. should exercise global leadership.

In the first of three parts, Gore discusses major global threats to the earth's delicate ecological balance, e.g., global warming, ozone depletion, air pollution, water pollution, deforestation, desertification, depletion of biodiversity, waste disposal and population increases. In Part II, he explores these concerns from several perspectives including economics, sociology, politics, history, technology, philosophy — and even theology. This discussion is detailed and aided by charts, graphs and illustrations. It is also documented with extensive citations to the work of experts. Thus, in the first two parts, Gore attempts to rebut any assumptions that environmental problems are remote and that ecological threats are insufficiently researched to warrant action.

In two chapters constituting the last part of *EARTH IN THE BALANCE...*, Gore urges that current policy making is shortsighted and calls for immediate action. In chapter 14, he explains how his political vantage point has shaped his understanding and how he believes politics

<sup>1</sup> At 34.

<sup>2</sup> At 30.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

can “raise public awareness and catalyze collective decisions” to strike an ecological balance.<sup>4</sup> He stresses our need to consider the effect of today’s laws and policies on future generations, both domestically and internationally. In chapter 15, Gore discusses the pressing need to: 1) stabilize the world population, 2) create and develop environmentally appropriate technology, 3) change the economic accounting system to value ecological consequences of decisions in the marketplace, 4) negotiate and establish new international agreements and 5) educate the world citizens.

Overall, Gore’s book expresses deep concern that future generations will inherit the consequences of short-term decision making and attempts to support the thesis that “each of us must take a greater personal responsibility for this deteriorating global environment... and look hard at the habits of mind and action... that have led to this grave crisis.”<sup>5</sup> Even those who disagree about the intensity of the crisis cannot ignore important evidence of thinking that will shape many policies of the present administration.

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<sup>4</sup> At 270.

<sup>5</sup> At 12.

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