

Post-modernism and climate change

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Abstract: It is an honor to be able to contribute to a special issue of the Journal of the Indian Association of Sedimentologists, in commemoration of our colleague Professor George Devries Klein. As a good geologist, he was critical of the “scientific” way the belief in catastrophic man-made global warming was promoted by the IPCC and its followers (here called the “IPCC narrative”). He was what is sometimes called a “climate skeptic”. In this article I discuss the influence of post-modern philosophy on the IPCC narrative. Postmodernism rejects scientific achievements of the Enlightenment. Any scientific criticism of the IPCC narrative is strongly rejected, even calling climate skeptics criminals. Some skeptics have even lost their jobs. According to the IPCC narrative the science has been settled and no further debate is tolerated. This is of course an anti-science standpoint. Some prominent geologists have been in the forefront of criticizing the IPCC narrative, publishing their scientific objections in many books and articles.

Keywords: George deVries Klein, Post-modernism, Enlightenment, Climate Change, IPCC, NIPCC.

Introduction.

Professor George Devries Klein and I met for the first time in 1973, when we were both on the scientific crew of Leg 30 of the Deep Sea Drilling Project, on board the *Glomar Challenger*.



Figures 1 and 2. I could only find two photographs of Professor Devries Klein from that expedition. On the left one he is photographing one of the sediment cores. The photo on the right was taken in the core lab of the ship. Professor Devries Klein is on the right, I am on the left.

The second, and last time I met him was during the 1978 International Sedimentological Congress in Jerusalem, where I presented a talk on Leg 30 sediment cores from the Coral Sea, north-east of Australia.

Contact was re-established in 2016. George had retired to Guam and had discovered on the Internet that I had published a critical book on climate change in 2016, titled *The Fable of a Stable Climate*. He ordered the book and we have been in contact until his death last April. We discovered that we were both *climate skeptics* (although we prefer to call ourselves *climate realists*). He sent me the PowerPoint of his 2016 presentation *some geological aspects of climate change relevant to Pacific Tropical Islands*, at the Island Sustainability Conference at the University of Guam.

Postmodernism

The first time I wrote about post-modernism was in the final chapter of my book *The Fable of a Stable Climate*, titled “Epilogue – Black Swans”. On page 403 I wrote:

“Another way of looking at this could be to contrast “proper science” with “post-modern science”. With “proper science” I am referring to scientific principles and philosophies established over centuries. Proper science deals with facts, observations, experiments, numerical representations of the natural world around us, and, most important, the

continuous testing of hypotheses and theories. As already said, proper science must adhere to the principle of *falsifiability*. [Note: earlier in the chapter I discussed the scientific philosophy of Karl Popper, as expressed in the principle of *falsifiability*].

Post-modern science calls into question conventional notions of truth and reality. It states that there is no objective truth. All scientific theories and hypotheses are simply narratives, often culturally determined, and one narrative is as good as another. Science is just another tall tale. It comes down to a rejection of objectivity and realism.

Such post-modernist thinking has also invaded education. The idea is that students can find out by themselves the truths about scientific theories, by just using “common sense”, unencumbered by what scientific theories had been developed in the past. Whatever they come up with is just as valid as the “old” theories. Such an approach was of course common in “pre-science” times. To give an example, thousands of years ago the Egyptians observed that the sun went under in the west and came up again in the east. Common sense told them that at night the sun travelled through the underworld. A whole religion was built on that premise. Pharaohs, after death, had to travel through the underworld, meeting all sorts of obstacles. To get safely through it, they needed all sorts of spells and assistance. How to go about it was recorded in the “Book of the Dead”. In more recent times, before Copernicus, it was thought that the Earth was flat and the centre of the universe, and that the sun turned around the Earth. That’s what common sense told them.

D.F. Mercer (*The Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine, Vol 4(1): 29-32, 2000*) wrote an excellent article on the effects of post-modern ideas on medicine, how it blurred the distinction between “proper” medical science and alternative medicine. He writes that postmodern ideas “*renders medicine open to infiltration from*

unscientific, emotionally, and ideological motivated individuals. Postmodern equates and allows for different forms of knowledge”. The same could be said in relation to climate science.

Another related concept to “post-modern science” is “post-normal science” (Ticker, *Principia Scientific, 21 August 2013*). In relation to climate change, Ticker calls the IPCC dogma “*a perversion of the standard definition of science as commonly understood. It appears to be an elaborate and dishonest attempt to pass off the preferences of a single group as some kind of pseudo-science. It brazenly casts aside the need for any factual basis and declares in the most unambiguous terms that whatever values it chooses to promote constitutes a truth unimpeachable by reality and a set of values that none dare challenge*”.

A consequence of “post-modern” scientific thinking is also that one can change observations and data at will. Whatever the outcome, all results are equally valuable. This approach is often used by the promoters of the dogma of catastrophic man-made climate change.”

Postmodernist philosophy has its origin in the French philosophers Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). Both were politically left. Foucault was for a time a member of the French Communist Party and later became a Maoist. Derrida was associated with far left organisations. Although he sympathised with the French Communist Party, he never became a member. He took part in the 1968 student uprising in Paris.

Their philosophy greatly influenced academic humanities departments, especially women and gender studies. This was especially the case in the United States. However, this is not the place to discuss their postmodern philosophy in detail. In the present context we are concerned with its influence on science, especially their rejection of the principles and philosophies of the Enlightenment.

The enlightenment

There are different opinions about when the Enlightenment started. It seems reasonable to put that beginning at the publication of Copernicus' book *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres) in 1543. In it he stated that the centre of the universe was not Earth, but that the Sun was near its centre. This was direct challenge to the till then accepted Earth-centred astronomy of the Greek philosopher Claudius Ptolemy (100-160). As this astronomical worldview was also the official standpoint of the Roman Catholic Church, scientists accepting the Copernican view came into conflict with the church. The most famous case is that of the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) whose astronomical observations supported those of Copernicus. However, Church Inquisition consultants pronounced Copernican theory heretical. In 1616, Galileo was ordered not to "hold, teach, or defend in any manner" the Copernican theory.

The Enlightenment period was also called the *Age of Reason*. During the Enlightenment the *scientific method* was developed. Its basic principles are reason, logic, observations, measurements, objectivity, universality, developing hypotheses or theories, testing and reproducibility. Science philosophers, like Karl Popper (1902-1994) and Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996), developed philosophical underpinnings. For instance, Karl Popper developed the *theory of falsifiability*. He developed this theory to distinguish science from pseudo-science. In short, this theory states that "*A proposition or theory cannot be considered scientific if it does not admit the possibility of being shown false*". To put this in another way, "A scientific statement must be able to be tested and proven wrong". One of the corollaries is also that scientific observations and experiments must be reproducible¹.

The Enlightenment has brought enormous benefits to mankind. Science has blossomed, technology has blossomed. In many countries, it has brought liberal democracies. For instance, the US Declaration

of Independence and their Constitution were based on Enlightenment principles.

Postmodern Philosophy's Rejection of the Enlightenment

Postmodern philosophers Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida rejected the Enlightenment scientific principles. They were influenced by German philosophers like Kant, Heidegger, Nietzsche and Hegel, who rejected objectivity. They argued that it is not possible to know reality. Subject and object are being separated. We cannot know outside reality. Logic and evidence are subjective. Postmodernism went as far as to believe that all scientific knowledge is only a narrative, a social construct, and one theory is as valid as the next one. There is no objective truth.

This postmodern "philosophy" has become quite extreme in relation to climate science. It doesn't accept that all scientific opinions are equally valid, but that only one opinion or theory is acceptable. The climate change narrative, as espoused by the UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is considered as the only valuable narrative. We will call it the *IPCC narrative*. This narrative is also characterised by its extreme intolerance. This narrative states that human emissions of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, are causing catastrophic global warming. Many scientists dispute this, based on good scientific arguments, but they have been subjected to *ad hominem* attacks. Over the years I collected the following abuses: "climate change deniers", "cash-amplified flat-earth pseudo-scientists", "the carbon cartel", "villains", "cranks", "refuseniks lobby", "polluters", "a powerful and devious enemy", "and profligates". The list is endless. We are being told that *the science is settled*, which an anti-science statement is of course. They are hostile to dissent and debate. It is sad that most universities and science academies have bought into the IPCC narrative.

Outlawing Climate Change "Denial"

David Roberts of Grist magazine wrote on September 19, 2006: "*When we've finally gotten serious about global warming, when the impacts are really hitting us and we're in a worldwide scramble to minimize the damage,*

we should have war crimes trials for these bastards (the “bastards” being the climate skeptics) – some sort of climate Nuremberg”. Former US Secretary of State John Kerry said that global warming skeptics should be disqualified from “high public office.” He called climate change a *weapon of mass destruction*. It is ironic that at present the highest public office in the United States, that of President, is filled by a climate skeptic.

In 2014, the President of the British Science Association, Sir Paul Nurse, urged researchers (the right ones of course – GJvdL) to “*call offenders (i.c. skeptics) out in the media and challenge them in the strongest way possible. And, when they are serial offenders, they should be crushed and buried*”. Even worse, in 2012, Richard Parncutt, professor of systematic musicology at the University of Graz, Austria, suggested that man-made global warming deniers should be sentenced to death. He posted his opinion on his university website. He wrote: “*I have always been opposed to the death penalty in all cases. Even mass murderers (like Breivik) should not be executed, in my opinion. GW (global warming) deniers fall into a completely different category from Behring Breivik (a Norwegian who murdered young socialists in a holiday camp - GJvdL). They are already causing the deaths of hundreds of million future people. We could be speaking of billions, but I am making a conservative estimate. If a jury of suitably qualified scientists estimated that a given GW denier had already, with high probability (say 95%), caused the deaths of over one million people, then s/he would be sentenced to death*”.

An Australian columnist proposed that climate change denial should be outlawed. She wrote: “*David Irving is under arrest in Austria for Holocaust denial. Perhaps there is a case for making climate change denial an offence. It is a crime against humanity, after all*” (this clearly shows that the denigrating term “climate change denier” equates with “Holocaust denier”). Environmental activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr said during the recent New York City’s People’s Climate March (21 September 2014) that “*there should be a law that lets authorities punish sceptics and deniers – those who engage in “selling out the*

public trust ... These guys are doing the Koch Brothers bidding and are against all evidence of the rational mind, saying global warming does not exist. They are contemptible human beings ... I think it’s treason”.

A New Zealand social scientist, Dr Jarod Gilbert, in 2016 called for climate change denial to be called a crime. He said: “*There is no greater crime being perpetuated on future generations than that committed by those who deny climate change*”. The term “climate change denier” is of course absurd. No scientist denies climate change. Climate change has been occurring since the beginning of the Earth.

More insidious is the fact that some scientists have lost their job because they dared to doubt the veracity of the IPCC narrative. A French meteorologist, Philippe Verdier, lost his job as weather man with France Télévision, because he had published and promoted a book critical of the IPCC narrative, titled *Climat Investigation* (climate investigation). He was sacked just before the Paris 2015 COP21 conference. He was charged by the TV network with having violated ethical rules.

Another case is that of Professor Peter Ridd of James Cook University, Townsville, Australia. He has recently been fired because of his opinions on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). He was fired by his university for allegedly multiple breaches of its code of conduct. He was also censured for denigrating research carried out at the James Cook University’s *Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Science* and the *Australian Institute of Marine Science*. He was also accused of scientific misconduct.

The GBR has been used extensively as an example of the disastrous effects of man-made global warming. However, as marine scientist and one of the world’s pioneers in studying coral reefs, Dr Walter Starck, wrote in a Quadrant Online paper⁷ that “*many claims of threats to the GBR are based on speculation and flat-out fabrications of researchers, bureaucrats and activists seeking grants and donations*”. “*The Reef is fine*”. Similar opinions were expressed by Peter Ridd, based on observations by himself and his students. He recently wrote an article explaining his views, titled *The Extraordinary Resilience of*

Great Barrier Reef Corals, and Problems with Policy Science in the book *Climate Change: The Facts 2017*⁸. He decided to fight his sacking in court. As this is an expensive business, he started an initial fund-raising petition. Within a few days he raised \$95,000, a clear sign of the massive support he is receiving. However, he became aware that he needed much more to support his case. A second fund-raising action amassed a staggering \$260,000 in a few months.

The actions against Professor Peter Ridd are not surprising. Apart from exposing the ideology-steered alarmist coral reef science, he also was a threat to science funding. Alarmist coral reef scientists have claimed that \$16 billion is required to “save the GBR”. Last January, the Australian Government announced a \$60 million plan to help improve the “health of the GBR”.

I could mention many more intolerant, anti-science examples. These clearly show that the IPCC narrative has nothing to do with real science. It is based on ideology and denies all the sound scientific principles developed over several hundred years since Copernicus.

The Marxist characteristics of postmodern climate change science has been noted by several authors^{4,5,6}. It can be illustrated by remarks from climate change activists:

Maurice Strong, a leader of the international green movement, said: *“Isn’t the only hope for the planet that the industrialized civilizations collapse? Isn’t it our responsibility to bring that about?”* Timothy Wirth, ex-President of the UN Foundation, made it quite clear: *“We’ve got to ride this global warming issue. Even if the theory of global warming is wrong, we will be doing the right thing in terms of economic and environmental policy.”*

Christiana Figueres is a Costa Rican diplomat. She was appointed Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on May 17, 2010. The UNFCCC organises annual climate conferences, called COPs (Conferences of the Parties to the UNFCCC). The first one was held in Berlin in 1995. This year’s COP24 will be held in Katowice in Poland, from 2-14 December.

During COP20 in Lima Peru in 2014. Christiana Figueres chaired that conference. In her opening address she said, among other, the following: *“The calendar of science loudly warns us that we are running out of time”, and “Here in Lima we must plant the seeds of a new, global construct of high quality growth, based on unparalleled collaboration building across all previous divides. History, dear friends, will judge us not only for how many tonnes of greenhouse gases we were able to reduce, but also by whether we were able to protect the most vulnerable, to alleviate poverty and to create a future with prosperity for all”*. During an earlier climate conference in Bonn, Germany, she said: *“This is the first time in the history of mankind that we are setting ourselves the task of intentionally, within a defined period of time, to change the economic development model that has been reigning for at least 150 years since the Industrial Revolution”*. The real agenda is concentrated political authority, an old Marxist dream. Global warming is the hook. It’s about a new world order under the control of the UN. It is opposed to capitalism and freedom and has made climate change catastrophism a household topic to achieve its objective. Figueres is on record saying democracy is a poor political system for fighting global warming. Communist China, she says, is the best model.

Actions by Geologists to Counter the IPCC Narrative

The most glaring aspect of the catastrophic global warming scare is its historic amnesia. That’s why many geologist are climate sceptics. They know about the geological history of climate change. One of

my own lectures is titled “*Four billion years of climate change*”. This gives a totally different perspective on global warming (and cooling).

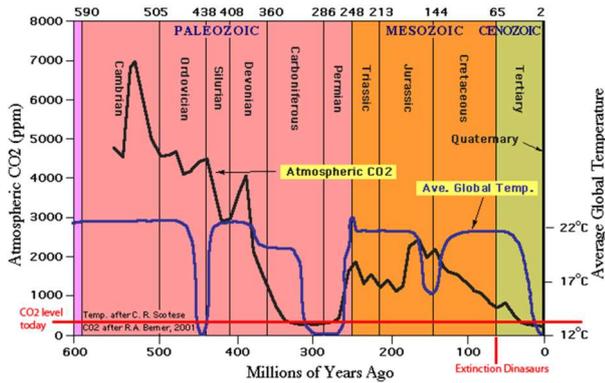


Figure 3. This graph shows atmospheric global temperature (blue line) and atmospheric CO₂ (black line) over the last 600 million years. It does not show any correlation between temperature and CO₂. These data are based on geological data and uncertainty increases further back in time. (Source: www.geocraft.com/WVFossils/Carboniferous_climate.html)

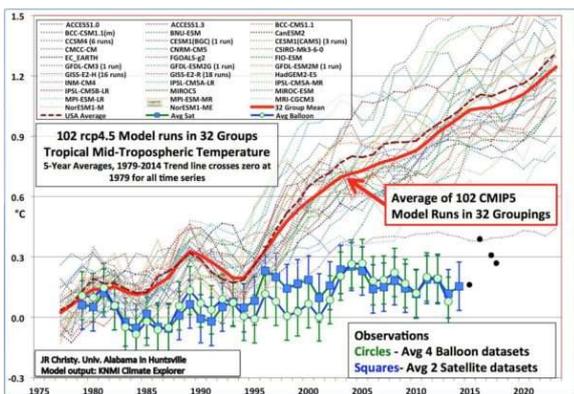


Figure 4. The IPCC narrative is almost exclusively based on non-validated computer models. This graph shows 102 models used by the IPCC and compared to actually observed temperature data from weather balloons and satellites (blue and green). (Source: J.R. Christy, University of Alabama in Huntsville)

Historically seen, the present minor warming is nothing unusual. Devries Klein in his Guam lecture³ used several illustrations similar to the ones I use. I will reproduce here two very important ones.

Many well-qualified geologists have joined the fight against the pseudo-science of the IPCC narrative. Professor George Devries Klein was one of them. But one of the most important and effective ones was the late Bob

Carter, professor of geology at James Cook University in Townsville, Australia. He was one of the co-authors of the publications by the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC), sponsored by CO₂ Science and the Heartland Institute. The NIPCC is an international panel of nongovernment scientists and scholars who have come together to present a comprehensive, authoritative, and realistic assessment of the science and economics of global warming, independent of ideology. Because it is not a government agency, and because its members are not predisposed to believe climate change is caused by human greenhouse gas emissions, NIPCC is able to offer an independent “second opinion” of the evidence reviewed – or not reviewed – by the IPCC on the issue of global warming.

Their first publication, *Nature, not human activity, rules the climate* was published in 2008. Their latest important publications are titled *Climate Change Reconsidered II*. So far, three major volumes have been published: *Physical Science* (2013), *Biological Impacts* (2014), and *Fossil Fuels – Benefits and Costs of Fossil Fuels* (2017). Apart from Professor Bob Carter, other lead authors of this series are Professor S. Fred Singer and Dr Craig D. Idso. Professor Carter also published two climate-change-critical books, titled *Climate: the Counter Consensus* and *Taxing Air – Facts & Fallacies about Climate Change*.

One of the most active critics of the IPCC narrative is the prominent Australian geology professor Ian Plimer. So far he has published five critical books. The two most important ones are *Heaven & Earth*¹¹ and *Climate change delusion and the great electricity rip-off*.

Because we have knowledge about the climate history of Earth, and because we adhere to the scientific method developed during the Enlightenment, geologists have a duty to critically analyse the climate science as being promoted by the followers of the IPCC narrative.

About the Author

Dr Gerrit van der Lingen studied geology at Utrecht University in The

Netherlands. He did his PhD on an area in the Spanish Pyrenees. His first job was in Surinam in South America, where he worked in Amazon jungle for three years. In 1965 he came to New Zealand to join the Sedimentology Laboratory of the NZ Geological Survey. He was a Council Member of the *International Association of Sedimentologists* from 1971 to 1978, and an Editorial Board Member for the journal *Sedimentary Geology* from 1972 to 1982. He took part in expeditions Legs 21 (1971) and 30 (1973) of the Deep Sea Drilling project on board the *Glomar Challenger*. Since 1990 he worked as a private consultant and was a Research Associate at the University of Canterbury. From 1991 till 2002 he was involved in paleoclimate research, studying ocean sediment cores from the Tasman Sea and Southern Ocean. In 1998 he took part in an expedition to the Tasman Sea and Southern Ocean on board the German research vessel *Sonne*. He retired from paid research nine years ago, but remains active as a man-made-global warming agnostic, giving lectures and writing articles. He is a foundation member of the New Zealand Climate Science Coalition.

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