



African Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

The Climate Change Discourse from a Critical Perspective

Odozor, U.S.^{1*} and Akintona, E.O.²

¹Philosophy Unit, Institute of Communication and General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. E-mail: odozorus@funaab.edu.ng

²Philosophy Unit, Institute of Communication and General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. E-mail: akintonaeo@funaab.edu.ng

Article Info

Volume 6, Issue 1, February 2026

Received : 12 June 2025

Accepted : 13 December 2025

Published : 25 February 2026

doi: [10.51483/AFJHSS.6.1.2026.45-56](https://doi.org/10.51483/AFJHSS.6.1.2026.45-56)

Abstract

For decades, climate change discourse has increasingly polarized scientists, bureaucrats and different interest groups. While scientists assert that climate change is anthropogenic, some stakeholders express skepticism on both the nature and the extent of climate change. Albeit, the politicization and undue monetization of recent science, with data falsification and manipulation incidents by unscrupulous researchers in some top universities across the world, not only worsen public incredulity, but make it evident that climate change skepticism cannot be lightly dismissed. Using the critical analytic method, this paper examined the scientific, political, and ethical dimensions of climate discourse. It also reviewed the bureaucratic origins of climate change skepticism, including the role of interest groups and the resultant spread of misleading information. The human angle and ethical implications of climate change fanaticism, including the potential consequences for vulnerable populations across Africa were highlighted. Data for this research were acquired from library and archival materials, and subjected to philosophical analysis. Given that climate mitigation would never be attained by the sole effort of climate scientists and activists, the paper argues for a nuanced and inclusive public enlightenment on climate change that acknowledges both the scientific consensus and the human angle of this debate, as any call for action that treats the human organism like an accident of nature would only further heighten the tension and fan the embers of skepticism.

Keywords: *Climate change, Climate fanaticism, Science, Skepticism, Politics*

© 2026 Odozor, U.S. and Akintona, E.O. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

1. Introduction: Overview of Climate Change and its Significance

Climate is classically depicted as the average weather (atmospheric) conditions—temperature and precipitation—of any location on earth's surface over a long period of time ([National Curriculum Development](#)

* Corresponding author: Odozor, U.S., Philosophy Unit, Institute of Communication and General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. E-mail: odozorus@funaab.edu.ng

Centre [NCDC] Uganda, 2020), ranging from months to thousands, or millions, of years (Peters *et al.*, 2020). According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), 30 years is standard time period for determining average weather condition (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2019, in press). This indicates that climate is localized; that is, climate is an insignia that locates or identifies countries, regions, sub-regions, and entire continents, in terms of geography, economy and social and cultural existence. For example, phrases like “arid desert” and “desert heat” bring to mind places like the Sahara/ Kalahari and the Arabian Peninsula; “temperate” refers to European climate; “semi-arid” climate is low-rainfall environments in southern Africa, Australia and Asia; “tropical /Equatorial” is associated with the warmth of West Africa and surroundings; while “polar” is linked to the extreme cold and ice sheets of the Antarctica. Climate both affects and even determines factors ranging from the local culture, to food and its availability in the immediate environment, commerce, the social environment, agro-investment, industry, trade route, and disease(s). Essentially, climate makes people who they are in the world, by enabling the identification of every particular location and people on the surface of the earth. Thus, climate has direct consequences for human existence: Its fluctuation immediately renders everything else uncertain; a business entrepreneur investing abroad not only understudies the social and cultural conditions of the host country and the availability of raw materials, but also looks out for a perfect climate in which production and productivity are both guaranteed; and, before making the necessary travel arrangements, a tourist must obtain a first-hand assessment of the climate of the intending tourism destination.

If climate gives human beings their very identity, then its sudden variation has grim consequences for the environment and human survival. To this end, an overwhelming amount of scientific data today have amply demonstrated that there are, indeed, “long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns” across the globe (United Nations, n.d.). This phenomenon, widely recognized as *climate change*, has, over the past decades, led to heated controversy over whether, and the extent to which, human activity is responsible for the steady rising global temperature, especially in the wake of the European Industrial Revolution (Turczyński, 2021). Climate change is viewed from the perspective of temperature rise across the globe. Like *Global Warming* (GW), it is typically portrayed as an increase in temperature of the atmosphere near Earth’s surface. So, global warming is climate change effect on a global scale; which essentially entails that the earth is warming up mainly due to human activity and inactivity (IPCC, 2019; Seneviratne *et al.*, 2021; Carvalho, 2024).

The chasm created by climate change discussion has on one side climate scientists and activists who warn that industrial activities are causing Earth’s temperature to rise steeply. On the other side are skeptics from every walk of life who, owing to the mistrust and incredulity occasioned by the perceived politicization and monetization of recent science, for example, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, big pharmacy, and the gender dysphoria disputes, view the climate change narrative as another programme of some powerful donors and financiers with clandestine agenda (Tam and Chan, 2023). Powell (2017) found a flat 100% consensus among world’s top scientists after a critical study of 11,602 peer-reviewed articles examining anthropogenic climate change. In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) describes climate change as “the single biggest health threat facing humanity” in the 21st century. Yet, the *Center for American Progress* research team recently uncovered that 139 elected officials of the recently concluded 117th Congress of the United States did not endorse or express concerns about the scientific validity of human-driven climate change (Drennen and Hardin, 2021; Smith, 2024). Also, a recent report released by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication found that only 61% of Americans believe that “global warming is mostly human-caused” (Smith, 2024, p.1). The aim of this paper is to review and critically assess this debate, highlight the reasons why little progress has been made so far, and promote mutual respect and cooperation of interested parties in the achievement of climate goals, with a view to closing the gulf between climate activists and skeptics.

2. Brief History of Climate Change Politics

Climate change politics and bureaucracy in the United States does not require much scholarly effort to show why fossil fuel still ranks as the highest source of energy in the country. For the sake of brevity, this section of the paper relies on Clark’s (2023a) synthesis based on two sources: Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway’s 2010 book, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues From Tobacco Smoke to Global*

Warming; and Nathaniel Rich and George Steinmetz's 2018 *New York Times* article: "Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change." The story of climate change dispute in the United States is the quintessential definition of bureaucratic deadlock, with scientists, politicians, and their supporters on either side of the divide. The United States is particularly of interest in this discussion, because of its strategic position in world affairs: what happens in the U.S. influences, and trickles down to, other parts of the world in a very usual way. For the same reason, the United States is also well positioned to lead the rest of the world in climate change mitigation, if only it has the political will to cut back on the consumption of fossil fuel. Although climate science is traceable to the discovery of carbon in 1757, the climate change phenomenon apparently began to find its way into social consciousness, at least within the scientific community, about two hundred years later with the publication of Revelle and Suess' (1957) paper entitled "Carbon Dioxide Exchange between Atmosphere and Ocean and the Question of an Increase of Atmospheric CO₂ During the Past Decades" in 1957 (Clark, 2023a). Early in the 1970 decade, further work on the subject of climate change by the physicist and mathematician, James Hansen, clearly identified three factors as being responsible for heating up the earth: increasing concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide from fossil energy, solar radiations, and volcanic activities. In 1979, Jimmy Carter became the first U.S. president to express interest in determining the extent of scientific consensus on the subject of climate change. A committee led by the climatologist Jule Charney and James Hansen met in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. It drew up its report, "Carbon Dioxide and Climate: A Scientific Assessment," warning about an average of 3 °C warming across the globe by 2035, if no decisive preemptive action was taken to stem the tide of carbon emission through government policy directive. The next year, another meeting took place in St. Pete's Beach, Florida, to make policy recommendations for the government to address this problem. However, the committee could not accomplish its objective, due to disagreements over the appropriate clause with which to draft the core message of the policy document.

When Ronald Reagan replaced Carter as president, he began by cutting in half the work force of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); next, he put aside an update report on fossil fuel put together by the national Council on Environmental Quality (COEQ), and even considered disbanding the council. Reagan also increased coal production and deregulated surface coal mining. In 1983, another document ("Changing Climate: Report of the Carbon Dioxide Assessment Committee") was issued by the William Nierenberg committee, confirming all the scientific findings of the 1979 report. This time, it took only two economists to override the recommendations of five scientists. Again, it was a futile effort that ignored the science and rather upheld the economics. But the report was grabbed by the Reagan administration as a policy document. Two years later, the conference of United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization scientists sat in Villach, Austria. However, with the cold war (the ideological struggle with Russia) raging, it seemed that climate action policies were destined for failure *ab initio*: any policy suggestion of government control of environmental resources and means of production in the West was viewed as *socialism*—a slippery slope into communism. For decades, books like Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* (originally published in 1962) had driven the free market philosophy deep into the American consciousness, portraying it as a *sine qua non* for political freedom. Thus, neither the senate hearings arranged by Al Gore and James Hansen in 1984 and beyond, nor the 1987 maiden North American conference on "Preparing for Climate Change" held in Washington D.C., with politicians, industry experts and scientists in full attendance, produced much result in subsequent years. In the 1980 decade, there were also scientists, such as those at the George C. Marshall Institute (GMI) for Better Public Policy in Arlington, Virginia, William Nierenberg himself, and others that worked in fossil industries, who took express advantage of government ambivalence to scale up confusion and misinformation, and instead cited "the uncertainty" of climate change science (Clark, 2023a).

George Bush became president after some talk about being an environmentalist on campaign trails, pointedly pledging to bring "the White House effect" to bear on "the greenhouse effect" (cited in Clark, 2023a, 29.05). In reality, whatever the intentions might be, or however genuine they were, the Bush administration's Achilles' heel was his bureaucrat chief of staff, John Sununu, who had a reputation for paying lip service to climate action, even as he sent representatives for the United States to every major climate summit across the world. Things got to a head on one occasion when United States delegates were pointedly accosted by their counterparts from other leading countries of the world for purposefully being the cog in the wheel of climate progress. Summarily, Sununu summoned a meeting of the senior staff of the Bush administration and warned them severely to desist from further public engagement of the subject. Although Republican administrations have

been stereotyped as the frontrunners of climate bureaucracy, the fact that climate inaction largely persists today suggests that even the Democratic administrations and candidates have basically done only a little more than their Republican counterparts, except deliver long flowery speeches and political rhetoric that, in the end, merely succeeded in making the climate noise louder and psychologically better.

For example, in 2006, Al Gore released his famous climate change documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, for which he was recognized the following year with a Nobel Peace Prize. Gore's work came under heavy criticism, because, even today, and with the benefit of hindsight, some of the fundamental claims and predictions he made in the video either did not come to pass as and when due, and to the degree predicted, as they were unduly exaggerated, or they were found to be flatly untrue. Above all, Gore apparently made the issue more about himself and his political interest than about all the raw facts of the science considered together, including the apparently recalcitrant ones (Clark, 2023b). According to critics, the documentary shrewdly cast Republican politicians and climate change critics in bad light, while portraying anyone who hopped on the climate change bandwagon on the basis of ideological *esprit de corps*, many of whom were Democrats—Gore's party—as being the truly morally good, scientifically minded and progressive people in the world. Albeit, with or without the Republican politicians, fossil fuel burning remains a veritable source of energy in the United States, even as green energy continues to evolve. In climate change controversy, therefore, there are saints and sinners on both sides, including scientists, politicians and the regular, well-educated members of the general public.

3. Discussion: Failed Predictions and Sentimentalism

While some of the claims made by climate scientists and enthusiasts make sense and have, indeed, come to pass, others have failed flatly. For example, in the 1990s, it was widely proposed that many islands in the Pacific would be completely submerged by 2010; that Greenland would be defrosted outright, and that polar bears would drown out (Clark, 2023b, 4:00). This understanding of 'submersion' clearly involved the idea that such cities or countries would have ceased to exist as geographical entities by that year. However, although Greenland was already defrosting even at the time the predictions were made, it is still in place today, and polar bears are thriving, and in many instances, cities and locations close to sea level basically experience annual high and low tides. The water rises during high tides, and recedes in low tides. These communities respond accordingly by evacuating temporarily to higher grounds, and returning to base with the ebbing of the tides. This is simple biological adaptation, found in various shades and degrees wherever there are biological organisms; it is how coastline communities have lived for thousands of years. This realization inclined critics to suppose that climate advocacy is all about hyping and exaggeration, giving the entire enterprise of climate science an air of promoting clandestine social and political agenda or ideology, with the tacit slogan: "if you agree with me, you are a morally sound and scientifically minded person; otherwise, you are evil, wicked and dim-witted" (Peterson, 2022, 59:45). However, this objection does not have much force. It is not within reason to expect that all predictions in science would come to pass with mathematical precision; if they do, then it is no longer science, but divine revelation, or soothsaying. Scientific predictions can only be reasonably expected to approximate future outcomes fairly accurately, not fit them with logical exactitude.

The climate change discourse has seen so much name-calling on both sides, to the point of antagonism (Tam and Chan, 2023), as though those who express skepticism about climate change were dull-brained and incapable of exercising the faculty of reason and unable to understand science. People who raise critical objections to the excesses of climate change enthusiasm and fanaticism and draw attention to recalcitrant data of experience are lightly and provocatively dismissed as "climate change deniers" who are out to promote some dark capitalist agenda against the progress of science and progressive thought. Be that as it may, many of the people who express incredulity about climate change do so from lack of adequate information, or novelty of the subject, and not necessarily because of any particular ideological leaning. They are regular citizens who are far from being bureaucrats or politicians. Again, by casting climate change critics as being in the same moral boat with "Nazi holocaust denial," many climate change activists betray the attitude of blackmail and overzealousness, thereby doing an even greater disservice to their enterprise and human wellbeing (Peterson, 2022). The skeptics return the "favor" by dubbing climate action advocates "alarmists". In the end, this chaotic

state of affairs serves no one's ultimate interest, except that of the bourgeois class, because the perennial lack of government intervention and ineffectual communication of knowledge on climate change only prolong the unbridled exploitation of natural resources and resort to fossil energy by the wealthy. It behooves the scientific community to quit behaving like politicians and focus on harmonizing all legitimate objections into a logically coherent scientific system of explanation. In other words, climate experts must tackle these objections head on; but they must do so intellectually by providing credible answers to legitimate objections, rather than simply aiming to discredit dissenting voices, as people do in political rivalry.

4. Conflation of Climate Variation and Environmental Disaster

Climate change debate has sometimes seen a sort of conflation of climate variation and environmental degradation. That is, the debate sometimes apparently confuses climate issues with basic issues of the physical environment, in the extant climate change literature. Which one is it precisely? Some human activities and inactivity cause environmental problems, and yet have nothing to do with climate change, even remotely. For example, some of the flood problems in Nigeria are caused by factors ranging from lack of infrastructure to reckless refuse disposal, and construction of permanent structures that constitute obstruction to the natural course of flowing water during heavy rains (Echendu, 2023; Ottuh, 2018; *The Punch Nigeria*, 2011). So, the water flows outwards into the surrounding, low-lying areas as floods into homes and premises. In Lagos, population explosion and the accompanying housing deficit act as direct catalysts in this regard. However, it is noteworthy that the floods quickly dissipate after each rainy season, as communities hasten back to normal life (Ndimele et al., 2024). This not only demonstrates the difference between environmental issues and climate change, it also shows that some human activities affect the immediate environment without necessarily having a direct consequence for climate variation.

In truth, what happens in the environment affects the weather, since the atmosphere is a critical part of the physical environment; but there is, at least a tacit difference between the immediate land area in the environment around the home, and the skies above. There is likewise a distinction between environmental pollution and natural disasters, for example, and weather fluctuation or climate variation. Both are not the same in scope and conception. This conflation in literature somewhat engenders the awkward impression that climate activists were grasping at every conceivable factor they could lay hands on, including those factors that have nothing to do with climate change. This should not be so; rather, the necessary conceptual distinctions must always accompany discussions in this regard, to enable stakeholders on each side see clearly through the entire spectrum of discourse; to shut down all avenues for misinformation, and dispel all rumours, mistrust and doubts.

5. Nature Fanaticism and Simultaneous Contempt for Human Accomplishments

Essentially, climate change enthusiasts and crusaders apparently treat all human accomplishments since the Industrial Revolution with levity and regard them with what amounts to contempt, as though these accomplishments had not put the human civilization in a better stead both scientifically and technologically than it would have been today, or ever before. For example, in his *Los Angeles Times* review of McKibben's book, *The End of Nature*, Graber (1989, par. 11-12) avers that:

They [nonhuman natural species] have intrinsic value, more value—to me—than another human body, or a billion of them. Human happiness, and certainly human fecundity, are not as important as a wild and healthy planet.

Dixon (1996: 12) echoes a similar biocentrist outlook:

It is only through the perspective of human experience that such [natural] occurrences are demonised and take on the mantle of disasters. Just as there are no such things as pests—only animals that get in the way of human society—and just as weeds are merely plants growing in the wrong place—from the human point of view—so natural disasters are geological, oceanographic or meteorological occurrences that happen to cause widespread disruption to humans.

With the belief of some climate hardliners that human existence and impact on nature is intrinsically evil, clearly, climate overzealousness has attained the status of fanaticism, like a cult of nature worship and, in the

estimate of some astute observers, bland terrorism (Peterson, 2022). Again, Graber (1989) expresses the following anti-human sentiment:

McKibben is a biocentrist, and so am I. We are not interested in the utility of a particular species, or free-flowing river, or ecosystem, to mankind. ... I know social scientists who remind me that people are part of nature, but it isn't true. Somewhere along the line—at about a billion years ago, maybe half that—we quit the contract and became a cancer. We have become a plague upon ourselves and upon the Earth. It is cosmically unlikely that the developed world will choose to end its orgy of fossil-energy consumption, and the Third World its suicidal consumption of landscape. Until such time as Homo sapiens should decide to rejoin nature, some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along (par.11-13; my emphasis).

How long does this mass extermination of the existing global human populations entail? Suppose, indeed, the human species were to be removed from the planet today, where would the future generations whose interest current climate crusade presumably aims to protect ultimately come from? Who will give birth to them? These questions are not trivial, because one brute fact climate extremists like Graber fail to realize or do not care about is that humans, whatever their population today, are squarely here now; and what are climate crusaders going to do about that fact, supposing the awaited virus fails to show up naturally for another century or two, even as Earth's heat continues in the upward trajectory? Are they proposing to lend nature a little helping hand, to achieve the downsizing purportedly needed for a greener earth?

To the critic, therefore, it seems evident that climate extremists—the self-acclaimed lovers of nature—are apparently not interested in biological diversity (Wilson, 1992), or life on planet Earth in its fullness (Attenborough, 1979), but in an earth with no humans. To the climate enthusiast, humans are “a cancer” (Peterson, 2022, 48: 30); humans are evil by default merely for existing and toiling for daily bread, even when the majority of people on the planet do not deplete the ozone atmosphere. For climate science critics in the humanities, however, science must have human wellbeing and progress at its core, and must not be anti-human; and saying this need not commit one to denying the intrinsic value of the nonhuman elements of nature. Neither does saying that science should have human wellbeing in view constitute a commitment to the age-old supposition of the ancient Greek philosophers that “man is the measure of all things” (Stumpf, 1994, p.32). There is logical incongruity in treating the rational human organism with disdain and, at the same time, claiming to love nonhuman nature by replacing humans with it. The activities of nature are typically uncoordinated and sporadic, rather than deliberate and calculated, as are those of humans (Odozor, 2015). Nature is mindless and follows its course to the end, even where human wellbeing is severely threatened (Dixon, 1996; Friedman, 2009). Thus, no amount of anthropomorphic attributes heaped on nature could serve as logical basis for treating nature as a rationally conscious entity, and humans, as an appendage of it that can be pruned off just so nature may be improved.

It is in this way that climate change fanatics create an unnecessary dichotomy that basically leaves humanity dangling between life as currently constituted with its sophisticated scientific breakthroughs and modern technological advancement, on the one hand, and life with cooler climate but devoid of modern technology, on the other hand. Once again, this is both gratuitous and disingenuous. Without the progress that has been recorded in the past two hundred years in the natural sciences and technology, it seems that even climate science itself would not get off the ground; at least, it would not attain its current level of intellectual sophistication, but would rather be at a rudimentary level of engagement. It is entirely possible to harness current scientific knowledge in understanding the climate and dealing with its issues frontally today. No doubt, the contemporary advancement of modern technology and industrialization has given climate science the concomitant advanced equipment with which to access and collect relevant reliable data, analyze the data, and project its findings into the future.

Of course, this is far from suggesting that climate scientists should not draw attention to the excesses of the Industrial Revolution, particularly the subsequent consumerist philosophy trailing it, and its adverse effects on the environment. But doing so should not foreclose the brute fact, or even the possibility, that the Industrial Revolution has brought with it indelible accomplishments that have led to good human values and general wellbeing. This is a truism that cannot be easily wished away to accommodate climate concerns and advocacy without, at the same time, doing away with the scientific and technological gains of the past two hundred years, or even more.

Energy is, by definition, the ability to get work done; and it is through industry that human life derives its essence and purpose; through the consumption of energy, poverty and human misery are eradicated to a very considerable extent. Thus, all the talk about climate change essentially boils down to one thing: the downplaying of the merits of fossil fuel energy, by means of which human civilization has been able to reach its current state of intellectual and technological innovation. The idea that the human wellbeing and progress of today should be shelved, or put on hold, for the human wellbeing of some distant future, as laudable as it sounds, can hardly go without raising even more legitimate, cogent questions about elimination of poverty. It is the human beings of today that must give birth to other humans, who will, in turn, engender the humans of the future in question here. Future wellbeing begins now and squarely rests on that of today. More so, human progress and accomplishments do not perish with each generation; and neither would that of today perish with the contemporary humanity. For example, the gains of the Industrial Revolution did not perish with the 19th century, but has lived on as legacy to all subsequent generations as the basis of all future human accomplishments in science and technology. So, at the very least, some balance should be struck: for just as the wellbeing of future generations ought not to be squandered or jeopardized for today's greed, so should that of contemporary civilization will not be sacrificed in the name of protecting a future that is already dangerously threatened by climate fanaticism, with the possibility of some cosmic process snowballing into a cataclysm capable of wiping out all life on earth even before that future arrives, as has happened before ([Shkolenko, 1987](#)). Meanwhile, cataclysms are, by definition, far beyond all human determination or control.

6. Is Africa Economically Ready?

Where is Africa in all of this? Western nations can afford to debate climate change, whether or not industrialization may be halted to save the planet, because they have exploited the earth enough to their own benefit. They have been able to scale the hurdle of poverty and basic infrastructure, and elevated the standard of living of the person on the street, including that of aliens in their lands. The singular reason life is good in the Western society is that they have been able to industrialize at a commercial scale, thereby attracting massive economic returns for their efforts. Today, even China that was not so successful in this regard a few decades ago, has joined the fray fossil fuel consumers, after embarking on massive industrialization process that now makes the country the economic hub of the 21st century, at least from the point of view of science and technology. Accordingly, what all the developed nations in the world have in common is that they all attained economic prosperity through massive industrialization, with no singular exception. Even the raw materials they all depend on Africa for are carted away to billion-dollar industries back in their home countries to create jobs and eliminate poverty. With the wealth they have accumulated over the past one and a half century, it is not unreasonable to expect that these large economies may be able to absorb the shock of temporary take-off delay of revenue inflow that comes with switching over to green, renewable energy. With Africa still steeped in endemic poverty and largely unable to solve the basic human essentials of food and shelter, however, it seems that the hope, if it actually existed, of climbing higher on the global economic ladder may be stuck in the pipeline for ever. For even with her abundance of natural resources, Africa's lack of broad industrial base remains the greatest challenge to the realization of economic stabilization and progress. So, the cogent question is, to what extent is Africa actually properly positioned to hop on the bandwagon of climate change activism, particularly given the fact that Africa has contributed rather little to the current greenhouse distress?

One foreseeable source of hope, though, is if only the African leadership is left to manage the continent's own resources, and that it is able to do so creditably, without undue interference from the superpowers. However, Africa's ability to key properly into the climate change discourse requires a lot of groundbreaking research and innovative thinking. In all, instead of thinking in the direction of global genocide, one practical solution is that when people are lifted out of poverty through gainful employment that goes with social development and progress, even as those terms are understood today, humans are in a better position to enlighten themselves and their children through affordable education and requisite standard of living and are, thus, much better poised to appreciate the dangers of climate change, develop the requisite mindset, and key into the crusade. On the other hand, halting scientific and technological progress so as to "save nature" may, in the case of the developing world, produce the concomitant effect of entrenching poverty of both the mind and material resources, thus, diminishing the intellectual backbone needed to rein in climate ignorance in the first place ([Peterson, 2022](#)).

7. Other Sources of Climate Change Skepticism

Research fraud and data manipulation due to greed and over-ambition even among some scientists, as well as media hyping, sensationalism and exaggeration of scientific findings are important factors fueling climate change skepticism (Judo, 2023a; Judo, 2023b). Sometimes, even when these unethical practices are discovered and become public, some university managements are not in any haste to deal decisively with the infraction, for fear of losing the revenues the university earns through such scientists, coupled with the pressure to be among the topmost in the world. These factors erode public trust and confidence in scientists and their work, engendering conspiracy theories of different shades and sizes (Tam and Chan, 2023). On the one hand, the scramble for funding is a core element of career success in academia, because institutions of higher learning across the world largely depend on external funding to remain in business. Funding agencies, on the other hand, have entrenched, preconceived interests for parting with their money. As such, too much money, even when the funding eventually comes, can derail true, objective scientific work, turning it into a political weapon for manipulation and social engineering; and this is not an unreasonable fear from the climate skeptic's angle.

Consider, for example, the gender debate. Given the huge amount of money coming from those with vested interests and ideological agendum, contemporary scientists have found themselves laden with the unsavory prospect of revising our hitherto held basic convictions about the distinguishing biological features and characteristics of male and female genders (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Linstead and Pullen, 2006), apparently for fear of enkindling the wrath of people in the LGBTQ community, even going so far as to suggest that there are now suddenly more than two genders. By so doing, science becomes an ideological weapon that can be used to silence anyone who dares to express the belief that there are, indeed, two genders with distinguishing characteristics. A related factor is that nearly every contemporary natural scientist wants a piece of the action and even pontificates to the rest of the world on climate science. In truth, not all scientists are qualified to speak authoritatively on climate issues, because climate science is not co-extensive with natural science. Many scientists are like other well-educated members of the society when it comes to the climate. Nowadays, merely being a scientist makes one an authority on climate change and global warming.

8. Giving Climate Science and Advocacy a Human Face

Science is an on-going, open-minded enterprise, and must acknowledge all relevant facts, including the apparently recalcitrant facts, and put them into consideration. It must then provide the relevant, coherent, scientific explanation that is logically consistent with the raw data of experience, rather than starkly ignore new data that does not appear to fit a fixed narrative. This is what people do in politics; and that is why climate change science is treated with skepticism and even vehemently opposed in some circles. True science should be at the service of human wellbeing; any science that must consume human lives in order to make its case, or see the light of day, is pure, unbridled animism (Peterson, 2022). By definition, science is the attempt to comprehend the workings of the physical universe of human experience with the purpose of promoting and enhancing human knowledge and wellbeing: for when a person knows better, they are more probably inclined to live and do better. More so, human life is naturally and intrinsically constituted in such a way that it must survive and thrive in whatever circumstances it finds itself; and it must do so within the ambits of nature (Odozor, 2015). So, a timely distinction must be carefully drawn between what humans need—what they must take—from nature for survival and flourishing, and the insatiable greed of exploitative individuals who view nature simply as something that has been put there solely to satisfy human greed and appetite. Climate science, then, if it is to be worth anything at all, simply cannot afford to sideline basic human wellbeing, or to treat it as secondary. Rather, it must have the human element at its core, not merely for the future, but beginning from the present. In other words, climate science and advocacy must be given a human face, or it should be ready to be inundated with even more criticism from researchers in the humanities, who will not hesitate to call it out as an anti-human enterprise, and with good a reason, namely, that true science must, in the end, protect and serve basic human wellbeing.

Some climate scientists and climate change action advocates are easily disturbed and even emotionally provoked by skepticism, apparently because their work in this field endows them with the vantage point from which to view the stark reality of climate variation—an advantage that those with dissenting viewpoints do not possess in immediacy. However, this emotional pushback at skeptics is rather surprising, because skepticism

has been a vital part of scientific research and knowledge acquisition in every other field of discourse. In fact, the history of thought is thoroughly dotted with skepticism; for over two and a half millennia, philosophers have had to deal with skepticism at every single turn, to the very point that skepticism and cynicism have become normal phenomena that are even expected (Stumpf, 1994). Skepticism and cynicism are essential elements of knowledge acquisition and dissemination, without which progress would be impossible. This is the very meaning of scholarship, in which every issue and knowledge claim is carefully scrutinized and critically analyzed, bit by bit, through the use of arguments, to test the knowledge in the crucible, so that it comes out as reliable in the end. So, climate researchers do not need to be worried about being challenged.

To this end, it is important to realize that the controversy in climate change discussion is not a new thing in the history of science, but is, in fact, second name to scientific breakthroughs and knowledge claims. For example, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection also put a deep chasm between naturalist thinkers and those at the theistic end of the divide (Pharoah *et al.*, 2009). The former are those who, following Darwin, ardently believe that the physical and moral orders are products of pure chance and accident with no bearing towards any purpose, intelligence or design, and so, can be absolutely explained without appeal to supernatural interventions (Dennett, 1995; Huxley, 1893; Joyce, 2006; Peterson, 2017; Ruse and Wilson, 2006; Wilson, 1975). Others are those who either dismiss Darwin's idea outright as being internally logically inconsistent, or accept the possibility of micro-evolutionary adaptation of organisms, while utterly rejecting macro-evolution as lacking in basic evidence (Behe, 1996). The evolutionary debate is known as the naturalist-intelligent design controversy; and it has been going on since Darwin (Lewens, 2007).

While climate activists sometimes tend towards downplaying recalcitrant data, climate change skeptics go to the opposite end of the spectrum: they cherry-pick the available data on climate science and take some of the research findings out of context. Then, they launch a frontal attack against both the messenger and the message. True science is based on facts, and is no respecter of persons, emotions and political leanings. Yet, the claims of climate research are based, to a large extent, on scientific data. No scientist worth the name would put their reputation and accomplishment on the line, merely to score a few, short-lived political goals. Those who did so live in infamy. In the final analysis, climate science and crusade should not come across as being merely about doomsday prediction; beyond that, focus must be on figuring out how climate stability can be achieved for the future without necessarily sacrificing current human wellbeing. Regardless of the provocation, climate scientists and climate action advocates must resist all temptations to being adversarial towards the general public, especially members of the public who appear to express reservations about climate change. Skepticism is the natural first human reaction to novel ideas. As such, human beings express doubts all the time about all kinds of things, especially novel ideas. Climate experts must, thus, continue to accord their work all the professionalism it necessitates, and leave politics to politicians.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Climate science and advocacy must be given a human face; and no exaggeration, alarmism, manipulation, or hyping is necessary, because evidence for anthropogenic climate change abounds and speaks for itself. Thus, it is the responsibility of climate scientists and activists to do science, and to communicate their findings appropriately without emotions. For as long as they confine themselves to finding and revealing the riches of nature, furnishing society with specific roadmap on climate change mitigation, scientists and advocates will shut down all windows of public distrust and skepticism, and ultimately meet their set objective. As for politicians, they will come to office and leave at the end of their tenure in four or eight years cycles; but the truths of science, once firmly established, are eternal. In the end, no one is immune enough to be able to escape climate catastrophe; and the ability to reverse the effects of climate change squarely depends on all hands being on deck (Turczyński, 2021). That is, climate change cannot be reversed by the singular effort of climate scientists and activists. So, a heavy dose of diplomacy is required in this advocacy to win over the skeptics, who must see sincerity of purpose in the efforts of scientists and climate action advocates. For example, studies such as that of Wang *et al.* (2018) suggest that when scientists and advocates incorporate the things that people care about in climate change communications, they are more likely to draw people in emotionally. The call for action against climate change is stark a reminder that humans have a responsibility to Earth. It is a call to discipline, which could enhance economic stability in the long run, if well-articulated in the developing parts

of the world, like Africa. On a general note, human beings have the duty to reflect on the consequences of their conduct, as moral agents. Such is the essence of Socrates' notable injunction that: "An unexamined life is not worth living" (Sullivan, 1964, p.5). For as long as moral issues like anthropogenic climate change challenges and threatens human wellbeing and corporate existence, Socrates' advice remains relevant by resounding in every subsequent human generation down the centuries; and it will resound onto the tail end of human race.

References

- Attenborough, D. (1979). *Life on Earth: A Natural History*. Collins.
- Behe, M.J. (1996). *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. Free Press.
- Carvalho, K. (2024). *Desertification: Causes, Effects, and Solutions*. *Earth.org*. Retrieved February 18, 2025, from <https://earth.org/what-is-desertification/>
- Clark, S. (2023a). *Global Warming: The Decade We Lost Earth*. YouTube Documentary Synthesis of Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway (2010), *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*, Bloomsbury Press, New York.
- Clark, S. (2023b). *The Many Errors of an Inconvenient Truth*. YouTube Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxiHzjH-ulo&t=135s>
- Dennett, D. (1995). *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*. Simon & Schuster.
- Dixon, D. (1996). *The Earth, its Wonders, its Secrets: Natural Disasters*. Reader's Digest Association.
- Drennen, A. and Hardin, S. (2021). *Climate Deniers in the 117th Congress*. *Center for American Progress*, March 30. Retrieved October 20, 2024, from <https://www.Americanprogress.Org/Article/Climate-Deniers-117th-Congress/>
- Echendu, A.J. (2023). *Human Factors vs. Climate Change: Experts' View of Drivers of Flooding in Nigeria*. *Natural Hazards Research*, 3, 240-246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nhres.2023.04.002>
- Eckert, P. and McConnell-Ginet, S. (2003). *Language and Gender*. Cambridge University Press.
- Friedman, T.L. (2009). *Mother Nature's Dow*. *New York Times*, March 28. Retrieved March 2, 2018, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/opinion/29friedman.html?th&emc=th>
- Graber, D.M. (1989). *Mother Nature as a Hothouse Flower: The End of Nature*. by Bill McKibben (Ed.), *Los Angeles Times*, October 22. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-10-22-bk-726-story.html>
- Huxley, T.H. (1893 / 1896). *Evolution and Ethics*. *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*, 79-83, Appleton.
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2019). *Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*. Shukla, P.R. et al. (Eds.), In Press. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>
- Joyce, R. (2006). *The Evolution of Morality*. MIT Press.
- Judo, P. (2023a). *Academia is Broken: Harvard Fake Data Scandal*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2Tm3Yx4HWI&t=256s>
- Judo, P. (2023b). *Academia is Broken: Stanford President Scandal Explained*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHfVZ5rvxqA>
- Lewens, T. (2007). *Darwin*. Routledge, New York.
- Linstead, S. and Pullen, A. (2006). *Gender as Multiplicity: Desire, Displacement, Difference and Dispersion*. *Human Relations*, 59(9), 1287-1310. doi: 10.1177/0018726706069772.
- Nathaniel Rich and George Steinmetz (2018). *Losing Earth: The Decade We almost Stopped Climate Change*. *The New York Times*, August 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvGQMZFP9IA&t=829s>

- National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) Uganda. (2020). *Geography Textbook*. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://schoolplannet.com/images/schools/tutorials/f74b750375c741f0c623c5d2b70f3eb7.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjXgMH1w8aMAxXIVkEAHYcxFckQFnoECBsQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3mS_7qDWbBUGAGQ7wUEN6u
- Ndimele, P.E., Ojewole, A.E., Mekuleyi, G.O., Badmos, L.A., Agosu, C.M., Olatunbosun, E.S., Lawal, O.O., Shittu, J.A., Joseph, O.O., Ositimehin, K.M., Ndimele, F.C., Ojewole, C.O., Abdulganiy, I.O. and Ayodele, O.T. (2024). *Vulnerability, Resilience and Adaptation of Lagos Coastal Communities to Flooding*. *Earth Science, Systems and Society*, 4, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/esss.2024.10087>
- Odozor, U.S. (2015). *Nature on Trial: A Philosophical Interrogation of G.C. Williams' 'Mother Nature is a Wicked Old Witch'*. *Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Arts*, 10, 54-68.
- Ottuh, J.A. (2018). *Climate Destabilization in a Religious World: The Role of Religion in Addressing Climate Change in Nigeria*. *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 19(1), 69-89. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v19i1.4>
- Peters, K., Dupar, M., Opitz-Stapleton, S., Lovell, E., Budimir, M., Brown, S. and Cao, Y. (2020). *Climate change, Conflict and Fragility: An Evidence Review and Recommendations for Research and Action*. *Overseas Development Institute & UK Department for International Development*. Retrieved March 5, 2025, from <https://odi.org/en/publications/climate-change-conflict-and-fragility-an-evidence-review-and-recommendations-for-research-and-action/>
- Peterson, J.B. (2022). *The Great Climate Con with Alex Epstein*. *YouTube Video*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDWq7-eP5sE>
- Peterson, M.L. (2017). *A Theological Evaluation of Evolutionary Ethics*. In Ruse, M. and Richards, R.J. (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Ethics*, 273-288, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316459409.020>
- Pharoah, R., Hale, T. and Rowe, B. (2009). *Doubting Darwin: Creationism and Evolution Scepticism in Britain Today*. Theos.
- Powell, J. (2017). *Scientists Reach 100% Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming*. *Bulletin of Science, Technology, Society*, 37(4), 183-184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467619886266>
- Revelle, R. and Suess, H. (1957). *Carbon Dioxide Exchange between Atmosphere and Ocean and the Question of an Increase of Atmospheric CO₂ During the Past Decades*. *Tellus*, 9, 18-27.
- Ruse, M. and Wilson, E.O. (2006). *Moral Philosophy as Applied Science*. In Sober, E. (Ed.), *Conceptual Issues in Evolutionary Biology*, 3rd Edition, 555-573, MIT Press.
- Seneviratne, S.I., Zhang, X., Adnan, M., Badi, W., Dereczynski, C., Di Luca, A., Ghosh, S., Iskandar, I., Kossin, J., Lewis, S., Otto, F., Pinto, I., Satoh, M., Vicente-Serrano, S.M., Wehner, M. and Zhou, B. (2021). *Weather and Climate Extreme Events in a Changing Climate*. In Masson-Delmotte, V. et al. (Eds.), *Climate Change 2021: The physical Science Basis Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 1513-1766, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157896.013>
- Shkolenko, Y. (1987). *The Space Age*. Progress.
- Smith, A. (2024). *Denial in the Anthropocene: Climate Change Beliefs and Self-Control*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, Ohio. Retrieved February 9, 2025, from http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=bgsu1710704438054409
- Stumpff, S.E. (1994). *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 5th Edition, McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Sullivan, D. (1964). *An Introduction to Philosophy*. Bruce.
- Tam, K. and Chan, H. (2023). *Conspiracy Theories and Climate Change: A Systematic Review*. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 91, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2023.102129>

The Punch Nigeria. (2011). Tuesday October 25, p.9.

Turczyński, R. (2021). The Effect of Climate Change on Future Common Security and Defence Policy Missions and Operations. *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces*, 53(4), 752-762. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0015.6178>

United Nations (UN). (n.d.). What is Climate Change?. Retrieved March 11, 2025, from <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>

Wang, S., Leviston, Z., Hurlstone, M., Lawrence, C. and Walker, I. (2018). Emotions Predict Policy Support: Why it Matters How People Feel about Climate Change. *Global Environmental Change*, 50, 25-40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.03.002>

Wilson, E.O. (1992). *The Diversity of Life*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Wilson, E.O. (1975). *Sociobiology: A New Synthesis*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

World Health Organization. (2023). Climate Change. Retrieved March 11, 2025, from <https://www.who.int/News-Room/Fact-Sheets/Detail/Climate-Change-And-Health>

Cite this article as: Odozor, U.S. and Akintona, E.O. (2026). The Climate Change Discourse from a Critical Perspective. *African Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(1), 45-56. <https://doi.org/10.51483/AFJHSS.6.1.2026.45-56>.