

The Climate Philosophy Newsletter

Volume 1 (2007)

“Our dependence on biological production remains absolute.”

George Monbiot

Office: Philosophy FAO 226, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620, USA+813-974-2454

Editor: Martin Schönfeld (email mschonfe@shell.cas.usf.edu)
Editorial Assistant: Christopher Kirby

Welcome!

Welcome to the inaugural *Climate Philosophy Newsletter*. This is an information forum concerning climate & philosophy. It will be mailed out in bimonthly intervals. Contents are created by subscribers. The items you send to climate-philosophy@mailman.acomp.usf.edu will be in the next installment of the newsletter.

There is also a need for real-time discussions, with individual threads of inquiry and debate. We’re setting up a site for this end. Just go to www.climatedynamics.net and register as a blogger. As soon as the site is up & running, everyone who wants to post on issues, comment on posts by others, and survey conversations, can do so on that site—and without the disadvantage of every single byte being sent out separately to every single subscriber’s inbox.

As a listserv subscriber, the only mail you will receive is the *Climate Philosophy Newsletter*.

I am deeply disturbed by the misinformation on the greenhouse effect, global warming, and climate change. Any contents related to this listserv shall be cognizant of the following four facts—even if this angers U.S. republicans, evangelicals, gas station owners, relativists, and Humeans: (1) Climate change is real. (2) It is bad. (3) We cause it. (4) It is now speeding up.

I suggest we regard the emerging reality of climate change as a philosophical opportunity. There was a time when optimistic *Aufklärer* and daring *philosophes* referred to their activity as “Weltweisheit” — *world wisdom*. Climate change obligates us, as their heirs, to live up to this enlightened promise of Philosophy. Our goal is to contribute to the advancement of **Climate Ethics**, and to the creation of **Philosophy of Climate**. What these words will mean depends entirely on what we’ll make of it. We’re all co-creators now. Shall we push the envelope?

Sincerely,

[Martin Schönfeld](#)

Thanksgiving 2007

Florida, on the Gulf of Mexico

PS: You can find the current academic network of the listserv [here](#).

Current Events—Call for Papers

The deadline is coming up this week — Friday, 30 November 2007.

A conference on [human flourishing and restoration in the age of global warming](#) will be held at [Clemson University](#) in North Carolina, USA, on 5-7 September 2008. Proposals consisting of a 500 word abstract are due on 30 November 2007. Papers based on the accepted proposals and to be read at the conference are due on 30 July 2008.

Submission details are [here](#).

Here is information about the [organizers](#), the [sponsors](#), and the invited [speakers](#).

Thanks to Allen Thompson (Clemson), Jeremy Bendik-Keymer (La Moyne College/American University of Sharjah), and Breena Holland (Lehigh University) for doing all this work.

Is there anyone else planning a workshop, a lecture, or a conference of similar relevance? Please let us know by sending information to climate-philosophy@mailman.acomp.usf.edu.

“Skeptical Environmentalist”—Critique of Clemson Bibliography

The Clemson conference organizers also provide a [bibliography](#). It has several sections: cost-benefit analysis & adaptation; domesticated nature; ecological restoration; environmental citizenship; environmental pragmatism; environmental virtue ethics; ethics of global warming; geoengineering; influential popular writing; nature & human flourishing; the IPCC Assessment Report IV; newspaper articles & other web links; non-human animals; relevant fiction; religion & environmentalism; suggestive philosophical sources; sustainability & future generations.

Very brief assessment of the Clemson bibliography: it’s a good start. On the philosophy side, there’s no section on Deep Ecology—that’s a lacuna. On the science side, there’s no section on Geophysics—nothing by Hanson, Lovelock, Flannery; nothing on the 2001 Amsterdam Declaration; and nothing on system self-regulation. To me, that’s a lacuna, too.

One possible problem with the bibliography is that it gives Bjørn Lomborg undue prominence. The organizers tried to be fair; they didn’t include his bogus book, *Skeptical Environmentalist* (Cambridge 2001), and instead linked to a testy [interview](#) by *Salon* (2007). But it needs to be stated that this sort of analytic skepticism, which Lomborg (University of Aarhus) represents, has been disclosed as entailing conclusions disavowed by the scientists whose work Lomborg summarizes. The scientists felt misrepresented. For John Rennie at *Scientific American*, “the book is a [failure](#)”. *Skeptical Environmentalist* was raked over the coals by that sober magazine; *Scientific American* 286.1 (Jan 2002): 61-71 contains a set of four scathing reviews, by Stephen Schneider (Biology: Stanford; “[fatally flawed](#)”; p. 63; “[a serious omission](#) for a respectable publisher such as Cambridge University Press”; p. 65); John P. Holdren (Environmental Science: Harvard; “giving skepticism—and statisticians—a [bad name](#)”; p. 67), John Bongaarts (U.S. National Academy of Sciences/Dutch Academy of Science; “[simplistic and misleading](#) calculation”; p. 68), and Thomas Lovejoy (World Bank/World Wildlife Fund; “Time and again I

sought to track references from the text to the footnotes to the bibliography to find but a [mirage in the desert](#)"; p. 71). Lomborg's reply, in *Scientific American* 286.5 (May 2002): 14-15, ends with, "I have made an [honest effort](#) to provide such an overview, based on science and with all the references clearly indicated," Rennie, *ibid.*, 15, charges that "by sowing distrust of the environmental science community with his rhetoric, Lomborg has done a severe disservice not only to those scientists but also to the public he has [misinformed](#)."

Regarding the intellectual integrity of environmental skepticism, here is the *Annual Report 2002* (60 pp.; pdf) of the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty (DSCD) at the Agency for Science, Technology, & Innovation of the Ministry of Science, Denmark, EU. Three complaints were filed 2002 at the DSCD against Lomborg (p. 3), "from natural scientists about scientific dishonesty displayed by a social scientist in the treatment of his topic" (p. 44). According to the *Annual Report 2005* (59 pp.; pdf), the DSCD ruled 2003 that Lomborg "acted at variance with good scientific practice" and that "the scientific message had been distorted to such an extent that the objective criteria for establishing scientific dishonesty had been met" (cf. *ibid.*, p. 27). Lomborg appealed to the Ministry of Science (MOS); the MOS ruled in 2003 to remit the case to the DSCD; Lomborg was acquitted since the *Skeptical Environmentalist* does not qualify, by MOS standards, as a science book, and so cannot be charged with scientific dishonesty (*ibid.*).

Please share with us recommendations or reviews of bibliographies and texts regarding Climate and Philosophy by sending them to climate-philosophy@mailman.acomp.usf.edu.

Current Information—IPCC

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its fourth Assessment Report (AR4) on 16 November 2007 in Valencia, Spain. Here are links to some texts.

1. Summary for Policymakers / *Synthesis Report* of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report ([draft](#), 16 November 2007; pdf file, 23 pp)
2. IPCC 2007: Summary for Policymakers, in: *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (pdf file, 18 pp)

Links to WG I "Physical Science Basis" (launched February 2007) documents are [here](#).

3. IPCC 2007: Summary for Policymakers: in *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the AR 4 of the IPCC (pdf file, 22 pp);

Links to WG II "Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability" (launched April 2007) docs are [here](#).

4. IPCC 2007: Summary for Policymakers, in: *Climate Change 2007: Mitigation*. Contribution of Working Group III to the AR 4 of the IPCC (pdf file, 24 pp)

Links to WG III "Mitigation of Climate Change" (launched May 2007) documents are [here](#).

If the UN servers are testy, try to go to [IPCC](#); click on "About IPCC"; in the drop-down menu, click on the Working Group (I, II, or III) whose findings interests you. The link to each group's research shows up in

boldface; clicking on it gets you to the table of contents of the full report. Summaries for policymakers follow front matter and precede technical summaries.

The Nobel Foundation posted a [speed read](#) (“two minute summary of this year’s award”) about the Nobel Peace Prize 2007 (½ to IPCC) titled *The Risk of Climate Change*.

Here’s a [post](#) on the *Climate Change Blog*, with links to newspaper articles in English, German, and French, and with a summary of the catastrophic highlights of the 16 Nov 07 UN Report. (Corrections to the post are welcome; please send email to mschonfe@shell.cas.usf.edu).

Are we missing information? Please share with us data on empirical news events relevant for Climate and Philosophy by sending them to climate-philosophy@mailman.acomp.usf.edu.

Forthcoming Publications by Listserv Subscribers

Ruth Irwin (University of Auckland, NZ) reports that *Heidegger, Politics, and Climate Change* will be published by Continuum in early 2008.

James Garvey (Royal Institute of Philosophy, UK) reports that *The Ethics of Climate Change: Right and Wrong in a Warming World (Think Now)* is forthcoming by Continuum 2008 as well.

What are you working on? Please share with us news about your forthcoming or recent articles, essays, chapters, reviews, books etc. pertaining to Climate and Philosophy by letting us know at climate-philosophy@mailman.acomp.usf.edu.

Future Journal—Request for Advisory Editors

It appears that those of us who examine climate change in ethical or policy terms can publish in existing venues. The same is arguably true for those of us who approach climate change via philosophy of science. But it appears that the conceptual relevance of climate change is broader than what is captured by ethics and philosophy of science. Meta-ethics comes to mind, and so do phenomenology, ontology, comparative thought, history of ideas, geography of cognition, and systems theory. Provided there are others who wish to explore climate along such new lines, should we create a journal, which may be called ***Philosophy of Climate***? Or is it still too early? Who’d be willing to serve on such a journal’s board as an advisory editor?

Kindly let me know at mschonfe@shell.cas.usf.edu

Thank you for your interest and attention.