

THE TRIUMPH OF DOUBLESPEAK

Despite over 20 years' of effort and four major Reports, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has not succeeded in providing any evidence that increases in greenhouse gases are having a measurable effect on the climate. Why is it, then, that so many people believe that they have done so. The answer lies in their subtle use of doublespeak, the technique of creating confusion by manipulation of language.. This newsletter shows how they have confused and twisted the meanings of words in such a way as to create triumph out of failure.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was signed by so many nations, including our own, started the whole thing off with this definition of "Climate Change", from Article 1 as follows:

"a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods"

They have suddenly changed the meaning of "climate change" which had previously not involved any particular cause, to one restricted only to its being "attributed" to direct or indirect human changes in atmospheric composition. This means that they do not have to prove that all changes in climate have this cause.. All they need to do is to get people to use the term "climate change", and they will suddenly discover that by saying these words they support the IPCC "attribution" whether they know it or not.

There does not need to be any actual evidence. All that is needed is for somebody. Such as an IPCC climate scientist, an environmental activist, a politician, or a journalist, to "attribute" it. The "attribution" does not even need to be "direct". "Indirect" can be as obscure as they chose it to be.

This device has been an outstanding success. Any "climate change" which is disapproved of, be it a heat wave, cold spell, flood, drought, or hurricane, is today routinely "attributed" to human influence on the atmosphere.

They confuse matters further by their additional statements. "Climate Change" is now only one of the many possible reasons for "change of climate", a term which seems now to have replaced the original meaning of "climate change". They are reluctant to enlarge on the possible other reasons for "change of climate" apart from "natural variability"..

"Natural Variability" evidently does not "change" it merely varies. Only "climate change" actually changes.

What is the difference between "change" and "variability"? Climate is known to vary over many different periods, from a few seconds to millions of years. How can you tell whether it is "changing" or "varying"?

They have left out altogether an important component of “change of climate”, and that is change of climate caused by humans, which does not involve changes in the composition of the atmosphere.

All organisms attempt to alter the climate around them to suit their metabolism. Humans have been very successful at doing this, as it has enabled them to populate many parts of the earth. They may alter their close climate by the use of clothes, or they may build a box with a roof, which encloses a climate suitable for living. They may modify climate to suit crops or animals. They may alter climate by other activities; by building cities, and roads, by heating their buildings, or consuming fuel for power production or transport. Most of these, with the possible exception of the last, do not obviously change the composition of the atmosphere, so they are excluded from “climate change” even if they cause measurable changes to temperature or other climate properties. Unless these can be allowed for, it is impossible to “attribute” any “change” to changes in atmospheric gases.

The IPCC Reports increase confusion by refusing to endorse the FCCC definition of “climate change” and providing yet another definition of their own, as follows:

“Climate change in IPCC usage refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as the result of human activity”

This appears as a footnote to the first page of the “Summary for Policymakers” in Reports No 3 and 4. It appears to return to the obvious straightforward definition before the FCCA came along, but not quite.

First it only “refers” to a definition, so we are not sure whether that is a definition or not. Secondly, they still want to deprive “natural variability” of being capable of “change”. But they are disingenuous anyway, because their own title is bound to be interpreted according to the FCCA definition, particularly by those who have not got around to reading the footnote on the first page of the “Summary for Policymakers”.

Also, they do not play fair with their limited discussion of “natural variability”. They always choose arguments that play down its importance, and place the actual data in such a way as to make it difficult to find, so they can claim that its influence can be ignored by comparison with the “anthropogenic” greenhouse effect.

GREENHOUSE GASES

The above FCCA definition of “Climate Change” makes no mention of the so-called “greenhouse gases” which figure so strongly in IPCC discussions. There are a number of trace gases in the atmosphere which possess absorption bands for infrared radiation emitted by the earth, thus reducing the total radiation emitted and causing a temperature rise. This action is quite different from what happens in a greenhouse, which traps warmed air instead of absorbing radiation.

The absence of a mention of greenhouse gases is quite deliberate, because they have to conceal the fact that the most important greenhouse gas is water vapour. John Tyndall, who discovered the effect in 1870, made this fact plain. He wrote that water vapour

“acts more energetically upon the terrestrial rays than upon the solar rays; hence, its tendency is to preserve to the earth a portion of heat which would otherwise be radiated into space”.

The Table of ‘Properties of Greenhouse Gases’ on the first page of the first IPCC Report (1990) does not include water vapour, and there is no Chapter on the subject, and hardly a single paragraph devoted to it, in any of their Reports. Their charts showing the various components of “radiative forcing” do not include water vapour.

If they were really interested in studying human effects on atmospheric components you would think that the main initial approach must surely involve a study of changes in water vapour.

They have not done so because it is too hard. Water vapour concentration in the earth’s atmosphere is extremely variable, with differences of orders of magnitude in different places. There are hardly any past records and little prospect of comprehensive study at the present time.

But instead they have decided to study the minor greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, and to sweep the problem of water vapour to one side by calling it a “feedback” to the effects of carbon dioxide. It is a case of the tail wagging the dog.

The meaning of the decision to make water vapour a “feedback” is never made clear, but actually involves the assumption that relative humidity is a constant. Since relative humidity is known to vary almost as widely as the actual concentration, there is no observational evidence to support the assumption.

ANTHROPOGENIC

This is one of the words they have invented with the specific purpose of confusing people. It is supposed to mean “human-induced”, but in practice they try to leave out human-induced climate change, which does not involve changes in atmospheric components, or try to pretend that it does not exist.

DISCERNIBLE HUMAN INFLUENCE

A similar principle applies to the statement from the second IPCC Report (1995):

“The balance of the evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate”.

This statement may refer only to the effects of greenhouse gas or to all human influences on the climate, as required, but it is always interpreted as evidence for an “influence” from greenhouse gases, when it says nothing of the kind. And the “influence” is always bad.

CORRELATION AND ATTRIBUTION

The IPCC admit that a correlation, however convincing, does not prove cause and effect. This ancient logical principle is often ignored by the general public, who are so often convinced that “links” between one phenomenon and another prove that they are related.

The First Report (1990) took advantage of this confusion when they claimed

“The size of this warming is broadly consistent with the predictions of climate models, but is also of the same magnitude as natural climate variability”

The “warming” that was illustrated was “broadly inconsistent” with the models because it was intermittent, and the actual amount was different. The conclusion should have been that the greenhouse theory did not explain climate, but “natural variability” did..

The IPCC decided that they could play on the lack of logical education merely by changing the word “correlation” to “attribution”. They could then claim, that “attribution, in contrast to “correlation” could prove cause and effect. This principle even occurs in the original definition of the FCCA, where “climate change” is caused by human activity merely by being “attributed” to it, whoever does the “attribution”. So “evidence” is not needed. “Attribution” is all that is required.

FORECASTING AND PROJECTING

The IPCC has abandoned any attempt to forecast future climate.

The first draft of the 1995 Report had a Chapter 5 “Validation of Climate Models” as in the First Report. I pointed out that it was wrong since no climate model has ever been “validated”, and they did not even try to do so. They thereupon changed the word “Validation” to “Evaluation” no less than fifty times and have used it exclusively ever since.

In addition, they do not use the word “prediction”. The models merely supply “projections”, which are the results of accepting the assumptions made by the models and by the futures scenarios, which need to be used in association with the models to obtain the “projections”

“Validation” is a term used by computer engineers to describe the rigorous testing process that is necessary before a computer-based model can be put to use. It must include successful prediction over the entire range of circumstances for which it is required, to an acceptable level of accuracy. Without this process it is impossible to find out whether the model is suitable for use or what levels of accuracy can be expected from it.

The IPCC has never attempted this process, and they do not even discuss ways in which it may be carried out. As a result the models are worthless, and their possible inaccuracy is completely unknown. The IPCC has developed an elaborate procedure for covering up this deficiency which is well described in the IPCC document on “Guidance Notes for Lead Authors on Addressing “Uncertainties”. It includes attempts to “simulate” those past climate sequences where suitable adjustment of the uncertain parameters and

equations in their models can be made to give an approximate “fit”, but they rely largely on the elaborate procedure for mobilizing the opinions of those who originate the models. Most of them depend financially on acceptance of the models, so their opinions are handicapped by their conflict of interest.

CONFIDENCE AND LIKELIHOOD

Since the results of the models are never validated and there is no method available to determine their accuracy or their reliability, they are graded by a set of levels of “confidence” decided entirely from the opinions of those who have produced them.

“Very High Confidence. At least 9 out of 10 chance of being correct

High Confidence. About 8 out of 10 chance

Medium Confidence About 5 out of 10 chance

Low Confidence. About 2 out of 10 chance

Very Low Confidence. Less than 1 out of 10 chance.”

The probability levels stated are nothing more than guesswork

They try to improve their “confidence” by carrying out “intercomparison” exercises, where they try to reduce the huge differences between the different models. Since no model has been successfully tested this is just as likely to increase their accuracy as reduce it, but it does, apparently, improve their “confidence”

The “projections” are a combination of models with a set of “futures scenarios” They are graded according to different levels of “likelihood” based on the opinions of the prejudiced “experts”.

“Virtually Certain: >99% probability of occurrence

Very Likely: >90% probability

Likely: > 66% probability

About as Likely as not: 33 to 66% probability

Unlikely: <33% probability

Very Unlikely: <10% probability

Exceptionally Unlikely: <1% probability”

Although low levels of “likelihood” are possible, almost all of the assessments are “very likely”. They seem reluctant to claim the ultimate brag of “virtually certain”.

They back up these prejudiced opinions by allocating arbitrary and completely unjustified levels of “probability”, which range up to over 99%, but they usually give themselves a sufficient margin of uncertainty to give them an escape if the projections turn bad..

From the Second Report “projections” were always so far ahead (typically 100 years), that they could not be verified in the lifetime of anybody living today. With increasing pressure to justify their claims, the 4th report and more recent additions are beginning to make ‘projections’ only a few years’ ahead, so it is not going to be long before they may be called to account for their inadequacy..

No attempt has ever been made to check these “projections against actual climate behaviour, except in a paper I published in 1999, which found that all of them were wrong. In one IPCC Report (1994) the following statement was made.

“Since scenarios deal with the future they cannot be compared with observations”

They do not seem to realise that all serious forecasters automatically check against observations as they occur, and adjust the forecast accordingly. The IPCC must be the only organisation capable of believing that this procedure is impossible. It automatically ensures that all their projections are worthless.

FORECASTS AND CHAOS

“Frequently Asked Questions” No 2 in Chapter 1 of “Climate Change 2007” has the following statement:

A common confusion between weather and climate arises when scientists are asked how they can predict climate 50 years from now when they cannot predict the weather a few weeks from now. The chaotic nature of weather makes it unpredictable beyond a few days. Projecting changes in climate (i.e., long-term average weather) due to changes in atmospheric composition or other factors is a very different and much more manageable issue”.

Weather forecasters are the true climate scientists. They have been using all available scientific techniques for some 200 years, and yet their forecasts are unreliable beyond a few days.

The IPCC statement begins by failing to admit that the IPCC climate scientists do not make “forecasts” at all, only “projections”. As a consequence they are likely to be even less successful than weather forecasters, who at least try to make regular checks on this reliability of the forecasts.

All calculations involving the properties of fluids involve the use of non-linear equations and integrals that cannot be solved exactly, This provides an uncertainty referred to as “chaos” which is certainly one reason why forecasting the complex behaviour of weather or climate is unlikely to be successful very far into the future.

But the claim that climate forecasting is somehow immune from “chaos” is simply untrue.

The following statement comes from a paper by David Rind, a prominent IPCC climate scientist.

“The climate that we experience results both from ordered forcing and chaotic behaviour, the result of a system with characteristics of each. In forecasting

prospective climate changes for the next century, the focus has been on the ordered system's responses to anthropogenic forcing. The chaotic component may be much harder to predict, but at this point it is not known how important it will be"

TRENDS

The whole object of the IPCC Reports is to establish "Trends". They have to establish that everything is inexorably getting worse. The "globe" is "warming" with an upwards "trend" The ice is melting with a downwards "trend". Any "trend" in the wrong direction has to be ignored as "anomalous. Indeed, any disagreement with the models is regarded as anomalous. The rate of change of methane in the atmosphere has a downwards trend, but this is ignored in favour of the upwards trend in concentration which ended, anyway, in 2000.

Since most climate properties fluctuate or even oscillate, it is necessary to choose a beginning point and an ending point to give the necessary trend. For example the last Report makes a big thing at the "trend" of retreat of Arctic ice from 1978 to 2007. They do not want people to know that Arctic ice follows a periodic pattern, with low points in around 1940 and 2007 and the high point at 1978. 2008 looks like a turnaround.

The rather unreliable surface temperature anomaly record also begins either in 1900 or in 1978, because both are low points in a periodic record. The high points were 1940 and 1998 and the figures have fallen since then, but the "trends" before 1998 are the only ones that matter.

Often the beginning and end points of the "trend" are not mentioned at all. Thus, we are told, that "the globe is warming" without any information as to which period is referred to or how much it is warming. In this way they can ignore the fact that since 1998 the "globe" has been cooling. So perhaps we may now told that the "long term trend" is up, without defining the meaning of "long-term".

Another periodic climate property is temperature of the ocean, and the trend is again chosen to be taken from the lowest point to the highest point, ignoring the fluctuation. The "trend" seems currently to be downwards.

The Fox and Franz Josef glaciers in New Zealand fluctuate. Some years ago they were receding. This fact was frequently used by the world press to prove the existence of a disastrous "trend". For the past few years they are advancing, and the World press is silent because the trend is in the wrong direction.

UNCERTAINTY

The IPCC carries out exercises to reduce the "uncertainty" not only of models but also of climate observations.

Much effort has been devoted to trying to improve the "certainty" of the surface temperature anomaly record, which is based on an unrepresentative sample, for which there is no recognised method of "correction". When a whole series of "corrections" are applied to the USA where there are many weather stations with a long record of

professional monitoring, the presumed “global warming” over an extended period tends to disappear, but a recent study of the absence of quality control in US weather stations casts doubt on the entire system. In this study Anthony Watts recruited a large number of volunteers who assessed compliance with US Bureau of Meteorology standards over a third of all US weather stations and found that only 11% were capable of an accuracy below one degree Celsius and 65% had errors of at least 5°C. Since the supposed increase over 100 years is less than one degree, the whole system can be considered useless..

A recent study of these temperature uncertainties admits that after they have tried their best there are remaining “unknown unknowns”, referring to the well-known poem of Donald Rumsfeld

The Unknown

As we know,

There are known knowns.

There are things we know we know.

We also know

There are known unknowns.

That is to say

We know there are some things

We do not know.

But there are also unknown unknowns,

The ones we don't know

We don't know.

IMPOSITION OF DOGMA

The IPCC Reports make no attempt to consider seriously all comments made on their various drafts. They make this plain in Appendix 1 of the First Report, where they say:

“While every attempt was made by the Lead Authors to incorporate their comments, in some cases these formed a minority opinion which could not be reconciled with the larger consensus”

This “consensus” is what is collectively decided by the anonymous Government representatives who approve the entire reports and who dictate to the “Drafting Editors” of the “Summary For Policymakers” what they are permitted to write. The “consensus” is actually a dogma, foreshadowed by the FCCC concept of “climate change” that all changes in the climate are caused by human-induced changes in the minor greenhouse gases. All contributions and comments that challenge this dogma are treated

as a “minority opinion” which they ruthlessly suppress. Reasons for rejecting comments were never given. The only way I could find out whether they had been considered was to read through the final Report. For the latest, Fourth Report, access to the comments on the “Science” Report was obtained through the British Official Information Act. I discovered that I had made 1,878 comments, and that most of these had been rejected out of hand and the others usually had a trivial reason such as “insufficient information” even when this information had been repeatedly supplied.

STATISTICS AND DAMN LIES

Before the development of statistical methods for estimating accuracy by R A Fisher and others in the 1930s there was no way of telling whether any particular observation was accurate. Several observations of the same quantity had a “range”, but there was no way of preferring one or another, or knowing whether any of them is a correct figure.

Statistical techniques were developed for which an estimate of the most probable figure for any quantity could be obtained, together with an estimate of the probable level of accuracy. These methods are now applied and reported widely, but it is not often realised that they are only valid if the assumptions made by the mathematics are met. Amongst these are the use of representative samples, the insistence of identical conditions of measurement and compliance with a very few mathematical formulae, the most importance being the Gaussian relationship.

With the climate, few of these conditions can be met, so there are no reliable estimates of the accuracy either of the observations or of the conclusions after manipulation. The IPCC cheerfully ignores all of this necessity and claims that its figures possess confidence levels for many quantities, which cannot be justified. It should be noted, however, that their basic figures of “radiative forcing” are all qualified as being dependent on various “Levels of Scientific Understanding” which are undefined. The only logical conclusion is to assume that none of them can be considered seriously even when the: “Level of Scientific Understanding” is considered to be “high”.

NATURAL VARIABILITY WINS

Three of the four major reports of the IPCC admitted that “natural variability” involving influences that do not involve changes in greenhouse gases, are perfectly capable of explaining the behaviour of our climate.

Let me repeat the statement from “Climate Change 1990”

“The size of this warming is broadly consistent with the predictions of climate models, but is also of the same magnitude as natural climate variability”

The Second Report (1995) was subjected to special treatment. One of the Lead Authors (Ben Santer) was given the task of altering offending sentences in the Final Draft Report, to make it conform with the “consensus” imposed by the Government Representatives who had to give approval to the report.

Among the passages from the Final Draft that were removed was the following

“None of the studies cited above has shown clear evidence that we can attribute the observed changes to the specific cause of increases in greenhouse gases.”

This was replaced by the following

“Implicit in these global mean results is a weak attribution statement—if the observed global mean changes over the last 20 to 50 years cannot be fully explained by natural climate variability, some (unknown) fraction of the changes must be due to human influences”.

The following statement was also in the original final draft:

“Finally we come to the most difficult question of all: ‘When will the detection and unambiguous attribution of human-induced climate change occur?. In the light of the very large signal and noise uncertainties discussed in this Chapter, it is not surprising that the best answer to this question is ‘We do not know’. Some scientists would have claimed, on the basis of the results presented in Section 8.4, that detection of a significant climate change has already occurred. Few if any would be willing to argue that unambiguous attribution of this change to anthropogenic effects has already occurred, or was likely to happen in the next several years.”

This statement was altered as follows:

“Finally we come to the most difficult question of when the detection and attribution of human-induced climate change is likely to occur. The answer to this question must be subjective, particularly in the light of the very large signal and noise uncertainties discussed in this Chapter. Some scientists maintain that these uncertainties currently preclude any answer to the question posed above. Other scientists would and have claimed, on the basis of the statistical results presented in Section 8.4, that confident detection of a significant anthropogenic climate change has already occurred. As noted in Section 8.1, attribution involves statistical testing of alternative explanations for a detected observed change and Few would be willing to argue that completely unambiguous attribution of (all or part of) this change has already occurred, or was likely to happen in the next several years.”

Even the altered versions do not seem very confident.

The scandal that emerged from this last minute censorship led to the imposition of strict controls over what could be permitted throughout the Third (2001) and Fourth (2007) Reports. A set of “Guidelines” to ensure uniform techniques for “estimating” (in other words “guessing”) uncertainties was drawn up.

Much use has been made of Bayesian statistics, which provides a technique for improving the reliability of guesswork, but is unlikely to work in the absence of comparison with actual observations.

Despite all these control measures the following statement was made in Chapter 1 of “Climate Change 2001”.

“ The fact that the global mean temperature has increased since the late 19th century and that other trends have been observed does not necessarily mean that an anthropogenic effect on the climate has been identified. Climate has always varied on all time-scales, so the observed change may be natural”.

This whole Chapter was omitted from the Fourth Report, and those who wrote it presumably ostracized. Instead there was a pseudo history of the Greenhouse Effect, which promoted the activities of the IPCC, but omitted all scientific work which did not suit them, like the voluminous measurements of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as long ago as 1812.

The Fourth Report no longer admitted that natural variability could explain everything in the climate, but they covered their backs to the extent of filling all of their pronouncement with reservations to be used when the day comes for withdrawal.

For example, they say:

“Most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperature since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations’

This statement is literally crawling with reservations, which can be used to back out of their claims when the time comes.

Thus, it is only “most” of the “observed increase.. How much is that?

They have eliminated from consideration those “globally averaged” temperature anomaly records that are more recent than “the mid-20th Century, and therefore, more reliable. These include satellite and radiosonde records, and even the most recent amalgamated surface temperature anomaly records, which do not show effects incompatible with natural variability.

“Globally averaged temperature” is never “observed” Individual local temperatures cannot be averaged because a representative sample does not exist. They refer instead to the so-called “Mean annual global surface temperature anomaly record” which is actually based on the “anomalies” obtained from measurements in the same geographically defined area, but are not “observed” but “deduced”.

Then, what they say is only “very likely” based on opinions of computer modelers, and the “observed” “anthropogenic” greenhouse gas concentrations, which do not include any measurements of the main greenhouse gas, water vapour, and only very restrictive measurements of all the rest, whose concentrations over land surfaces, where it matters, are almost unknown.

So there is no evidence that “anthropogenic” increases in greenhouse gases are altering the climate. “Natural Variability”, is thus the only cause of changes in the climate, provided “anthropogenic” interventions not involving greenhouse gases are also considered to be “natural”.

Cheers, Vincent Gray