

VIII - CONCLUSION

The friends of truth are those who search for it, not those who boast they have found it ¹.

Condorcet, *Discours sur les conventions nationales* (1791)

In June 2015, Ms Corinne Lepage, commissioned by the French minister for Ecology, submitted a 140-page report entitled *The economy of the New World*, prepared by a group she founded and chaired. Page 25 of the report reads: "in 2014 solar energy accounted for 10% of world electricity". In reality, according the International Energy Agency, the share of solar electricity world electricity in 2012 was 0.4% (it could have slightly increased between 2012 and 2014). This gross overstatement is not trivial. It is first striking because of its magnitude: a factor of 25. To say that the sun accounts for 10% of the world's electricity is like saying that the French average wage (2,160 euros per month in 2015) is close to 50,000 euros per month. Next, it is not a mistake

1. « Les amis de la réalité sont ceux qui la cherchent et non ceux qui se vantent de l'avoir trouvée »

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let slip in the heat of a discussion, like anyone can commit, it is a written sentence, thought through, read again and monitored, that expresses what its authors truly believe. Third, the principal author and signatory is not just anyone in France: Ms Lepage, who was Environment minister, is considered an authority on climate and energy, and very frequently questioned as such in the French media. Fourth, the report cited is the product of a group of 27 “experts”, assisted by officials from the Department of Ecology, who all checked and approved the text; the gross error discussed here is therefore not a blunder made by the sole Ms. Lepage, it is what believe (and make believe) dozens of official actors in the field. Not a single warmist corrected it. Finally, the report in which it appears is explicitly addressed to the current Environment Minister, Ms Ségolène Royal, who does not have to verify the reports of her administration and her consultants; she will undoubtedly be convinced that solar energy does indeed product 10% of the world’s electricity, and might make decisions based on totally false premises.

This enormous blunder is not a minor incident without meaning. It is, on the contrary, representative. Of what theelites think on the subject of climate and energy. Of the gap between their dreams and reality. Of their ignorance of the world as it is. Of their contempt for knowledge, facts, figures and reason.

Do we find such large gap in other areas of public life, such as education, health, the economy, security or mobility? In part, perhaps, but probably not to the same degree. It is hard to imagine counter-truths of a Lepageien magnitude being circulated in these domains without being contradicted. The area of the climate (and energy which is intimately associated with it) is particularly fertile soil for the weeds of folly. This little book has attempted to find out why and how we have

arrived at this degree zero of common sense. The proposed answer is this: we have gone from a fragile science, climate science, to a dangerous ideology, warmism.

A fragile science

Without a doubt, global warming exists. During the 20th century the average temperature has increased by about 0.7 ° C. The concept of average temperature is not a simple concept, but a constructed concept, based on imperfect measures and conventional aggregations, and therefore calls for caution. However, doubts and uncertainties about the concept and its measurements does not call into question the reality of this increase. It is not global warming that is fragile, but its causes, its future, the policy implications it calls for, and above all the nature of the science it has generated.

An official science - Global warming has become, in the last half-century, a scientific object. But the "science" that studies it is not a science like other, and the institution that represents it, the IPCC, has nothing to do with learned societies and academies that have long since been established by researchers in all other areas, and are administered by them. The IPCC is an entity created by politicians and United Nations organizations who pass command to researchers, and summarize their reports. Climate science, which is still in its infancy, needed time to mature, and independence to develop. It has instead been kidnapped by hurried, and interested, politicians and ideologues. The result is an official science which is aligned and frozen, that is to say not very scientific.

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Uncertain causes - If global warming is certain, its causes are less so. The official truth is that there is only one: the accumulation of greenhouse gases, particularly anthropogenic CO₂. This explanation is convenient because it means there is only a single enemy, which suits politicians. But it is not totally convincing. It does not accommodate the fact that the Earth's temperature has always fluctuated, including when human activity emitted little or no CO₂. Everything suggests that warming, like most natural and social phenomena, has many causes. CO₂ is probably one of them, but it is certainly not the only one.

Impossible projections - Uncertainty about the causes makes it very difficult to predict temperatures. If CO₂ is the only cause, if one knows the relationship between concentration of CO₂ and temperature, if we know how to predict the evolution of CO₂ emissions, then knowing the evolution of temperatures is easy. But can we believe that all these "ifs" are present when we see that the predictions made thirty years ago for the 2015 temperatures have not turned out to be correct. In fact, researchers are focusing almost exclusively on predictions for 2100. This preference for the very long term is specific to climate science: there is no equivalent in economics or medicine or biology (even if it is found in astronomy). It is a bit paradoxical: climatologists who are struggling to predict the weather at the end of the week are very forthcoming about what will happen at the end of the century (they justify themselves by saying that the mechanisms in question are not the same). Is this preference for the very long term imposed by the politicians? Is it a protection against the verification of predictions by realities? One cannot help thinking that climate science has not yet sufficiently mastered the extreme complexity of the dynamics of long-term climate systems to make credible climate forecasts for 2100. Will the warming recorded in the 20th century (0.7 °C) continue? It is — 198 —

entirely possible. Will it accelerate? This is not inconceivable. Will it stop, or even turn around? One cannot exclude it.

Unknown consequences - The important thing is also not global warming in and of itself but the possible consequences of past warming (certain) and future warming (uncertain). Here again, climate science is not very assured. The IPCC itself (IPCC 2012, p. 119-120), as we have said, acknowledges a “low confidence” in the worsening observed or forecasting of extreme catastrophic events. Warmists of all shapes and sizes do not show this caution, and do not hesitate to assert that all these misfortunes are already there, rising sharply, and caused by anthropogenic warming; and predict the worst in all areas by 2100. The reality is that we know very little about the consequences of a possible (and uncertain) increase in temperature and / or CO₂. It may be that the doom-sayers are right - after having been often wrong in the past. It is also well established that increases in CO₂ has considerable beneficial effects on agricultural production.

An important article on the warmist vulgate is that the forecasted disasters will especially hit the poorest countries and regions of the planet. The factual basis of this claim is virtually non-existent. In fact, the fragile efforts at global warming regionalization suggest that it is so far more marked in temperate and northern regions (where the rich countries are) than in tropical and equatorial regions (where poor countries are located). What is certain is that during the last thirty years, after a century of global warming, agricultural production in poor countries, and all quality of life indicators, are far from diminishing, and are actually increasing faster than ever.

Chimeric implications - All these speculations about climate change lead to a major recommendation presented as a Kantian

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imperative: halve global emissions of CO₂ by 2050. There, we leave climate science for economics. The latter is probably less fragile than the former (perhaps because it deals with problems which are less complex), but it is not very comfortable with the very long term. Economic analysis suggests, however, two or three important points.

The first assumes a direct and simple relation between CO₂ emissions and temperatures. It observes that the cost of emissions reductions is a function of the magnitude of the reduction. We deduce an objective (of temperature and at the same time of reduction in emissions) which is such that the total cost, that is to say the cost of damage plus the cost of the reduction, is minimal. The objective must therefore be calculated, and not postulated more or less arbitrarily.

The second takes into account the assumption of uncertainty about future damage. These might be non-existent; but they could also be very high, almost infinite. This hypothesis is at the heart of the Stern report. It evokes the famous Blaise Pascal bet. Pascal placed himself in the hypothesis where one cannot prove the existence of God, but where one must choose between believing or not. If I choose to believe in God, I earn infinity if he exists (I go to heaven), and I do not lose much if he does not exist. If I choose not to believe in God, I lose everything if he does exist (I'll go to hell), and I do not earn much if he does not exist. So it is in my best interest to bet on the existence of God. This is roughly what Stern explains for climate policy. If worst-case scenarios come true (which is not certain but plausible), the loss for humanity will be terrible, and it is reasonable to pay an insurance premium, even if it is very high, to guard against this possibility. In game theory, this strategy, which is to minimize the maximum possible loss, bears the — 200 —

name of the “Minimax”. Pascal’s bet was criticized in that it completely ignores the benefits of a life of pleasure in the event of non-belief in God (and symmetrically the cost of the deprivation of such pleasures assuming a belief in God). Stern, the economist, does not neglect emission reduction costs (the amount of the insurance premium), but he uses a zero discount rate to compare it with future damage (with their amount multiplied by the probability of occurrence). Stern’s zero discount rate has of course been criticized.

The third point concerns the means to be used to achieve a given reduction goal, whatever it is. Economists agree that the best way (the one that minimizes costs) to do so is a tax on CO₂, or, what amounts to the same, in terms of efficiency, a rights market to buy CO₂¹. Each level of emissions corresponds to a level of tax: the higher the tax, the lower the emissions. On this point, economists are not followed by politicians, who prefer quantitative restrictions, that is to say rationing systems, which produces the same results, but do so at a much greater cost to society.

Justified or not, the climatologist objectives of reducing CO₂ emissions are unattainable. They involve such a considerable reversal of trends (-50% in the coming 35 years to compare with +50% in the past 22 years) that a serious specialized agency such as the International Energy Agency considers it to be totally unrealistic. If a tree is judged by its fruits, those of so-called climate science are so bitter they call for severe judgement of the tree.

1. This equivalence, which is classic, totally escapes Pope Francis. In *Laudato si*, he is in favour of a carbon tax, and violently opposed to a rights market (the word market, which evokes, for him, the devil, motivates his opposition).

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A dangerous ideology

On these fragile scientific foundations, systematically biased by the interventions of politicians and administrations, appeared what we call warmism. The word describes a major social phenomenon that includes an explanation of the world, a principle of political action and institutions (national and international). This movement has all the characteristics of ideologies, as described by Hannah Arendt. It is *monocausal*, built on one simple idea: there is a single enemy, CO₂ emitted by human activity, sole cause of global warming, itself the sole cause of the inevitable end of the world. It is, or wants to be, “*scientific*” and seeks the protection of science, which it does not hesitate to regulate and control. It is *public*, that is to say mobilizes all the resources of the state apparatus, holder of the monopoly on violence, to persuade or impose its views. It is *revolutionary*, and advocates the total disappearance of the public enemy number one, at the price of a complete change of behaviours and mechanisms that will bring about a “new man” and “another” economy. It is finally *popular*, in the sense that it engenders a broad support from most activists, politicians, the media, the religious, and consequently a large number of citizens. This ideology echoes the mythical and ancient sequence of sin, punishment, and redemption. Man misbehaves; God punishes him, on earth by destroying his habitat or in the afterlife by sending him to hell; man, however, if he repents and flagellates himself, can be saved. Understanding the origins of the warmist ideology is one thing; highlighting its dangers is another thing. We will discuss five.

The eviction of soluble major problems - Warmism and its focus on the fight against CO₂ occupies a large and growing space in debates, policies and resource allocation, on both national — 202 —

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and international levels. In the media or in political timetables, the word “CO₂ “appears 100 times, maybe 1,000 times more frequently than the word” malaria”. A first danger of warmism, is to hide, to relegate to second place, to push to the side of the road, all kinds of serious problems which nevertheless call for attention and action. Economists call “opportunity cost” this crowding effect. Efforts to identify these problems abound. Let us mention two, among others.

The first consists of the Millennium Development Goals. In 2000, the United Nations identified eight priority objectives (divided into sub-goals) for 2015: (i) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (ii) achieve universal primary education; (iii) promote gender equality and women’s empowerment; (iv) reduce child mortality; (v) improve maternal health; (vi) combat AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (vii) ensure environmental sustainability; (viii) ensure a global partnership for development. The fight against CO₂ is not on this list; sub-objectives of “sustainable development” relate to the fight against deforestation, the protection of biodiversity, the provision of clean water and sanitation and the elimination of slums. The Millennium Development Goals are clear, quantifiable, concrete and achievable. The report published in 2014 by the United Nations shows that they have been partially met. It also shows that much remains to be done. Abandoning everything to give top priority to the fight against CO₂ is to mistake the shadow for the substance.

The second is called the Copenhagen Consensus. In 2004, Bjorn Lomborg, a Danish statistician, gathered a small number of experts to define “priorities to advance well-being”. These experts were of indisputable quality: half of them were Nobel Prize winners - not for Peace but for Economics. These experts

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identified some twenty fairly specific, clearly identified, and costed, spending areas where results, which are also identified and quantified, could be expected. The exercise was repeated in 2008 and in 2012 “because of the rapid changes in the state of knowledge on the challenges and solutions.” For example, the top five priorities of the list of 16 priorities established in 2012 were: the distribution of vitamins and minerals to children of pre-school age, subsidies to modern treatments of malaria, widespread child immunization, de-worming school children to improve their health and education, and the widespread use of treatments against tuberculosis. If these actions are in the field of health (this is not the case for all the other 11), it is because these are the ones that have the best ratio of cost to benefit. Lomborg had previously expressed doubts about the warmist certainties. That is why his Consensus, and the priorities they set, were violently attacked. In the eyes of warmists, they have the unforgivable disadvantage of suggesting that there are other priorities, more modest but more realistic, than the fight against CO₂ emissions.

The decline in living standards - The warmist ideology will contribute to a decline in living standards. The drastic reduction of CO₂ emissions, which is generated by this ideology, has a cost. It is regressive, in that the cost weighs more (relative to income) upon the poor than upon the rich; and much more upon poor countries than upon rich countries.

The decline in human living standards is not a danger in the eyes of all warmists. A number of them openly advocate degrowth. This is for example the case with Pope Francis, the most recent warmist recruit (François 2015, §193), citing with admiration the words of Patriarch Bartholomew on the need “to move from consumption to sacrifice” (§12). — 204 —

The risk of conflict with poor countries - Warmism is an ideology of rich countries, which has mainly developed in the United States, the United Kingdom, in the countries of northern Europe and in France. Warmist policy is defined by the G8 (or now G7), where the richest countries in the world decide for others, without consulting them, with the arrogance of good conscience. These attitudes can only hurt and irritate poor countries.

In the name of warmism, those same rich countries want to intervene - and are now intervene - directly in the development policies of poor countries, by opposing their proposed coal power plants. They do this by refusing to finance such plants, by opposing the guarantees granted to private funding, and by prohibiting international institutions like the World Bank from making loans for this purpose. As we have seen, in many cases, no coal means no electricity, and therefore no development.

At COP 21, the Paris climate conference, the rich countries intend to get firm commitments from poor countries to lower CO₂ emissions, accompanied by checks and constraints. These decreases, as we have seen, can only be achieved at the cost of slowing or stopping the growth of these countries.

It is easy to predict that poor countries will rebel against such extravagant claims. Regarding funding, they found a solution: China has created an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank which has announced that it is ready to finance coal plants. At COP 21, the poor countries will refuse to make the commitments required of them. Rich countries think they can buy them with the promise of a transfer of 100 billion dollars per year. One can imagine the bitterness of the debates on the criteria for the allocation of this big cake: between payer countries (how much

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by the US? How much by Italy?), and between paid countries (how much for India? how much for Malawi?). At best, there will be promises of CO₂ reductions in exchange for promises of funding - promises of the kind that only bind those who believe them, not those who make them.

This failure - open or hidden, but assured - might drive a wedge between rich and poor countries. After the Second World War, the North abruptly realized the size of the gap which separated it from the South. The South, euphemistically called the developing world, was characterized by poverty, hunger, malnutrition, disease, infant mortality, illiteracy, filth and disregard for women. The books of Sauvy, which coined the term "Third World", Myrdal (*Asian Drama*), Josue de Castro (*Geopolitics of Hunger*), Moussa (*The Proletarian Nations*), put the spotlight on this tragedy.

For years, the gap remained deep, scary, and it widened: production, or at least the production per capita was growing faster in the North than in the South. It is only in the last thirty or forty years that it has begun to shrink. First in Asia. In Latin America, with ups and downs. Finally in Africa in recent years. In the sixties the South was growing more slowly than the North; in the 21st century, it is growing faster. With economic development, (wether despisers of growth like it or not), poverty declined dramatically in poor countries: infant mortality plummeted, life expectancy jumped, famine (of agricultural origin, not those of military origin, alas) virtually disappeared, illiteracy decreased, access to safe water rose, etc. If, as the warmists say, climate change explains all events, then the effect that climate change has had on poor countries is very positive. Of course, poverty continues to wreak havoc in the South, and even in the North, and it is not a question of stopping the fight — 206 —

against poverty. Much has been achieved but much remains to be done. Much is being done, and increasingly so by poor countries themselves. That is why it is essential not to hamper their efforts, not to impose constraints that would impede or prevent their development, and thus their fight against poverty. It is their will. This must be our policy.

A blow to science - Much of the progress made in the fight against poverty comes from technological innovations, which are the fruits of science, which itself is based on reason. The warmist ideology does not get along well with all this. In the recent papal encyclical, which is the latest version of the warmist catechism, technology, or more accurately the “technological paradigm” is presented (with and after finance, it is true) as being responsible for all the ills of the land. Scientific credibility is a much needed plant, but a very delicate and fragile one. It is based on rules, habits and complex behaviours. It combines respect for established hierarchies with openness to new opinions. It does this by keeping systematically and strictly politicians, ideologues, and the media away from the discussions and conclusions. This is the best way to be respected by politicians, ideologues and the media, whose eminent role is to rely on the ever fragile achievements of science to define policies.

That is unfortunately not what we see in the case of “climate science”. The interference of politics in this new field is constant, systematic and large. It is ministers and international institutions (normally politicized) who order the scientific results they want. The result is a science which is both official and fixed - two completely a-scientific or anti-scientific characteristics. This makes it make, at best, a half-science. Climatologists themselves expect their legitimacy from politicians and ideologues: we are right because the Ministers repeat what we say. The height of

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absurdity is reached with the reference (should say reverence?) to the “support” of the encyclical of Pope Francis to the warmist theses. The approval of the successor of Urban VIII is presented and perceived as scientific proof!

The loss of the credibility and authority of science caused by warmism explains and produces all the excesses that have been reported. The president of the French Republic may well say that tsunamis are caused by global warming; Ms Lepage may well multiply by 24 solar electricity's share in the world's electricity. There are no more authorities to report the error, or citizens to deplore it. “Climatologists”, if indeed they see it, choose to be silent in order to protect the credibility of what has become an ideology.

This critique of warmism, its excesses and its dangers, does not solve the problem of global warming. The global temperature has increased, it may continue to increase; what to do?

Primum non nocere, first do no harm, as requested by the Hippocratic Oath. Do not engage in restrictions and expenses that would impede or prevent the growth or that *a fortiori* would cause degrowth. Nothing indicates that the common house is on fire, contrary to what is claimed by all those who want to play with fire helmets, boots and uniforms. The pause in temperatures for 18 years gives us time for analysis and reflection.

Second, more unbiased studies and analyses without bias, to try and reduce the considerable uncertainties about the causes, mechanisms, interactions, responsibilities and scope of actions. Here, as always and as elsewhere, it is science, the real - not catechisms - that will provide the basis for possible action. — 208 —

Third, intensify research on possible technological innovations. Carbon capture and storage may become operational. Research undertaken for many years on electricity storage may finally be successful, radically changing the game for intermittent renewables. New materials may appear, that will improve energy productivity. Nanotechnology or biotechnology may bring great surprises. The decline in motor vehicle fuel consumption will continue, which is surely less flamboyant and revolutionary than their elimination, but probably more effective. As has always been the case, there are technological innovations that can solve the problem of CO₂ emissions, if it really needs to be solved.

Fourth, if you still want to pay an insurance premium to protect yourself from a potential disaster, perhaps we could try to introduce a moderate carbon tax, which would provide an additional incentive to the economies and innovations. However it should not be additional to the carbon taxes that already exists (such as the fuel taxes imposed in Europe, which tax CO₂ at a rate of 200-300 euros per tonne of CO₂); it should replace other taxes, such as payroll taxes; it should consider the benefits forgone of CO₂ for agricultural production; and it should be established in all countries. But we must be aware that such a tax would be regressive.

Let us leave the last word to the great Cervantes, which says more about ideology and its ravages than many sociologists and philosophers. Warmists like to think of themselves as Don Quixotes. They are indeed, but not in the sense that they think. If they had read Cervantes better, they would know that he does not present his hero as a model to be imitated, but rather as a fool to flee. Don Quixote is the archetype of the ideologue. He stuffed his head with a thousand stories of medieval chivalry, and that stuff prevents him from seeing things as they are. He

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looks at windmills (wind turbines!), and imagines robbers to fight. He finds a shaving basin, and sees it as a knight's helmet. A whore enters the loft where he sleeps, he believes that a great lady approaches. His mirages systematically deliver setbacks and blows, which is an inexhaustible source of humour in the novel. But such is the strength of his ideology, the disappointments and blows he receives never teach him anything; they are for Don Quixote additional evidence of the reality of his nonsense, which is another comic element of the book. Don Quixote is not unsympathetic, and not stupid, but he is away, carried out of himself, by his ideology as if by a disease. He is not a man of power, and his fads harm only himself and his servant Sancho Panza who embodies common sense, but still ends by being contaminated by the madness of his master. Don Quixote is a man alone, and the companions he encounters, innkeepers or princes, do not take his convictions seriously and laugh at him on the sly. This cannot be said of our Don Quixote today: they are numerous, and powerful. Perhaps it was already like this in the Spain of 1600, and Cervantes was targeting ideologues more dangerous than his ridiculous hero. In the tomb where he has been for just 400 years, he must be laughing at those who flatter themselves in taking his Don Quixote as a role model.