

Epistemologies Paper:
Religious Faith, Empiricism/Rationalism, and Occultism



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Religious Faith:

The website, *Answers in Genesis*, attempts to underline a Christian faith-based perspective on human-caused global warming. In the article “Global Warming in Perspective,” by Melinda Christian, Christian refutes well-known claims from the scientific community on global warming, especially those aspects induced by humans. The main claims Christian addresses are: global warming is really happening; humans are causing global warming; global warming will drive many species of plants and animals to extinction; ocean levels are expected to rise in the coming century; the number weather-related catastrophes caused by global warming are expected to increase. Christian later explains how people of the Christian faith should respond to such claims about human-caused global warming, citing scripture (Psalm 24:1; 2 Peter 3:10) that relates to humanity’s “dominion” over nature and a new Earth that is to be created, free from sin, by their deity.

This argument follows epistemology found within the religious faith perspective, as this epistemology uses aspects of different revelations, teachings, texts, and insights to shed light on issues. In this article’s case, it uses the story of Noah’s flood to refute that species of animals and plants would go extinct and, in turn, claims many would flourish in the wake of polar ice caps melting. The article also uses this story to explain that drastic weather conditions are a simple byproduct of this global event. In two specific places, Christian cites scripture: Psalm 24:1 speaks to humanity’s task of acting as stewards from this world gifted from God while 2 Peter 3:10 speaks to the eventual destruction of this world. As this argument uses evidence from a sacred text and builds on sacred mythological stories to advance its viewpoint, it falls under the realm of religious faith.

Empiricism/Rationalism:

The webpage from NASA's Earth Observatory provides an argument for human-caused climate change, using both rational and empirical elements of reasoning. This article specifically attempts to address climate changes post-Industrial Revolution, drawing on scientific data of Earth's "vital signs" (i.e., particles in atmosphere, amounts of atmospheric gases, energy radiation from Earth's surface and the Sun, ocean surface temperatures, etc.) to provide evidence of human-induced global warming. The article also demonstrates scientific reasoning behind these recorded observations through explaining the perspectives of leading climatologists and scientists studying these phenomena. NASA's Earth Observatory program uses pellucid data and logical reasoning to show that humans are causing these changes in Earth's climate.

As the scientific process often uses both of these forms of reasoning, it is no surprise that one can find elements of empiricism and rationalism embedded within this article. Rationalism is defined epistemologically through elements of lucid persuasive reasoning, logic, and analysis in order to develop an argument. The article demonstrates rationalism in how it logically and persuasively draws on the testimonies and opinions of experts to make claims; one example of this is the article's explanation of scientific theories around multi-decadal solar output trends. Furthermore, the article provides a scientific analysis of data; this is found specifically in rationalism (as Empiricism cites scientific evidence rather than analyzing it further). Empiricism is exhibited in the numerous graphs and figures cited in this article. These figures reflect measurements of scientific data on changes in temperature as seen on a variety of different fronts. As this article uses specific elements of both scientific reasoning and measurements, empiricism and rationalism, as epistemologies, are conspicuous.

Occultism:

The article “The Astrology of Climate Change” offers an analysis of natural and human influenced climate change based on the movement of the planets. The article postulates that Pluto, with its 240 year periodicity, matches with long-term weather patterns. While Saturn, with its 29 year periodicity, can be used to assess shorter climate cycles. By tracking the ingresses of Pluto and Saturn into the Aries sign and their interaction with other planetary bodies it can be established whether current and future climate periods will be predominately warming, cooling, or neutral. The current ingress chart of Pluto into Aries (in effect until 2068) show we are in a moderate warming period, indicating the possibility human caused climate change does not pose a huge threat. The current ingress chart of Saturn into Aries began in 1996 and will end about 2026. This chart is significantly warm and strongly indicates the rapid rate of warming will continue regardless of any legislative action to curb CO2 emissions. The future ingress chart for Saturn indicates a temperature neutral time period, affording the possibility that either natural or human efforts curb the warming effects are successful.

Astrology is typically considered a part of the occult; that is, it represents a way of tapping into supernatural forces which offer a method of understanding the world. This careful analysis of global climate change using the planetary ingress charts of Pluto and Saturn into Aries offers a very structured, educated, and expert use of astrology as a way of knowing. The logical presentation of the argument and analysis speaks to the use of rationalism, and the use of data shows a use of empiricism. But, due to the reliance on astrology, occultism, which “justifies claims by citing lessons or insights gained from some type of supernatural or paranormal force or agency” (as stated in the class presentation), is the main epistemology used to create this article.

Works Cited

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