ment rather than young-earth creationists. It is not as detailed as the history provided by Numbers, being half the length. However, *Designer Science* is more focused on the ID movement than the young-earth creationism movement, and it includes 21st-century developments such as the Discovery Institute's Walter Bradley Center. This gives me hope. Howell speaks from his own specific perspective about the history of the 20th century and, for the most part, models an objective stance for moving into the 21st century, with opportunities for former rivals to join together in the scientific activity of constantly questioning, evaluating the evidence, and seeking truth.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF6-26Livingstone

THE EMPIRE OF CLIMATE: A History of an Idea by David N. Livingstone. Princeton University Press, 2024. vii + 534 pages, including notes, bibliography, and index. Paperback: $29.95. ISBN: 9780691236728.

The Trump administration announced in December 2025 that it would break up the National Center for Atmospheric Research, one of the premier facilities for weather and climate. Office of Management Budget Director Russell Vought explained that the center "is one of the largest sources of climate alarmism in the country."[1] Critics see this as one more effort by the Trump administration to bury the "inconvenient truth" of climate change and ignore the devastating effects it is likely to have in the coming century.

This reflects the general state of climate discourse in the United States. Climate change is either an existential threat that requires dramatic action, or a hoax used by the political left to justify regulation. There is little room in this debate for more nuanced questions and disagreements.

In *The Empire of Climate,* David N. Livingstone pulls readers out of this narrow debate to explore the idea of climate. It is a remarkably expansive and ambitious study. He writes:

> [M]y aim is to provide an outline chart of the realm I refer to as "the empire of climate." Since ancient times, the idea that the climate exerts a determining influence on minds and bodies, health and well-being, customs and character, war and health has attracted a long line of committed followers. (p. ix)

This book is a warning, first to scholars and secondarily to policy makers. Scholars, Livingstone argues, have too often conflated histories of the past and future: "chronicles of the past and histories of the future merge in claims about the impact of climate and climate change on human society" (p. 7). And they have often slipped into a reductive determinism that hides human agency, and therefore human responsibility. Here Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (Norton, 1997) receives considerable attention.

Livingstone works chronologically through four primary areas of climatic determinism: health, mind, wealth, and war. The consistent theme is that climate has been used to justify and expand power structures that favor white Europeans and North Americans. Since Hippocrates in the fifth century, climate has been a cornerstone of medical geography, "interspersed with moral judgements, evaluations of character, depictions of temperament, and assessments of intellectual aptitude" (p. 58). Tropical climates were described as places of moral and health hazards for Europeans. Indigenous peoples in the tropics were often described as morally degenerate, lazy, and feeble minded. According to this narrative, climatic variations made it inevitable that Europeans would dominate the globe intellectually, economically, and militarily.

Throughout, Livingstone draws on contemporary scientists, journalists, and climate activists to argue that climatic determinism is alive and well, here emphasizing climate change predictions that exude inevitability. He develops this most extensively in chapter 11, "Securitizing Climate Change," quoting Chris Huhne, a former British secretary of state for energy and climate change:

> The devastating impact that climate change would have on global food, water, and health meant that "unstable states" would become more unstable. Poor nations poorer. Inequality more pronounced, and conflict more likely. [This, Livingstone writes, is] a refrain echoing its way through the corridors of government, academia, and journalism. (p. 370)

Livingstone's warning is timely, indeed necessary. Framing climate change as an inevitable crisis has potentially dangerous consequences. The more dire and complex the crisis, the more tempting it is to consolidate power and advance a "solution." It is essential to consider how climate has been used in the past to justify racism and slavery, economic exploitation, and other injustices or we run the risk of reproducing those injustices in our quest to slow climate change.

Livingstone acknowledges at the outset that in writing "an introductory guide to a vast terrain," the book "no doubt suffers from the weaknesses of every mapmaking venture: silences, selectiveness, subjectivity" (p. ix). For example, Livingstone focuses almost exclusively on European and American men. But these do not undermine the book's considerable contributions.

The principle challenge I find with the book is that Livingstone emphasizes the specter of climate determinism to such a degree that he does not offer readers any guidance on how to understand climate's agency. Perhaps Livingstone assumes readers will be familiar with work in subfields such as environment and society, and environmental history, which routinely treat the nonhuman world as a historical agent, but it would have been helpful for him to recommend some resources on climate agency.

Furthermore, it is not alarmist or deterministic to say that climate change will have impacts on food production, trade, political conflict, et cetera, even if we do not have precise predictive power. What does it look like to treat these threats probabilistically and appropriately without succumbing to determinism?

It is important to emphasize that historians and historical geographers do not need to solve the problems they describe, and they generally eschew the prescriptive. But Livingstone could have provided examples of contemporary discourse that avoids the trap of conflating past and future histories and the trap of climatic determinism.

In the end, *The Empire of Climate* is a valuable contribution to the historiography of climate, and it provides an important warning. As Livingstone shows, climate has always been socially constructed and used for political and economic gain, so there is good reason to engage the contemporary debate critically and carefully.

Note

[1]Russell Vought (@russvought), "The National Science Foundation," X (formerly known as Twitter), December 16, 2025, 8:17pm, https://x.com/russvought/status/2001099488774033692?lang=en.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF6-26Tagliapietra

PURSUING SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM: Letters Between Werner Heisenberg and Enrico Cantore, 1967–1976 by Claudio Tagliapietra, ed. Cascade Books, 2025. 316 pages. Paperback; $39.00. ISBN: 9798385243297.

Pursuing Scientific Humanism explores the nine-year correspondence between Enrico Cantore (1926–2014), a relatively unknown Jesuit philosopher, and Werner Heisenberg (1901–1976), one of the twentieth century's most influential physicists. The book includes 107 letters discovered in the archives of the Max Planck Society that were meticulously compiled, catalogued, and translated by Claudio Tagliapietra, assistant professor of dogmatic theology and associate director of the DISF Research Center on Faith and Science at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. More than just a collection of letters, *Pursuing Scientific Humanism* tells the inspiring story of a young, idealistic philosopher and a world-renowned physicist who supported and encouraged him.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I begins with an introductory chapter that provides essential historical and biographical context to the correspondence. Because of the success of modern science, rapid advances in technology, and the influence of positivist philosophy, it had become common in the early twentieth century to think of the natural sciences as objective, verifiable, and value neutral, while the humanities were considered subjective, interpretive, and value laden. C.P. Snow, in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1959), famously asserted that the humanities and natural sciences could no longer communicate with each other; he worried about the dire consequences this division could have for the world. Cantore sought to bring the "two cultures" together through what he called *sapiential scientific humanism,* which, Tagliapietra writes, "offers a different perspective on the relationship between science and humanism. [Cantore] asserts that science possesses an intrinsic humanistic dimension, serving as a source of moral dignity, educational resources, and freedom" (p. 33). Werner Heisenberg had expressed similar views in *Physics and Philosophy* (Harper & Brothers, 1958), a book that deeply impressed Cantore and prompted the young scholar to write the first letter, expressing his great admiration for Heisenberg's work and requesting a meeting to discuss the philosophical implications of quantum physics. Despite his busy schedule, Heisenberg was sympathetic enough with Cantore's project to grant an initial meeting, which led to a nine-year correspondence.

Following this historical and philosophical overview, Tagliapietra includes an intellectual biography of Enrico Cantore, written by Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti, Cantore's longtime colleague and friend. While the introductory chapter focuses primarily on Cantore's philosophy of science, this chapter highlights his Christian faith and the role that it played in his thought. For Cantore, both science and humanism were best understood in relation to Christ, the Logos through whom all things were made. "Ultimately," Tanzella-Nitti writes, "it is the origin from the Creator and the intimate and transcendent meaning that nature holds that explain why scientific research is so compelling, why it can become a life's passion, and why doing science is 'a labor of love'" (p. 35, quoting Cantore's *Scientific Man* [Institute for Scientific Humanism, 1977], p. 143). Similarly, as Tanzella-Nitti explains, Christ serves three essential functions in Cantore's humanism:

> First, the Christological reference allows him to frame the reflection on intelligibility and order in nature within a reflection on the Christian Logos, a