

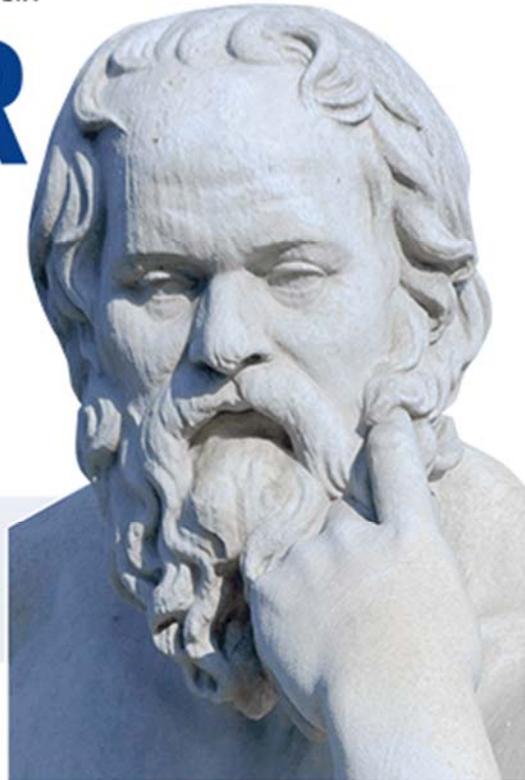
A Socratic approach on climate change

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TIME FOR CLIMATE LOGIC

*Hypothetical Conversation - Socrates
meets Mr Smith, a strong believer in
Climate Change*

The philosopher, Socrates, sought truth through asking questions. He might have employed the following line of questioning to explore the subject of global warming.



The Climate Study Group is trying a new approach with an Advert in The Australian on page 7 today. Or rather, you might say this is a very old approach...:

Socrates

Nice to meet you Mr Smith. I hear you are very concerned about dangerous global warming.

Mr Smith

Yes, we are facing an alarming prospect of a global warming catastrophe.

Socrates

What gives you such concern?

Mr Smith

Emissions of CO₂ from burning fossil fuels.

Socrates

How were these fossil fuels formed?

Mr Smith

Various plant forms grew, died and formed fossil fuels before and during the Carboniferous Period.

Socrates

Was there dangerous global warming prior to the Carboniferous Period?

Mr Smith

No. There's no evidence of dangerous global warming prior to the Carboniferous period.

Socrates

So where did the carbon in fossil fuels originate?

Mr Smith

Plants absorbed CO₂ from the atmosphere prior to the formation of fossil fuels.

Socrates

So the CO₂ absorbed by plants is now being released from burning fossil fuels.

Mr Smith

It must be so.

Socrates

You have observed there was no dangerous global warming prior to CO₂ being absorbed to form fossil fuels, so how could the same CO₂ now being released cause dangerous global warming?

Mr Smith

I find the implication of your question provocative and disturbing. You should know there is a move to bring charges against you for corrupting youth with your philosophical questions.

Socrates

I am well aware that people are disturbed by my philosophical enquiries which reveal the truth with compelling logic and facts which refute long held beliefs. Our conversation has been no exception.

Mr Smith

I have to go now.

...

Cue believers now telling us that the Sun has dimmed, don't we know, therefore even though the world was warmer 7,000 years ago, and 130,000 years ago and 250,000 years ago, etc etc, on and on, for millions of years, this particular warming is "due to CO₂" and millions of other warmer years were due to "something else".

Readers will no doubt be able to think of other Socratic approaches. :-)

UPDATE:

Alarmists have caused a malaise,
In our world, by their daft climate craze,
But their angst demagogic,
Could be cured by the logic,
And wisdom of old Socrates.

– Ruairi