

Open letter to the authorities and academic bodies of UCL

Michael Mann praised at the Catholic University of Louvain

The Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) has decided to award an honorary doctorate in 2022 to American climatologist and geophysicist Michael E. Mann (see [here](#)). It is true that this researcher has been talked about a lot. Indeed, it is the father of the "hockey stick curve" ([hockey stick curve](#)), a curve retracing the probable evolution of temperature over the past 2,000 years. With this curve, which erases the Medieval Climatic Optimum (MCO) and the Little Ice Age (LIA) (see [here](#) and [here](#)), Michael Mann has positioned himself in the camp of the catastrophists as it is reported or perceived in the media. Its curve was also taken up by Al Gore and appears in IPCC publications, from its third report. We are not going to discuss here the validity of the results obtained by Michael E. Mann during his career or his trials. This subject has caused a lot of ink to flow and we refer interested readers to other papers (see [here](#)). We just want to let you know that we consider this to be a political gesture by UCL and that Michael E. Mann holds no more truth than the other, unfortunately less famous, teams of paleo-climatologists.

You justify your decision by invoking that " *Michael E. Mann's investigations, research and creations are based on real facts to help us keep our eyes open at a time when the real has never been so weakened* ". Further on, we find the sentence: "*Renowned for the excellence of his analyses and his modelling, Michael Mann defends the veracity of scientific facts in the face of the manipulations of climato-sceptics.* »

A scientific critique of the updated curve (2021) by Mann et al. (1998) can be found on the SCE website (Science, climat et énergie, [here](#) and [here](#)).

According to UCL, therefore, Michael E. Mann would hold the true truth and we are faced with a sort of knight who fights tirelessly against climate-realists, a priori incompetent despite the presence of a large number of high-level professors, including Nobel Prize winners in their ranks. Michael Mann would therefore represent **correct reasoning**, and the climato-realists, the opposite, namely **scientific error**, and this title of doctor honoris causa 2022 acknowledges this opposition. Note also that climato-realism, a concept invented by those who "hold the truth" within the framework of the IPCC, does not reject the fact that a (slight) recent warming exists, but they discuss above all its amplitude and the respective contribution of its natural or anthropogenic origin. Many other even more pejorative terms are regularly used by proponents of anthropogenic warming to castigate those who criticize the work of the IPCC, and this gives little credit to the scientific community, to mention only this one.

Michael Mann is not the only person in the world who performs paleoclimatic analyses, but he is simply the most famous. It became so thanks to the IPCC and Al Gore who highlighted its results in 2001(see [here](#)). A recent publication [peer reviewed], published in Earth/MPDI on March 3, 2022

([Lüning & Lengsfeld 2022](#)) reminds us that Michael E. Mann is indeed not alone: several other teams have analyzed the paleoclimate archives and have also obtained curves retracing the evolution of the temperature of the last 2000 years (the details can be found in the above-mentioned Science-Climate-Energy page). These studies are based on **indirect temperature measurements**, obtained by using **proxies** (tree rings, etc.) and are therefore **uncertain and imprecise**. His is exactly the reason why the different paleoclimatic reconstructions are all different from each other. Between the year 0 [origin of the abscissa of the graph of [Lüning & Lengsfeld 2022](#)] and 1800, all paleoclimatic reconstructions show cycles (often aperiodic). These oscillations are clearly of **natural origin**, since anthropogenic CO₂ emissions were very low at that time.

The results of Mann et al. (1998) erase the warm period of the Middle Ages, yet known long before the interest in anthropogenic climate change, as " Climate Optimum of the Middle Ages "; the Lüning & Lengsfeld study shows that the temperature at the time was similar to, or even higher than, that of today. There are very many historical testimonies concerning these periods, relating to the growing of vine, the production of cereals, etc., whose geographical areas of spreading following climatic fluctuations have been painstakingly reconstructed in Europe by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (see [here](#) for a summary). The same holds for the settling of the Vikings in Greenland, reflecting again a climatic fluctuation (see [ici](#)). Historians at your university know that there was a warm period which led to great prosperity during the early 13th century, and, among other things, that this allowed the population to be better fed and grow; but later, this larger population was subjected to crises around the first half of the 13th century, precisely because of the sudden cooling of the climate which caused famines (see [here](#)).

No, Michael E. Mann does not hold the absolute truth concerning the evolution of the temperature of the past, and neither do the other teams of paleo-climatologists. The truth of the past will always be **uncertain**, because we are dealing with indirect, and by definition, **inaccurate** temperature measurements.

To praise Michael Mann is therefore a political gesture by the UCL authorities who, by this signal, are clearly positioning themselves in the camp of the "warmists". This is not a surprise, because in April 2012 the late Istvan Marko, professor at this same university, had already been the subject of despicable attacks by other professors at UCL, a petition asking to ban him from the right to communicate his thoughts even circulated (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

In this petition, we read this sentence "*In 2007, the Catholic University of Louvain chose to honor Professor Steve Schneider by awarding him the title of doctor honoris causa. Until his death, the late Professor Schneider fought to ensure that the scientific issues surrounding our climate were communicated honestly and rigorously to the public.* »

But here is what Stephen Schneider said publicly in 1989:

"On the one hand, as scientists we are ethically bound to the scientific method, in effect promising to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but — which means that we must include all the doubts,

the caveats, the ifs, ands, and goals. On the other hand, we are not just scientists but human beings as well. And like most people we'd like to see the world a better place, which in this context translates into our working to reduce the risk of potentially disastrous climatic change. To do that we need to get some broadbased support, to capture the public's imagination. That, of course, entails getting loads of media coverage. So, we have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have. This 'double ethical bind' we frequently find ourselves cannot be solved by any formula. Each of us has to decide what the right balance is between being effective and being honest. I hope that means being both."

Definitively, UCL does not honor itself by awarding this recognition to a researcher who publishes results that are blatantly contradicted by history.

Please accept, Mr. Rector, the expression of our respectful sentiments.

April 26, 2022.

Berth Paul, Prof., European University

Geuskens Georges, Prof. emeritus, University of Brussels, Belgium (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Furfari Samuel, Prof ESCP UK; Prof. emeritus , University of Brussels, Belgium (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

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