

Re: The Objectivity of Science

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- *From:* "whitesickle@xxxxxxx" <whitesickle@xxxxxxx>
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> The Objectivity of Science

> The Traditional View

> Does it Stand Examination?

> The traditional view of science is that scientists are searching for
> the truth in a disinterested and objective way. It is generally
> admitted that there are occasional dishonest scientists, but these are
> regarded as highly exceptional.

> This self-image of scientists has been subject to much skeptical

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> analysis in recent years. Sociologists of science studying scientific
> controversies have found that evidence is only one of many factors that
> influence what is accepted as authoritative. These other factors
> include funding, prestige, rhetoric and political influence. Seven
> fascinating case histories of scientific controversy are described in
> one of the key books in science and technology studies, *The Golem: What
> You Should Know About Science* by Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch
> (Cambridge University Press, second edition, 1998). This book helped
> trigger off a controversy within the scientific world called "Science
> Wars", and was attacked by "science warriors" who tried to defend the
> old image of science. In the words of Collins and Pinch, the science
> warriors "seemed to think of science as like a fundamentalist religion:
> mysterious, revealed, hierarchical, exhaustive, exclusive, omnipotent
> and infallible. The language is that of the Crusade or the Witch Hunt;
> victory, confession and retraction are the goals wherever heresy is
> encountered."

> Other discussions on the practice of modern science have focused on the
> political and economic forces that influence it. A recent critique by
> Daniel S. Greenberg, *Science, Money and Politics: Political Triumph and
> Ethical Erosion* (University of Chicago Press, 2002) gives a masterly
> overview of how big science and big government have operated together
> in post-war America. For 40 years Greenberg has produced a newsletter
> *Science and Government Report* in which he has analysed Government
> spending on science. The scientific establishment was not used to being
> held up to the same standards of accountability as other special
> interest groups but Greenberg showed that time and time again,
> scientists were as grasping as any other spending department. Far from
> being pure, research science involved money-grubbing politics,
> backroom deals, special pleading, inflated claims and scare-mongering.
> Too often, in return the public got shoddy science and waste on a
> monumental scale.

> Another area of concern has been a number of well-publicised cases of
> scientific fraud. William Broad and Nicholas Wade provided an
> insightful and comprehensive analysis of fraud and deceit in science in
> their book *Betrayers of the Truth* (Oxford University Press, 1985). As
> they express it, "The claim of science to represent a reliable body of
> knowledge rests four-square on the assumption of objectivity, on the
> assertion that scientists are not influenced by their prejudices or are
> at least protected from them by the methodology of their discipline.
> Science is not an idealized interrogation of nature by dedicated
> servants of truth, but a human process governed by the ordinary human
> passions of ambition, pride and greed, as well as by all the
> well-hymned virtues attributed to men of science." Dogmatic skeptics
> often try to discredit research in unorthodox areas by accusing
> researchers of fraud and deceit, but Broad and Wade conclude that fraud
> is much more likely to be successful in mainstream, uncontroversial
> areas of research. In controversial areas there is usually a far

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- > greater degree of skepticism and scrutiny. "Acceptance of fraudulent
- > results is the other side of that familiar coin, resistance to new
- > ideas.

- > Fraudulent results are likely to be accepted in science if they are
- > plausibly presented, if they conform with prevailing prejudices and
- > expectations, and if they come from a suitably qualified scientists
- > affiliated with an élite institution. It is for lack of all these
- > qualities that new ideas in science are likely to be resisted."

The main problem with these views of science is that they are vague as to who in hell they are talking about. Who are these scientists talked about here. Are they college faculty members? If so, do they include those in all "the sciences." What are the sciences? Is economics a science? Is political science a science? Is mathematics a science? Is economics a science? Lots of meanings are attached to the term scientist, and to science.

Response: The article was a philosophy article but it did give references. Its point was not to question whether science exists (it clearly does) but to point out Science is not an idealized interrogation of nature by dedicated servants of truth, but a human process governed by the ordinary human passions of ambition, pride and greed, as well as by all the well-hymned virtues attributed to men of science." As a result the scientific process can be corrupted and will be at times for a long time. A psychiatrist once asked me, "How can we know the ideas we follow are really reflective of reality? I replied, "Go back three hundred years before there were automobiles, airplanes and trains. Now look at the present where there is the space shuttle. Through "technological progression" we can see how are ideas are built on others and indeed are reflective of reality. The article states, "Other discussions on the practice of modern science have focused on the political and economic forces that influence it. A recent critique by Daniel S. Greenberg, *Science, Money and Politics: Political Triumph and Ethical Erosion* (University of Chicago Press, 2002) gives a masterly overview of how big science and big government have operated together in post-war America. For 40 years Greenberg has produced a newsletter *Science and Government Report* in which he has analysed Government spending on science. The scientific establishment was not used to being held up to the same standards of accountability as other special interest groups but Greenberg showed that time and time again, scientists were as grasping as any other spending department. Far from

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being pure, research science involved money-grubbing politics, backroom deals, special pleading, inflated claims and scare-mongering. Too often, in return the public got shoddy science and waste on a monumental scale." I'd suggest perhaps reading the book to see if it answers any of the questions you have. Glaringly evil examples of corrupted science in the relatively recent past include Japanese "biological research" during WWII, so-called Nazi research and science, Tuskegee untreated syphilis study, etc. Present day examples might possibly include, albeit minimally, NIH shipping in research subjects from all over the world and fishing for severely mentally ill in poor ER's to use as research subjects or brain donors. Sound farfetched? Nothing is totally impossible. Dr. Fuller Torrey was arrested for robbing a graveyard for brains. (To the moderator: Please allow me to expound a little bit on this). You see Dr. Fuller Torrey of related NAMI fame...National Alliance for the Mentally Ill...and head of Treatment Advocacy Center obviously thinks low income housing and community services for the mentally ill homeless aren't going to happen so he wants them taken off the street because they represent a danger to themselves and others. IMO, the real reason he wants involuntary detention is to use these specimens as research fodder and build up his extensive collection of brains which he works with the Stanley Foundation. Many disturbing questions and the science is shoddy...feline virus as the causative agent of schizophrenia.

You write, "If there is such a thing as *what scientists believe* there must be some organization among them that makes sure all stick to the party line. This organization must be a secret one, because no one I know of can tell me what the name of it is, or who is its chief executive officer or head guru, or whatever his title is. This "bordering on religion of science thing..." must be a secret part of the conspiratorial religion thing. How dare some scientists claim to be Muslim, some Jewish, some agnostic, some atheistic, some Buddhist, when there is only one religion common to all "scientists."

I think it is much more complex than that. Scientists who practice real science don't "believe" in anything. I think you will generally find the hard sciences to be more scientific whereas the soft sciences (such as the social sciences) are rife with shit. The social sciences can be interesting but there is more opportunity to ride on an agenda. The article states, "The traditional view of science is that scientists are searching for the truth in a disinterested and objective way. It is generally admitted that there are occasional dishonest scientists, but these are regarded as highly exceptional. In the words of Collins and Pinch, the science warriors "seemed to think of science as like a fundamentalist religion: mysterious, revealed, hierarchical, exhaustive, exclusive, omnipotent and infallible. The language is that of the Crusade or the Witch Hunt; victory, confession and retraction are the goals wherever heresy is encountered."

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I disagree with any analogy the traditional view of science is that scientists are searching for the truth in a disinterested and objective way with seeing science as like a fundamentalist religion. Science by its nature is not mysterious, "revealed", hierarchical, exhaustive, exclusive, omnipotent and infallible. Some scientists become ossified brains but history catches up with them. Science is a process and depends on methods but it must be open.

As far as, "This "bordering on religion of science thing..." must be a secret part of the conspiratorial religion thing. How dare some scientists claim to be Muslim, some Jewish, some agnostic, some atheistic, some Buddhist, when there is only one religion common to all "scientists." I think you can be any denomination, faith, etc. and be a scientist. There may be a "commonality" of scientists but it isn't religion. What bites my ass and draws blood is when I read discussions on evolutionary biology and people will automatically precede from the basis Darwinian evolution is still necessary for survival of the human species. To me this is dogma. It is "very" common. It is also IMO dangerous. I'm a believer of Darwin. Never once have I disagreed with his theory. How utterly convenient to absolve one of responsibility and operate on the automaton forces of natural selection. What a blood letting, gurgling, vomiting, hunger, disease and shit releasing death experience. Viva la Liberation!

• *References:*

◆ *The Objectivity of Science*

◇ *From: whitesickle@xxxxxxx*

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