

SCIENTISTS ARE HUMAN, TOO!

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The scientific community has been doing some soul searching of late. At the center of the issue is the question of objectivity in science. The philosophy of **scientism** would have us believe that science is the only road to truth and, therefore, that scientists are the sole guardians of knowledge. Practically speaking, most scientists probably would acknowledge that science is a human endeavor and, consequently, is subject to the imperfections of its practitioners. Nonetheless, the scientific establishment is wrestling with issues of pseudoscience, bias, and fraud.

PSEUDOSCIENCE

This first category usually includes the paranormal, various New Age beliefs, and personal encounters with UFOs. Proponents of naturalism and materialism expand this definition to include any scientific theory that challenges their personal perception of the world. Examples would be creationism, cold fusion, homeopathic medicine, and the Gaia hypothesis. Personally, I do not subscribe to the last three ideas. However, some scientists depart from objectivity in their harsh criticism of such unconventional views.

BIAS

Of course, creationists have argued that their view can compete on the same level as evolutionary theories (e.g., Geisler and Anderson, 1987). It is here that I raise the issue of bias. In the big picture, the purpose of consensus is to prevent confusion arising from unconfirmed or seemingly suspect research. Supposedly, scientists will not accept any new theory until their collective learning and experience convince them that it is better than the existing one. Still, some charge that editors of professional journals, and peer reviewers, occasionally resist publishing opposing views. Consensus should not censor, it should encourage more rigorous work.

Sometimes the resistance can be great indeed. For example, Halton Arp thinks he has found evidence that supports his theory against the prevailing Big Bang theory. However, he has difficulty obtaining access to major telescopes because other scientists do not believe he could possibly be right (Arp, 1990).

The same people, then, hardly are likely to give creationism a fair hearing. The following list is a small selection of attitudes that illustrate my point.

Faith in creation is personal and subjective, whereas faith in evolution is universal and objective (Ferrell, 1991).

Any scientific experiments that set out to confirm the Bible automatically are unscientific (Rice, 1989).

Although Werhner von Braun led America into space, his belief in creationism prevents him from being considered a "true" scientist (Jones, 1989).

One evolutionist said this in response to the young age of dinosaur bones dated by a group of creationists: "No matter what date they claim, the dinosaurs died out 66 million years ago" (Lafferty, 1991).

FRAUD

Sadly, fraud and misconduct have tainted the history of science. Perhaps the most famous example is the so-called Piltdown man, which was announced to the world in 1912. Clever forgers put a human skull with the jaw bone of a modern ape, and aged it artificially. The hoax fooled many great experts until the early 1950s, when new techniques exposed the deception. This is an embarrassing incident, not just for science, but for evolution. For almost forty years, evolutionists pointed to the Piltdown man as an example of the alleged ape-man transition. The Piltdown case has a positive side, however. It teaches us that science can correct itself, despite the consensus.

CONCLUSION

Some scientists may call creationists' views pseudoscience, look with bias on our scientific case, and present false arguments to the world, whether intentional or otherwise. However, science itself is not the enemy of truth. Certainly, science and scientists have their limitations, but we can work within those limitations to advance the cause of our Creator.

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