

The New “Process” of “Science”

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A peculiar and dangerous virus is currently infecting American public discourse. This virus pathologically transforms our language, so that our conversations with one another become garbled, confused, and ultimately meaningless. This has serious implications for science, as well as American life in general.

Newspeak in America: “Settled Science”

Words are transformed into something they never were intended to mean, or robbed of their meaning altogether. “Democracy” is set to the meaning of “republic,” “gambling” becomes “investment,” and “vice” becomes the “virtue of diversity.”

“Science” is one of the most devalued words. It is occurring in oxymoronic phrases such as “the science is settled,” with implications that we now have “scientific proof” by “overwhelming consensus.”

One can list a number of subject areas in which unsettling questions can no longer be raised without risk of being called a “denier” or a “denialist,” and of having one’s scientific credentials tainted, one’s grants terminated, and one’s academic career ruined.

We “continue to do science” on “settled issues” only in order to fill in some gaps in our knowledge, in the view of Rudy Baum, editor-in-chief of *Chemical and Engineering News*. “But the questions and gaps are not fatal flaws,” he writes.¹ Mr. Baum, who holds a B.A. in chemistry and studied medicine for one year at Georgetown University Medical School, now passes judgment on what is and is not “settled.”

Nowhere is the word “science” abused more than in the United Nations, where institutionalized mob rule is called “science.”

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

In its headlong drive to gain the power to tax and ration world energy (and thereby control world technology—sharing taxation authority with other governments in return for their support), the United Nations has created a “process,” which it calls “science.” Yet, this process is different from and, in fact, alien to science as the world has heretofore known it.

The United Nations has selected 600 willing persons with formal education in science to participate in its series of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (“IPCC”) meetings and studies. A few hundred other such persons—not quite so fortunate as to be in the select 600—also participate in these meetings. Some of these individuals are actively engaged in scientific work. Others once did scientific work, but are now largely

retired. The primary requirement for selection is a willingness to participate in the UN’s new “process” and the agenda behind it.

In UN IPCC meetings large and small, members of the chosen group study and discuss current and past research literature concerning climate and climate prediction, with special emphasis on the entirely unsolved problem of climate prediction for time periods decades and even centuries in the future. Participants also create written accounts of their deliberations. These emanations are closely observed by a very select small group of UN operatives.

When the meetings and writing are completed, this small group of observers combines the products of the meeting into a large important-looking report—carefully editing it so that it supports UN political objectives. Jonathan Overpeck, a leading signer of the UN IPCC’s summary for policymakers, and one of 600 co-recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore, described how 30 scientists met with diplomats from 113 countries until they agreed on every word of a 15-page summary of a 1,000-page report.²

At no time is this report submitted to the 600 plus “scientists” and like number of nonscientists who participated in the meeting for their final approval. The report and its shorter summary report are disseminated to the public as “settled science,” regardless of the fact that the scientists involved do not agree upon the text. After all, scientists seem never to agree. But the elite few who oversaw the meeting and interpreted its results are special. They are the UN’s anointed messengers of the truth.

This “process” looks like “science.” After all, scientists usually have academic degrees in science; scientists often have meetings to discuss research; scientists write lots of reports; and scientific meetings usually have small groups of scientists who organize the meetings and sometimes summarize the activities. But there is an enormous difference.

Scientific truths are *never* determined through such meetings; unsolved scientific questions are *never* resolved by such meetings; and scientific articles are *never* published unless every putative or listed author has personally approved every word of the publication.

Science has always progressed on the basis of observations, experiments, and thoughts published by individual scientists and sometimes pairs or small groups of scientific coworkers. In the early centuries of science, this publication was largely in the form of personal letters and occasional books. Now, there are thousands of scientific journals in which scientific work is published.

A few of these published articles are especially valuable; a greater number, while not remarkable, provide relatively mundane studies that add to the infrastructure of science; many are not useful at all; and some are completely wrong. As individual scientists read these articles, they use their own wisdom, knowledge, and judgment to separate new information that they find valuable from information that they find of lesser or no use.

Those who make good choices from the scientific literature and who conduct valuable work themselves push forward the frontiers of scientific knowledge. Others do not. There is an etiquette established by custom and culture in science. Those whose articles are judged of little or no value—and therefore are rarely referenced by other scientists—are nonetheless treated with courtesy. Even the best scientists only occasionally produce seminal work and, moreover, it is always possible that the prevailing wisdom is wrong—that an article that appears to be without value is in fact an unrecognized important new discovery.

Sometimes this process is fast because a new seminal discovery is made. Sometimes it is slow. Always, scientific progress is a result of a large number of individual decisions that trend in a specific direction. Scientific truth is never decided by meetings organized to decide which ideas are true and which are false.

If the mob rule process of the United Nations worked, many great unsolved scientific questions could be quickly solved. United Nations observers could attend scientific meetings of cancer scientists and determine the causes and cures of cancer. With the “science settled,” this scourge could be eliminated. Likewise Alzheimer disease, human aging, the origin of the universe, and other great unsolved problems could be solved. The fact is that mob rule does not work in science any better than it works in nations. No scientific question has ever been resolved in this way.

In the present case, in which UN apparatchiks have proclaimed that human activity is catastrophically warming the planet, the human cost of error is so great that many other scientists have become motivated to individually examine the evidence. Now, a total of more than 9,000 Americans with Ph.D. degrees in science, and therefore professional educational credentials that, on average, equal or surpass the UN 600—and a total of more than 31,000 Americans with at least B.S. degrees in science—have signed a petition to the U.S. government specifically rejecting the UN claim that human use of hydrocarbon energy is injuring the climate. In fact, the 31,000 scientists state that carbon dioxide released by energy production is actually beneficial to the environment. The petition, list of signatories, frequently asked questions, and other information are posted at www.petitionproject.org.

These are 31,000 individual scientific evaluations. Each scientist actually signed his name and approved the conclusion—unlike the key 600 UN participants who did not sign the UN report. Even if, however, the 31,000 had met and led each other to participate—they did not, and even if the UN 600 had signed the UN report—they did not, the vote is 50 to 1, or 15 to 1 if we count only scientists holding a Ph.D. Scientific truth is not determined by vote, but if the United Nations likes to vote, the vote, like the scientific evidence, does not support its conclusions.

Abolishing the Scientific Method

How far the UN “process” has deviated from science was described by Stephen Schneider of Stanford University, a leader among the UN 600, who now have themselves introduced as Nobel laureates. The new “science” has overthrown Karl Popper’s “false god of falsification.” The accepted theory can no longer be disproved by contrary evidence discovered by any scientist or group of scientists.³

In “systems science,” we look for “preponderance of evidence,” Schneider said. This is a “community judgment, made over time.” And who makes the community judgment—or decides who is a legitimate member of the community? “That’s why we have IPCCs and National Research Councils,” Schneider said.³

In “community”-based “systems science,” the actual evidence put forth by dissenters—as in the recent review article by Robinson et al. on atmospheric carbon dioxide⁴—is not examined. Instead, the method is ad hominem attacks¹ against the scientists themselves, the institutions for which they work, any funding sources they may have, and the journals that publish their work. This is a form of shunning, workplace mobbing, or guilt by association.

A 36-page ad hominem attack on scientists who differ with various environmentalist positions used as a basis for costly regulations states: “This study quantitatively analyses 141 English-language environmentally sceptical books published between 1972 and 2005.” Not a word of the actual argument from any of the books was examined. Rather, the article was concerned with looking for evidence of a vast conspiracy. It concludes that 92 percent of the books were somehow “linked” to conservative think tanks (CTTs), with agendas supporting such concepts as free enterprise, property rights, and limited government. Without discussing the scientific merits, the authors assert that “scepticism is a tactic of an elite-driven counter-movement designed to combat environmentalism.”⁵

The herd instinct manifested in the “process” of “peer review” constitutes a serious barrier to scientific discovery, concluded the late Thomas Gold, in reflecting on his 50-year career in science.⁶

Sham peer review, a new self-anointed peerage, and the destruction of science itself in the service of a political movement constitute an even more serious threat to science, as well as to our industry, our form of government, our freedom, and our way of life.

Conclusion

It is time to kill this counterproductive virus that has sickened American science, engineering, and medicine. Its corruption is eroding the institutions upon which we depend for our liberty, and our very lives.

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