

anchorage anarchy

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Unsettling Science

“In science, theories are always hypothetical and provisional and are a convenient method of grouping and linking known facts, as well as a useful instrument for research, for the discovery and interpretation of new facts; but they are not the truth.”

“The scientist makes use of hypotheses to work on, that is to say he makes certain assumptions which serve him as a guide and as a spur in his research, but he is not a victim of his imagination, nor does he allow familiarity with his assumptions to be hardened into a demonstrated truth, raising to a law, with arbitrary induction, every individual fact which serves his thesis.”

These quotations, taken from two articles written by Errico Malatesta in the journals *Umanità Nova* and *Pensiero e Volontà* in 1922 and 1924, respectively, resonate strongly with me when I consider what passes for science today. What struck me when I was reading Malatesta was how clearly he, a non-scientist, understood the scientific approach, how science is supposed to be done and what purpose it should serve. He believed that science is a tool to elucidate natural processes and phenomena in order to discover the underlying “laws” of nature, how things work; and that once that is understood, scientists can then study the effects of intentional or unintentional human interventions on them.

The scientific method is based on sound principles: observe phenomena, from human disease to animal behavior to the movements of the planets to changes in the weather; form a hypothesis about how and why such things happen as they do based on theory or experience; perform experiments or monitor processes and events to test that hypothesis; and then change the hypothesis if the facts revealed in the experiment differ from those expected were the hypothesis true. Such an approach, developed over hundreds of years, has yielded many good things: effective treatments for some cancers and infectious diseases, technological improvements that have improved the day-to-day lives of most of the people in the world, and multiple forms of energy generation (which is necessary to drive the other improvements).

Scientists and their patrons in government and industry, however, do not always follow this approach religiously, if you’ll pardon the expression. Data that are not consistent with the hypothesis may be rejected during studies, peer-reviewed journals tend not to publish the results of studies that fail to prove their hypotheses (although that is the case with most scientific research experiments), and some

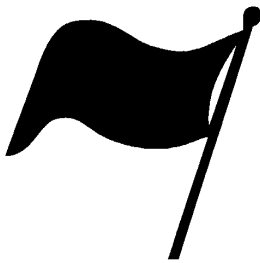
scientists engage in frank fraud—publishing papers containing made-up data. But more problematic than these types of conscious deviations from real science, is the tendency for well-connected scientists to defend their hypotheses in the face of inconsistent data and contrary scientific opinion and to stand by silently while mainstream news sources exaggerate and distort the information provided to them by the scientists, cherry-picking papers and reports for factoids that will either excite or frighten the consumers of their news products. While there is a lot of important and well-done scientific research being carried out, much of what ends up in

public view is shoddily done and politically-motivated. Unproven theories commonly become dogma and those with contrary opinions are treated as pariahs just as religious heretics were in the past. In the terms used by Malatesta, theories become truth.

The Roof is on Fire

The most obvious current example of badly done science is the hype about global warming. At the most recent international climate change gabfest, which wrapped up in Lima at the end of 2014, the political and scientific establishments once again attempted to scare the rest of us into believing in their predictions about the results of global warming while they themselves burned through enormous amounts of money extorted from working people, generating tons of greenhouse gases in needless travel, air conditioning, and other carbon generating luxuries they would deny to those of us who are not part of the smart set. As at all such conferences, the “experts” preached to the choir of their political acolytes, and the mainstream news outlets dutifully reported their “findings” as god’s own truth. To question any part of the received wisdom is to risk being labeled a global warming denier, hardly better than those who claim the nazis did not murder millions of jewish people.

Conferences such as this one resemble nothing so much as medieval church councils where the authorities agree on



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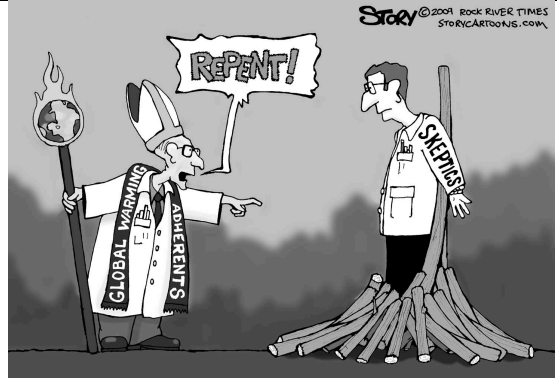
**You can reach Bad Press at:
PO Box 230332**

**Anchorage, AK 99523-0332
USA**

**www.bad-press.net
bad_press@me.com**

acceptable doctrine and castigate those who disagree as heretics. Such meetings are not conferences of independent researchers comparing data and seeking truth. They are authoritarian enterprises where the powers-that-be assemble the supporters of whatever theory or dogma they favor and try to convince the rest of the world they are right simply by presenting massive amounts of data and documents. But of course, few ever actually read the studies or position papers themselves, and rely instead on “executive summaries” or the interpretations thereof by news outlets. The fact that much of the information presented at these gatherings is not only repetitive and self-referential, but based entirely on speculative “models,” is lost on most observers, who are unlikely to have the time or ability to wade through and interpret the papers presented and discussed at these meetings. Instead we are supposed to just take the experts at their word and believe what they say, because “the science is settled.”

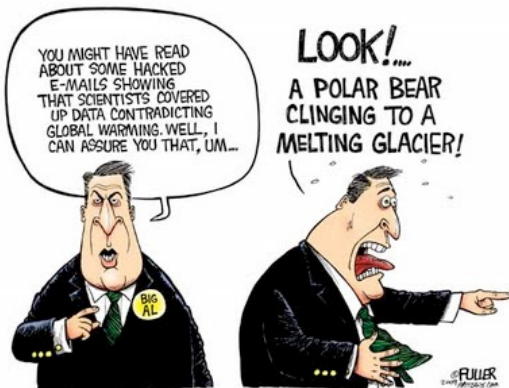
But the science sucks. Climate scientists do not all use the same data in formulating their theories—there are inconsistencies in historical temperature and rainfall records used by researchers which results in quite different predictions of what the future holds. Predictable recurrent phenomena like *la niña* and *el niño* are treated like confounding aberrations. Loss of arctic ice is portrayed as proof of establishment climate theory and a harbinger of global meltdown, while a simultaneous increase in antarctic ice is



explained away and dismissed as having no predictive significance. After superstorm Sandy and hurricane Katrina a few years ago, we were warned that this was what east and gulf coast storm seasons were gonna look like from now on, but that prophecy did not come to be. And while most people are familiar with the hockey stick global temperature graph which many think proves the case for human-caused warming, scientists minimize the fact that temperatures largely stabilized in the last 15 years or so while greenhouse gas output increased. Official climate science is riddled with inconsistencies, failed forecasts, and some simple junk science.

But the reaction of the scientific establishment has been to simply shout “the sky is falling” more loudly, more often. This is absolutely contrary to the scientific approach described by Malatesta. Instead of reexamining their hypotheses, the climate science true believers such as NOAA and similar government agencies worldwide spend billions of dollars of other people’s money chasing data that will support their

hypothesis even when easily observed phenomena and data tend to disprove it. They repeat the same observations and gather virtually the same information over and over instead of investigating conflicting evidence in depth. They dismiss facts which do not support climate change orthodoxy, claiming that one must look at trends, not isolated events, but then are inconsistent in this approach—if an individual year is hotter than the preceding one it proves their case, but if cooler has no significance since one must look at “trends.” Failed projections about weather events like more frequent and more destructive atlantic tropical storms are never voluntarily admitted to and reexamined. They are so committed to their own hypothesis that they refuse to be distracted or confused by facts that contradict it.



If the united nations, NOAA, etc are so convinced of the reliability of their theories and the data that support them, why spend so much time, effort, and money on pricey research repeatedly demonstrating alaska glaciers are

shrinking, greenland ice is melting, and ocean temperatures and pH changing? If the science is settled, why spend so much time “proving” the same thing over and over? The answer is: because this is the only stuff they can prove. The rest of their theories, such as why the warming is taking place, how warm the planet will eventually get, and what effects this will have are what is really in dispute and here they do not have reliable data to prove their predictions, whatever they may be this year. But the feeling appears to be that if they can prove some pieces of their story, they will be able to convince the world that the rest of the narrative they have woven from these few facts is also true.

That is why they are able to get away so easily with dismissing the skeptics and dissidents as “deniers.” They pretend that those who have not embraced the true faith deny that there has been a warming trend, that summer ice cover in the arctic has shrunk, and that the snows of Kilimanjaro are not what they used to be. These facts are indisputable. What the skeptics argue about instead is how much atmospheric carbon has contributed to these changes and how much have solar cycles. They challenge the predictions made about the rise in temperatures and water levels over the next century. They believe that even if further climate changes are coming the world may well be able to adapt to such changes without experiencing disastrous effects. They point out that wind patterns as well as

temperature changes play a role in the formation and melting of arctic ice. They argue that land use patterns on mountainsides likely play a larger role in the disappearance of some glaciers than does atmospheric warming. These are the points in dispute—precisely because they are the things for which mainstream climate researchers either cannot provide definite proof to support their theories and projections, or which they would prefer not to discuss at all. Since they cannot effectively put these contrary opinions to rest with data they can prove and they are unwilling to question their hypotheses in light of contradictory information, they choose to circle the wagons and denigrate and dismiss their critics.



Established Science?

It is not altogether clear why global warming has taken on the character of a latter-day religion. Some critics claim it

is a means by which governments can increase control of their subjects, restricting their access to energy sources and thereby impoverishing and more closely regulating them. But it is more likely just the same old tendency for those in power to defend the way they think and perceive the world and to try to impose their views on others. When science was young, it was not a part of the establishment, at least in the west—on the contrary, it was looked on with suspicion by the authorities, especially when the christian church dominated europe. Over time, however, as religious belief and the power of the church thankfully diminished, science and scientists looked to secular governments for patronage and often became part of the political establishment. Science was able to help industrialists make more efficient and profitable machines and governments make more lethal weapons and thus became the recipient of more and more taxpayer-funded largesse from governments. This has resulted in huge governmental scientific bureaucracies from NOAA to NIH to FDA to umpteen military research agencies. Like any bureaucracy, the scientific establishment likes to protect its influence and power. And the more powerful people—including scientists—become, the more they believe they are always right.

And science has suffered for it. The united states public health service funded research in Tuskegee where physicians failed to treat black men with syphilis in

order to study the natural course of this treatable disease. The national socialist german government funded scientists who followed the lead of the american doctors in Tuskegee and carried out barbaric experiments on prisoners to advance their scientific theories. In the soviet union, Stalin strangled real research into genetics, agriculture and biology by supporting Lysenko's nonsensical ideas and imprisoning or killing his critics. And for many years the FDA was notoriously slow to approve effective therapies for many diseases until AIDS activists forced them to stop letting people die while their interminable review process worked itself out. Today, carrying on this long tradition of state-supported "scientists" engaging in ethically questionable "scientific" research and treatment, virtually every problem in living from sadness to excitement is labeled a disorder and treated with drugs, largely at taxpayer expense.



Politicizing science has harmed people over and over. People in pain are denied the use of heroin and marijuana, while the state makes it harder and harder for physicians and others to provide them

with legal pain remedies. They are able to do this because the puritans have convinced some that recreational drug use is sinful, and the shrinks have convinced others that it is pathological. Courts are allowed to incarcerate people based on junk science like allegedly proving someone's whereabouts using flawed cellphone data, unproven fingerprint identification technology, or completely arbitrary blood alcohol levels, none of which have any firm basis in science. Meanwhile, medical research is driven by which constituency is most vocal so that funding for far more lethal lung cancer pales in comparison to that for breast cancer. Here, pink ribbon advocates and fundraisers learned well from ACT-UP and other AIDS activists how to manipulate data and exploit people's ignorance and fear in order to squeeze money out of the state.

A classic example of how politics corrupts science is contained in the 2006 united states surgeon-general's report on *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*. In it the statement is made that "There is no safe amount of secondhand smoke. Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be dangerous." There is no real research presented to back this up, but there is apparently no need for that these days when it comes to the self-evident evil of tobacco. While it can be proven experimentally that ingredients in tobacco damage cells, and epidemiology has clearly demonstrated the ill-effects of



active smoking, neither of these facts support the above statement about the danger of incidental exposure to small amounts of second-hand smoke—except in the sense that there is no safe amount of salt, since it increases some people’s blood pressure; or driving, since some people die in road accidents; or sunlight, since UV rays damage skin cells; or inhalation of car exhaust when one walks or bikes next to a roadway, since these gases too contain toxins. In these cases people are advised to reduce their exposure or risk but not to entirely avoid these things. There is no warning from the surgeon-general not to walk or drive around New York during rush hour. But the prohibitionist approach has so distorted discussion of tobacco usage that this statement was trumpeted about by newsies and the public health authorities, but never challenged—least of all by any “reputable” scientist.

The Pseudoscience of Society

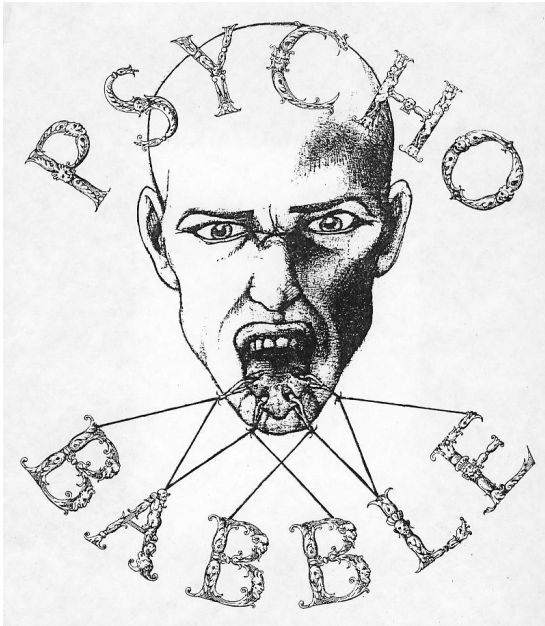
While I believe much of what passes for modern science in the fields of medicine and climate research fails to meet the standards described by

Malatesta, the real target of his critique in the articles from which these quotes were taken were the “scientific” socialists and anarchists of his day, people like the socialist Marx and anarchist Kropotkin, who believed that the methods of natural science could be applied to people and their social and economic relations. Malatesta, on the other hand, believed that human beings and their interactions could not be analyzed, nor their actions and decisions predicted, in the same way that scientists could study and hypothesize about planets, atoms, plants, and other animals. He saw that the mind and free will which people possess make them and their behavior unpredictable and thus gives the lie to determinist social theories, including those from revolutionary theorists.



The words science and scientific have an aura of truth and respectability about them that lead to people to apply these labels, even when not merited, to their own ideas and work in an effort to achieve an acceptance they might not otherwise have. While the “scientific” social change

theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have largely gone out of fashion (with the notable exception of a letter-writer whose argument for “scientific anarchism” was published in last year’s edition of *Anarchy: a journal of desire armed*), they have been replaced by a new generation of pseudosciences. Fields of study like psychology, sociology, and economics, for instance, are commonly called social sciences, but are unscientific in the extreme—with psychology being the worst. While they all involve some level of research, which generally is simply the recording of observations of human behavior, they are unable to conduct true experiments with any rigor, since they all deal with the observed behavior of people and it is impossible to accurately assess what leads to this behavior and why.



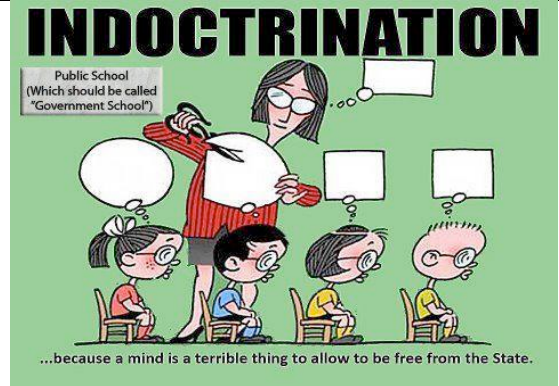
The fake science of psychology shares many of the characteristics of badly-done natural sciences. Shrinks of various sorts embrace made-up dogmas like Freud’s fairy tales about id, ego and superego or Jung’s pseudoreligious approach to people’s thought and emotional processes. Psychological researchers waste time and money researching why some people but not others engage in homosexual sex and then go on to make claims that sexual tastes are inborn when no one would dare claim the same for any other simple behavioral or emotional preference. Active children who prefer play to school are diagnosed with a disease treatable with psychoactive drugs and teenagers who resent arbitrary decisions imposed on them by authoritarian parents and teachers have an oppositional defiant disorder. And none of this psychobabble is based on anything but the presumption that current mainstream social, family and sexual habits are “normal” (in the judgmental sense of that word) and that deviation from socially acceptable behaviors is somehow pathological and worthy of study and treatment. But the shrinks, with their medical degrees and ever changing diagnostic and statistical manuals that define certain behaviors and desires as diseases, have created an aura of scientific authority around their preposterous theories, through which they attempt to enforce conventional behavior on those who rebel against the norms of societies they find themselves stuck in. Psychiatry and psychology have become

part of the scientific establishment and people like Szasz and Laing are marginalized and ridiculed for questioning the dogmas of the mind doctors.

Scientific Statism

Both the concept of settled science and the acceptance of unproven social theories as scientifically-based are valued by establishment scientists and their political supporters and funders because they make it easier for the powers-that-be to impose their version of acceptable behavior on others. But real science is about open inquiry, not control, and can never be truly established or settled. New data can always be discovered that may completely change the game. Medical research, though imperfect, often seeks real innovation and tries out seemingly crazy approaches in attempts to treat disease, especially in cancer research. Risky conjecture and skepticism regarding consensus theory is a key part of true science but is seldom seen in the big, government-funded science arena. Since critical thinking and the questioning of authority are discouraged so actively among the population at large, it shouldn't be surprising that so many scientists never overcome their upbringing and training. Authoritarian societies and education systems are pretty good at creating people, including scientists, who will go along to get along.

It is dismaying that many who are otherwise critical of much of establishment doctrine so readily embrace



fashionable but unsubstantiated scientific theories like the global warming package and mainstream psychology. A large part of the reason for the almost unquestioning embrace of mainstream climate change theory by the left and most anarchists is that the dissidents tend to be (although they are certainly not exclusively) conservatives and pro-capitalists. The fact that politicians like Gore and Obama are in bed with the scientific establishment on this issue is of no concern, but the political views of the skeptics call their dissent from the established doctrine into question. So while questioning authority might be presumed to be an essential part of the libertarian outlook, on this issue it is viewed with suspicion by far too many anarchists.

Most approaches for controlling warming embraced by the authorities call for increased state action and restrictions on individual freedom. But you can be sure that while the politicians and scientists dictate to the rest of us how we should minimize our carbon footprint,



they have no intention of cutting back on their own carbon-producing projects like building more war machines, shooting rockets into space, sending boats all over the world to test water temperature and pH, and flying themselves and their buddies to climate change conferences. We need to ration our heating and air conditioning while they need military aircraft and a fleet of SUVs to accompany them on their next junket to some meeting where they presume to dictate our actions and determine our fate.

Scientific inquiry should be free and untethered to the state or any other institution which is capable of imposing its opinions on others. Freedom of thought, rigorous research, robust and wide-ranging debate are the foundations of good science. Real science can never be settled, since new information perpetually becomes available and changes the ideas and hypotheses on which further research can be based. Discovery of new information and phenomena should be sought out with complete disregard of what the scientific authorities have put down as scripture. Such an approach requires both scientists

and non-scientists who think and act for themselves, who see things as they are and could be, and who change their opinions based on new information instead of clinging to worn-out dogmas and explaining away conflicting evidence. Exactly the kind of people suited for building a libertarian society where science, as well as every other project, is always subject to question and critique, and where dissenters are valued instead of demeaned.

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ADDSMD: A Breakthrough Discovery in Psychiatry

by Ralph Nimmo

According to the American Psychiatric Association, a new mental disorder has been discovered that is proving to be the greatest breakthrough in psychiatry in decades. According to Dr Ima Schrinquac, “ADDSMD is a recently discovered disorder, added in the latest update of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)” She went on to explain that ADDSMD stands for “Artificial Disorder Designed to Sell More Drugs.”

Dr Schrinquac tells us that “Recently a Toronto professor, Edward Shorter, claimed that in DMS-V, American psychiatry was ‘defining ever-widening circles of the population as mentally ill with vague and undifferentiated diagnoses and treating them with powerful drugs.’ We realized that he was pointing out the direction psychiatry needs to go, and so we decided to do an early revision of DSM. And in DSM-V1/2, we dropped several disorders and added the important discovery, ADDSMD.”



The discovery of ADDSMD is itself an interesting story. As Dr Schrinquac put it: “We had a plethora of disorders listed in DSM-V—ODD, ADD, ADHD, OCD, and on and on. As you can imagine, a long list like this can be very cumbersome to work with, so we began to examine whether some of these disorders might share a common trait of enough significance that we could combine them into a single disorder. And, in an example of one of the greatest recent victories in psychiatric and medical science, we discovered such a trait. Many of these disorders were invented when we discovered that there were drugs available from pharmaceutical companies that might be able to suppress a particular behavior, feeling or thought that could be considered undesirable. So there were three simple symptoms that most disorders shared: 1) the undesirability of the behavior, feeling or thought, whether to the individual experiencing them, to those surrounding her or him or to society as a whole; 2) the existence of a legal, prescription drug that could be used to suppress the behavior, feeling or symptom; and 3) our decision to call it a disorder. We have thus been able to drop a number of listings from the manual, making DMS-V1/2 the most compact version of the manual ever. ADD, ADHD, ODD, OCD, and numerous other disorders are no longer listed, because we have realized that they are merely variations of ADDSMD. We hope to make DMS-VI even more compact as we examine whether perhaps some of those who have been diagnosed with mild depression and certain forms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder

might not also actually be suffering from ADDSMD.”



Dr Schrinquac also explained that ADDSMD has made it possible to recognize a number of symptoms that psychiatrists had not previously noticed. “If a pharmaceutical company has developed a drug that can affect a behavior, feeling or thought, then that behavior, feeling or thought is most likely a mental disorder that needs to be treated. Why else would a legitimate drug developed by these fine corporations affect it?” But Schrinquac warns against assuming that every behavior, feeling or thought that can be affected by any drug is a mental disease. “For example,” she says, “the acceptance of consensus reality can be changed through the use of such drugs as LSD, mescaline or psilocybin. But these are *illegal* drugs. I would say the use of these drugs is itself a mental disorder. A mental disorder is a behavior, feeling or thought that can be affected by a *legitimate* drug, manufactured by a pharmaceutical company and approved by the FDA.”

Dr Schrinquac then explained some of the other benefits of this discovery: “I think a lot of us have realized that we live in a deeply diseased nation and world, but we haven't known the nature of that disease. Now we know. Behavior, feelings and thoughts that do not originate in proper treatment with psychiatric drugs are most likely diseased. At present, we don't have drugs for dealing with every behavior, feeling or thought. But the discovery of ADDSMD has allowed us to recognize that there is not a single person who doesn't display some symptom that can be treated with drugs. With continued research and experimentation—for which we require government funding—we should be able to find a reason to put every single American on psychiatric drugs. And Obama's health plan should allow every one of these Americans to get the drugs they need. This is the road to mental health in this country. When every American is on psychiatric drugs, we will be free of all undesirable and nonconforming behavior, feelings and thoughts. And that is mental health. In addition, by keeping the pharmaceutical companies strong, this may also be a major step on the road back to economic health. By exposing the universal reality of mental illness, the discovery of ADDSMD has proven to be a blessing in disguise. We are in fact on the path to the full acceptance and enjoyment of mediocrity and conformity. And that is the path to a healthy society.”

Fine, optimistic words from a fine example of her profession. Thank you, Dr Schrinquac.

