

# The problem with science is that so much of it simply isn't

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In the opening sentence in an article titled “Scientific Regress”, the author William Wilson remarks:

“Scientific claims rest on the idea that experiments repeated under nearly identical conditions ought to yield approximately the same results, but until very recently, very few had bothered to check in a systematic way whether this was actually the case.”<sup>1</sup>

The article is about science and the repeatability of scientific results published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. (Indented paragraphs are quoted from this article, unless otherwise referenced.)

## Claims not replicated

A group called Open Science Collaboration (OSC) tried to evaluate research claims by replicating results of certain science experiments. They replicated one hundred published psychology experiments and found 65% failed to show any statistical significance, and many of the remainder showed greatly reduced significance than originally reported. The OSC group even used original experimental materials and sometimes performed the experiments under the guidance of the original researchers.

They found, though, that the problem was not just in the area of psychology, which I don't consider hard science anyway.

In 2011 a group of researchers at Bayer looked at 67 recent drug discovery projects based on preclinical cancer biology research. They found

that in more than 75% of cases they could not replicate the published data. These data were published in reputable journals, including *Science*, *Nature*, and *Cell*.

The author suggested that the reason many new drugs were ineffective may be because the research on which they were based was invalid. This was considered the reason for the failure—the original findings were false.

Then there is the issue of fraud.

“In a survey of two thousand research psychologists conducted in 2011, over half of those surveyed admitted outright to selectively reporting those experiments which gave the result they were after.”

This involves experimenter bias. The success of a research program might be all that is required for success in the next funding round. So, what might start as just a character weakness in the experimenter ends up being outright fraud. The article states that many have no qualms in

“... reporting that a result was statistically significant when it was not, or deciding between two different data analysis techniques after looking at the results of each and choosing the more favorable.”

One writer

“... theorized that the farther from physics one gets, the more freedom creeps into one's experimental methodology, and *the fewer constraints there are on a scientist's conscious and unconscious biases*. If all scientists were constantly attempting to influence the results of their analyses, but had more opportunities to do so the ‘softer’ the science, then we might expect that the social sciences have more papers that confirm a sought-after hypothesis than do the physical sciences, with medicine and biology somewhere in the middle. This is exactly what the study discovered: A paper in psychology or psychiatry is about five times as likely to

report a positive result as one in astrophysics [emphasis added].”

## Retracted claims in the hard sciences

I work in the field of physics (experimental and theoretical). I know first hand about the pressure to publish findings. I believe it is more difficult to commit fraud in physics but I also believe there exist opportunities to do so, particularly in areas that are difficult to check. An example is where there is a heavy content of theoretical physics, and/or where statistical analyses are critical to the finding. Detection problems arise in areas such as particle and astrophysics.

Two major claims have recently been retracted.

One was the announced discovery of both cosmic inflation and gravitational waves at the BICEP2 experiment in Antarctica, which I covered extensively in 2014/15.<sup>2</sup> It was retracted only about one year after the initial announcement. In 2011 there was the reporting of an alleged discovery of superluminal neutrinos at the Swiss–Italian border, which, as is typical, was later retracted with far less fanfare than when first published. This situation involved an OPERA experiment in which neutrinos supposedly travelling faster than light were observed. A year after the OPERA claim, the co-located ICARUS experiment reported neutrino velocities consistent with the speed of light in the same short-pulse beam OPERA had measured.

In both cases, in which physics was central, independent measurements were able to check the validity of the initial claim. This, thankfully, occurs far more often in the hard sciences than other science fields. Sometimes a false hypothesis endures for a time, but eventually is overturned. Unfortunately, this is often not the case with the ‘softer sciences’, if they can be called that.



Figure 1. BICEP2 telescope at the South Pole

### Evolutionary biology masquerades as hard science

So-called evolutionary biology, for example, masquerades as a hard science when, in fact, much of it is not operational science. Operational science is testable and repeatable, is open to criticism and subject to fraud detection. After all, *science without debate is propaganda!*

But evolutionary so-called science, is more like forensic science; it is weak because it is not subject to the same testable criteria.

As the famous evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr admitted:

“For example, Darwin introduced historicity into science. Evolutionary biology, in contrast with physics and chemistry, is a historical science—the evolutionist attempts to explain events and processes that have already taken place. Laws and experiments are inappropriate techniques for the explication of such events and processes. Instead one constructs a historical narrative, consisting of a tentative reconstruction of the particular scenario that led to the events one is trying to explain.”<sup>3</sup>

In such a science, experimentation is not applicable,<sup>4</sup> but story-telling,

which Stephen Gould called just-so-stories, is.

The article goes on to criticize the inane processes of scientific paper publication, peer-review, and the difficulties in getting false notions overturned, as well of the development of the cult of ‘scientism’:

“Some of the Cult’s leaders like to play dress-up as scientists—Bill Nye and Neil deGrasse Tyson are two particularly prominent examples—but hardly any of them have contributed any research results of note. Rather, Cult leadership trends heavily in the direction of educators, popularizers, and journalists.”

These criticisms I mostly agree with, but the article was not explicit on the underlying Darwinian belief system prevalent today.

### Conclusion

That belief system—materialism, that matter, energy, and the forces of nature are all that there is—is prevalent in the scientific community. It has led to a *modern-day bias of atheism among the scientific establishment* to the point that anyone holding to a Judeo-Christian belief system must be considered weak. Darwinian evolution and big bang atheism are the

accepted beliefs on which all science is to be based. This is the worldview now held in most universities in the West. This fact has led to a moral vacuum and a situation where fraud has become more commonplace.

This has progressively established a trend as society, more and more, has abandoned the Creator. The author concludes his article with the following, which I must agree with:

“When cultural trends attempt to render science a sort of religionless clericalism, scientists are apt to forget that they are made of the same crooked timber as the rest of humanity and will necessarily imperil the work that they do. The greatest friends of the Cult of Science are the worst enemies of science’s actual practice.”

### References

1. Wilson, W.A., Scientific Regress, First Things, Institute of Religion and Public Life, [firstthings.com/article/2016/05/scientific-regress](http://firstthings.com/article/2016/05/scientific-regress), May 2016.
2. Hartnett, J.G., New study confirms BICEP2 detection of cosmic inflation wrong, February, 2015; [creation.com/detection-of-cosmic-inflation-wrong](http://creation.com/detection-of-cosmic-inflation-wrong).
3. Mayr, Ernst (1904–2005), Darwin’s Influence on Modern Thought, based on a lecture that Mayr delivered in Stockholm on receiving the Crafoord Prize from the Royal Swedish Academy of Science, 23 September 1999; published on [ScientificAmerican.com](http://ScientificAmerican.com), 24 November 2009.
4. This will be denied. The evolutionist will claim experiments in the lab confirm evolution. But it is equivocation, where the definition of evolution is changed. In the lab it is natural selection operating on mutating genes, but for a microbe to evolve into a microbiologist over 3.8 billion years a lot of new information would have to have been added, and lab experiments have done nothing to confirm this.