Chapter A.2 Failures of scientists in other issues with high public profile

It is the rule, rather than the exception, that

- *small groups of scientists are [delinquent and/or dysfunctional and/or dishonest and/or delinquent and/or hypocritical], with at least one of those traits being present in a strong dosage, and that*
- *scientific consensus is [delinquent and dysfunctional and/or dishonest and delinquent and hypocritical], with ALL traits being present in strong-to-extreme dosages.*

And yet, there are endless volumes of good work and great thinking, creative ideas and stunning insights... from this, the impossibility of the above conclusions. I'm comfortable with that.

It seems impossible to reconcile these two perspectives, and many other perspectives that one might distill from the activity. Like the gods of the ancients, scientists have a "complex character", and scientists and religious disciples so very much in certain ways, however much both groups may disdain each other.

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Introduction

[Howell 29Dec10 – This chapter is very incomplete! Only a few of the science issues are developed in an overview fashion.]

In the late 1990's, I became more involved in the climate change issue, both at work during the later stages of the development of Action Plan 2000 for Canada's climate change plans, and at home as I realised that what I had earlier ignored as a science fashion-cum-cult was then becoming a major public issue and a full-fledged religion of scientists. Having repeatedly seen similar failures in consensus scientific thinking before, and noticing some fraudulent data and dysfunctional analysis at the start of the global warming issue, I expected global warming to be another politically-correct mess and was therefore skeptical right from the start. However, there was a large amount of new data and modeling, and it takes time to identify the [dishonest and/or delinquent and/or dysfunctional and/or hypocritical] thinking by individual scientists, and the [dishonest and delinquent and dysfunctional and hypocritical] consensus scientific thinking.

There is an enormous amount of great thinking and work, but one cannot be sure which [data, concepts, models] are “more true” (even though models in general are only simplifications/ approximations), which are “useful” (even if they are wrong!), and which pose the “most fruitful questions” (even though models usually pose useful questions, even if they are wrong). My own “self-forced” approach is to sustain a diverse conceptual ecosystem of “Multiple Conflicting Hypothesis” - don't even throw out lies, as they help to balance my opinions, and keep me from becoming a proponent of an model or concept, blinding me to data and analysis that tells me that my beliefs are worn (more of this in Part II). This isn't an answer or philosophy – it's a trick that suits my own weaknesses.

However, over time, I kept noticing that the diseases of science as illustrated by the “Kyoto Premise” was typically (not rarely) being reported by [isolated, lunatic, evil] individuals for other high-profile scientific issues of high public profile for which I personally had not been involved with. These areas seem to show the same catastrophic failures of [rational, logical, scientific] thinking, the same robotic adherence to scientific [fashions, cults, religions], and the same [] behaviours reappear consistently with scientists. In the 2004 to 2006 period, these impressions became overwhelming, reminiscent of a strong impression from a favourite work.

?Alexander Solzhenitsn's? “Gulag Archipelago” describes Solzhenitsan's feelings as he is being dragged from his apartment by the police in the middle of the night. He knows that the charges are a mistake, and is almost laughing to himself as he is certain that it will all be cleared up quickly. However, he has despise for others who have been carted away in the same manner, evil people guilty of crimes and betrayal. It takes him years to realize that most other victims were innocent, that they were in the same situation as him. In the same manner, it is only in the last decade that I have recognized a general pattern of failure of scientists think, ACCORDING to the general framework of thinking ([rational, logical, scientific] thinking). Over the same period, I've also concluded that [rational, logical, scientific] thinking is limited and inadequate for complex systems, and desperately short of the mark for living systems and human systems. So it's not all bad if scientists don't comply with their stated and claimed approach to science, as will be covered in Part B.

And so it is with the science – whereas one feels that the problems with scientists are localised and limited, only occasionally getting out of hand, these are clearly general problems!

Brief comments on several science issues of high public profile

I have not worked on any of the subjects listed in this chapter (except climate change of course, as a hobby), but I have read extensively on several topics, and I have also picked up on a few others that I have come across without putting any real time into them. I have selected science issues that are (or have been) of high profile to the public, which typically involve misleading information that is strongly pushed on the public by a large scientific community (as a science fashion, cult, or religion), and for which there is a degree of active denunciation or suppression by the scientific community of those who have alternative viewpoints. A few issues that were not of such high public profile were also sneaked into the list (continental drift, standard model of the sun).

The literature on each of these issues is overwhelmingly in their support. Like one would expect of a religion, the literature is usually scathingly and (often) unjustifiably critical of scientists and their concepts that dare challenge the orthodox views. Therefore, there is little sense in my repeating the arguments of the scientists who are proponents – they are extensively covered and promoted by all standard texts and papers. I am including coverage only one or a few of the alternative perspectives for each of the issues. While the coverage is short and superficial, I warn that the critiques and alternative concepts are far from trivial, and that those who simply go with the consensus science are often making a big mistake. That is the safest approach for a scientist's career, but collectively this behaviour is VERY dangerous for science, which is entirely dependent of the rare scientists who are capable of critically assessing the basis for their beliefs. If you don't find yourself yearning for a better basis for your area of expertise, then stay with it, but please let others get on with a vital job, and as they say, try to keep an open mind. This appears to be what most scientists do, according to a “conceptual locality”, but seemingly cannot do where data, concepts, models challenge their framework of strong beliefs.

In some cases there is substantive commentary available from other sources (notably for the Velikovsky affair, the “Standard Model of Cosmology”, the “Special Theory of Relativity”, and Herrnstein & Murray's “The Bell Curve”). In the case of the “Kyoto Premise” in Chapter A.1 we have seen that Ian Plimer's book, plus a plethora of papers and books by others, provide an overwhelming documentation of the catastrophic, enduring failure of thinking by essentially all scientists on that theme and all of its principal components. Charles Ginenthal's analysis of critiques by Carl Sagan, Stephen J. Gould, and Isaac Asimov provide thorough “critiques of the critiques” used to attack Velikovsky. I might eventually classify the work of Dean Turner and Richard Hazlett's work (and Bethell and others) in the same manner, but my review of that area is still incomplete as of Dec10. I have come to feel that this kind of meta-analysis, targeted as it is on the popular and cherished [fashions, cults, and religions] of mainstream scientists is more valuable than most of the scientific work in the area. It's sad to see such strong beliefs without questioning by people who claim to be thinking all the while.

Keep in mind here that the issue is NOT which [concept, theory, model, scientist] is correct or false, as in essence most theories are incomplete, or are only approximations, and with time one idea and then the next may prove to be “most true to most scientists”, an expression with little significance. By definition almost, most alternative [concept, theory, model, scientist]'s MUST be incorrect, as a widely diverse set of concepts that conflict with one another is inconsistent with having one reality.

Astronomy & Physics

Special Theory of Relativity (STR)

What better theme to start with than a dominating scientific concept of the 20th century – the Special Theory of Relativity? In the first two decades or so (perhaps the mid 1920's was a period of substantive acceptance and the declining protests from scientists challenging the idea, although challenges still do persist), Einstein faced extremely emotional attacks on his concepts. It is therefore ironic to note that the scientists who are "true believers" in the Special Theory of Relativity have become the modern persecutors of the [liar, lunatic, foolish] scientists who dare to question, attack, or provide alternatives to the STR.

It is important for me to note that in the case of the "Special Theory of Relativity", while there is substantive material critiquing the theory, I am a long ways from going through key papers systematically. In spite of a lack of a more complete basis on my part, while short of a solid personal conviction that the science itself is better represented by other theories, I am convinced that the religious adherence of essentially all scientists to the creed of the Special Theory of Relativity has long been on shaky ground. Admittedly my content in this section is inadequate and far from convincing, but it may be sufficient to inspire rare reader to pick up the torch and investigate further.

Earlier experiments (to 1937) were held up to "prove" the STR, whereas at best what the did was to "disprove" a particular interpretation of a material ether and a particular interpretation of the behaviour of light (wave theory). At worst – several key experiments contradicted the STR, but have always been ignored or claimed to be irrelevant as they violate an "inertial framework" (of course, so do the experiments supporting the SRT). The Ives-Stilwell "Atomic Clock" experiment was apparently the first to provide "positive" support for a STR – but the authors agreed with the STR of Lorenz-Poincare, not that of Einstein. Even modern arguments which are claimed to "prove" the STR, such as the satellite-borne atomic clock adjustments for the GPS system, appear to violate the instantaneous-time paradox for different inertial frames (again, non-inertial frameworks can be evoked as a reason for this, but if nothing on Earth or around it works, what use is the theory?). Finally, as with the first non-relativistic derivations of E=mc^2 (pre-Einstein), non-relativistic approaches may better explain phenomena [see Bethell

Big Bang Theory (proper name?)

Standard model of the sun

Standard model of Cosmology

Is anything quite so ridiculous as the extreme claims by essentially all expert scientists in cosmology that the "Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation" (CMBR) "proves" anything about conditions at the beginnings of the Big Bang?

The Velikovsky affair

Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo

General science

Evolutionary theory
(historical - scientists for & against) – Darwin, Stephen Jay Gould, past & current campaigns of science versus religions

Continental drift theory of geology

Intelligence, sociology and human race – Hernstein & Murray

Environmentalism

(see Bjorn Lomborg's book!)

CFCs and the ozone layer

Kyoto Premise on climate change

Toxicity – dioxins

Peak oil

Electric cars
– oversold

Forrestry harvest

Health

Food foibles – fats, salt, sugar

smoking?

Cancer follies

Stress

Conclusions

The coverage here of other great scientific issues of high profile to the public is shallow and sporadic, only scratching the surface of the widespread failures of [rational, logical, and scientific] thinking by scientists, and especially of consensus science. Not all of the criticisms will prove to be correct, nor indeed have the problems and successes for each area been identified in anything but a haphazard manner. But to repeat a saying that appears elsewhere I this book:

In sports, it's not whether you win or you lose,
it's how you play the game.

In science, it's not whether you're right or wrong,
it's how you play the science.

It is my "soft conclusion" from the examples that scientists do not in general adhere to a [rational, logical, scientific] basis for their thinking and argumentation. Perhaps that occurs for their own very narrow scientific activities within the context of their "scientific programming" or "scientific belief systems", but outside of that context the thinking falls far short of the ideal. Hopefully the reader can recognize many of the same kinds of failures in the examples of this chapter as being similar to those pointed out in Chapter A.1 on the "Kyoto Premise". Furthermore, in many areas (typically areas of strong non-linear, chaotic, discontinuous behaviour of systems, "complexity" is a good, loose term), basic limitations are:

- not all key variables are known
- one cannot measure the key variables
- measurements are unreliable or inaccurate
- the key variables cannot be controlled precisely for experimentation
- the available models are inadequate
- the mathematics is intractable

The widespread, consistent failures of scientists' [rational, logical, scientific] thinking across a diverse sampling of issues is indicative of a fundamental limitation of the thinking and approach of scientists, and by extension, of all homo sapiens.

We expect [concept, theory, model, scientist]'s to evolve over time as the result of [rational, logical, scientific] comparison and debate. But that is NOT the case, as is well pointed out by these examples for science issues of high profile for the public. I do not have solid descriptions or explanations for the process that actually occurs. In spite of the internet and relative openness of science, many of the actions, scientists, and processes are still not fully available even to those directly involved, so we will have to be content with some degree of conjecture based on an outsider view – but at least this is across many science issues. In any case, a more detailed view of the failures of scientists' thinking is provided in Part B.

While the criteria of JUDGEMENT for the comments above is according to the scientists' own claim of [rational, logical, scientific] thinking, that is not to say that going outside of that "philosophy of thinking" is necessarily a bad thing. Chapter B.6 and Part C deal with that issue in more detail, suggesting that pre-and-post-scientific thinking are better adapted for "complex systems", possibly alone or when "hybridized" with [rational, logical, scientific] thinking. But it definitely has

implications for the strident claims of scientists to "have the truth", and whether there can actually be a reliable truth to what they claim. It also destroys the notion that if someone has a long education, experience and recognition as a scientist, that one can do no better, and that one should simply leave issues to the specialists.

Actually what we see are long-term (as much as decadal or centuries long) catastrophic failures of thinking by essentially all scientists in their own area of specialty, and the most introductory and simple levels, and looking back in history (not supported in this book), my gut feel is that has been, and always will be, the case. Going beyond the simple, introductory levels of science, its hard to believe that the thinking magically becomes infallible, as illustrated by the examples scientists' boondoggles with the "Standard Model of Cosmology".

It does seem that modern science has not matured to the extent of the humanities when dealing with complex, incompletely understood problem domains. In the humanities, while there may be similar sniping at non-conformists, at lest the is a much more general recognition of the need to acknowledge alternate viewpoints and opinions. Perhaps the advantage of the humanities is that the subject matter is so vastly more challenging than areas of "classical science", that no formal methods work in a tight, closed manner.

> *Ideas should not be treated with respected*
> *They should be tortured, mutated, dismembered, blended violently together*
> *To produce a hugely diverse bed of new ideas and concepts*
> *And a means of testing those we rely on*
> *But problems arise when scientists personally identify themselves with ideas*
> *Then an attack on an idea is perceived as a personal attack.*
> *Perhaps such is an absolute limitation of scientists.*

I think it's important to promote an [open, honest, competitive-collaborative, tolerant] attitude to science, and the idealistic "scientific method" and normal descriptions of science do that. However, as with the checks and balances in the British-style justice system, and especially in the USA constitution, it is perhaps best not to assume idealistic behaviour of humans, but to create a competitive/ co-operative systems with open information and some kind of equivalent of a ???"conceptual marketplace" and a "right to sue" to keep diverse groups in check.??? To a very large extent, modern "formal science" does provide that kind of environment with mechanisms like peer review, competitive proposals, and some (surprisingly limited) open debate, but there are clearly failures in the long-term dominance of [dysfunctional, dishonest, delinquent, hypocritical] scientific belief systems, and in the "persecution" of scientists with alternative and often better conceptual frameworks or models, even given the great availability of information. But where "formal science" is consistently failing, public web access to more and more of the scientific papers and outputs, and the ability to form world-wide networks of like-minded investigators, is leading to increasing "informal science by amateurs" and rare renegade "mainstream scientists" (ie government and academic) IS providing a far more powerful tool to deal with these behavioural and intellectual problems.

> *More often than not, it is amateur scientists and non-scientists who are carrying the torch of critical review of bad science, and the creative breakthrough thinking.*

It is like the "king who has no cloths" situation. It is also important to see that ordinary people can best the experts at their own game, and that we should NOT trust a bevy of insiders for ANYTHING.

end additions

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