

4 Of Scientific Consensus and a Wish That Came True

a sermon by Pastor Manul Laphroaig

Every now and then we see some obvious bullshit being peddled under the label of science, and we wish, couldn't we just put a stop to this? This bullshit is totally not in the public interest—and isn't the government supposed to look after the public interest? Wouldn't it be nice if the government shut these charlatans down? This is the story of a science community that had had this wish come true.

Once upon a time in a country far far away there was an experimental scientist who managed to solve a number of important real-world problems, or at least managed to convince himself and many other scientists that he did. His work brought journalists to otherwise unexciting scientific conferences and made headlines across the world.⁶ He might have ended up in history as a talented experimentalist who challenged contemporary theories to refine themselves by sticking them with examples they didn't quite cover. As his luck would have it, though, he came of age in the time and place where scientific debates were being settled by majority votes and government action.

It so happened that the government of that country was very pro-science. They took to heart the stories of scientists being kept back by ignorant retrogrades and charlatans throughout history, and they would have none of that. They were out to give science the support and protection it deserved, and they looked to it to solve practical problems. So they took a keen interest, and, being well-educated and versed in the scientific method as they were, trusted themselves to tell a true scientific theory from an obviously erring one.

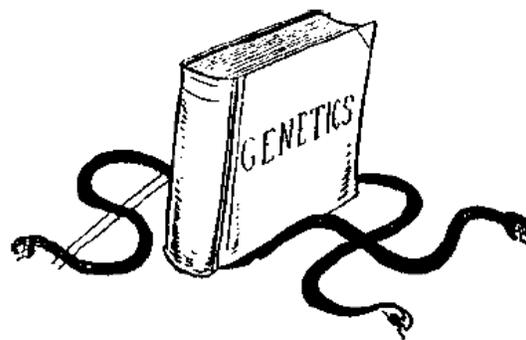
Since scientists continually find themselves in bitter debates, this ability was extremely useful. They had the power to settle such debates to reap all the rewards of having the right science and to stop those scientists in the wrong from wasting people's time and resources. Sometimes the power had to stop them the hard way, to protect the impressionable youth who could otherwise be misled by complicated arguments; but that was all right because, once the debate is settled, isn't it one's duty to protect the young 'uns from harmful influences with all the means at hand?

So our up-and-coming scientist did the right thing: he petitioned the government to suppress the erring opposition, citing his experimental successes and the opposition's failures, obvious waste of effort, and conflicts of interest. Besides his successes, he built a strong moral case against his opponents: while

his school showed exactly how to produce broad impacts for the benefit of humanity, the others mostly proclaimed that the result of any direct human efforts would be at best uncertain, that the current state of Nature might be really hard to change, and yet that humans were rather powerless against its accidental changes.

Clearly, such interpretations of science were pervasions that couldn't be tolerated. Moreover, the immediate implications of the opponents' theories obviously benefited the worst political actors of the age—and guess who funded the bulk of their so-called science? The very same regressive forces that sought to forestall Social Progress! Of course, not all of the opposition was knowingly in their pay, but shouldn't Real Scientists know better anyway, especially when the majority has had its say? Surely they have had enough notice.

The name of our scientist was Trofim Denisovich Lysenko. The reactionary pseudo-science in the sights of his and his hard-won scientific majority's rightful wrath: so-called *Genetics*. The place was the Soviet Union, 1936–48.



More precisely, it was the Mendelian theory of heredity based on genes, the so-called Weismannism–Morganism. That theory postulated that genes governed heredity, mutated unpredictably under factors such as radiation, and that mutations were hard to

⁶You'll find one such headline from the New York Times on the page 12.

direct for human purposes such as creation of new useful breeds of plants and animals. That was, of course, scandalous: didn't Marxist science already assert that environment was solely responsible for shaping all essential characteristics of life? Surely this "fear and doubt" approach of genetics that proclaimed all human beings to be carriers of countless hopeless mutations did not belong in the world of progressive sciences.



And all of this was under the banner of "pure science", even though obviously financed by and serving the interests of the imperialist ruling class!



This theory was merely re-arming the racists and eugenicists, intent on suppressing the lower classes!



There is an old word for what happens when science becomes settled by majority, and the settlement gets enforced by the government. This good old word is *Inquisition*.

Inquisition got started to protect the lay people from destructive ideas that any learned person at the time would easily recognize as false, such as that "witches" could somehow interfere with crops and flocks. It eventually sought the power of the government to enforce its verdicts and to curb the charlatans from confusing those of little knowledge. It got what it sought, and the rest is history. Which, of course, tends to repeat itself.

It was obvious that this "science" was in fact pure fascism, not matter how desperately it tried to distance itself from such anti-science atavisms.

FINDS WAY TO CREATE MORE FOOD PLANTS

Dr. Lyssenko, Russian, Crosses Varieties Having Different Periods of Vegetation.

WIDE EFFECT IS FORESEEN

Tropical Products Now Can Be Grown in North, the Genetics Session at Ithaca Is Told.

EVOLUTION SEEN AS CURBED

Haldane Says Man's Chance Is Not as Favorable Now as When He Lived in Small Tribes.

By WILLIAM L. LAURENCE.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
ITHACA, N. Y., Aug. 30.—A new discovery in plant breeding, regarded as epoch-making, which permits growing of tropical and sub-tropical fruits in northern climates and allows crossing of varieties of seeds requiring entirely different periods of vegetation was announced at Cornell University today during the last general session of the International Congress of Genetics.

This discovery, which opens the way for creation of many new varieties of fruits and other foods, was made recently in Odessa, Russia, by Dr. T. D. Lyssenko, and was reported here by Dr. N. I. Vavilov, director of the Institute of Plant Industry in Leningrad.

The process involves a relatively simple treatment of the seed before planting and will make it possible to raise such tropical fruits as alligator pears and bananas, and such semi-tropical fruits as grapefruit, oranges and lemons in New York State, New England and the Middle West. It may, if practiced on a large scale, have incalculable economic significance, in view of the fact that States like California and Florida and many tropical and sub-tropical countries have developed such large industries around their fruit products.

New York Times report from the sixth International Congress of Genetics (1932) in Ithaca, NY.

All cartoons in this sermon are by one Boris Efimov, who started his long career in Party Art by lauding Trotsky, then glorifying Stalin and calling for summary executions of “Trotskyite dogs” (which included his brother), did his humble bit in promoting first the heroic Soviet political police in 1930s, and then the “Soviet peace initiatives” and “Soviet democracy” throughout the 1960s and 70s, denouncing the imperialists and the wavering.



The Great Captain leads us from Victory to Victory!

One of his last commissions (he was over 85), was to ridicule both those who clamored to speed up Gorbachov’s “Perestroika” and those showing too much caution in conducting it—because the right way was to go in lockstep with the Party. (Just like he did in 1987, drawing pig-like Deniers of Lawless Terror worshiping the Great Captain’s blood-spattered idol.) When the Party’s power ended, he complained that “political cartooning didn’t exist anymore.”

He passed away in 2008, a paragon of sticking to just the prescribed amount of murderous blood-thirstiness at any given time, a true knight of the Party Line—and, if there is ever a Hell, doubtlessly sticking Hell’s engineers with the problem of how to reward such a sterling life achievement of toeing it ever so precisely. There are many shitty jobs in this world and the one beyond, but, believe in Hell or not, that one takes the cake.



Efimov's Trotsky: Revolutionary Saint to Fascist Enemy!