Of Science and Celia

May 11, 2009 By Paul Dalton

I am a revolutionary leftist. I hate listening to my people- other leftists- talk about science. So much left discourse on science is rooted in a fundamental lack of understanding of the scientific

method and a confusion between what science is and what scientists do.

Science is not a thing- it is not an institution, it is not an ideology, it is not a group of people. Science does not have a point of view, nor an agenda. It is a structural framework for expanding what we know. It is much like language- a tool or method fully capable of being used for good or bad, but rather neutral on its own.

Assigning motive to a method is silly. If someone bakes a rotten cake, is the baking method to blame? Is the German language to blame for Mein Kampf? Is music to blame for the Pussycat Dolls?

Science is sort of like technology- misunderstood and maligned in some quarters, misunderstood and lionized in others. The term technology simply means the collection of knowledge. Sure super fast computers are technology, but so are rotary dialed telephones and farming.

Science is just a method for learning and testing truths. Sure science is used to make atomic weapons, but so it metallurgy. Yet, so often science is treated like an entity- a coherent, self aware thing, with interests, agendas and so on.

Take the song 'Science' by System of a Down (a band I love, but this song (which rocks) makes me cringe):

> *Science fails to recognize the single most*
>
> *Potent element of human existence*
>
> *letting the reigns go to the unfolding*
>
> *Is faith, faith, faith, faith.*
>
> *Science has failed our world*
>
> *Science has failed our Mother Earth.*

First, no science does not 'fail to recognize' faith. Scientists are keenly aware of faith, and the scientific method can be used to test aspects of it, just like it can to test most anything. Tons of scientific work has been done on faith- attempting to understand what roles it plays in the world, where it comes from, how it affects disease outcomes and so on. Perhaps what Serge meant to say is that 'science fails to defer to faith' that it doesn't assign a privileged place for faith.

And how exactly has 'science failed our mother earth?' I am guessing this refers to pollution, overpopulation, deforestation, islands of plastic choking the oceans- that kind of thing. Science is not to blame, any more than George Eastman is to blame for all of those awkward teenage pictures of me.

It isn't science that causes pollution- people do. The process of polymerization- which underlies the production of plastics (and the formation of DNA) is not to blame for the ever growing blob of garbage floating in the pacific.

To take it one step further- this song seems to imply that faith- being the opposite of science (fair

enough in a sense)- is the solution to the devastation wrought by big-bad science.

Really? I mean, really, are you serious?

While it would be a gross oversimplification to assign blame for the world's wars on different systems of faith- it is beyond argument they have played a big role. Have warheads ever been fired over a difference in scientific orthodoxy? I have seen some heated arguments between the lab coat set, but wholesale bloodshed has never been the result. Can 'faith' say the same?

On an unrelated note: Celia Farber, the yellow journalistic hack is suing Richard Jefferies of the Treatment Action Group for exposing her shoddy work to a group called the Sammelweis Society. Richard is one of the true quite giants of AIDS activism- one of the sharpest knives in our drawer. Farber is denialist posing as a journalist.

Hopefully the courts will quickly see this for what it is and dismiss the case with prejudice. I will follow the case closely and give updates as they come.

In case you read this Celia- yes you are a hack, and embarrassment to the idea of journalism. The only award you deserve is the igNobel or perhaps a Pee-Ew-litezer prize for rotten writing. Worse than simply being an incompetent journalist, you actively spread the lie of HIV denialism, perpetuating a falsehood that has literally killed millions.

How do you live with yourself. Really, how?

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