

POLITICS MONEY & SCIENCE

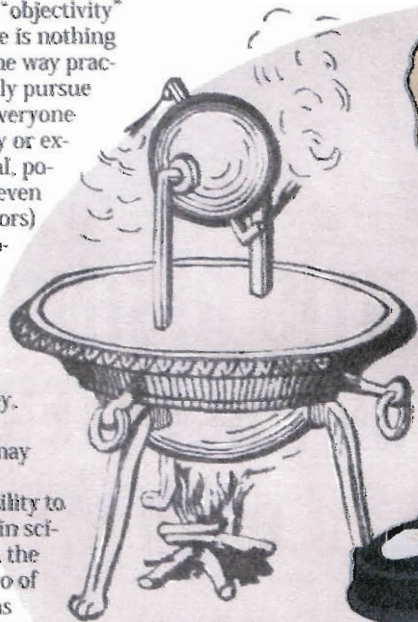
Who Really Decides Which Ideas Are Accepted and Which Are Not?

• BY ROBERT M. SCHOCH, PHD.

Despite the myth of the "objectivity" of "pure science," there is nothing fully objective about the way practicing scientists actually pursue their business. Scientists, like everyone else, are influenced either subtly or explicitly by combinations of social, political, and religious pressures (even when reacting against such factors) and by deeply ingrained assumptions and worldviews that are virtually inescapable. The status quo rewards "good" scientists, those who tow the party line, with prestige, honor, promotions, grant money, personal gain, and even wealth. But those who step out of line may be severely punished.

Politicians often have the ability to halt the serious pursuit of certain scientific endeavors. This has been the case for thousands of years. Hero of Alexandria (first century AD) was well on his way to developing an effective steam engine. However, the politicians and administrators wanted nothing to do with such a device. The Roman Empire widely employed slave labor. If mechanical engines were used to irrigate fields or for other aspects of production, what would all those slaves do? Idleness could lead to rebellion. The first practical steam engine would have to wait another 1600 years. Imagine what the world might be like today if the politicians had not squelched the invention of the steam engine two thousand years ago.

The patron of science, or of a particular scientist or field, can be all-important. A classic example is the Soviet agronomist Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976) who gained the



Hero's Engine

personal support of the dictator Joseph Stalin (1878-1953). Lysenko rose to prominence in the 1920s, garnering the attention of Soviet leaders as someone ideologically compatible with the politics of the time. Lysenko had peasant roots; he despised classic academic theory and mere laboratory work, emphasizing practical techniques to increase crop yields. Lysenko was given the helm of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences of the Soviet Union and named director of the Institute of Genetics of the USSR Academy of Science. His



Trofim Lysenko

anti-Mendelian, neo-Lamarckian (inheritance of environmentally acquired characteristics) views received high-handed official approval. Statutes outlawed dissenting views. In the end, Lysenko's "science" proved ineffective; many of his supposed results were either greatly exaggerated or simply fraudulent. Lysenko may be an extreme case, but it illustrates the abuses possible when those with power and money decide to support an





Purported excavation at "Bosnia Pyramid Site"

agenda, using science as the means.

On a different scale, I have seen the corrupting effects of money in Bosnia. I am referring to the so-called "Bosnian Pyramids" located in Visoko. Initially I was excited about the prospect of very ancient pyramids (claims circulated that they were 10,000 or more years old). Upon visiting the site, I discovered a massive hoax fueled by money, power, influence, and patronage. The major player is Semir Osmanagich, a Bosnian-American who continues to promote several natural hills as human-made ancient pyramids. He has solicited private, corporate, and government backing and funds to continue excavations there, excavations that only perpetuate the fraud by actually shaping the hills into what appear superficially to be step-pyramid structures. Osmanagich brings high-level politicians to the site, touting the great "discoveries" being made, and organizes "conferences" about the "pyramids."

While in Visoko exploring the site firsthand in 2006, I briefly met a former head of state of Yugoslavia, there to support the "pyramids" (Bosnia/Herzegovina is one of the countries that resulted from the breakup of Yugoslavia during the 1991-1995 wars), and I attended one of Osmanagich's conferences. The conference was a farce with no hard evidence corroborating the reality of the "pyramids" but rather a lot of mumbo-jumbo and ambiguous comments generated by people claiming to be scientists (archaeologists, geophysicists, chemists, geologists—you name it) who were present simply because they were being paid, and jobs were difficult to come by in the ravaged Bosnian economy. The politicians apparently knew nothing about science, and could care even less. All they were concerned about was bringing in money, and the so-called pyramids formed a

major tourist attraction, with small businesses, restaurants, and hotels sprouting up to serve the needs of the pilgrims to the site. And pilgrims they were, for they were coming to a virtually sacred site, one that engendered national loyalty and pride in the antiquity and sophistication of Bosnia's origins—supposedly older than Egypt or perhaps any other civilization. To question the authenticity of the Bosnian pyramids was to insult the Bosnian people and their heritage. Nationalism can trump scientific evidence and reason. The paradigm, the accepted dogma, in the case of the so-called Bosnian pyramids was that they are authentic. Evidence to the contrary was ignored, or worse yet, those advocating a different view were vilified and persecuted. I was reminded of the Inquisition.

This brings us to a major problem with science today: The dominance of certain ruling paradigms. Those who control the money, jobs, prestige, technical publication outlets, and popular media (whether directly or subtly) have a low tolerance for ideas that may challenge the desired result or accepted status quo. In modern America if one wants to fit in, one does not question certain sacred cows. Among these are human-induced global warming, Darwinian evolution, gradualism, global plate tectonics, Big Bang cosmology, various aspects of materialism, and historical progressionism (the general concept that history is a one-way street going from dumb old "them" to modern enlightened technologically sophisticated "us"). Various other topics are anathema and shunned by any "serious" scientist who expects to receive grant funding;

desires a decent university, government, or corporate position; and entertains publishing in the most prestigious scientific journals, which in turn are taken by the popular media as dogmatic truth worthy of reporting. Shunned subjects include non-traditional medicine, crop circles, UFOs, intelligent design, alternative archaeology (including the concept that some ancient peoples were much more sophisticated than traditionally believed), and paranormal (parapsychological) studies.

Parapsychology is an interesting case. Telepathy (direct mind-to-mind communication), psychokinesis (mind-over-matter), and precognition have been studied extensively for over a century by some of the best minds, including Ph.D. scientists and even Nobel laureates (for example, Charles Richet, Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine, 1913, and Brian Josephson, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1973). The basic phenomena have been demonstrated over and over again and even been put to practical use. There is a vast scientific literature on parapsychology, with specialized journals and societies. Yet, despite these facts, the "average scientist" does not consider parapsychology a science, and knowing nothing about the subject and evidence, feels free to make disparaging statements about the field and any of its practitioners. If anything concerning parapsychology makes it to the popular media, the press is sure to interview some mainstream "acknowledged authority" and will be fed a bunch of rubbish supposedly debunking parapsychology. To belittle parapsychology even more, the media may include comments about crystal balls, fortunetellers, false séances, or quack astrologers, thus further condemning parapsychology by association.

Given its low status, parapsychology has never been the recipient of adequate funding. In the early 1990s it was estimated that the total expenditures devoted to parapsychological studies worldwide since 1882 (the year when the Society for Psychical Research was established, beginning systematic scientific studies of the paranormal) were at most equal to two months of psychology funding in the United States. In the last 20 years the situation has only become more dire as the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) laboratory has shut down and the United States government and military are no longer (at least not publicly) funding parapsychological research or applications.

Between 1972 and 1995 the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), INSCOM (U.S. Army Intelligence Support Command), the NSC (National Security Council), and other federal departments funded, studied, and applied parapsychological techniques to military and



Brian Josephson

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BECKET'S BONES

Lastly, they might have been moved into the tomb of a French Huguenot who is buried in the Canterbury Cathedral.

It was the Canterbury theory which inspired Peregrine and Risto. During the height of the Catholic persecution of Huguenots, the French Cardinal Odet de Coligny was forced to flee to England. The Cardinal lived until 1571, when he either died a natural death or was murdered by agents of the French Church for his role in attempting to get English support for the French Hugue-



Cardinal Odet de Coligny

nots. The unusual placement of his tomb in the Cathedral may have been in the secret hiding place where Becket's bones survived the 1558 desecration. This tomb is plain, not adorned with jewels as was Becket's. And it is wedged at an irregular angle between two pillars very close to Becket's original shrine in the Trinity Chapel. Did the Archbishop and the Cardinal share a tomb? Is it possible the Cardinal's bones were repatriated back to France? The Protestant French Church never made a request for the bones, which to some is suspicious.

This is the theory according to the Raiders of the Lost Bones, Peregrine Prescott and Risto Pronk. They claimed that Coligny's death had been faked, that the Cardinal had actually returned to France alive and well. The story was a ruse that served two purposes: the Cardinal's safety, and Becket's bones had their hiding place. It also explains the reluctance of the Church in France to request the return of the bones. The Church, said the defendants, already knows. In fact the amount of research they presented in defense of their actions was unexpected. "This is the most remarkable explanation that we have heard in this court," declared the chairman of the magistrates bench. Prescott and Pronk convinced the judge that whatever they were up to, it was no mere burglary.

They were freed on probation. ■

SCIENCE & MONEY

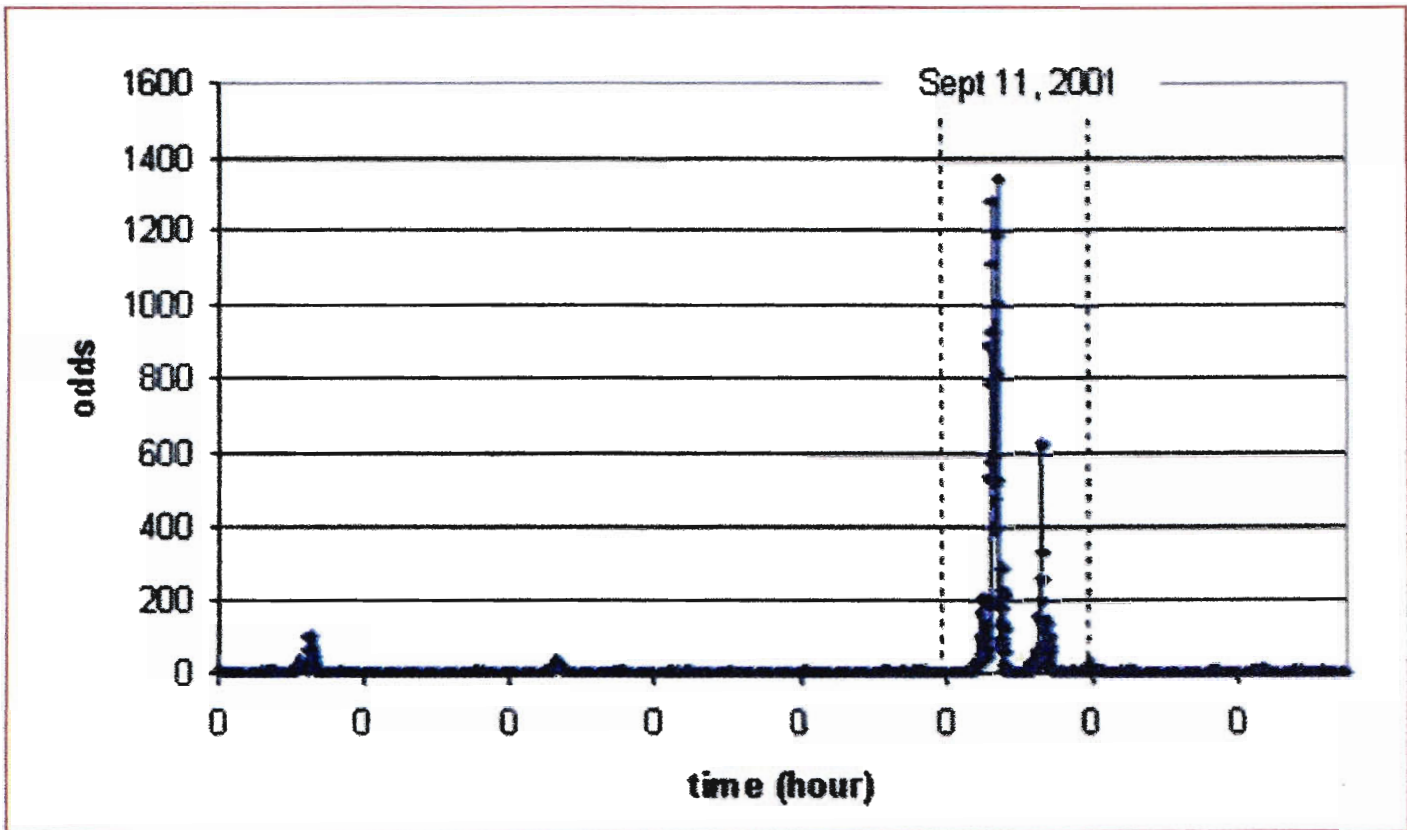
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intelligence objectives. During the Iran Hostage Crisis (1979-1981) under the Carter Administration, remote viewing was successfully utilized to identify American hostages and their locations, as well as potential escape routes. In his book, *White House Diary* (2010), Jimmy Carter mentions the successful use of parapsychology-based intelligence. "The proven results of these exchanges between our intelligence services and parapsychologists raise some of the most intriguing and unanswerable questions of my presidency... They defy logic, but the facts are undeniable." (Quoted from a *Politico* article, by Patrick Gavin, posted on the Internet 20 October 2010.)

If there is scientific evidence supporting the reality of parapsychological phenomena, and more importantly that it actually works, as testified to by a former U.S. president, why did the government stop funding such studies? Why is parapsychology held in such low regard by the scientific community and the public at large? Why is there so much disinformation about the subject? Shouldn't substantial funds be put into such a paradigm-breaking subject?

I believe the "problem" with parapsychology is indeed its paradigm-breaking aspect. The data of parapsychology suggest the possibility that mind can exist and operate independent of matter, that consciousness is a force or entity unto itself that can interact with other consciousnesses and also directly affect the material world. These concepts strike at the very foundations of a materialistic, progressive worldview, where everything can be explained by a combination of physical forces mixed with random accidents. The status quo "scientific" worldview typically leaves no room for a dualism between spirit and matter, nor even acknowledges the concept of spirit or soul as having an objective reality. To make matters worse, parapsychology takes seriously such issues as the possibility of an afterlife, disembodied spirits, and the idea of consciousness (at some level) pervading all of life and the universe.

It would seem that everything parapsychology studies, and finds evidence for, threatens the status quo currently benefiting those in charge. Modern society is built on materialism and consumerism; those with the most money have the most influence (be it in politics, business, or otherwise), and reap the material benefits of society. They want to keep it that way. Superficially it might appear that the relationship of parapsychology to religion would be more amicable, but such is not the case when it comes to many mainstream churches. Based on subservience to a god, with the intermediaries between the god and the everyday public being the officials of the church, there is little room for freedom of thought when it comes to the nature of spiritual beings, con-



The Global Consciousness Project is a parapsychology experiment begun in 1998, described as an attempt to detect potential interactions of "global consciousness" with physical systems. The project uses a geographically distributed network of hardware random number generators to uncover potential anomalies in their output that might correlate with world events that elicit widespread emotional response or focused attention by large numbers of people. The above chart shows the results for 9/11/2001 when terrorists attacked New York's World Trade Centers.

sciousness, and our souls. The dogma of the church (whichever church) should prevail and be accepted on *blind faith* without scrutiny.

While parapsychology is an example of a field shunned and disparaged by the mainstream, an example of a paradigm and dogma currently favored by the establishment scientific community is global climate change. The consensus view is that Earth is warming, with potentially disastrous consequences, and the primary culprit is human activity. In many scientific circles, to even suggest that this may not be the entire story is to face harsh consequences—loss of grant funding, diminished prestige, being passed over for promotion, inability to publish one's data and views.

The American Physical Society, like many other scientific societies, has gone on record as supporting the reality of global warming, stating (language adopted by APS Council on 18 November 2007):

"Emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are changing the atmosphere in ways that affect the Earth's climate. . . .

The evidence is incontrovertible: Global warming is occurring.

If no mitigating actions are taken, significant disruptions in the Earth's physical and ecological

systems, social systems, security and human health are likely to occur. We must reduce emissions of greenhouse gases beginning now.

Because the complexity of the climate makes accurate prediction difficult, the APS urges an enhanced effort to understand the effects of human activity on the Earth's climate, and to provide the technological options for meeting the climate challenge in the near and longer terms. . . ."

Of course such statements issued by a mainstream scientific organization become dogma virtually equivalent to papal encyclicals. They form the basis and rationale for investing major financial resources in the topic—in this case global warming.

Recently charges of academic misconduct on the part of climate change proponents made the news with the scandal dubbed "ClimateGate." In November 2009 over a thousand emails and several thousand documents were released by a hacker, acquired from a server used by the Climate Research Unit of the University of East Anglia. Allegations included the withholding of data, manipulation of data to support global warming scenarios, exaggeration of the certainty of the data supporting global warming, suppression of dissenting opinions, and plotting to re-

move people from influential positions (such as journal editors) who disagree with climate change dogma. Subsequent investigations into these charges have neither fully supported the allegations nor totally exonerated the individuals involved, but they have engendered strong feelings and exposed just how vested the interests are and how much money can be at stake.

On 6 October 2010, Harold Lewis (Emeritus Professor of Physics, University of California, Santa Barbara) sent a letter to the president of APS, resigning in disgust from the society he had first joined 67 years earlier. Professor Lewis asserts that the APS (and by extension, much of mainstream science) has been corrupted by money. To quote him,

. . . the money flood has become the *raison d'être* of much physics research, the vital sustenance of much more, and it provides the support for untold numbers of professional jobs. . . . It is of course, the global warming scam, with the (literally) trillions of dollars driving it, that has corrupted so many scientists, and has carried APS before it like a rogue wave. It is the greatest and most successful pseudoscientific fraud I have seen in my long life as a physicist. Anyone who has the faintest doubt that this is so should force himself

to read the ClimateGate documents, which lay it bare."

Even if one disagrees with Professor Lewis that global warming is the "most successful pseudoscientific fraud," his point that money drives much of modern science must be acknowledged. Those who control the money influence the science, both in terms of which topics are researched and, it would appear in at least some instances, the conclusions that are reached.

Here I am not judging the sides in the global warming debate. Personally, I am convinced that the bulk of the evidence indicates that Earth is warming. However, it appears to me that both natural and artificial factors are involved, and it is difficult to disentangle the two. Nature is not as simple as some people's thinking may be. This is true when it comes to global climate change, the interplay between matter and consciousness, evolution (evolution occurs, but is both more subtle and more complex than some simplistic formulations), or any of a myriad of other scientific issues. Even such subtleties, however, seem to threaten the status quo. Unfortunately all too often dog-

matism prevails and any freedom of thinking is confined to very narrow limits, at least if one wants to gain prestige, influence, and money while pursuing science. ■

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