



GOOD FAITH: ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL

by

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ABSTRACT

All those who are both sincerely and rationally pursuing any purposes whatsoever must: both be concerned to monitor their success or failure in fulfilling these purposes; and, wherever that monitoring reveals that a purpose sincerely pursued is not in fact being fulfilled, be ready to adopt alternative and hopefully more successful tactics in the pursuit. The present paper develops, and makes some topical and very practical applications of, this apriori theoretical insight. It contends that very often, and sometimes in extremely important cases, it is impossible to avoid a disturbing and shameful conclusion. That either the pretended are not in fact the actual purposes or, although they are, that those actual purposes are being pursued in an almost unbelievably irrational, perverse and counterproductive way. In all the cases considered here there can be little doubt but that the first of these two alternatives constitutes the correct conclusion. For there are obvious motivations of interest and/or ideology, and no reason to suspect such egregious irrationality.

Some years before the First World War a Parisian periodical asked some of the most prominent French figures in the various branches of what we would now call the social sciences, and which were known at that time in France as les sciences morales, about what they regarded as the most essential method in their field. While other respondents sent back learned methodological disquisitions Georges Sorel replied in one word, 'honesty'.

- Stanislaw Andreski¹

Suppose that someone gives vent to utterances which others, whether rightly or wrongly, consider to be perverse, contrary to manifest fact, scandalous, immoral or in some other way beyond the pale. Then, in these permissive and latitudinarian days, someone else is almost bound to come forward with the eirenic suggestion that, whatever else might be said to their discredit, both the beliefs expressed in those utterances, and the believer, must be allowed to have been totally sincere.

To this complacently charitable response it would be as appropriate as uncommon to respond in turn that such a concession constitutes a paradigm case of praising with faint damns. For, to anyone seized of the enormous possibilities of wishful thinking, of self-persuasion and of self-deception, to allow that the speaker was at least guiltless of plain, conscious, calculated mendacity can scarcely appear generous. Neither can the fulfilment of so universal and absolute an obligation serve as the basis for awarding any kind of

diploma. To warrant that we need something more; perhaps that the speaker's pronouncements were, however mistaken, an outcome of a sincere and open-minded search for the truth; or that he is already obeying his proposed practical imperatives, however unacceptable to us, at some self-sacrificial cost.

1. Defections from plain and simple honesty

Certainly Georges Sorel was calling for honesty in more than that most narrow and minimal understanding. Yet it still needs to be noted, before going after more, that even the most elementary minimum is not always supplied - not even in the physical and medical sciences. For instance: some years ago, under the headline 'The Professor is a fraud', The Economist (London) reported how a "highly respected worker in the field of cancer research was exposed as having painted black areas on experimental mice to simulate the results he desired", and that in the USA the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had "had to move against one of the country's leading cardiologists, a Professor of Medicine at the University of California at Irvine, for reporting false results with patients".

A case with results far more unfortunate and wide-ranging than those of any then mentioned by The Economist was that of William McBride. He was for a long time falsely credited with having done the research which revealed the teratogenic effects of the drug thalidomide.² He therefore received a ready hearing for his later claims that his laboratory tests

on chicks and rabbits had shown that Benedictin, a drug very widely used to treat hyperemesis grvida (morning sickness in pregnancy) was similarly teratogenic. It was, suggestively, The National Enquirer which in October 1979 broke this story, touching off an explosion of tort litigation.³ The company marketing Benedictin - which had been approved by the FDA in 1956, from which about a million women a year had been benefitting, and to which some even owed their lives⁴ - incurred over a hundred million dollars in legal costs, and in 1984 was forced to withdraw this still FDA-approved product from the market. Although there is not and never has been any good reason to believe that Benedictin either has caused or will cause birth defects, nevertheless the legal threat remains. So the company has decided that it cannot afford to reopen the production and marketing of this entirely beneficial substance.

Charges of outright scientific fraud were first brought against McBride on an Australian television programme in December 1987. According to two of his colleagues, he had not only named them as co-authors of the critical rabbit paper without their consent but in it had "altered results to strengthen inconclusive experiments with the rabbits". He had not in fact tested as many rabbits as he claimed to have done, he had employed no controls; and he had not been accurate in reporting the doses given. In November 1988 an investigative committee chaired by an Australian Chief Justice and actually appointed by Foundation 41, the outfit established to support McBride's post-thalidomide researches, categorically confirmed

all these charges: "The experiment...was not conducted in accordance with proper scientific method and was not honestly reported....Dr McBride was lacking in scientific integrity."⁵

A similarly flagrant dishonesty and lack of scientific integrity is sometimes found in the area of les sciences morales. Thus, in a double-edged tribute to Marx as Politician (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1983), David Felix described "The Civil War in France, argued with his superb disdain for the facts", as "the last of Marx's polemical masterpieces" (p. 175). Judging by measures of political influence rather than by the standards of historical scholarship, it was indeed an extraordinary achievement. For though Marx himself, in a letter of 22 February 1881 to Ferdinand Nieuwenhuis, admitted that the Paris Commune of 1871 "was in no sense socialist, nor could it have been", this book succeeded in persuading generations of followers that really the Paris Commune had been the first Communist coup, providing the prime model for a "dictatorship of the proletariat".

Lenin, having unreservedly endorsed the obituary claim of Engels that the contribution of Marx to the social sciences was on all fours with that of Darwin to biology,⁶ accepted that compelling yet mendacious compilation as a faithful account of wie es eigentlich gewesen. So it was not the Commune as it actually was but the Commune as misrepresented by Marx which became Lenin's guide and inspiration as, during the August and September immediately preceding the Bolshevik October Coup, he worked on his State and Revolution.

One clear and memorable example of that "superb disdain for the facts" is the assertion that all elected Councillors and appointed functionaries had "to do their jobs at workingmen's wages". The truth was that the 6000 franc annual wage which the Deputies of the Commune voted for themselves and set as a maximum for state officials was over ten times the amount being paid to members of the National Guard defending Paris.⁷ To all appearance altogether unaware that in The Civil War in France Marx had been behaving as a premature Leninist, systematically lying for the sake of the revolution, Lenin quoted the relevant falsehood: "From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workmen's wages. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves."⁸

2. Sincerity of purpose and not so simple honesty

There is much more still to be made of Sorel's reply. The first essential is to grasp the simple, fundamental truth about logically necessary connections between sincerity of purpose and the constant, alert monitoring of success or failure in the achievement of sincerely pursued purposes. For sincerity in the pursuit of any purpose whatsoever absolutely presupposes a strong concern to discover whether and how far that purpose has been and is being achieved. Furthermore, if and in so far as the agent becomes aware that it has not been or is not being achieved, and unless there is a readiness to attempt alternative and hopefully more promising tactics, we

cannot truly say, even if it was originally a sincere commitment, that that purpose still continues as the same commitment pursued with the same sincerity as before.

Suppose, for instance, that someone is so old-fashioned as to proclaim a Quest for the Holy Grail. And suppose then that, almost before the fanfares have died, they settle for the first antique-seeming mug offered by the first fluent rogue in the local bazaar. We surely have to say that this neglect of any systematic inquiry, this total lack of interest in either the true history of the purchase put in the place of honour on the mantelpiece or the evidence that perhaps the real thing does survive somewhere, all conspire together to show that, whatever else they may have been after, it certainly was not to unearth and acquire the vessel actually employed in the original Last Supper; if such there was.

Again, since many find it hard to accept that a point so down-to-earth can be enforced by an illustration so far-fetched, consider two more pedestrian alternatives. Suppose someone professes to be in business in order, no doubt among other things, to turn a profit; or suppose that the captain of a cricket team says that he is playing, no doubt again among other things, in order to win. Then what credence could we give to these professions if there is no care to keep, in the one case, accounts and, in the other, the score? Descartes used to say that he preferred to judge what people sincerely believe by what they do rather than by what they say. The same shrewd principle applies equally well to the determination of true intentions and actual purposes.

The next step is to relate these logically necessary connections to recommendations famously made by Sir Karl Popper.⁹ These recommendations refer to both theoretical science and practical policy; the word 'policy' being employed both here and throughout the present paper as the adjective not of (state) 'politics' alone but of (all) 'policies'. In each case Popperian methodology can be seen as the direct and necessary outcome of sincerity in the appropriate purposes. It is the more worthwhile to represent these recommendations in this way as much as he himself seems never to have done so. His apparent reluctance, and the consequent failure to deploy what is perhaps the most powerful supporting argument, are probably to be explained by reference to a generous yet unrealistic unwillingness to recognize discreditable distractions or even sheer bad faith in any of his academic opponents.

The aim of all theoretical science - let it be said loud and clear and without hesitation - the aim of all theoretical science is truth; or, if for any reason truth is unattainable, then the nearest possible approximation. But if the truth is what we are sincerely seeking, then we have to adopt what Popper calls the critical approach. For people who truly want to discover the truth, like knights who with pure hearts and single minds seek the Holy Grail, will not rush recklessly to embrace unexamined candidates.

The kind of criticism called for here is, of course, only and precisely that which bears upon the question of the truth of what is criticized. This needs to be said because what is

actually offered as an objection to, or a criticism of, some proposition may be an expression of concern not so much about its truth or falsity as about its acceptability or unacceptability upon entirely different grounds. This is perhaps most common with claims about the consequences of policies. But it is also found with some less immediately practical contentions. Consider, for instance, the sort of response received during the last twenty or more years by those psychologists and others who have dared to challenge the substance of a pronouncement made by the US Department of Labour in 1965: "Intelligence potential is distributed among Negro infants in the same proportion and pattern as among Icelanders or Chinese, or any other group... There is absolutely no question of any genetic differential."¹⁰

One striking example of such truth-indifferent criticism is the case of Michael Levin,¹¹ a Professor of Philosophy in the City College of the City University of New York. He published in the Australian journal Quadrant an article in which he asserted: that "there is now quite solid evidence that...the average black is significantly less intelligent than the average white"; and that, despite enormous efforts to "bring American Negroes into the educational mainstream ...they continue to exhibit disproportionately high rates of illiteracy, dropping out, absence from the more prestigious disciplines, and other forms of academic failure."

In a meeting on 20 October 1988, a meeting at which Levin was not enabled to appear in his own defence, the Faculty Senate of City College voted overwhelmingly to condemn his

article as "racist", and to disassociate themselves from his "abhorrent racist utterances". Since Levin has at no stage even been accused of practicing or advocating racist discrimination, in the sense of advantaging or disadvantaging individuals for no other and better reason than that they happen to belong to this racial set rather than that, that resolution must be construed as a condemnation not of alleged or actual bad behaviours but of admittedly heretical beliefs.¹² Apparently none of the academics so quick and so eager to condemn Levin for these heretical beliefs has ever been enough interested in the academic question of their truth or falsity to request to be referred to his evidence for asserting them.¹³

But now, to return. As everyone knows Popper proceeds to maintain that scientists should start by making bold conjectures, conjectures apparently fitting all the available facts while also carrying extensive implications about what else must be the case if these bold conjectures are indeed correct. But then, paradoxically, true scientists must, just because it is the truth which they are seeking, strenuously strive to falsify those conjectures; that is, to show that they are, after all, false.¹⁴ The implication is that though they will naturally want their own theories and their own hypotheses to turn out to have been correct, honest inquirers must, to the extent that they are indeed sincere truth-seekers, necessarily labour to show that all theories and hypotheses proposed, and especially their own, are, after all, false.

That, surely, is too much to expect of human nature? But it is by no means too much to demand that theorists should always be frank and honest in recognizing and taking account of apparent falsifications once these have been produced and presented by others. Take as a shining example Darwin's completely sincere and singleminded pursuit of truth. It was this that prompted Freud to commend "the great Darwin", because "he made a golden rule for himself, writing down with particular care observations which seemed unfavorable to his theory, having becoming convinced that just these would be inclined to slip out of recollection."¹⁵

Compare and contrast the typical behaviour of Marx, revealed by a never too often quoted letter to Engels dated 15 August 1857. This letter is also noteworthy in that it reveals much, if not all, of what Marx meant by the dialectics (or the dialectic method), which are (or is) in the published works, though never adequately explained, sometimes confidently commended:

I took the risk of prognosticating in this way, as I was compelled to substitute for you as correspondent at the Tribune....It is still possible I may be discredited. But in that case it will still be possible to pull through with the help of a bit of dialectics. It goes without saying that I phrased my forecasts in such a way that I would prove to be right also in the opposite case.¹⁶

As Engels remarked in his memorial address, after deploying very different considerations: "So war dieser Mann der Wissenschaft!"

3. Sincerity in the pursuit of practical policies

Whereas the single aim of theoretical science is truth the purposes of practical policies, and of the institutions established for the implementation of those policies, and the fulfilment of those purposes, are as multifarious as human desires. Yet parallel considerations apply here too. Suppose you want to claim that it was in order to secure some particular goods that a policy was originally introduced, and that those are still the objectives for which it continues to be sustained. Then you have to show that the people who first introduced the policy, and the people who now support and sustain that policy and its related institutions, were, and are: both keen to monitor success or failure by that same stated standard; and, if it turns out that the policy is not producing the desired results, ready to change course.

This argument can help us to understand Popper's advocacy of what he distinguishes as piecemeal, reformist, social engineering as opposed to the wholesale, Utopian, revolutionary alternative. This advocacy springs from his sincere and rational concern for the welfare of the subjects of such social engineering - for, so to speak, the socially engineered. Thus the crucial objection to the wholesale Utopian variety precisely is that this must make impossible the effective monitoring of success or failure in achieving

the goods supposedly intended by the social engineers. It therefore makes it equally impossible for them to recognize and to learn from their mistakes: and then to apply the lessons learnt to the amendment of their policies. So there is an obvious Popperian answer to what was once a frequently pressed question: 'Just how wide-ranging and upsetting does a programme have to be before its implementation ceases to count as piecemeal, and begins to rate as wholesale, social engineering?'

It is: 'Just so soon as it becomes impossible effectively to monitor success or failure, and to make cybernetic corrections of perceived mistakes.' Popper himself says: "...the reconstruction of society is a big undertaking which must cause considerable inconvenience to many and for a considerable span of time. Accordingly, the Utopian engineer will have to be deaf to many complaints: in fact it will be part of his business to suppress unreasonable objections. (He will say, like Lenin, 'You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.') But with it, he must invariably suppress reasonable criticism also."¹⁷

Since, both in the USSR and in numerous other countries subjected to similar regimes, such exercises in wholesale, Utopian social engineering have been and still are being executed in the name of what has traditionally advertized itself as Scientific Socialism, it is very much to the point to quote Popper's counter-claim - that the critical approach would "lead to the happy situation where politicians begin to look out for their own mistakes instead of trying...to prove

that they have always been right. This - and not Utopian planning or historical prophecy - would mean the introduction of scientific method into politics, since the whole secret of scientific method is a readiness to learn from mistakes."¹⁸

The word 'politician' must not of course here be construed as referring to professional politicians only. For the fundamental contention about the logically necessary connections between sincerity of purpose, rationality, a concern to monitor the effectiveness of the means employed to achieve sincerely pursued purposes, and a readiness to change course if those putative means are found not to be achieving the purposes actually pursued, is a contention which is relevant wherever and whenever anyone claims to be pursuing any purpose whatsoever. What, for instance, are we to think of either the rational pretensions or the sincerity of teaching purpose of those professing teachers who are opposed to any independent inquiry into what and how much their pupils have actually succeeded in learning?¹⁹

This fundamental contention is, therefore, applicable almost everywhere. But it seems that its most important, disturbing and often startling applications and in what are today two extremely extensive areas. The first is that of putative research findings offered in support of or opposition to contentions about the harmful, harmless or positively beneficial character of various sorts of substances.

In examining such issues we have to eschew the Naderite assumption that the only operative motive for not sincerely seeking the truth is greed, and that exclusively the greed

imputed to privately owned, for profit corporations.²⁰ For here as elsewhere the motives of the crucial agents can be and are very various. There are also the hatred of capitalism, the furthering of a political or legal career, the maintaining or extending of a bureaucratic empire, or indeed almost anything else. The most conspicuously greedy people in the Benedictin cases mentioned earlier were in fact the tort lawyers. (Very understandably, these are believed to be among the most substantial contributors to Nader's campaigns.)²¹

The second area of most fruitful application is to the Welfare State machine - those more or less monopolistic public organizations which together provide health, education and welfare services unpriced or almost unpriced at the point of supply. Presumably this application is as fruitful as it is because these organizations and those who - Shall we say? - person them are not subject to the disciplines of the market. Their 'customers' are not able easily, or perhaps at all, to transfer their 'custom' to any alternative, competing supplier.

When the Social Affairs Unit (SAU) was founded in London in 1980 the stated aim of its Director, Dr Digby Anderson, was "to break the spell of the welfare state". His contention was that it "distributes the burden of proof unfairly It consumes public money, and it is its obligation to prove that it is not wasting it..." So the proper function of the external critic is "to...prick, chide and goad a self-satisfied web or self-perpetuating bureaucracy into giving an account of itself..."²² For it is all too easy for those

professionally involved in these institutions to obstruct any independent investigations which may succeed in getting started; or, failing that, at least to seem thoroughly to discredit their findings. The insiders can, and will, reply to every objection - often quite truly - that the outsiders are out of touch, or misinformed and out of date: nothing was ever wrong or, if it was, it is already being put right.²³

To Anderson's already strong case we must now add, as what Bishop Berkeley might have called "the killing blow", that rational professionals sincerely and singlemindedly devoted to producing the relevant services will have no difficulty in meeting the SAU challenge: not only because, as insiders, they enjoy the insiders' privileged access to information: but also because, as sincerely devoted professionals, they will already have been making every effort to monitor the effectiveness of their own performance. And, furthermore, the same rational and sincere commitment ensures that they have been constantly concerned not only to maintain but also to improve productivity. For rational people sincerely dedicated to the production of any kind of good cannot but study to economize; that is to say, deploy to maximum effect whatever resources may from time to time become available to them.

4. Sincerity in the Welfare State machine

It is not altogether inappropriate to speak here of a "killing blow". For when we begin to apply these ideas to Welfare State institutions we frequently find failures to

keep adequate records of what actually is being achieved.²⁴ Such records are, or would be, records of the output of these service industries. But without comprehensive and reliable indices of production it is impossible to develop satisfactory measures of productivity. Then, in the absence of any satisfactory measures of productivity, it becomes: both impossible to develop rational policies for the improvement of productivity; and all too easy to suggest that the sovereign remedy for all perceived deficiencies in the service provided is increased inputs of resources.

In these circumstances it seems to be widely if tacitly assumed that in these peculiar industries output is always a direct and simple function of input. So, since in everything human there are always deficiencies to be perceived, those who person such public services are forever complaining of underfunding; with the implication that all would be well if and only if even more money were to be showered upon institutions of which the present services are perceived to be deficient. These complaints are then echoed, endorsed and broadcast by Opposition politicians, especially when the main party in Opposition happens to be a creature of the labour unions.

In union spokespersons and their allies such claims and complaints, and the obviously false assumptions upon which they are based, are doubtless only to be expected. But it should be shocking to hear a former Minister of Education, who before becoming a Member of Parliament had been a Fellow and Tutor in Economics, arguing in calm and considered print:

".....expenditure on education rose from 4.8 per cent of GNP in 1964 to 6.1 per cent in 1970. As a result, all classes of the community enjoyed significantly more education than before."²⁵

The (state) maintained system of primary and secondary education in the UK, the system over which the author of that last quotation had earlier presided as Minister of State, is one in which these maintained schools are owned and subject to what until quite recently was a comparatively modest amount of central regulation, run by 104 Local Education Authorities (LEAs). But these LEAs are more aptly described as Local Education Monopolies (LEMs), since they in fact cater for between 93 per cent and 94 per cent of all the children in relevant cohorts. Since independent schools cater for between six and seven per cent of the market this system is perhaps not, very strictly speaking, a monopoly. But then, is there any anti-monopoly legislation anywhere in the world which would not be activated long before a single supplier had achieved a 75 per cent or 80 per cent, much less a 93 per cent market share? All this too is before we take account of the fact that these monopolists are operating a policy of predatory pricing. For they supply their services without any direct charge to their consumers.²⁶

It is most remarkable - yet still more remarkable that this should so rarely be noticed and protested as a scandal - that there never has been any comprehensive and independent²⁷ system for assessing the performance of this huge monopoly industry, an industry which is by any criterion one of the

largest in the country. The independently assessed national examinations -GCE and CSE—and their significantly less independently assessed successor GCSE, were specifically designed to cater only for the top 60 per cent of the whole ability range. No school-leaving examinations have ever been similarly directed at the bottom 40 per cent. So we find that up to half of all those who choose to drop out of the system at the first legal opportunity leave without any credible certification showing how much, if at all, they have benefited from all their years of compulsory education.

Even where independently assessed examinations have been taken there is strong opposition to the publication of the results in any form which might license conclusions relevant to the improvement of educational practice. Thus the National Union of Teachers (NUT), which was at the time by far the largest of the teachers' unions, proclaimed its "total opposition" to the clause in what became the 1980 Education Act requiring every maintained school to publish the results obtained by its pupils in these examinations.

Two reasons were offered for this "total opposition": first, that publication in this form would be misleading; and, second, that it would lead to the compilation of "league tables". Certainly the publication of the bare results, with no supplementary information about the peculiarities of the intakes into the schools in question, could be extremely misleading. But no school has been forbidden to add whatever further information it sees fit to include.

Ideally what is needed is an algorithm for determining, by reference not only to examination results but also to other relevant indices, the Educational Value Added (EVA) by each school. Given an adequate measure of EVA or some tolerable approximation thereto, then competition to raise positions in "league tables" becomes exactly what is needed for improving educational performance.

The failure or, perhaps better, the refusal to produce the evidence which would be yielded by independently assessed school-leaving examinations for the bottom 40 per cent is egregiously scandalous. For it prevents those who are presumably most in need from receiving reliable evidence of their educational achievement and - hopefully - consequent employability. Also, of course, it makes it much more likely that their educational achievement will not have been such as to recommend these pupils to potential employers. For, if only there had been such independent tests, then unsatisfactory results - unless these had been successfully concealed²⁸ - would presumably have stimulated improvements in the educational practices thus shown to have been ineffective.

Another rarely remarked consequence of this failure or refusal is that whenever committees are established to report on and make recommendations about levels of literacy or numeracy they have to begin by somehow constructing their own more or less conjectural estimates of the extent of the problem, and then proceed to develop their equally speculative suggestions as to how the deficiencies thus estimated might best be remedied.²⁹ If only adequate and comprehensive tests

were being given within the system itself, then such inquiries could start from the firm findings of these tests. Next they might proceed to compare the performances of different schools, and from these comparisons learn what teaching methods are most effective. The result would surely be an unusually useful report.

Certainly, as was argued earlier, to the extent that individuals or organizations are sincerely and wholeheartedly committed to teaching, then they must be insistently concerned to discover, by the most reliable test methods, what and how much their pupils have learnt. It therefore becomes very difficult not to infer the absence of such commitment from the apparent lack of that concern.

5. Supposed science and allegedly harmful substances

The second area for the most fruitful application of the ideas expounded in Sections 2 and 3 is the offering of putative research findings in support of or opposition to contentions about the harmful, harmless or positively beneficial character of various sorts of substances. Here the besetting evil is the presentation of research reports which have not been subjected to and survived energetic peer criticism as if these constituted definitively established scientific findings warranting and indeed imperatively demanding immediate litigation and/or regulatory action.

Take as a first example the case of the unsavoury wastes dumped in the Love Canal in New York state. The question at issue was not whether they were toxic - that they undoubtedly

were - but whether they had done or were likely to do any physical harm to any of the people living close by. The case exploded when in 1978 the New York State Commissioner of Health issued a report entitled 'Love Canal: Public Health Time-Bomb'. The Governor was then quick to announce that all the 236 families living around the canal would be permanently relocated. In the ensuing panic President Carter ordered the evacuation of a further 700-odd families, which in turn was made permanent after a few months.

All this happened before there had been any peer review of the original research reporting an increase in asthma, urinary disorders, suicides, epilepsy, spontaneous abortions, birth defects, and most of the other evils to which flesh is heir. Once such a review was at last made - once, that is to say in Popperian terms, the reckless conjecture of a 'Public Health Time-Bomb' was subjected to strenuous truth-directed criticism - it emerged that there was absolutely no good reason to believe that any illness or disability whatever can properly be attributed to living near Love Canal.³⁰

Take as a second example the case against 'passive smoking', which expression is defined as meaning the inhalation of tobacco smoke produced by other people. Here the misbehaviour is not so much leaping to welcome conclusions on the basis of some paper not yet subjected to strenuous peer criticism as refusing to give due weight and attention to criticisms made; and/or, after assuming that some degree of risk has been proved, vastly exaggerating that risk by misleading presentation.

Two of the studies most often cited are by T. Hirayama and by D. Trichopolous. These have been subjected to devastating criticisms. Yet their evidence is described by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of Australia as "strongly suggestive" and by the US Surgeon-General as "compelling".

So how do these authorities deal with objections? The NHMRC in its report grasped the nettles firmly. Only the original and incorrect calculations of risk-ratios given by Trichopolous et al. were quoted: no mention was made of the total recalculation of risk-ratios produced by W.D. Heller and accepted by Trichopolous. The Surgeon-General did give the corrected values. But he attributed them to Trichopolous et al., 1983, where they do not of course appear; thus relieving his readers of possible anxieties about research workers who had got all their original calculations wrong. The Surgeon-General made no mention of the enormous miscalculations made by Hirayama in the 1981 paper, and later admitted by him. The NHMRC Report had nothing at all to say about errors, whether admitted or not.³¹

In 1988 Her Majesty's Stationery Office published the Report of the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health. It claimed that the non-smoking wives of smoking husbands have a 30 per cent higher chance of contracting lung-cancer than the non-smoking wives of non-smoking husbands. Assuming that this is true - certainly a considerable assumption - then it sounds as if the former set of non-

smoking wives would be well advised to start nagging their husbands to break the smoking habit.

But things begin to look very different once we learn that the annual death rate from lung-cancer among non-smoking wives of non-smoking men is of the order of six per 100,000, while among the non-smoking wives of smoking men the corresponding figure is eight per 100,000. Thus two in every 99,994 non-smoking wives of smoking husbands die of lung-cancer which, it is claimed, should be attributed to passive smoking. That is an exposure risk of just about one in 50,00; about the chance, we are told, of tossing 16 heads in a row with an unbiased coin.³²

The third, and it will have to be final, example is the largely if not exclusively North American war against a factitious epidemic of cancer supposedly produced by allegedly carcinogenic (industrial) chemicals in the environment. The definitive study of this phenomenon is Edith Efron The Apocalypitics: How Environmental Politics Controls what we know about Cancer (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1984). One of the many lessons to be learnt from this massive book is that in this area the self-interest of capitalist corporations - customarily epitomized in the abusive monosyllable 'greed' - is not the only or even the most important motive for producing shoddy or outright dishonest work.

Thus Efron quotes from a report in Science for 1977 about a monitoring and inspection programme performed by Carl Blozan, a research analyst for the FDA, at 42 laboratories in different parts of the USA. Measured against the proposed FDA

standards the (capitalist) "corporate laboratories come out on top, followed by contract labs, and, at the bottom, labs at institutions of higher learning". None of the universities included in this study had a better than 50 per cent compliance score. Further enquiry revealed that part of the explanation for these "seemingly incongruous" facts was that many of the academics were not themselves doing the work which they had contracted to do, but were dumping it onto inadequately supervised graduate students. The fact that corporate testing was scientifically superior to university testing "would surprise many consumer advocates" wrote the author of that Science report; who was obviously also himself surprised (pp. 238-9).

We may appropriately conclude by quoting from an article in the Radical journal Science for the People: "My reading of the cancer epidemiological data is that there is still no convincing evidence for a chemically induced cancer epidemic". Nevertheless "people are moved to act on what they perceive as 'outrageous misconduct' by people who have put profit before the health and safety of their neighbours (or their workers)". So, though there is, thus admittedly, "no convincing evidence" of any such misconduct, we 'progressive scientists' can reasonably hope to be believed when we continue to "expose the corporate greed at the root of many outrageous instances of excess cancer among workers or in the communities".³³

NOTES

1. Social Sciences as Sorcery (London: Deutsch, 1972). p.232. This book was later Pelicanned.
2. See Peter Huber Galileo's Revenge: Junk Science in the Courtroom (New York: Basic, 1991), p. 126; also the references provided in the Notes thereto.
3. For a full account of this 'only in America' affair see the whole chapter, 'Nausea: The Massed Legal Attack', in Huber 1991.
4. Ibid., p. 111. Huber claims that Charlotte Bronte might not have died in 1855 had Benedictin been available then.
5. Ibid., pp. 112-3, 116-20, and 125-9; also, of course, the references provided in the Notes thereto.
6. Thus in 1894, in his second publication, Lenin wrote: "It will now be clear that the comparison with Darwin is perfectly accurate" (Vol. I, p. 142 of the Collected Works). For an extensive critique of that obituary claim compare my Darwinian Evolution (London: Granada/Paladin, 1984), III 3.
7. See B.D. Wolfe Marxism: 100 Years of a Doctrine (London: Chapman and Hall, 1967), Ch. 8; and compare Felix 1983, pp. 166ff.
8. Quoted at Vol. XXV, p. 419 of the Collected Works.
9. See The Open Society and its Enemies (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1945. Fifth Edition 1966).

10. For the best available account of all these cases, see Roger Pearson Race, Intelligence and Bias in Academe (Washington, DC: Scott-Townsend, 1991).
11. Pearson 1991, pp. 275-286. I am also employing material from personal contacts and communications.
12. For a development of this distinction in the present context, see my 'Three Concepts of Racism' in Encounter for July 1990.
13. For a short summary of the present state of the debate among the researchers, see the letter of protest reprinted in Pearson 1991, pp. 279-80.
14. Popper thus contends that the proper method of science, whether natural or social, is that of Conjectures and Refutations (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).
15. Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, translated by Joan Riviere (London: Allen and Unwin, 1922), p. 61.
16. No one so far has ever been able to meet my challenge to point to a passage or passages in the Collected Works of Marx and Engels in which anything is ever admitted to constitute a difficulty for what in their correspondence they regularly described as "our theory" or "our view".
17. Popper 1945, Vol. I, p. 160.
18. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 163: emphasis added.
19. For a critique of such opposition, compare 'Teaching and Testing', Chapter 6 in my Sociology, Equality and Education (London: Macmillan, 1976).
20. Where the law of product liability is as strong as it is today in the USA corporations have an overriding interest

in discovering whether a product is harmful before they risk putting it on the market.

21. See, again, Huber 1991; and compare Peter Huber Liability: The Legal Revolution and its Consequences (New York: Basic, 1988) and Walter Olson The Litigation Explosion: What Happened when America Unleashed the Lawsuit (New York: Truman Talley Books-Dutton, 1991).
22. Digby Anderson (Ed.) Breaking the Spell of the Welfare State (London: Social Affairs Unit, 1981), pp. 29-30: emphasis original.
23. See the title article in Anderson 1981, and compare Chapter 1 in Digby Anderson The Ignorance of Social Intervention (London: Croom Helm, 1980).
24. See, for instance, 'Do-gooders doing no good?', in M. Brenton and C. Jones (Eds.) The Yearbook of Social Policy: 1984-5 (London, and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985). Compare too Anderson 1981, passim.
25. C.A.R. Crosland Socialism Now (London: Cape, 1976), p. 20.
26. For a critique of this socialist monopoly as such see 'Educational Services: Independent Competition or Maintained Monopoly', in David Green (Ed.) Empowering the Parents: How to Break the Schools Monopoly (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1991), pp. 15-53; and compare my Power to the Parents: Reversing Educational Decline (London: Sherwood, 1987), Chs.1-4.

27. This qualification is of the last importance. For where teachers are allowed to have the last word in assessing the learning achievement of their own pupils, they are necessarily and at the same time also appraising their own success as teachers. But to permit this is to permit such teachers, in violation of one of the fundamental principles of natural justice, to act as judges in their own cause.
28. The importance and significance of this proviso was underlined when recently a whistle-blower revealed the previously concealed results of reading tests given by nine LEMs to all the seven year olds in their charge. To a substantial decline over the last five years the only response from these authorities had apparently been to attempt to maintain secrecy rather than to improve performance. See Martin Turner Sponsored Reading Failure (Warlingham, Surrey: Ipset Education Unit, 1990).
29. See Flew 1987, pp. 107-8.
30. See, for instance, Aaron Wildavsky 'If Claims of Harm from Technology are False, Mostly False, or Unproven, What Does that Tell Us about Science?', in D. Anderson (Ed.) Health, Lifestyle and Environment: Countering the Panic (London: Social Affairs Unit, 1990), pp. 112-6.
31. See J.R. Johnstone 'Scientific Fact or Scientific Self-Delusion', in Anderson 1992; a modified extract from J.R. Johnstone and C. Ulyatt Health Scare: The Misuse of

Antony FLEW's paper - (final version and
conference version) for Committee 6 of
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