



The most serious and pervasive of all misconceptions about evolution equates the concept with some notion of progress, usually inherent and predictable, and leading to human pinnacle. Yet neither evolutionary theory nor life's actual fossil record supports such an idea, according to paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould in *Ladders and Cones: Constraining Evolution by Canonical Icons*.

To us, this means evolution skids sideways like a

How to spot a bastard in a lab

(Even though all scientists look the s

Buick fishtailing through slush. Evolution is not a journey from simple to complex that would ever occur the same way twice if you could "rewind the tape and start it again," a metaphor used by the late Gould. Barring natural catastrophe, it seems we're all stumbling through unrepeatable historical events adapting to environmental conditions that are changing as a result of political decisions. Since evolution in no way guarantees progress we must rely on reason and human institutions.

Climate change

In the news this week is the latest pathetic round of the United States pissing in the world's face on climate change. At the UN climate change conference in Bali, America's last minute agreement to allow a footnote which references the 25-40 percent reduction in carbon emissions suggested by the EU is held up as progress. In order to reach this generous compromise, the rest of the world has to settle for a "roadmap" to nowhere, an agreement to really talk about climate change at Copenhagen in 2009. The rest of the world has good reason to believe that Americans are hopelessly full of shit and by "Americans" I mean "our corporate masters." Even George Bush says he now agrees with the science which means that the consensus is so solid that even the most powerful man in the world who has everything to gain by stalling the reduction of carbon emissions can no longer deny it. It's just that reducing carbon emissions would be "bad for the economy" - the forces of political conservatism

simply do not include the condition into their cost-benefit analysis.

There are endless opportunities to the privatization of science. The oil-company scientists who dispute the reality of climate change see their credibility erode. There is broad agreement about the need to act, but that doesn't stop the holdovers from claiming evidence to the contrary is in the hands of Al Gore. When it comes to climate change, we are clowns.

Biotechnology

In the example of biotechnology applied in agriculture, it might appear that the scientists insist genetically engineered food the public can rest assured. But anyone who investigates for themselves will find a scientific work that casts huge doubt over the biotechnology industry. The science of genetic engineering in agriculture has been fully politicized. Science is so tightly interwoven with the political agenda to patent, engineer, and control the supply.

The chemical and pharmaceutical industry's shopping spree and essentially purchased the seed trade but practically the entire domain. The Reagan era gave us the patenting of genes, the epidemic of conflicted interest that has led to the corporate infiltration of academia. The result is a world grown with genes engineered from organisms that are "substantially equivalent" to non-engineered organisms. The shrines in public policy. The public is told that genetically engineered food is both so similar to natural food that the process by which they are created need to be studied and yet so novel a category that genes can be patented.

The biotech companies who wrote the regulations submit a "voluntary consultation" on the safety of engineered food. The result is characterized by secrecy and an absence of safety studies, while rampant patenting creates an ethical black hole by forcibly privatizing humanity's fundamental common resources.

Scientists who dare to bring up the issue of immunosuppression, and loss of nutrients, have their careers destroyed. Scotland's Alan Wallace, whose negative health effects of rats fed genetically engineered potatoes. He was a hero for 48 hours before two mysterious phone calls led to the dissolution of his research group. It's a common occurrence since for scientists whose findings contradict the notion of "substantial equivalence."

It is generally acknowledged that the public's stake in something skews one's objectivity. Independent science is crucial in evaluating issues as far-reaching as the safety of engineered food. When it comes to biotechnology, the dissenters are the only ones who come to the fore.

Figuring out which scientists and politicians should follow the same principles is a complex task. Corrupt politicians - follow the money.

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How to spot a bastard in a lab coat

(Even though all scientists look the same)

Buick fishtailing through slush. Evolution is not a journey from simple to complex that would ever occur the same way twice if you could “rewind the tape and start it again,” a metaphor used by the late Gould. Barring natural catastrophe, it seems we’re all stumbling through unrepeatable historical events adapting to environmental conditions that are changing as a result of political decisions. Since evolution in no way guarantees progress we must rely on reason and human institutions.

Climate change

In the news this week is the latest pathetic round of the United States pissing in the world’s face on climate change. At the UN climate change conference in Bali, America’s last minute agreement to allow a footnote which references the 25-40 percent reduction in carbon emissions suggested by the EU is held up as progress. In order to reach this generous compromise, the rest of the world has to settle for a “roadmap” to nowhere, an agreement to really talk about climate change at Copenhagen in 2009. The rest of the world has good reason to believe that Americans are hopelessly full of shit and by “Americans” I mean “our corporate masters.” Even George Bush says he now agrees with the science which means that the consensus is so solid that even the most powerful man in the world who has everything to gain by stalling the reduction of carbon emissions can no longer deny it. It’s just that reducing carbon emissions would be “bad for the economy” - the forces of political conservatism

simply do not include the condition of the environment into their cost-benefit analysis.

There are endless opportunities to examine the politicization of science. The oil-company-funded dissent by scientists who dispute the reality of human-induced climate change see their credibility eroded every day. There is broad agreement about the need to reduce carbon emissions, but that doesn’t stop the holdouts and deniers from claiming evidence to the contrary is being suppressed by Al Gore. When it comes to climate change, the dissenters are clowns.

Biotechnology

In the example of biotechnology and genetic engineering in agriculture, it might appear that enough reputable scientists insist genetically engineered food is safe and the public can rest assured. But anyone who chooses to investigate for themselves will find a deep body of scientific work that casts huge doubt over the claims of the biotechnology industry. The science of genetic engineering in agriculture has been fully politicized because the science is so tightly interwoven with the corporate agenda to patent, engineer, and control the world’s food supply.

The chemical and pharmaceutical industries went on a shopping spree and essentially purchased not only the seed trade but practically the entire discipline of biology. The Reagan era gave us the patenting of living things and the epidemic of conflicted interest that resulted from the corporate infiltration of academia. The fallacy that food grown with genes engineered from other species is “substantially equivalent” to non-engineered food is enshrined in public policy. The public is told that engineered food is both so similar to non-engineered food that the process by which they’re created does not need to be studied and yet so novel and unique that their genes can be patented.

The biotech companies who wrote their own regulations submit a “voluntary consultation” to the FDA on the safety of engineered food. The regulatory process is characterized by secrecy and an absence of meaningful safety studies, while rampant patent abuse has opened an ethical black hole by forcibly privatizing seed, one of humanity’s fundamental common resources.

Scientists who dare to bring up the allergic effects, immuno-suppression, and loss of nutritional value have their careers destroyed. Scotland’s Arpad Pusztai detailed negative health effects of rats fed genetically engineered potatoes. He was a hero for 48 hours at his institute before two mysterious phone calls led to his firing and the dissolution of his research group. It’s been downhill ever since for scientists whose findings contradict the dubious notion of “substantial equivalence.”

It is generally acknowledged that having a financial stake in something skews one’s objectivity. This is why independent science is crucial in evaluating something as far-reaching as the safety of engineered food. When it comes to biotechnology, the dissenters are heroes.

Figuring out which scientists and sciences are compromised should follow the same principle as rooting out corrupt politicians - follow the money.

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