

Gonzo Science
Anomalies, Heresies,
and Conspiracies

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A lexicon of blowhards

Beware your pop science essay collection, kids. Some of this whiz-bang stuff is paper-thin.

Even John Brockman's popular science book, *The Third Culture*—an otherwise laudable attempt to facilitate sharing between scientists and the public—perpetuates some of the worst ideas in the field.

There are exceptions. For instance, conservative biologist Richard Dawkins, the lion of reductionist mechanism, is published right alongside Brian Goodwin, a holistically minded biologist that Dawkins probably shuns as a neo-Vitalist.

That's nice to see, but, here at Gonzo Science HQ, we're all, *Richard Dawkins? Why include him at all?*

He is the most establishment figure you could possibly invite. His ideas aren't new. If anything, Dawkins provides the very latest totally old ideas.

Brockman's other books—essay collections he's edited, such as *Science on the Edge* and *What's Your Dangerous Idea?*—are stimulating in the main.

But, in general, they have a reductionist-mechanist thing going on and, as anyone knows, reductionist mechanism is our sworn enemy.

The "third culture" promoted by Brockman strains under its elitist pretensions: "[S]cientists and other thinkers in the empirical world...redefining who and what we are."

Yeah, see, that's what we're afraid of actually. Isn't this the same crew that's been fucking up the program in the first place?

We're all for a culture of scientist-philosophers, but they better not ram genetic engineering down our throats. Has the Exxon-Valdez of nanotechnology happened yet?

We like the Edge Foundation and Brockman's books; there's just a lot of bitchy cherrypicking we can do among his choice of who to include and what they say.

Brockman's idea of "edge" scientists forming a "third culture" could only be improved by properly locating the edge. It's is not so much "science on the edge" as "edgy scientists from the center."

Or from the right, like an execrable essay ("Government is the problem not the solution") by Matt Ridley in *What's Your Dangerous Idea?*

His spectacular "dangerous idea" was to cut government regulation—in 2007, scarcely before the highly unregulated market went kablooyo.

Is this the guy we want writing about the genetic code? A fact-free, free-market glibertarian?

What is this clown doing in a brainiac science book, spouting manifestly incorrect ideology like a cranky old man shooing kids off his lawn?

Was he included for balance? The "dangerous idea" was letting him contribute to the book.

The cosmologists in *Science at the Edge* are a depressing parade of establishment names, featuring the latest window-dressing on the Big Bang's fatal health problems.

Alan Guth? Cracker, please. This is the guy who got big by saving the Big Bang's ass in a little move called "inflationary theory"—a huge "theory patch" meant to make certain anomalies disappear.

Guth's writing style is insufferable: "It's often said...that we are in a golden age of cosmology. That's really true."

Amazing! His *own age* is **the** golden age! As if paradigms in cosmology will *never shift again*.

In "The Cyclic Universe," Paul Steinhardt, a giant in conventional cosmology, lovingly details the Cyclic Universe theory—his *own theory*.

As we pointed out in our own book, *Gonzo Science*, it's verrrry similar to a rejected theory by outlaw astronomers Fred Hoyle, Geoffrey Burbidge, and Jayant Narlikar—the Quasi-Steady State Cosmology (QSSC).

The QSSC posited a cyclical universe to resolve anomalies in the Big Bang theory, not only by proposing a cyclical expansion to the universe, but by ditching the "big bang" entirely. Of course, this was unacceptable to the dominant paradigm.

Then Steinhardt comes along, fancy as you please, and finds a way to graft together the Big Bang, the Inflationary theory, and the idea of a cyclical universe—but in a way that's satisfactory to the establishment, thus saving the Big Bang.

God forbid anyone should acknowledge the similarity to outlaw QSSC, because then credit might go where it is due.

New book by author Mike Palecek of Cloquet

Cover art by Brian Barber of Duluth

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