Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics

JIME

ISSN 2601 - 5749, ISSN-L 2601 - 5749

published by

Center for Socio-Economic Studies and Multiculturalism
Iasi, Romania
www.csesm.org

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EDITORIAL

SCIENCE, PSEUDOSCIENCE AND CULTURE

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Scientific information is decisive for evidence-based decision-making. Still, in recent years the authority of science has been contested. The low public trust in scientists leads to concerns. Research suggests that political and ideological divides play a significant role in science rejection, with individuals sometimes disregarding scientific facts that contradict their beliefs.

Carl Sagan considers that it should be *an exquisite balance between two conflicting needs: the most skeptical scrutiny of all hypotheses that are served up to us and at the same time a great openness to new ideas.* In today's world, fostering both skepticism and openness is even more critical, especially with the rapid spread of misinformation.

Yuval Noah Harari reveals that science is based on rejecting the fantasy of infallibility and proceeding to construct an information network that takes error to be inescapable. Even the geniuses made mistakes, and even the most celebrated scientific tracts are sure to contain errors and lacunae. Since even geniuses suffer from confirmation bias, you cannot trust them to correct their own errors. This is what makes science so powerful—it embraces correction and revision rather than clinging to absolute certainty. Science is a team effort, relying on institutional collaboration rather than on individual scientists or, say, a single infallible book. Institutions too are prone to error, but they reward skepticism and innovation rather than conformity. Scientific institutions are also different from conspiracy theories, inasmuch as they reward selfskepticism. This built-in skepticism is what allows science to progress.

While science is generally held in high esteem, its epistemic and cultural authority has been challenged by mis- and disinformation, historical failings of science, an alleged "reproducibility crisis", conspiracy theories, and science-related populist attitudes. Despite these challenges, science remains a self-correcting process, constantly refining knowledge through peer review and empirical testing. Strengthening public trust requires transparent communication, ethical research practices, and engagement between scientists and society.

In a research based on the outcomes of World Values Survey, (waves 5, 6 and 7), focused on Romania, I approached the perceptions on science and technology from a cultural point of view, with a special emphasis on religion.

On the one hand, most of the respondents agree that science and technology are making our lives healthier, easier, and more comfortable, that because of science and technology, there will be more opportunities for the next generation, that the future changes should emphasis more on technology, and that the world is better off, because of science and technology. Despite this, the perception on importance of science in daily life it is quite balanced. A balanced perception means that people engage critically with scientific information while also appreciating its contributions. On the other hand, when it comes to science and religion, most of the respondents agree that we depend too much on science and not enough on faith, and that whenever science and religion conflict, religion is always right. Despite this, the perception on the bad effects of science that it breaks down people's ideas of right and wrong it is quite balanced. Transparency, accessibility, and education help maintain

this balance, ensuring that the public remains informed without falling into blind trust or outright rejection.

A special remark on confidence in universities that can be considered drivers of innovation in societies. Most of the respondents are confident in universities but there is a significant decline in the last decade. Efforts to rebuild trust often focus on affordability, workforce alignment, and transparent communication.

A global survey focused on the concerns of a widespread lack of public trust in scientists reveals that in most countries surveyed, scientists and scientific methods are trusted, scientists perceived competence, benevolence, and integrity are high, but perceptions of scientists' openness are comparably lower. Therefore, scientists wishing to gain more public trust could work on being more receptive to feedback, transparent about their funding and data sources, and invest more effort into the types of public communication desired by a large majority of the public. Public trust grows when people feel included in the scientific process rather than being presented with conclusions from a distance.

Science is different from pseudoscience, and history is different from pseudohistory, not only in evidence and plausibility but in how they change. Science and history are cumulative and progressive in that they continue to improve and refine knowledge of our world and our past based on new observations and interpretations. Each new discovery, whether in a lab or an archaeological site, builds upon past knowledge, correcting errors and filling gaps. Pseudohistory and pseudo-science, if they change at all, change primarily for personal, political, or ideological reasons.

If we are living in the Age of Science, then why do so many pseudoscientific and non-scientific beliefs abound? Religions, myths, superstitions, mysticisms, cults, New Age ideas, and nonsense of all sorts have penetrated every nook and cranny of both popular and high culture. A 1990 Gallup poll of 1,236 adult Americans showed that percentages of belief in the paranormal that are alarming. Factors such as cultural cycles, media exposure, and interpersonal influence contribute to their persistence.