

Open Letter by the Editor-in-Chief

Declaration of Academic Freedom (Scientific Human Rights)

Article 1: Preamble

The beginning of the 21st century reflects more than at any other time in the history of Mankind, the depth and significance of the role of science and technology in human affairs.

The powerfully pervasive nature of modern science and technology has given rise to a commonplace perception that further key discoveries can be made principally or solely by large government or corporation funded research groups with access to enormously expensive instrumentation and hordes of support personnel.

The common perception is however, mythical, and belies the true nature of how scientific discoveries are really made. Large and expensive technological projects, howsoever complex, are but the result of the application of the profound scientific insights of small groups of dedicated researchers or lone scientists, often working in isolation. A scientist working alone is now and in the future, just as in the past, able to make a discovery that can substantially influence the fate of humanity and change the face of the whole planet upon which we so insignificantly dwell.

Groundbreaking discoveries are generally made by individuals working in subordinate positions within government agencies, research and teaching institutions, or commercial enterprises. Consequently, the researcher is all too often constrained or suppressed by institution and corporation directors who, working to a different agenda, seek to control and apply scientific discovery and research for personal or organizational profit, or self-aggrandisement.

The historical record of scientific discovery is replete with instances of suppression and ridicule by establishment, yet in later years revealed and vindicated by the inexorable march of practical necessity and intellectual enlightenment. So too is the record blighted and besmirched by plagiarism and deliberate misrepresentation, perpetrated by the unscrupulous, motivated by envy and cupidity. And so it is today.

The aim of this Declaration is to uphold and further the fundamental doctrine that scientific research must be free of the latent and overt repressive influence of bureaucratic, political, religious and pecuniary directives, and that scientific creation is a human right no less than other such rights and forlorn hopes as propounded in international covenants and international law.

All supporting scientists shall abide by this Declaration, as an indication of solidarity with the concerned international scientific community, and to vouchsafe the rights of the citizenry of the world to unfettered scientific creation ac-

ording to their individual skills and disposition, for the advancement of science and, to their utmost ability as decent citizens in an indecent world, the benefit of Mankind. Science and technology have been far too long the handmaidens of oppression.

Article 2: Who is a scientist

A scientist is any person who does science. Any person who collaborates with a scientist in developing and propounding ideas and data in research or application is also a scientist. The holding of a formal qualification is not a prerequisite for a person to be a scientist.

Article 3: Where is science produced

Scientific research can be carried out anywhere at all, for example, at a place of work, during a formal course of education, during a sponsored academic programme, in groups, or as an individual at home conducting independent inquiry.

Article 4: Freedom of choice of research theme

Many scientists working for higher research degrees or in other research programmes at academic institutions such as universities and colleges of advanced study, are prevented from working upon a research theme of their own choice by senior academic and/or administrative officials, not for lack of support facilities but instead because the academic hierarchy and/or other officials simply do not approve of the line of inquiry owing to its potential to upset mainstream dogma, favoured theories, or the funding of other projects that might be discredited by the proposed research. The authority of the orthodox majority is quite often evoked to scuttle a research project so that authority and budgets are not upset. This commonplace practice is a deliberate obstruction to free scientific thought, is unscientific in the extreme, and is criminal. It cannot be tolerated.

A scientist working for any academic institution, authority or agency, is to be completely free as to choice of a research theme, limited only by the material support and intellectual skills able to be offered by the educational institution, agency or authority. If a scientist carries out research as a member of a collaborative group, the research directors and team leaders shall be limited to advisory and consulting roles in relation to choice of a relevant research theme by a scientist in the group.

Article 5: Freedom of choice of research methods

It is frequently the case that pressure is brought to bear upon a scientist by administrative personnel or senior academics in relation to a research programme conducted within an academic environment, to force a scientist to adopt research methods other than those the scientist has chosen, for no reason other than personal preference, bias, institutional policy, editorial dictates, or collective authority. This practice, which is quite widespread, is a deliberate denial of freedom of thought and cannot be permitted.

A non-commercial or academic scientist has the right to develop a research theme in any reasonable way and by any reasonable means he considers to be most effective. The final decision on how the research will be conducted is to be made by the scientist alone.

If a non-commercial or academic scientist works as a member of a collaborative non-commercial or academic team of scientists the project leaders and research directors shall have only advisory and consulting rights and shall not otherwise influence, mitigate or constrain the research methods or research theme of a scientist within the group.

Article 6: Freedom of participation and collaboration in research

There is a significant element of institutional rivalry in the practice of modern science, concomitant with elements of personal envy and the preservation of reputation at all costs, irrespective of the scientific realities. This has often led to scientists being prevented from enlisting the assistance of competent colleagues located at rival institutions or others without any academic affiliation. This practice is too a deliberate obstruction to scientific progress.

If a non-commercial scientist requires the assistance of another person and that other person is so agreed, the scientist is at liberty to invite that person to lend any and all assistance, provided the assistance is within an associated research budget. If the assistance is independent of budget considerations the scientist is at liberty to engage the assisting person at his sole discretion, free of any interference whatsoever by any other person whomsoever.

Article 7: Freedom of disagreement in scientific discussion

Owing to furtive jealousy and vested interest, modern science abhors open discussion and wilfully banishes those scientists who question the orthodox views. Very often, scientists of outstanding ability, who point out deficiencies in current theory or interpretation of data, are labelled as crackpots, so that their views can be conveniently ignored. They are derided publicly and privately and are systematically barred from scientific conventions, seminars and colloquia so that their ideas cannot find an audience. Deliberate falsification

of data and misrepresentation of theory are now frequent tools of the unscrupulous in the suppression of facts, both technical and historical. International committees of scientific miscreants have been formed and these committees host and direct international conventions at which only their acolytes are permitted to present papers, irrespective of the quality of the content. These committees extract large sums of money from the public purse to fund their sponsored projects, by resort to deception and lie. Any objection to their proposals on scientific grounds is silenced by any means at their disposal, so that money can continue to flow into their project accounts, and guarantee them well-paid jobs. Opposing scientists have been sacked at their behest; others have been prevented from securing academic appointments by a network of corrupt accomplices. In other situations some have been expelled from candidature in higher degree programmes such as the PhD, for expressing ideas that undermine a fashionable theory, however longstanding that orthodox theory might be. The fundamental fact that no scientific theory is definite and inviolable, and is therefore open to discussion and re-examination, they thoroughly ignore. So too do they ignore the fact that a phenomenon may have a number of plausible explanations, and maliciously discredit any explanation that does not accord with orthodox opinion, resorting without demur to the use of unscientific arguments to justify their biased opinions.

All scientists shall be free to discuss their research and the research of others without fear of public or private materially groundless ridicule, or be accused, disparaged, impugned or otherwise discredited by unsubstantiated allegations. No scientist shall be put in a position by which livelihood or reputation will be at risk owing to expression of a scientific opinion. Freedom of scientific expression shall be paramount. The use of authority in rebuttal of a scientific argument is not scientific and shall not be used to gag, suppress, intimidate, ostracise, or otherwise coerce or bar a scientist. Deliberate suppression of scientific facts or arguments either by act or omission, and the deliberate doctoring of data to support an argument or to discredit an opposing view is scientific fraud, amounting to a scientific crime. Principles of evidence shall guide all scientific discussion, be that evidence physical or theoretical or a combination thereof.

Article 8: Freedom to publish scientific results

A deplorable censorship of scientific papers has now become the standard practice of the editorial boards of major journals and electronic archives, and their bands of alleged expert referees. The referees are for the most part protected by anonymity so that an author cannot verify their alleged expertise. Papers are now routinely rejected if the author disagrees with or contradicts preferred theory and the mainstream orthodoxy. Many papers are now rejected automatically by virtue of the appearance in the author list of a

particular scientist who has not found favour with the editors, the referees, or other expert censors, without any regard whatsoever for the contents of the paper. There is a black-listing of dissenting scientists and this list is communicated between participating editorial boards. This all amounts to gross bias and a culpable suppression of free thinking, and are to be condemned by the international scientific community.

All scientists shall have the right to present their scientific research results, in whole or in part, at relevant scientific conferences, and to publish the same in printed scientific journals, electronic archives, and any other media. No scientist shall have their papers or reports rejected when submitted for publication in scientific journals, electronic archives, or other media, simply because their work questions current majority opinion, conflicts with the views of an editorial board, undermines the bases of other current or planned research projects by other scientists, is in conflict with any political dogma or religious creed, or the personal opinion of another, and no scientist shall be blacklisted or otherwise censured and prevented from publication by any other person whomsoever. No scientist shall block, modify, or otherwise interfere with the publication of a scientist's work in the promise of any presents or other bribes whatsoever.

Article 9: Co-authoring of scientific papers

It is a poorly kept secret in scientific circles that many co-authors of research papers actually have little or nothing to do with the research reported therein. Many supervisors of graduate students, for instance, are not averse to putting their names to papers written by those persons who are but nominally working under their supervision. In many such cases, the person who actually writes the paper has an intellect superior to the nominal supervisor. In other situations, again for the purposes of notoriety, reputation, money, prestige, and the like, non-participating persons are included in a paper as co-author. The actual authors of such papers can only object at risk of being subsequently penalised in some way, or even being expelled from candidature for their higher research degree or from the research team, as the case may be. Many have actually been expelled under such circumstances. This appalling practice cannot be tolerated. Only those persons responsible for the research should be accredited authorship.

No scientist shall invite another person to be included and no scientist shall allow their name to be included as a co-author of a scientific paper if they did not significantly contribute to the research reported in the paper. No scientist shall allow himself or herself to be coerced by any representative of an academic institution, corporation, government agency, or any other person, to include their name as a co-author concerning research they did not significantly contribute to, and no scientist shall allow their name to be used as co-author in exchange for any presents or other bribes.

No person shall induce or attempt to induce a scientist in howsoever a way to allow that scientist's name to be included as a co-author of a scientific paper concerning matters to which they did not significantly contribute.

Article 10: Independence of affiliation

Many scientists are now employed under short-term contracts. With the termination of the employment contract, so too is the academic affiliation. It is often the policy of editorial boards that persons without an academic or commercial affiliation will not be published. In the absence of affiliation many resources are not available to the scientist, and opportunities to present talks and papers at conferences are reduced. This is a vicious practice that must be stopped. Science does not recognise affiliation.

No scientist shall be prevented from presenting papers at conferences, colloquia or seminars, from publication in any media, from access to academic libraries or scientific publications, from attending scientific meetings, or from giving lectures, for want of an affiliation with an academic institution, scientific institute, government or commercial laboratory, or any other organisation.

Article 11: Open access to scientific information

Most specialised books on scientific matters and many scientific journals render little or no profit so that commercial publishers are unwilling to publish them without a contribution of money from academic institutions, government agencies, philanthropic foundations, and the like. Under such circumstances commercial publishers should allow free access to electronic versions of the publications, and strive to keep the cost of the printed materials to a minimum.

All scientists shall strive to ensure that their research papers are available to the international scientific community free of charge, or in the alternative, if it cannot be avoided, at minimum cost. All scientists should take active measures to make their technical books available at the lowest possible cost so that scientific information can be available to the wider international scientific community.

Article 12: Ethical responsibility of scientists

History testifies that scientific discoveries are used for ends both good and evil, for the benefit of some and the destruction of others. Since the progress of science and technology cannot stop, some means for the containment of malevolent application should be established. Only a democratically elected government, free of religious, racial and other bias, can safeguard civilisation. Only democratically elected government, tribunals and committees can safeguard the right of free scientific creation. Today, various undemocratic states and totalitarian regimes conduct active research into nuclear physics, chemistry, virology, genetic engineering, etc in order

to produce nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. No scientist should willingly collaborate with undemocratic states or totalitarian regimes. Any scientist coerced into work on the development of weapons for such states should find ways and means to slow the progress of research programmes and to reduce scientific output so that civilisation and democracy can ultimately prevail.

All scientists bear a moral responsibility for their scientific creations and discoveries. No scientist shall willingly engage in the design or construction of weapons of any sort whatsoever for undemocratic states or totalitarian regimes or allow his or her scientific skills and knowledge to be applied to the development of anything whatsoever injurious to Mankind. A scientist shall live by the dictum that all undemocratic government and the violation of human rights is crime.

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