

Fashionable Nonsense Postmodern Intellectuals Abuse Of Science

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The Snarling Citizen

A sequel of sorts to the classic (and bestselling) sendup of literary criticism, *The Pooh Perplex* Thirty-seven years ago, a slim parody of academic literary criticism called *The Pooh Perplex* became a surprise bestseller. Now Frederick Crews has written a hilarious new satire in the same vein. Purporting to be the proceedings of a forum on Pooh convened at the Modern Language Association's annual convention, *Postmodern Pooh* brilliantly parodies the academic fads and figures that hold sway at the millennium. Deconstruction, poststructuralist Marxism, new historicism, radical feminism, cultural studies, recovered-memory theory, and postcolonialism, among other methods, take their shots at the poor teddy bear and Crews takes his shots at them. The fun lies in seeing just how much adulteration Pooh can stand.

Intellectual Impostures

Permeated by the author's delightful humor, this little book explains, with nearly no mathematics, the main conceptual issues associated with quantum mechanics: The issue of determinism. Does quantum mechanics signify the end of a deterministic world-view? The role of the human subject or of the "observer" in science. Since Copernicus, science has increasingly tended to dethrone Man from his formerly held special position in the Universe. But quantum mechanics, with its emphasis on the notion of observation, may once more have given a central role to the human subject. The issue of locality. Does quantum mechanics imply that instantaneous actions at a distance exist in Nature? In these pages the author offers a variety of views and answers - bad as well as good - to these questions. The reader will be both entertained and enlightened by Jean Bricmont's clear and incisive arguments.

The Gulf War Did Not Take Place

A hilarious satiric essay by a well-known scientist shows how contemporary intellectuals fond of using scientific concepts in writing concepts misuse and abuse these concepts. Reprint.

Relativism Refuted

Examines the aims and tools of science for creating theories and explanations of phenomena, with an eye to answering the question of whether or not science actually leads to true comprehension of reality

Social Sciences as Sorcery

Explores how the French theory of philosophy, which became popular during the last three decades of the twentieth century, spread to America and examines the critical practices that French theory inspired.

Beyond the Hoax

This book explains, in simple terms, with a minimum of mathematics, why things can appear to be in two places at the same time, why correlations between simultaneous events occurring far apart cannot be explained by local mechanisms, and why, nevertheless, the quantum theory can be understood in terms of matter in motion. No need to worry, as some people do, whether a cat can be both dead and alive, whether the moon is there when nobody looks at it, or whether quantum systems need an observer to acquire definite properties. The author's inimitable and even humorous style makes the book a pleasure to read while bringing a new clarity to many of the longstanding puzzles of quantum physics.

Making Sense of Quantum Mechanics

Using the law of thermodynamics, one of today's most penetrating and celebrated thinkers sets out to explain the consequences of nonlinear dynamics (or chaos theory) for philosophy and science. Concerned with the interplay between science, society, and power, Isabelle Stengers offers a unique perspective on the power of scientific theories to modify society, and vice versa. 9 diagrams.

Quantum Sense and Nonsense

"We should be thankful that Gross and Levitt have provided a wake-up call. Their significant overview of the thinking of those who teach our lawyers, journalists and teachers should be read by all who are concerned by the decline of the status of science in our times." -- Physics Today

Postmodern Pooh

In a provocative analysis written during the unfolding drama of 1992, Baudrillard draws on his concepts of simulation and the hyperreal to argue that the Gulf War did not take place but was a carefully scripted media event -- a "virtual" war. Patton's introduction argues that Baudrillard, more than any other critic of the Gulf War, correctly identified the stakes involved in the gestation of the New World Order.

My Brain is Open

In 1979 two events occurred that would shape the next twenty-five years. In America and Britain, an era of weary consensus was displaced by the arrival of a political marriage of fiery idealists: Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher transformed politics with a combination of breezy charm and assertive "Victorian values." In Iran, the fundamentalist cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini set out to restore a regime that had last existed almost 1,300 years ago. Between them they succeeded in bringing the twentieth century to a premature close. By 1989, Francis Fukuyama was declaring that we had now reached the End of History. What colonized the space recently vacated by notions of history, progress and reason? Cults, quackery, gurus, irrational panics, moral confusion and an epidemic of idiocy, the proof of which was to be found in every state, every work-place, and every library. In *Idiot Proof*, columnist Francis Wheen brilliantly evokes the key personalities of the post-political era—including Princess Diana and Deepak Chopra, Osama bin Laden and Nancy Reagan's astrologer—while lamenting the extraordinary rise in superstition, relativism and emotional hysteria over the past quarter of a century. In turn comic, indignant, outraged and just plain baffled by the idiocy of it all, *Idiot Proof* is a masterful depiction of the daftness of our times and a plea that we might just think a little more and believe a little less.

The Truth of Science

Random Walks, Critical Phenomena, and Triviality in Quantum Field Theory

This is a charming and insightful contribution to an understanding of the "Science Wars" between postmodernist humanism and science, driving toward a resolution of the mutual misunderstanding that has driven the controversy. It traces the root of postmodern theory to a debate on the foundations of mathematics early in the 20th century, then compares developments in mathematics to what took place in the arts and humanities, discussing issues as diverse as literary theory, arts, and artificial intelligence. This is a straightforward, easily understood presentation of what can be difficult theoretical concepts. It demonstrates that a pattern of misreading mathematics can be seen both on the part of science and on the part of postmodern thinking. This is a humorous, playful yet deeply serious look at the intellectual foundations of mathematics for those in the humanities and the perfect critical introduction to the bases of modernism and postmodernism for those in the sciences.

French Theory

This book is a close reading of Jacques Lacan's seminal essay, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud," selected for the particular light it casts on Lacan's complex relation to linguistics, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. It clarifies the way Lacan renews or transforms the psychoanalytic field, through his diversion of Saussure's theory of the sign, his radicalization of Freud's fundamental concepts, and his subversion of dominant philosophical values. The authors argue, however, that Lacan's discourse is marked by a deep ambiguity: while he invents a new "language," he nonetheless maintains the traditional metaphysical motifs of systemacity, foundation, and truth.

Power and Invention

In this collection of essays, her first since the best-selling *The Worst Years of Our Lives*, Barbara Ehrenreich delves into the soul of the 1990s in search of the American zeitgeist after "The Decade of Greed."

A Certain Ambiguity

When *Intellectual Impostures* was published in France, it sent shock waves through the Left Bank establishment. When it was published in Britain, it provoked impassioned debate. Sokal and Bricmont examine the canon of French postmodernists - Lacan, Kristeva, Baudrillard, Irigaray, Latour, Virilio, Deleuze and Guattari - and systematically expose their abuse of science. This edition contains a new preface analysing the reactions to the book and answering some of the attacks.

Mathematics and the Roots of Postmodern Thought

'Uncritical Theory' is a timely challenge to much of what passes for radical thinking in an age of postmodern commodity culture.

EPZ Thousand Plateaus

In 1996, Alan Sokal, a Professor of Physics at New York University, wrote a paper for the cultural-studies journal *Social Text*, entitled 'Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity'. It was reviewed, accepted and published. Sokal immediately confessed that the whole article was a hoax - a cunningly worded paper designed to expose and parody the style of extreme postmodernist criticism of science. The story became front-page news around the world and triggered fierce and wide-ranging controversy. Sokal is one of the most powerful voices in the continuing debate about the status of evidence-based knowledge. In *Beyond the Hoax* he turns his attention to a new set of targets - pseudo-science, religion, and misinformation in public life. 'Whether my targets are the

postmodernists of the left, the fundamentalists of the right, or the muddle-headed of all political and apolitical stripes, the bottom line is that clear thinking, combined with a respect for evidence, are of the utmost importance to the survival of the human race in the twenty-first century.' The book also includes a hugely illuminating annotated text of the Hoax itself, and a reflection on the furore it provoked.

Quick Studies

Bertrand Russell's survey of nearly seventy years of his own work is one of the most illuminating books. It is a masterpiece of philosophical autobiography. This edition includes a new introduction by Thomas Baldwin, University of Cambridge.

Fashionable Nonsense

Med udgangspunkt i fysikeren Alan D. Sokals videnskabelige nonsens-artikel i det amerikanske tidsskrift Social text (Spring/Summer 1996) er her samlet et udvalg af artikler fra aviser og tidsskrifter.

Anti-Intellectualism in American Life

Hailed by "The Washington Post" as "surprising, substantive, and sophisticated" "Lingua Franca" covered the intellectual life of the 1990s with wit and passion and helped establish many of the leading voices in American journalism today. This is a collective portrait of the American intellectual in its native habitats.

Quantum Psychology

"The Invention of Modern Science proposes a fruitful way of going beyond the apparently irreconcilable positions, that science is either "objective" or "socially constructed." Instead, suggests Isabelle Stengers, one of the most important and influential philosophers of science in Europe, we might understand the tension between scientific objectivity and belief as a necessary part of science, central to the practices invented and reinvented by scientists."--pub. desc.

The Last Word

The Sokal Hoax

This text contemplates Western culture "after the orgy" - the revolutions of the 1960s. The author argues that the sexual revolution has led

not to sexual liberation but to a reign of transvestism, to a confusion of the categories of man and woman, and a "transaesthetic realm of indifference".

My Philosophical Development

Simple random walks - or equivalently, sums of independent random variables - have long been a standard topic of probability theory and mathematical physics. In the 1950s, non-Markovian random-walk models, such as the self-avoiding walk, were introduced into theoretical polymer physics, and gradually came to serve as a paradigm for the general theory of critical phenomena. In the past decade, random-walk expansions have evolved into an important tool for the rigorous analysis of critical phenomena in classical spin systems and of the continuum limit in quantum field theory. Among the results obtained by random-walk methods are the proof of triviality of the cp_4 quantum field theory in space-time dimension $d \leq 4$, and the proof of mean-field critical behavior for cp_4 and Ising models in space dimension $d \leq 4$. The principal goal of the present monograph is to present a detailed review of these developments. It is supplemented by a brief excursion to the theory of random surfaces and various applications thereof. This book has grown out of research carried out by the authors mainly from 1982 until the middle of 1985. Our original intention was to write a research paper. However, the writing of such a paper turned out to be a very slow process, partly because of our geographical separation, partly because each of us was involved in other projects that may have appeared more urgent.

The Invention of Modern Science

In 1996 physicist Alan Sokal published an essay in *Social Text*--an influential academic journal of cultural studies--touting the deep similarities between quantum gravitational theory and postmodern philosophy. Soon thereafter, the essay was revealed as a brilliant parody, a catalog of nonsense written in the cutting-edge but impenetrable lingo of postmodern theorists. The event sparked a furious debate in academic circles and made the headlines of newspapers in the U.S. and abroad. Now in *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*, Sokal and his fellow physicist Jean Bricmont expand from where the hoax left off. In a delightfully witty and clear voice, the two thoughtfully and thoroughly dismantle the pseudo-scientific writings of some of the most fashionable French and American intellectuals. More generally, they challenge the widespread notion that scientific theories are mere "narrations" or social constructions.

The Title of the Letter

'A rare and remarkable book.' *Times Literary Supplement* Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Paris VIII. He is a key figure in poststructuralism, and one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. Félix Guattari (1930-1992) was a psychoanalyst at the la Borde Clinic, as well as being a major social theorist and radical activist. *A Thousand Plateaus* is part of Deleuze and Guattari's landmark philosophical project, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* - a project that still sets the terms of contemporary

philosophical debate. *A Thousand Plateaus* provides a compelling analysis of social phenomena and offers fresh alternatives for thinking about philosophy and culture. Its radical perspective provides a toolbox for 'nomadic thought' and has had a galvanizing influence on today's anti-capitalist movement. Translated by Brian Massumi>

Knowledge and the World: Challenges Beyond the Science Wars

If there is such a thing as reason, it has to be universal. Reason must reflect objective principles whose validity is independent of our point of view--principles that anyone with enough intelligence ought to be able to recognize as correct. But this generality of reason is what relativists and subjectivists deny in ever-increasing numbers. And such subjectivism is not just an inconsequential intellectual flourish or badge of theoretical chic. It is exploited to deflect argument and to belittle the pretensions of the arguments of others. The continuing spread of this relativistic way of thinking threatens to make public discourse increasingly difficult and to exacerbate the deep divisions of our society. In *The Last Word*, Thomas Nagel, one of the most influential philosophers writing in English, presents a sustained defense of reason against the attacks of subjectivism, delivering systematic rebuttals of relativistic claims with respect to language, logic, science, and ethics. He shows that the last word in disputes about the objective validity of any form of thought must lie in some unqualified thoughts about how things are--thoughts that we cannot regard from outside as mere psychological dispositions.

What Is Philosophy?

Chomsky Notebook

This book explores the origins of the academic culture wars of the late 20th century and examines their lasting influence on the humanities and progressive politics. It puts us in a position to ask this question: what to make now of those furious debates over postmodernism, multiculturalism, relativism, critical theory, deconstruction, post-structuralism, and all the rest? In an effort to arrive at a fair judgment on that question, the book reaches for an understanding of postmodern theorists by way of two genres they despised and hopes, for that very reason, to do them justice. It tells a story, and in the telling, advances two basic claims: first, that the phenomenological/hermeneutical tradition is the most suitable source of theory for a humanism that aspires to be universal; and, second, that the ethical and political aspect of the human condition is authentically accessible only through narrative. In conclusion, it argues that the postmodern moment was a necessary one, or will have been if we rise to the occasion and seize the opportunity it offers: a truly universal humanism might yet be realized even in—or perhaps especially in—this atavistic hour of parochial populism.

Archaeological Fantasies

Did aliens build the pyramids? Do all the world's civilizations owe a debt of gratitude to a single super-civilization in ancient times? Was Egypt the home of magicians? Is there a fantastic body of ancient wisdom awaiting discovery, which will help solve the world's problems? These and other scenarios are thrown up by purveyors of what is often dubbed alternative, fringe or popular archaeology and ancient history. In reality, such work is properly called pseudoarchaeology since it is a muddled imitation of the real thing. In this collection of stimulating and engaging essays, a diverse group of scholars, scientists, and writers consider the phenomenon of pseudoarchaeology from a variety of perspectives. They contemplate what differentiates it from real archaeology; its defining characteristics; the reasons for its popular appeal and how television documentaries contribute to its popularity; how nationalist agendas can warp genuine archaeology into a pseudo-version; and the links between pseudoarchaeology and other brands of false history and pseudo science. Case studies include surveys of esoteric Egypt and the supposedly mystical Maya, Nazi pseudoarchaeology, and ancient pseudohistory in modern India.

Fashionable Nonsense

Throughout human history, thoughts, values and behaviours have been coloured by language and the prevailing view of the universe. With the advent of Quantum Mechanics, relativity, non-Euclidean geometries, non-Aristotelian logic and General Semantics, the scientific view of the world has changed dramatically from just a few decades ago. Nonetheless, human thinking is still deeply rooted in the cosmology of the middle ages. This is the book to change your way of perceiving yourself -- and the universe. Some say it's materialistic, others call it scientific and still others insist it's mystical. It is all of these -- and none. The book for the 21st Century, complete with exercises. Picks up where "Prometheus Rising" left off. Some say it's materialistic, others call it scientific and still others insist it's mystical. It is all of these -- and none.

The Origin of Consciousness

A New York Times Notable Book
An ALA Notable Book "Original and illuminating." --The Washington Post
What draws our species to war? What makes us see violence as a kind of sacred duty, or a ritual that boys must undergo to "become" men? Newly reissued in paperback, Blood Rites takes readers on an original journey from the elaborate human sacrifices of the ancient world to the carnage and holocaust of twentieth-century "total war." Ehrenreich sifts deftly through the fragile records of prehistory and discovers the wellspring of war in an unexpected place -- not in a "killer instinct" unique to the males of our species, but in the blood rites early humans performed to reenact their terrifying experiences of predation by stronger carnivores. Brilliant in conception and rich in scope, Blood Rites is a monumental work that continues to transform our understanding of the greatest single threat to human life.

Higher Superstition

Noam Chomsky applies a rational, scientific approach to disciplines as diverse as linguistics, ethics, and politics. His best-known innovations involve a groundbreaking theory of generative grammar, the revolution it initiated in cognitive science, and a radical encounter with political

theory and practice. In *Chomsky Notebook*, Cedric Boeckx and Norbert Hornstein tackle the evolution of Chomsky's linguistic theory. Akeel Bilgrami revisits Chomsky's work on freedom and truth, and Pierre Jacob analyzes his naturalism. Chomsky's own contributions include an interview with Jean Bricmont and an essay each on Edward Said and the natural world. Altogether, these works reveal the penetrating insight of a remarkable intellectual whose thought extends into a number of fields within and outside of academia. For the uninitiated reader and longtime fan, this anthology attests to the power of Chomsky's rationalism and the dexterity of his critical investigations.

Uncritical Theory

While taking a class on infinity at Stanford in the late 1980s, Ravi Kapoor discovers that he is confronting the same mathematical and philosophical dilemmas that his mathematician grandfather had faced many decades earlier--and that had landed him in jail. Charged under an obscure blasphemy law in a small New Jersey town in 1919, Vijay Sahni is challenged by a skeptical judge to defend his belief that the certainty of mathematics can be extended to all human knowledge--including religion. Together, the two men discover the power--and the fallibility--of what has long been considered the pinnacle of human certainty, Euclidean geometry. As grandfather and grandson struggle with the question of whether there can ever be absolute certainty in mathematics or life, they are forced to reconsider their fundamental beliefs and choices. Their stories hinge on their explorations of parallel developments in the study of geometry and infinity--and the mathematics throughout is as rigorous and fascinating as the narrative and characters are compelling and complex. Moving and enlightening, *A Certain Ambiguity* is a story about what it means to face the extent--and the limits--of human knowledge.

A House Built on Sand

Cultural critics say that "science is politics by other means," arguing that the results of scientific inquiry are profoundly shaped by the ideological agendas of powerful elites. They base their claims on historical case studies purporting to show the systematic intrusion of sexist, racist, capitalist, colonialist and/or professional interests into the very content of science. Physicist Alan Sokal recently poked fun at these claims by foisting a sly parody of the genre on the unwitting editors of the cultural studies journal *Social Text* touching off a still unabated torrent of editorials, articles, and heated classroom and Internet discussion. This hard-hitting collection picks up where Sokal left off. The essayists offer crisp and detailed critiques of case studies offered by the cultural critics as evidence that scientific results tell us more about social context than they do about the natural world. Pulling no punches, they identify numerous crude factual blunders (e.g. that Newton never performed any experiments) and egregious errors of omission, such as the attempt to explain the slow development of fluid dynamics solely in terms of gender bias. Where there are positive aspects of a flawed account, or something to be learned from it, they do not hesitate to say so. Their target is shoddy scholarship. Comprising new essays by distinguished scholars of history, philosophy, and science (including Sokal himself), this book raises a lively debate to a new level of seriousness.

Postmodern Theory and Progressive Politics

Since the end of the Cold War, the idea of human rights has been made into a justification for intervention by the world's leading economic and military powers—above all, the United States—in countries that are vulnerable to their attacks. The criteria for such intervention have become more arbitrary and self-serving, and their form more destructive, from Yugoslavia to Afghanistan to Iraq. Until the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the large parts of the left was often complicit in this ideology of intervention—discovering new “Hitlers” as the need arose, and denouncing antiwar arguments as appeasement on the model of Munich in 1938. Jean Bricmont’s *Humanitarian Imperialism* is both a historical account of this development and a powerful political and moral critique. It seeks to restore the critique of imperialism to its rightful place in the defense of human rights. It describes the leading role of the United States in initiating military and other interventions, but also on the obvious support given to it by European powers and NATO. It outlines an alternative approach to the question of human rights, based on the genuine recognition of the equal rights of people in poor and wealthy countries. Timely, topical, and rigorously argued, Jean Bricmont’s book establishes a firm basis for resistance to global war with no end in sight.

How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the World

Called by many France's foremost philosopher, Gilles Deleuze is one of the leading thinkers in the Western World. His acclaimed works and celebrated collaborations with Félix Guattari have established him as a seminal figure in the fields of literary criticism and philosophy. The long-awaited publication of *What Is Philosophy?* in English marks the culmination of Deleuze's career. Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between philosophy, science, and the arts, seeing as means of confronting chaos, and challenge the common view that philosophy is an extension of logic. The authors also discuss the similarities and distinctions between creative and philosophical writing. Fresh anecdotes from the history of philosophy illuminate the book, along with engaging discussions of composers, painters, writers, and architects. A milestone in Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* brings a new perspective to Deleuze's studies of cinema, painting, and music, while setting a brilliant capstone upon his work.

Humanitarian Imperialism

Winner of the 1964 Pulitzer Prize in Non-Fiction. In this award-winning classic work of consensus history, Richard Hofstadter, author of *The Age of Reform*, examines the role of social movements in the perception of intellect in American life. "As Mr. Hofstadter unfolds the fascinating story, it is no crude battle of eggheads and fatheads. It is a rich, complex, shifting picture of the life of the mind in a society dominated by the ideal of practical success." --Robert Peel in the *Christian Science Monitor*

Blood Rites

Traces the eccentric life of legendary mathematician Paul Erdos, a wandering genius who fled his native Hungary during the Holocaust and helped devise the mathematical basis of computer science.

The Transparency of Evil

The fundamental question whether, or in which sense, science informs us about the real world has pervaded the history of thought since antiquity. Is what science tells us about the world determined unambiguously by facts or does the content of any scientific theory in some way depend on the human condition? "Sokal's hoax" added a new dimension to this controversial debate, which very quickly came to be known as "Science Wars". "Knowledge and the World" examines and reviews the broad range of philosophical positions on this issue, stretching from realism to relativism, to expound the epistemic merits of science, and to address the central question: in which sense can science justifiably claim to provide a truthful portrait of reality? This book addresses everyone interested in the philosophy and history of science, and in particular in the interplay between the social and natural sciences.

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