

My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

39

As they say in the Justice Department . . . “Follow the money.”

That is: if you know who stood to profit, you also know who committed the crime.

The same rule applies in almost any situation you can think of, not only in crime. Always consider the motive. Stated opinions frequently have no slightest relationship with known facts; instead, are altered in attempts to gain some sort of advantage. Lawyers and politicians (most of whom are lawyers) provide us with a seemingly infinite number of clear examples: as somebody said . . . “You can tell that a lie is coming from a lawyer’s mouth if his lips are moving.”

The introduction of the so-called scientific method was supposed to remove us from the influence of lies and myths,. and here and there, now and again, it actually has served some worthwhile purpose; but those cases are the exceptions, not the rule. But the problems produced by science are not a result of the scientific method, they are, instead, a result of the scientists themselves, who are, after all, people, with at least their fair share of the shortcomings of other people.

Most people believe that treatments for medical problems must be proven by scientific research before they can be used; but, in fact, the vast majority of treatment protocols now in widespread use have never been proven. Yes, some of them work, but many of them do not work, serve no worthwhile purpose. Again . . . “Follow the money,” since making money is the only real motive in such cases.

A few years ago, in Canada, the government sponsored a so-called “Task Force” for the purpose of investigating medical problems associated with lower-back pain; an activity which primarily consisted of a so-called “review of the literature,” an attempt to find anything of value on the subject that had ever been printed in a scientific journal. In the end, having carefully examined tens-of-thousands of supposedly scientific studies that had been published, they rejected them all. Their conclusion being that nothing of value had ever been published and that there was no proof of any of the many theories and practices.

In 1995, another Canadian Task Force published the results of their work, this time on the subject of neck problems resulting from so-called “whiplash” injuries. Then, having carefully investigated the claims made in more than 10,000 published studies on that subject they rejected all but a very few of these, and clearly stated grave doubts about the very few studies that they thought might have at least some value.

Given that lower-back problems are the single most expensive generally-non-life-threatening, medical problem in this country today, with an overall cost exceeding \$100,000,000,000.00 each year (that being BILLIONS, not millions), and that neck problems add about fifty percent to that total cost, it follows that the two Canadian studies were not investigating relatively unimportant matters. Yet, in fact, the scientific journals were able to provide them with literally nothing in the way of meaningful information.

In a recent attempt to put the knock on my published articles, some asshole mentioned that none of my articles have ever been published in a scientific journal . . . which was the only true statement in his article; but was true only because I never submitted any of my articles to such journals.

The stated purpose of scientific journals is an attempt to assure that new scientific discoveries will be brought to the attention of other scientists, so that other people can take advantage of and use any new knowledge that comes to light. But that is the “stated purpose,” while, in fact, the reality is totally different, almost the opposite of the stated purpose, does little or nothing to bring now knowledge into the open while doing a great deal in the way of assuring that anything new will never come to light.

In order to have even a slight chance of being published in a scientific journal, an article (a so-called “study”) must follow a number of very firm rules; rules that are supposed to assure that it is “new,” that it is “true,” that it has never been published anywhere previously, that it has been “proven,” that the work (the “research” that produced the study) was performed by “qualified experts,” that it gives full credit to anybody and everybody who ever performed similar

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but earlier research, that it is written in a “certain manner” which serves only to make it all but impossible for anybody to understand just what you are trying to say, that you at least mention every contrary and usually stupid opinion ever published by thousands of idiots over a period of several centuries.

All of which is bad enough, but which is only the beginning: once sent to a journal, the article is usually ignored for a period of at least a year, and sometimes several years, and is then sent to several supposed “experts” in that same field, and these unknown, unnamed “experts” then supposedly “review” the article, decide to publish it or reject it. But, even if it is accepted for publication, they almost always demand that the article be changed, that the conclusions be altered. It must, in effect, be brought into line with their opinions, myths, superstitions, prejudices, likes, dislikes, fears and hopes. That is to say: you must agree with the reviewers’ previously published ideas.

Which, frankly, is impossible to do while writing anything that is new, true or of any slightest value to anybody. Which, instead, merely assures that almost everything published in scientific journals is pure bullshit; generally bullshit that has previously been published in one form or another a thousand or more times. But, you must understand, it is bullshit that is “believed,” that is “accepted,” that is “established,” that is “known,” and thus has become a part of supposedly scientific knowledge.”

Here and there, once in a rare while, you can run across a scientist who is at least honest, who is actually interested in the truth, and sometimes, though very rarely, they are even smart enough to recognize the truth when it hits them across the face with a baseball bat. But those are the rare exceptions, certainly not the rule. But one thing you can count on: all of them are desperately anxious to please their peers, to look good in the eyes of other scientists, and thus they will seldom if ever do or say anything to “rock the boat,” to put themselves outside the tight constraints of “acceptable science.”

Yet even a moment’s rational consideration should make it obvious to anybody apart from an outright idiot that merely parroting the “party line” can never produce new knowledge. Improvement is impossible without change, although it does not follow that change always leads to an improvement. In fact, most changes lead in the opposite direction, make something worse rather than better; but, nevertheless, even such failures lead to new knowledge if they are viewed and considered properly, they at least teach you one more thing that does not work.

So, if you are borderline rational, then you should change it again, try something else; which will usually produce yet another failure, but will also give you even more knowledge; even if, as it happens, it is negative knowledge, something to avoid.

“Trial and error?” Absolutely, since nothing else works. Design it, build it, strap it on your back and head off down the runway . . . then it will either fly or it won’t; but until you try it you will never know for sure.

Theory? Fuck the theory; build something that works and then try to figure out just why and how it works. I am aware of many things that work but have no slightest idea just why or how they work.

Why, for example, does a muscle respond to proper exercise by becoming larger and stronger? Nobody knows, and anybody who claims to know is both a liar and a fool. And just what is gravity? Nobody knows, and yet anybody apart from idiots should at least be aware of it and should also be aware of its effects.

Up until about fifty years ago, the scientific community in general ignored exercise, and any scientist who expressed an interest in it was considered to be a fool. Why? Because there was no money in it, they could not see any potential profit. But now things have changed, now they can see potential profits, so now thousands of these supposed “experts” are trying desperately to climb aboard the band wagon, to get in on the profits. Hardly a day goes by that I do not hear from one or more of these people; all of whom, according to their claims, have discovered the greatest secret solution in history, something that will instantly solve everybody’s problems in the fields of exercise; while, of course, making them rich and famous. All they want from me is for me to put up all of the money and work required to develop their great invention while they take any and all resulting profit.

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Having long since learned the hard way that it is impossible to deal with such people in a rational manner, I no longer even try; as soon as I hear what they want I tell them very clearly that I am not interested and hang up. I do not have enough time, money or other resources to properly explore all of my own ideas, and thus there is nothing left over for anything else. Properly performed research and development projects take a great deal of time, money and hard work, and then they usually lead only to another failure, so you must be both willing and able to deal with repeated failures if you even hope to discover or invent anything of real value. The idea itself is worth only what you do with it, and that usually turns out to be literally nothing apart from continued waste of time and money.

But if, in spite of all the problems and mistakes, you do eventually come up with something of actually real value, either a product or an idea, then there is at least one thing that you can count on: initially, you will be called a fool or an outright fraud, but later, if what you have discovered actually works, then the same people who at first called you names will do everything possible in attempts to steal credit for your work.

Twenty-five years ago, when I first introduced Nautilus exercise machines, damned near every supposed “expert” in the field of exercise called me both a fool and a fraud, and sometimes called me a lot worse things, but now these same people are trying to claim credit for my early discoveries. When I started Nautilus we had no real competition, but now there are about fifty companies selling very poor copies of machines that I introduced twenty-odd years ago.

I sold the Nautilus company more than nine years ago in order to give myself both the time and money needed to develop even better equipment, and since I sold that company it has steadily gone downhill because the new people simply did not know what the hell they were even trying to do apart from making money; as a result, they have developed nothing of value and have not even been able to make much if any money. The company is now in the hands of its fourth owner, being run by people who simply do not know anything about exercise. And appear to know even less about exercise as a business.

So, if you cannot believe anything that comes from scientists, and if you cannot believe much, if anything, that comes from people in the exercise business, then just where can you go for worthwhile advice? Well, as the Chinese say . . . “Rots of ruck.”

All I can suggest is that you try it and see what happens, and then go on from there. In the end, if you are not utterly stupid, you may find something that appears to work. If so, then try to determine just why and how it works, so that perhaps you can then improve it.