



Bryan Appleyard: Blind Faith in Science. New Scientist: October 8, 2005

Scientific fundamentalism is the belief that the world is accessible to and ultimately controllable by human reason. This is a profoundly unscientific idea. It is neither provable nor refutable. Obviously it is a leap of faith to insist that human reason is capable of fully understanding the world. We seem to have some access to its workings, but it would be wildly premature to believe that the human brain is capable of comprehending all reality...

That scientific fundamentalism is dangerous should be evident to any serious thinker looking back on the 20th century. Fascism was an anti-Enlightenment creed, but its most lethal expression in Nazism was founded on science. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* leaned on the biology of Ernst Haeckel, which, at the time, was perfectly respectable. Communism, an ideology that sprang directly from the scientific Enlightenment, was based on Marx's conviction that a science of history had been discovered. The slaughter of the Jews, Stalin's massacres and Mao's deliberate starving of millions were all executed by people persuaded they were justified by scientific insights.

Of course, it might be said this was bad science. But that is no more of an excuse than saying the Spanish Inquisition was bad religion. In that case, people twisted benignly intended human value systems to evil ends. There is nothing whatsoever in science - and this should be shouted daily from the rooftops of every scientific institution - that makes it immune from such abuses.