

Book review



## **Nonscience Returns by Brian J. Ford**

Reviewed by Mike Sutton

I love this book. It is brilliant. I own a copy of the original book and now proudly own the second edition.

*Nonscience* is essentially a book about what is wrong with our universities, the anti-science incurious money grubbing managerialists running them and many of the incurious and conformist so-called “experts” who work in them. Many examples are given of bad science presented as good. Ford’s myth busting in that regard is so toe curlingly excruciating at times that I had to put the book down. Sometimes to laugh, other times to curse and most times just to sit and think. Astoundingly shocking facts that I was unaware of just keep coming at you from out of the pages like rat-a-tat-tat machine gun fire over the deep trenches of previous credulity.

Whatever impression this book review gives you hereafter I whole heartedly recommend you buy *Nonscience* and read it carefully on mythbusting and general veracity seeking grounds. Prepare to be shocked!

There will be few spoilers in this review. I am not giving out the very best of Ford’s myth busting examples for free. But I will let slip just a few others as a taster.

In a world that is increasingly polluted by fake news, serial lying politicians and incompetent science “experts” and historians of science, *Nonscience* (Ford pronounces it rather like nonchalance) is a concept after my own brain. It has essentially the same meaning as ‘dysology’, another word we surely need to add to our rationally sceptical lexicon if we are to stand any chance of not joining the zombie horde of credulous fake-fact believing celebrity TV “expert” presenters with their beaming beatific grins and their incuriously faithful fan base. And a few of these bubbly celebrity vacuous dullards come in for a righteous veracity shock in this excellent book. For example, the popular TV physicist Brian Cox is exposed for broadcasting total claptrap and Cox’s own science hero Charles Darwin quite rightfully has his Victorian trousers pulled down to expose serial lies about his shameless science fraud plagiarism of

Patrick Matthew, the true originator of the theory of macroevolution by natural selection.

The book is repetitive, but only in parts and only on rare occasions. In one case regarding the Amazon rainforest not being the “lungs of the planet” it only provides fully detailed accurate answers to inaccuracies noted in the claims of others on that idea much later in the book. But I have nothing against some delay and repetition in a book that wants its readers to remember the most important points. Who would complain too much about that other than a nit-picking incurious pedant or someone with a genuine photographic memory?

What could better emphasise the importance of veracity regarding what goes on in our universities, science facts and the history of scientific discovery than finding and exposing publications that contain errors on such matters? What then of a book on that very topic that also contains a small number of errors? Should we mock it, dismiss it, tell everyone not to buy or read it, even though most of it is razor sharp, funny, and essential reading in the field? No, I do not think so. But I do think it is the painful and unfortunate duty of a fair and honest reviewer to admit errors exist and to point them out. To do anything else would be *nonscience*. Thereafter, it is the duty of the book’s author, in my opinion, to write a new addition in the not far distant future that admits to and then corrects those errors. What better full function for a great book on the problem of *nonscience* is that? Because at that stage the criticised book starts to become the solution to the problem outlined. So here goes for my part:

- (1) It is total *nonscience* to claim, as Ford does, that Darwin and Matthew knew one another personally before Matthew exposed Darwin’s plagiarism in 1860. All the evidence in their private correspondence proves the very opposite is clearly true.
- (2) Universities today do in fact train their lecturers to lecture, most insisting they undertake, in post, several teaching qualifications.
- (3) In many (but not all) universities today, tutorials are no longer characterised by small groups. In many greed-mongering universities they can – shockingly – each contain up to 70 students!
- (4) The claim that Spanish Flu originated in Spain has been debunked by many writers. Current “knowledge” has it that it originated either in China or the USA. And it was called ‘Spanish flu’ only because Spain was neutral in WW1 And, accordingly, had no propaganda machine to protect it from such claims.

- (5) Modern plagiarism detection software does now detect plagiarist substituting words with synonyms.
- (6) Ford's science informed hard and certain reasoning that face coverings do not protect wearers and those around them from COVID 19 in the 2020 pandemic is at least open to deeper new evidence-led debate, because current research has it that the virus is spread mainly through coughed and otherwise exhaled infected water droplets, which masks to tend to trap.
- (7) Alfred Russel Wallace (once mistyped as Russel Wallace in Nonscience) never originated the full theory of evolution by natural selection. Patrick Matthew did that in 1831 and the book where he wrote it was even cited many times by Selby in 1842 – who then edited the very journal that published Wallace's (1855) Sarawak paper on the theory Wallace in fact replicated and then claimed, as did Darwin, to have conceived independently.

If you buy this excellent book and find other examples that you think need correction – or deeper consideration – then please write a review of it to let Ford know. I am sure he wants you too. If not, what on Earth would be the point of a book on 'nonscience'? Here is a chance for all of us to tackle the serious problems of nonscience that Ford so brilliantly publishes for our own good.