

Words Poorly Used #106 — Consensus

It rears its ugly head again. I'm talking about the populist tendency to subsume the existence of substantial discord by uttering a stupid statement containing the word, "consensus," or its equivalent. Today, I saw this in print, "most scientists today will agree ..." What possible difference does it make what scientists agree on? Isn't science about disciplined observation, not some polling process? In fact, it is the scientist who is going in the most unique direction, who is on the path less taken, who will make the next new discovery. He should be in a minority of one until the bulk of his field have reviewed the findings and found them to be supported by repeatable evidence. How many scientists will agree on something has nothing to do with the scientific method or the existence of a phenomenon.

— Kilgore Forelle