

Science “Knows” Nothing

Nobody asked but ...

Science (or discovery) is not a knowledge set. The Online Etymology Dictionary contains at least one reference to the Greek *skhizein* “to split, rend, cleave.” A software engineering colleague said that all knowledge pursuit was either splitting or clumping of previously discovered things. This means doing it now, more splitting and clumping — a process. The object of the process is to make educated guesses toward future probabilities, and that those educated guesses will still, in an ongoing fashion, be the subject of splitting and clumping. A knowledge set produced by science is a transitory thing — a mass that is soon to be split and re-clumped. If science could not do this, we would be without several innovations of today, like the plate tectonics theories which underlie most modern geological thought, and, for further example, we would be without smartphones — 1940s and 1950s scientists might have assumed that vacuum tubes were a constant in digital processing.

Unfortunately, we often stop reading the etymology when we see the Latin *scientia* “knowledge, a knowing; expertness,” which, also unfortunately, implies a mastery over known information. As if Latin were a refinement of Greek. To me, Greek civilization was of discovery, while Roman civilization was derivative — eg the Greeks named the (fictive?) gods and their purviews, whereas the Romans only renamed those same gods.

Today, we need to return to the original meaning of science, an unceasing breaking apart and rebuilding. a continual questioning and re-synthesis of concepts. Science is a guessing game, one impeded by conclusion, not impeded by inquiry. Why do we want final answers when only clever new answers which spin off new inquiry will get us further down the evolutionary road? That other fork is a *cul-de-sac*, a deadly one.

— Kilgore Forelle