

Popper

Sir,

Robin Holliday's criticism of Popper is welcome. Philosophers of science this century have contributed nothing that helps us understand the scientific process and why it is so successful. Scientists regard their activity with a puzzled detachment. The oft quoted counter-example is Karl Popper and his famous book 'The Logic of Scientific Discovery'. Popper claimed to have solved the problem of induction by arguing that science proceeds by a sequence of bold conjectures rather than being based on observations, and that then these conjectures are replaced when they are falsified. Falsification is all and verification irrelevant. This view completely ignores the nature of discovery in science and fails to explain how one knows that a falsification is

correct. As has been pointed out, the graveyard of failed scientists is filled with those who gave up their ideas at the first indication that they were wrong. Falsification also does not help us distinguish science from non-science; the idea that eating hamburgers will make you a better poet is falsifiable but is not science.

Popper goes so far as to say "Our science is not knowledge; it can never claim to have attained truth, or even a substitute for it, such as probability....We do not know; we can only guess". What nonsense, for example, DNA is the genetic material and codes for proteins. His reputation is greatly overinflated with respect to science.

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