

# My Definition of a Scientist

By Frank Schnell — October 31, 2018



Credit: Storyblocks [1]

A scientist is a person who is able *and willing* to live with uncertainty as long as it takes to dispel that uncertainty through an objective, logical process (a.k.a. the Scientific Method).

Most non-scientists are victims of a potentially dangerous combination of two common attributes of human intelligence:

- (1) an extreme aversion to uncertainty and
- (2) the *ability to rationalize*.

The former is expressed as a fear of the unfamiliar which inhibits one's evolution from Frightened Animal to Thinking Human Being. The latter enables one to intellectually neutralize discomfiting truths or uncertainties and is used (especially, but not exclusively) to support political and religious ideologies. In their darkest forms, those ideologies give one permission to continue behaving like a beast while still imagining that one is a superior life form.

Contrary to popular belief, the public embrace of absolute truth and religious doctrine does *not* automatically predispose one to moral behavior. Good people will be good, and bad people will be bad, whether or not they believe in a god.

The disinclination to abide uncertainty is shared by scientists and non-scientists, alike. However, unlike the non-scientist, the scientist typically relieves the associated discomfort by testing verifiable and falsifiable hypotheses in order to establish *objective truths*.

In the end, scientists and non-scientists obtain the same end, i.e., a personally satisfying resolution of uncertainty. However, as a cursory study of human history demonstrates, only *one* of those paths is fraught with injustice, cruelty and bloodshed. (When was the last time you heard of

a *scientist* burning a *priest* at the stake?)

Thoughts? What is a scientist to you?

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