

Living with uncertainty: Understanding science as an ongoing method of inquiry rather than an affirmation of inalterable facts

Science can be very certain and precise. It tells us exactly when to expect the next total solar eclipse and when Halley's comet will return. It predicts exactly how much of what compound will result from a chemical reaction when two substances are mixed.

...

We have come to trust science and to think of it as a reliable guide to truth. It's easy to forget that science has been wrong many times.... Science can make mistakes, but it has built-in self-correcting mechanisms. It may take a long time, but errors will eventually be corrected, and truth will ultimately triumph. Science is not perfect, but it's the best tool we have for understanding reality.

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We all crave certainty. Perhaps that's why so many people are inclined to listen to cocksure quacks who claim to know the one true cause of all disease rather than to real doctors who are honest enough to say they don't know what is wrong. Uncertainty is a fact of life, and we must learn to accept it and deal with it appropriately.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)