

This Nobel is not Noble

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Editorial

The winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2013, Randy Schekman, made statements to *The Guardian* newspaper pointing out that the most influential scientific journals in the world, such as *Nature*, *Cell*, and *Science*, have ruined the process of doing science, representing a tyranny that must be broken. He also stated that the results of his investigations will no longer be sent to be published in these journals.

Schekman surely refers to the hegemony that prevails not only in terms of the scientific publishing industry, but also in the broadcasting (or not) of innovative and outstanding scientific schools of thought. I perceive his intervention as a cry of disagreement with all these procedures, which most scientists know or imagine, and with which –like Schekman– we disagree; however, we should do some analysis.

It is curious that Schekman's voice rose up and was heard just after receiving the Nobel Prize; thus my first question would be: If Schekman had not published in these journals, would he had received that award? To answer this first question, we reviewed the laureates from 1993 to 2013: 49 scientists have received the award in 20 years. All of them published the results of their research in journals such as *Science*, *Nature*, *Cell*, *The Lancet*, and *Jama*, among others before receiving the Nobel, ranging between publishing only once (two cases) to over ten times (three cases). What is interesting is that the number of publications increases substantially after receiving the Nobel and in more than eight

cases, by over ten times more. Contributions in terms of the scientific quality of these later publications are mostly well below the one that led to their nomination and eventual award of the Nobel. Certainly the majority of the most significant breakthroughs are published in the aforementioned journals, but not all. Hence my second question arises: Are we –scientists who have not published their findings in this hegemonic circuit– doomed never to get this award? As a matter of fact, in my view, doing science is not linked to public or social recognition; it is based on other driving forces. These forces have an essential relationship with the search for truth; truth meaning the result of comparing the modus operandi of nature with an intellectual construct –either theoretical or empirical– inherent in the observer, which is carried out by steps and rules that are commonly called scientific method. We are closer to the concept of truth to the extent that this comparison approaches identity, that is to say, comparing our operation theoretical construct to the modus operandi of nature (in this case biological nature related to the human being). Doing science is not sticking to the definitions engendered by what is now known as the theory of knowledge, but is rather a task related to intuition, craftwork, and art. In short, it is a philosophical position on the concept of truth and nature, which has no place for the impact factors of scientific journals, those invisible but present and powerful academic cloisters that eventually distort such Noble work.

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