

The benevolent dictatorship: prejudice disguised as science

Throughout history, it has become clear that morality often disguises itself as technology, and opinion masquerades as data. The consequences are often catastrophic. The “benevolent dictatorship” is a silent regime in which prejudice is authorized, as long as it is wrapped in supposedly neutral language, legitimized by reports, protocols and consensuses that tend to reproduce the same moralism they pretend to combat for the benefit of the collective. Thus, old prejudices can gain a new lease of life, supported by a pseudo-scientific authority that dismisses uncomfortable questions and avoids critical review.

This fact can be seen in some current criteria for biomedical treatments (Figure 1), body selection, or behaviors. Under the pretense of protecting the majority, an inconvenient minority is created, marked by statistical, decontextualized labels that have little to do with real individuals. No room can be found for historicity or consideration of social determinants: everything is resolved in the coldness of a list or the assertiveness of a protocol as absolute, doctrinal truth.

In such arrangements, science turns into a shield: it protects those who wield it, harms those who don't fit its mold. It becomes dogma when it should be a process; it becomes a statement when it should be a question. This is the science of Cartesian rigidity that upholds seemingly beneficial norms but perpetuates inequalities under the pretext of collective concern.

Ultimately, the “benevolent dictatorship” is simply a more polished way of controlling bodies and behaviors. And perhaps therein lies its greatest danger. It is developed in air-conditioned rooms, in legitimate meetings of associations, wielding sacred checklists. And thus, it stifles doubt—which should be science's greatest ally—in name of a supposed consensus. As if someone needs to have more common sense.

Science exists primarily because of the human capacity to ask questions, and the quality of these questions defines its importance. Paradoxically, science lends itself to upholding prejudice. We should not confuse technical prudence with a façade of moralism. If science itself fails to find the answer and materialize it, the “benevolent dictatorship” will continue, cordial and implacable, convinced of its rightness—and fairness.



Figure 1. Slovakia 2 Euro commemorative coin, 2023. 100th anniversary of the first blood transfusion. KM# 195.

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