

Theory in Biology

1. Yes it is a mess. But perhaps Biology is not a fundamental science, but as many people have said, only a particularist excrescence on physics; with evolution about the only theoretical principle; so it is not so far removed from history.

-- To the extent that is so, there may not be that much place for theoretical or physical thinking in biology; and perhaps we should still be grateful for the gadgetry and measurement that 'physicists' help to offer our descriptive pursuits.

As to Mendel-- it is a myth that he was simply overlooked.-- The main villain seems to be Naegeli, who plainly could not have understood Mendel's numerology; so there is some merit in Bronowski's remark. (But if, say, Darwin or Weissman had gotten hold of Mendel's results, I would guess there would have been some chance of its catching on. What was so different in the overall community outlook in 1900?)
--Where did Bronowski say what you attributed

More nonsense than not has been written about Mendel's discovery and its obscuration; but particularly critical and well-informed are L.C. Dunn 's "A Short History of Genetics"; McGraw Hill, 1965; and his chapter in Caspari & Ravin, eds., Genetic Organization, Acad. Press, 1969.

Since Mendelism is assuredly Genetics' major theoretical triumph, this indeed should tempt you to look further.

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