

With reference to DormitivePrinciples.pdf;  
Molière is the originator of the term.

From: "Bruce Gregory" <gregory@cf4.harvard.edu>  
To: Dag Forssell  
Date: Fri, 6 Sep 1996 11:53:30 EST  
Subject: Right Author, Wrong Play

Dag,

I found this on the net:

We illustrate this by a literary example. Molière's play La Malade Imaginaire includes a doctor who explains sleeping powders by saying that they contain a ``dormitive virtue''. In the play, the doctor is considered a pompous fool for offering a concept that explains nothing. However, suppose the doctor had some intuition that the dormitive virtue might be extracted and concentrated, say by shaking the powder in a mixture of ether and water. Suppose he thought that he would get the same concentrate from all substances with soporific effect. He would certainly have a fragment of scientific theory subject to later verification. Now suppose less--namely, he only believes that a common component is behind all substances whose consumption makes one sleepy but has no idea that he should try to invent a way of verifying the conjecture. He still has something that, if communicated to someone more scientifically minded, might be useful. In the play, the doctor obviously sins intellectually by claiming a hypothesis as certain. Thus a knowledge seeker must be able to form new concepts that have only extremely tenuous relations with their previous linguistic structure.

Best wishes,

Bruce