The larger subculture of science itself began, we are told (Whitehead, 1925), in about 1600 A.D. when a new combination of attitudes and activities became widespread in Europe. The smaller soil survey subculture of science began in the late 1800's in the time of Dokuchaev and Hilgard (see references to them in this index). For ten years now SOIL SURVEY HORIZONS has chronicled the soil survey subculture, particularly as it has been manifested in the United States. But the roots of this discipline are international and the outreach of soil survey programs is global.

The three elements that came together about 1600 A.D. in popular experience to create what we call the scientific approach were: (1) analytical thought (useful later in reasoning about soil classification), (2) an uncritical faith, of religious origin, that there is an order in all the universe (how else in the 19th and 20th centuries would anyone attempt to study soils as organized bodies?), and (3) an interest in everyday occurrences (which to the soil surveyor means manifestations of soil properties in relation to environment and management).

The soil survey subculture views the soil as a collection of bodies that are dynamic parts of the environments with which they interact. Soil surveyors are pedologists who dig in the soil and get their hands dirty. These men read landscapes as well as books. Soil surveyors bring all their senses to bear on the object of study and its environment: tactile, visual, olfactory, auditory and even sense of taste.