

SPECTRUM

FOREST BREEZE

IS SCIENCE OUR FRIEND OR ENEMY?

I am training to be a scientist. I have learned to envision nature as a network composed of deterministic, and therefore predictable, components. Scientists don't understand very much about the interrelationships within this network, yet we still try to manipulate them to achieve management goals. Foresters, like all scientists, say: "We'll make the best decision based on all available knowledge." This gives us confidence in the face of immense uncertainty.

But we all engage in deduction in our own lives. From the myriad of bits of information that is perceived by our senses, we cope by selectively attending to only a few things that will confirm our pre-existing world view. We grasp a few knowns, make some major assumptions, and then run with them as far as we can. If we did not take the risk of being wrong, we would never learn or accomplish anything.

I like science because the immensity of uncertainty has lessened, even though by an infinitesimally small amount. David Suzuki spoke about science last Friday night at the James M. Hill High School in Chatham. He criticized the politicians, who in spite of their scientific illiteracy, still make decisions about our environment that will affect us for generations. His criticism implies that if they were scientists, they would be better able to improve the impoverished state of our planet. Suzuki assumes that as scientists, this would deter them from being controlled by the "monster" of economics.

Simply because science may enable politicians to learn more about our ecosystems, it does not mean they will necessarily "fix" the mess we have made of them. Science may help them determine how toxic chemicals end up in the oceans, and may help them make predictions about what would

happen to aquatic life if our present rate of water pollution continued. But I do not know if science would make them realize, as Suzuki implored Friday night, that the rate at which population growth and consumption are increasing on this planet, is unsustainable.

I have read many works by scientists which explore how to repair the symptoms of ecological degradation, but relatively few which study how to remove the cause. If a portion of the Amazon has been deforested and is experiencing nutrient loss, the "scientific" politicians may consider fertilizing the soil for farmland. Or maybe, they would discover that a leguminous crop such as the Kudzu bean could be planted to restore the nitrogen and macro-pores of the depleted, compacted soil. Maybe we'll figure out how to sustain a farm indefinitely on the old Amazonian soils, thanks to science!

Thanks to science, the city of

Fredericton has built a settling pond for a stream that runs near Beaverbrook Street. With the pond acting to help settle toxins, it will decrease the amount of chemicals reaching the St. John river. Science is our friend! With science as a basis, politicians could even develop new technology so that we could dump our toxic wastes on the moon! The politicians could embrace science with open arms, and we may still not change our ways.

The paradox about science is that while it is the cause of technology and the subsequent resource depletion, it is also seen as the answer to our problems. If science were really amoral like it's supposed to be, the paradox wouldn't exist. Separate from whim and bias, science is often thought to reflect truth. Nevertheless, it is used to manipulate elements on Earth as a direct reflection of our whims and biases. Furthermore, its selective advancement in certain areas should make it painfully obvious that it is far from being amoral. Why is it, for example, that we have been able to harness nuclear energy, but have not been able to render its by-products harmless? It is not because nuclear physics is so difficult to understand that the knowledge is only slowly being acquired. Rather, the risks associated with nuclear energy exist because

we have not made an effort to acquire this knowledge. We have not cared to look at the impact of our manipulations with a long-term perspective.

I am training to be a scientist, but I am not without ethics. Suzuki said: "Science reveals secrets about the Universe... to give us insight and control." But he was talking about an illusion. He was criticizing science as the cause of the "monster" of economics. Is science our friend or enemy, David? The answer is, it depends on why and how you use it.

Forestry students are taught to look at forests with a much longer time frame than any politician's term in office, but we are not taught the "rightness" or "wrongness" of our science. Among many other things, we are taught about Soil Science, Hydrology, and Meteorology. These are the study of the basic elements that Suzuki referred to as earth, water and air. Whether we go out into the world and use this knowledge purely for economic gain, for society or for ameliorating the environment is an individual choice. So don't be so sure that science will reveal truths. It is a tool that people use based on their own preconceptions about truth.

LETTER

FOREIGN AID AND THE DEFICIT

Dear Editor,

As our nation's deficit grows, so does the pressure to shrink foreign aid funding. I am not ignorant to the problems here in Canada, but if you will take off your blinders long enough to realize the shocking truth that 40,000 children die every day in third world countries. This is unacceptable.

Asking the government for more foreign aid dollars is not what I want, but rather to strategically plan for the day when foreign aid is no longer needed. One way to approach this goal is to finance projects which build sustainability such as the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. The bank, started by Dr. Moham-mad Yunus, is a micro-enterprise banking system which lends small loans to the poorest of

the poor, 92% of whom are destitute women. The bank has over 1.5 million borrowers and lends more than a million a day in loans averaging \$75. A recent independent evaluation demonstrates that out of 100 typical borrowers of the bank, 50 have eradicated their own poverty, 25 are on the verge of doing so, and 25 remain in poverty mainly due to chronic illness. A World Bank study released in November 1993 also substantiates the Bank's achievements.

The Grameen Trust is the replication of the Grameen Bank and needs funding to allow other developing countries access to this project which has been proven successful. Our government does need to redirect our foreign dollars to support projects which work.

Janise Johnson

METANOIA BY JOHN VALK

LIGHT TRUTH & WAY

How difficult is it to convince someone of the truth or validity of something new or difficult? We generally protect ourselves with copious amounts of scepticism. Few are easily swayed from what they perceive to be the tried and the true.

When we are young, supposedly not set in our ways, we yearn for things new or different. This is part of discovering who we are. Yet, any exploration has its limits. Subtle pressure can conform even the most resolute. Does any individual expression remain in peer determined (life) styles: music, dress, entertainment, career patterns?

That same pressure to conform also touches on the spiritual or religious. This time to conform is generally to ignore. That's the tendency in the media and education.

It's not that there are no distinct spiritualities behind what is written or taught. But how much reflection is done on those spiritualities, let alone their existence? The religious has to do with reflecting about what we are doing and why. It forces us to wrestle with life's meaning; to consider, for example, that life is more than pleasure and entertainment, or that university is more than job training.

That type of thinking is paramount to the nature of the university. It is not something to be taken lightly. Nor is it to be ignored. We are all the more impoverished when that occurs. Yet, we have denied that for sometime, only now to reap the consequences. The crisis we are facing in education today may have more to do with ignored or confused spirituality than it does with lack

of funding, programmes, or facilities.

That brings me back to my original question: how difficult is it to convince someone of the truth or validity of something new or different? In the Gospel of John (14:6) Jesus is recorded as saying: "I am the way, the truth and the life." This is, no doubt, a bold statement. It was also radically new and different when first uttered.

Here is a man who is saying, in effect, that if you really want to get a handle on yourself and your life, you would be well advised to reflect seriously on what I am saying and doing. These words were not merely for Sunday morning, for solace at funerals, or invocations at graduations. These are words that strike at the very core of our being. They potentially impact everything we say and do: the purpose of our studying, the way we do business, the meaning of work, how we treat our children, how we regard the environment.

If 78% of Canadians identify themselves as Christian, these words of Jesus ought not to be unfamiliar. But do we believe them or give them any credibility? Do they make any difference in our lives? Do we encourage each new generation to wrestle with them before we consider them knowledgeable and wise?

It does no good to dismiss these words simply because they are linked to ecclesiastical structures. They are not exhausted by these structures. We may or may not like what this or that church does. But that does not discount the truth or validity of Jesus' words. Nor is it reason to make them vanish from our purview. Rather, it might force one to reflect on why we feel a discontinuity rather than a continuity between the words and deeds of Jesus and any particular church.

It would be a shame, no a travesty, if a person who identified with the Christian faith graduated from University and has not wrestled with these words of Jesus. In a country still purported to be Christian such an expectation would not be unreasonable. No doubt, some will come to reject the truth of these words. That has historical precedence. But let that rejection be a knowledgeable one, not one born out of ignorance, distortion or intellectual dishonesty.

What would be worse than denying the words of Jesus as true or valid would be to claim that they are insignificant. To argue that they can be treated with indifference is to reveal, among other things, a profound ignorance of their impact on the history of the West. It is to engage in revisionist history.

Of course, to speak with indifference or profound ignorance does not mean one has escaped religious or spiritual concerns. It merely indicates on w has appropriated a different religious outlook. If that sounds too confusing, perhaps it's time for some serious reflection.

BLACK TRIANGLE BY B.J.

LESBIAN QUIZ

Has anyone ever asked you about Lesbianism? Seemingly innocent questions about your Lesbian lifestyle. I recently found a book called Lesbian Lists by Dell Richards which includes a page entitled "10 Questions Most Commonly Asked of Lesbians and the Answers You'll Never Hear". It should be noted that this list was originally provided by University of New Mexico Gay and Lesbian Students Union Speakers Committee. Here is the list reproduced from Lesbian Lists.

1. What, exactly, do two women do together? (usually asked by a woman)

A: It takes too long to explain. A lesbian quickie lasts hours. We lay there and discuss politics until we figure it out. But if you like I'll show you. How about this evening at six.

2. Which one of you is the man? (usually asked by a man)

A: We're lesbian, not confused. Look it up!

3. What do your parents think about it?

A: They weren't exactly tickled lavender.

4. Do you face any discrimination because you're — "that way"?

A: None. The lesbian movement is a bodily function that involves the expulsion of our reproductive organs.

5. Why are you a lesbian?

A: Let me show you a picture of my girlfriend.

6. Did anything in your childhood affect your "choice"?

A: Definitely. There was this cute little redhead in my nursery school that I used to take naps with...

7. Why do you have to tell everyone?

A: I have a P.C. quota to meet.

8. Is one of you "butch" are the other "femme"?

A: Yes, but we trade off every time we roll over.

9. Do you plan to have children?

A: We're trying! (Wink-wink, nudge-nudge, know what I mean)

10. But wouldn't you want your children to be straight?

A: And miss this opportunity to be interrogated by the next generation of psych majors?

BENEFIT DANCE

Saturday, March 5th, 1994
9pm - 1am

Band:

Highway "10"

(Country Rock and Rock & Roll)

Tickets \$5.00 at the door or may be purchased at McConnell Hall, UNB Campus.

All proceeds go to Paraplegic Association

Come and join the fun for a great cause!!

Must be 19 years or over.

CONTACT LENSES

GUARANTEED FIT
EXTENSIVE
FOLLOW-UP
CARE

STUDENT SPECIAL
SOFT CONTACT LENSES

159.

REG. \$250.00

COMPREHENSIVE
SERVICE PROGRAM
CLOSE TO CAMPUS
& HIGH SCHOOL

CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS APPLY

DAVID G. HARDING
CONTACT LENS SPECIALIST
SUITE 504, 1015 REGENT STREET
FREDERICTON MEDICAL CLINIC
458-0270

EXPIRES FEB. 28/94