

# Gateway

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## CIRCULATION

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## LETTERS

Submit all letters, typed and double-  
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Opinions expressed in the Gateway  
are those of the writer, and are not  
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## Suzuki no scientist

I believe that besides being  
an institute for the production of  
sophisticated technicians, a  
university is meant to be a  
centre of informed opinion - or,  
more exactly, a centre for the  
formation of informed opinion.  
Articles such as the one on  
David Suzuki, *Gateway* Feb. 3,  
suggest the possibility that in  
some important respects this  
institution may not be a univer-  
sity. If it were, Dr. Suzuki would  
not be found stimulating.

Commentary on that arti-  
cle, entitled "David Suzuki:  
Sorcerer's Apprentice", is  
called for because the uncritical  
acceptance of such an enter-  
tainer - "to some the equivalent  
of a modern shaman or guru" -  
would discredit what reputation  
the university may have in less  
provincial centres.

## READER COMMENT

Dr. Suzuki is quoted: "A  
person who takes a degree in  
science without an arts course  
goes into the most powerful  
sector of society without having  
had the background in  
humanities to give him the  
wisdom to use that power."  
Some faculty members may be  
flattered to hear that one or two  
of their undergraduate courses,  
taken and passed, confer  
wisdom. Others will wonder  
how this can be the case, when,  
as Dr. Suzuki noted, "anyone  
who has ever been to a univer-  
sity knows that there is no con-  
nection between a degree and  
intelligence."

Dr. Suzuki says "scientists  
should not be expected to have  
any special wisdom or insight."  
That also is not true. Scientists  
are capable of a very special  
insight, and that insight is  
profound, creative and vital. It is  
an insight into the nature of the  
reality in which the in-  
vestigating human spirit finds  
itself, and in the philosophy of  
science - a subject studied at  
this university by theoretical  
physicists - the scientific mind  
conducts an enquiry into its  
own nature as important as any  
we can expect from the  
humanities (at least from the  
humanities as we could profit  
from their study under the  
programme outlined by Dr.  
Suzuki).

The nature of Dr. Suzuki's  
public enquiry is accounted for  
by the word "titillation", a word  
with ludicrous undertones. Any  
mind trained to the rigorous  
logical analysis of modern  
physics could not fail to  
observe, and be repelled by, the  
inner self-contradiction of that  
enquiry, and more important, by  
the inadequacy of its account of  
science. Students at a university  
where original scientific  
research is being carried on in a  
variety of fields will of course be  
more fully acquainted with the  
nature of scientific discovery -  
more fully acquainted than Dr.  
Suzuki - "geneticist,  
philosopher, TV personality" -  
who has said, "The great  
tragedy of the twentieth century  
is the schism between art and  
science."

"Tragedy" - students of the  
European literatures will be  
familiar with that debasement of  
human experience and wisdom.  
It is a popular usage of the word,  
and customarily is accom-  
panied by slack, unstructured  
grammar. So it is in Dr. Suzuki's  
speech, which can never be a  
vehicle either for thought or for  
the expression of passionate  
human feeling, certainly never  
for the two working together in

creative co-operation and har-  
mony.

But let me take up the  
subject of science. Most  
physicists will agree that Kepler  
was a scientist. Let us just  
investigate the premises upon  
which he discovered his three  
laws of planetary motion. First,  
he inherited the Greek admira-  
tion for geometry, which in the  
Ptolemaic astronomy had made  
it necessary to define circular  
planetary orbits, the circle being  
the most "perfect"  
geometrical form, and the  
celestial bodies being perfect  
and harmonious. He inherited  
Greek geometry in his belief that  
God was a geometer, that the  
sky exhibited perfect Euclidean  
proportions and harmonies. His  
second assumption, which no  
doubt was of importance in his  
heliocentrism is given in his *de  
Harmonice Munde*, 1619:  
"Lulled by the changing har-  
mony of the band of planets,  
there dwells in the sun an  
intellect simple, intellectual fire  
or mind, whatever it may be, the  
fountain of all harmony."

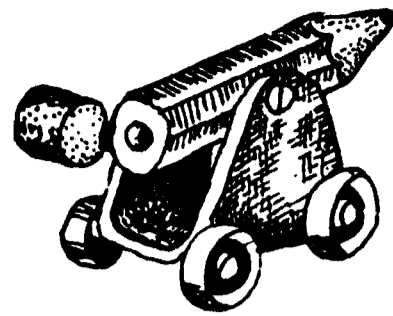
With these premises,  
Kepler noted that there was,  
besides the earth, five planets  
(several not having been dis-  
covered in his time). There are  
also five regular solids in Eucli-  
dean geometry, and five only,  
which have all faces the same,  
and all faces forming the same  
angles with their neighbouring  
faces. These are: the tetrahedron,  
of four equilateral  
triangles, the cube, the oc-  
tahedron of eight equilateral  
triangles, the dodecahedron of  
twelve pentagonal faces, and  
the icosahedron, of twenty  
equilateral triangles.

Kepler took the five regular  
solids and inscribed them one  
inside the other like Chinese  
boxes. From doing so he deter-  
mined his three laws: that the  
paths of the planets are ellipses  
with the sun at one focus, that a  
line from the sun to a planet  
sweeps out equal areas in equal  
times, and that the cubes of the  
planetary distances from the  
sun are as the squares of their  
periods around it. These laws  
were amalgamated into one  
coherent function of the univer-  
sal law of gravitation by Newton,  
but were not improved upon as  
accounts of where a given  
planet will be at a given time.

The point is, that Kepler was  
a scientist. The scientists at  
work at our university, if they are  
creative, carry out the same  
procedures as Kepler, what has  
been called "inspired guess-  
ing". No doubt many of their  
guiding assumptions, and their  
procedures, will be as obsolete  
in three hundred years as  
Kepler's are now. The other fact  
is that Kepler's beliefs about the  
sun were not incompatible with  
mathematical precision in the  
description and prediction of  
natural events - they would not  
be so today. Today there is  
debate among theoretical  
physicists as to whether those  
who are attracted by the general  
theory of relativity are motivated  
by strictly scientific, or by  
primarily aesthetic con-  
siderations.

We are all agreed that when  
the professional scientist looks  
up from the imaginative heat of  
his retorts and furnaces, when  
he steps out into the common  
public world of human culture,  
his vision may fail him. That  
there should be those among us  
at a university who think of  
Suzuki as a man of vision,  
(scientific or other) suggests  
that the humanities may have  
gone bankrupt. It is not a  
cheering fact that so many are  
no longer, at a university, enter-  
tained by thought, and that the  
entertainer should have preten-  
sions to being a thinker.

Colin Ross  
Commerce 1



# editorial

## "Watchdog" critique

A gilded image of the journalist and his trade has  
been constructed (honestly or otherwise) to create a  
belief that a free press will somehow bring the truth to  
the people. We call ourselves "watchdogs for society"  
and hail ourselves as learned, creative, and  
courageous people who will "print and be damned."

"Print and be damned" be damned," is what some  
professional medias seem to be saying, though.

People who attended Tuesday's forum on tuition  
increases, and then waited to see how the media  
covered it will find at least two glaring examples of how  
the simplest fundamentals of good journalism were  
scrapped, leaving behind very little approximating the  
truth. These examples were aired by CFRN News and  
printed by *The Edmonton Journal*.

Let's deal with CFRN first because theirs is the  
most insignificant example.

Their report lasted about 45 seconds and con-  
sisted of individual comments which, if placed against  
what actually happened at the forum, would produce a  
bizarre facsimile to say the least. A rough quote of their  
news report for your interpretation: "U of A students  
who attended a forum on tuition increases said it's  
about time students started accepting the burden of  
paying for their education privileges..."

Very little time was given to the original reason the  
forum was called. Even less was given to the  
statements of the panels and issues involved. God  
sakes, even president Gunning did his best to show he  
didn't like the idea of raising tuitions. Therefore, the  
CFRN report was incomplete. We call it biased.

But worse yet is the example printed in  
Wednesday's *Journal* titled "Students are split on  
tuition fee hike," written by their education reporter,  
Sharon Adams.

Yes, Ms. Adams, the student ranks are split, but  
that does not mean you should misrepresent those  
with whom you don't seem to agree. The best news  
pegs in the story were given to two students who  
argued one side of the issue (and incorrectly at that)  
which left just a few lines at the tail end of the story, as if  
by chance, on the reason the forum was called. What  
were the arguments most speakers and students  
brought forth? They weren't in the article. Did the writer  
understand them? Were they deliberately buried? How  
can you call yourself a professional journalist Ms.  
Adams, with examples like that under your byline? The  
story looks like you only had time to do half a job, or  
were dishonest with the facts.

We at *The Gateway* laugh at *The Journal* quite a bit  
(whether in jealousy or in genuine mirth is up to  
debate). But that story wasn't laughable. It was sick.

We aren't trying to set ourselves above anyone. We  
make our full share of journalistic errors. That might be  
why few people seem to take us "student journalists"  
seriously. But at least we have enough pride in our work  
to do the best we can. At least we try our best to be  
honest and present all sides of an issue.

Is it asking too much to expect the same from the  
"pros" downtown?

## Health for all

The purpose of this letter is  
to clear up a common mis-  
understanding about Student  
Health that appeared on the  
front page of the *Gateway* last  
week.

The \$10 Student Health fee  
only provides for the subsidized  
prescription service (prescrip-  
tions filled for \$1.25), the free  
dental service at the clinic  
including a mouth guard, and  
infirmary care. Those people  
who have not paid the \$10 fee  
must buy their prescriptions at  
cost, and pay for the dental  
service and the infirmary care.

Alberta Health Care pays  
for the doctors' visits of all  
people insured with them. The  
Health Service doctors are all  
registered with all the provincial  
health care schemes across

Canada so that when out-of-  
province students visit our  
clinic, their own province foots  
the bill.

Foreign students are en-  
couraged to become insured by  
AHC if they will be here longer  
than one year. For foreign  
students who will be here less  
than one year, there is a special  
short-term health insurance  
available. In other words,  
students who do not pay their  
\$10 fee are *not* ripping the rest  
of us off.

Even with the insurance  
coverage available for services  
rendered, the University Health  
service has had to really tighten  
its budget. This year the Board  
of Governors will be asked to  
pick up the deficit of between  
\$150,000-\$200,000. It is my  
understanding that it is for this  
reason that Students' Council  
supports reinstatement of the  
\$10 mandatory health fee.

Karin Martin