

“A child of five could understand this. Fetch me a child of five.”

Though I am an acolyte to the sciences, I have become disenchanted with them. It is refreshing, from time to time, to hear the naive but sincere sentiments from people whose opinions of science date back to the Enlightenment: "Science can understand everything." I'm sorry, but that's just not true.

It has to be understood that any scientific theory is subject to cultural interpretation, which then can change it's meaning. Look what happened to Darwin's theory of evolution, particularly the "survival of the fittest." When the businessmen finally got around to either reading Darwin or hearing bastardized half truths about what he said, they thought to themselves, "Hey...not bad. Survival of the fittest? Competition? Just like business!" Soon you had everyone trying to make a biological model fit social functioning. Sure there are similarities, but if you're not careful, you get eugenics.

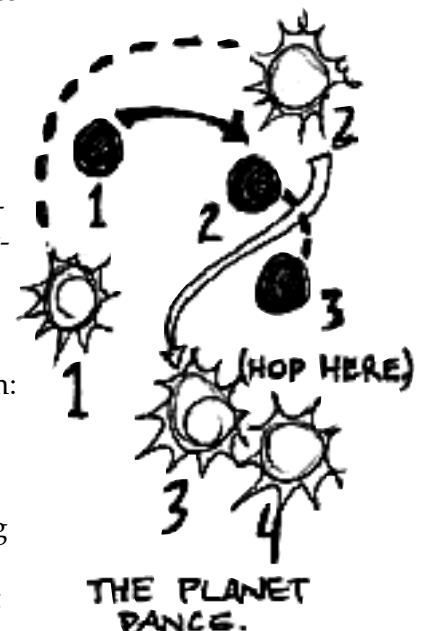
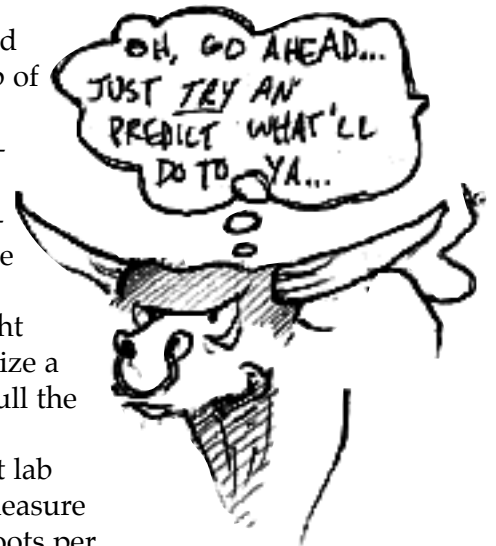
No, science can not understand everything; science can only understand what it can observe. Can't see it? Can't measure it? Can't explain it. On top of that is the ethnocentric baggage that every individual carries around with them. Need proof? Look at how blindly the monks of the Middle Ages followed the words of Aristotle, even when it was obvious he was wrong. Hell, the only reason the Church recognized that a vacuum could be created was because they needed a place for heaven to exist once the idea of the "heavenly spheres" was shot to hell. The heresy of the thermometer...

Scientists are nothing more than well conditioned lab rats. Pavlov taught dogs to salivate at the sound of a bell, only because the dogs could recognize a connection between the bell and food. Scientists just recognize patterns. Pull the level and get a food pellet...

In fact, now that I think about it, animal behaviorists make the best lab rats. The behaviorist's method, in field or lab, is to record accurate data, measure precise distances and exhaustingly catalog number and shape of moose doots per square mile. While they painstakingly gather data to chart graphs that will make other animal behaviorists cry, they tend to miss how an animal acts as a complete entity. Behavior is a complex mesh of parts, and sure it helps to break all these parts down to sections that can be conveniently studied, but don't think that a chart of bat food consumption versus environmental temperature explains bat behavior. It's usually right when a human thinks he can predict an animal's behavior that the human gets gored.

Let me give you an example of the limitations of science. Get up in the morning and watch the sun rise (there's a hint in that phrase). Now we, in our educated aloofness know that the earth goes around the sun (so the sun doesn't rise...the earth falls), but if the sun did go around the earth, it would look exactly the same. The earliest astronomers were just noticing patterns, and came up with a good theory. There was just one problem; actually, a whole bunch of them: planets. All the others stars scrolled smoothly across the sky except for those pesky "wandering stars." They'd go forward, then back, then seem to stand still.

To explain all of this meandering, intricate systems were devised to explain their actions. To this day, horoscopes depend heavily on the apparent wandering of the planets. Then some bright boy said, "Wait! If the Earth and all the planets were to go around the Sun, that would explain the wandering!" And of course it



did.

As the earth overtook or was passed by planets, their apparent motion in relation to ours would make them seem to wander back and forth. All the kinks were worked out of motions of the heavens.

Great...but what holds the planets where they belong? Little tracks? Gold chains? God? Ah, gravity. Of course, it was gravity (we're nearing my point. Bear with me). Physicists have experimentally (experimentally. That means they've watched something over and over until they see clear patterns) determined simple algebraic formulae to determine the attraction between any two objects with mass that are separated by any amount of space.

Einstein took it even further and explained gravity roughly like this: space and time are like a huge trampoline. Anything you put on the trampoline will cause it to sag and that sagging will pull in other objects, just like balls rolling down a hill.

Amazing. Through simple observation (and some brave leaps of intellect during particular time periods)

we have the theory of gravity. OK. But why do two masses "dent" space/time? That can't be answered. There's nothing to observe. Science can run along fine until...oops, there's no more track. The frontiers now lie in accelerated particle physics, using gigantic cyclotrons. But they too will hit the wall.

Man will never "invent" anything. We will simply continue to observe the universe around us and find new combinations of things to make. Should we just reach a certain level of knowledge and simply say, like a frustrated parent, "just because?" That worked for the Europeans during the Middle Ages.

Until we can find something beyond science, humanity is destined simply to follow the dots and create ready made pictures; we'll never be able to make a simple stick drawing on a blank page. If we could understand the fundamentals of the universe? Well, then we'd be gods, wouldn't we? We could make our own rules.

Anyway, I'm going to go pull my lever...I'm hungry.

Chain Letter

As promised last week, here's a chain letter for you to copy and mail off to friends. If you'd like an e-mail version to distribute, just contact GDT, and we'll send you a copy.

Remember: chain letters are frowned upon by the US Postal service, so don't send this to anyone.

29 October, 1995

Before you immediately throw this letter out, please let me explain its purpose: this is a test to see just how efficient the postal systems of the world are.

Have I gotten you interested? Well, let me explain; This letter originality appeared in Volume 2, issue 8 of a satire publication, Gracies Dinnertime Theatre, printed on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester New York, USA. Anyway, the whole thing got started when the US Postal service lost an issue that had been mailed to us from our illustrator. Needless to say we had to publish without illustrations...and we're bitter.

This letter is much more than revenge, however. Our goal is to get it as far and into as many countries as possible (here's where you help). Just make a copy of this letter and mail it off to some friends. If you're mailing it to a country where English is not the most common language, please translate this letter before mailing it. After you do that, get in touch with Gracies Dinnertime Theatre, either through a letter, postcard, or e-mail, and just tell us the name of your city, state or province, and country. It would also be nice if you could tell us where you received the letter from, originally.

Then we plot out on a map just how far this letter gets.

That's it. No money. No threats of bad luck.

Remember: chain letters are frowned upon by the US Postal service, so we urge you all not to follow the above instructions.

You can get in touch with Gracies Dinnertime Theatre via:

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre
care of
438 Clay Road. Apartment C.
Rochester, New York 14623
United States of America

If you have access to electronic mail, you can reach us at
STH8884@ritvax.rit.edu

We won't be able to update everyone who responds to this letter as to how far it gets, but if you have access to the internet, you can check on progress by visiting

<http://www.rit.edu/~sth8884/gdt.html>

Thanks for your time.

-Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

Martyr of the week

St. Quentin
October 31

-Troy Liston

Hey there brothers and sisters of the immaculate deception, welcome once again to the shrine of Catholic suffering. The martyr for the week of Oct. 30-Nov. 5 is the great St. Quentin. A Roman soldier who converted to Christianity in the late third century, our saint missionized in Gaul. Here he was martyred after being tortured in some unique and cruel ways. He had hot nails driven into his head and was stretched, pulled and pushed on an extravagant rack that worked with weights and pulleys. Next they filled his mouth with a mixture of quicklime, vinegar and mustard (now you know the ingredients of the Nick Tahou's garbage plate!), beheaded him and threw his perforated corpse into the Somme river. About fifty years later his body resurfaced and a blind woman was cured when she stumbled over it. Naturally she founded a church dedicated to him on that spot (now the city of Saint Quentin in France). It is ironic that one of our most famous prisons is named for this saint, since in another episode of his life an angel once freed him from prison. Quentin is the patron saint of bombardiers, chaplains, locksmiths, tailors and porters. If you have the sniffles or a raging smokers cough, this is the saint you are to invoke.

Other saints of note for this week (although not martyrs) are St. Mathurin (patron of fools, Nov.1), St. Rumbald(only lived for 3 days, yet quoted scripture and preached to the public, Nov. 3) and St. Martin de Porres (patron of hairdressers, people of mixed race, public health workers and Peruvian television {i'm not kidding},also Nov. 3). The other big day this week is All Souls day on Nov. 2. This is the day to pray for the souls of all those unfortunates who are stuck in the afterlife waiting room, the line at the Bursar's win- I mean purgatory. Until next week remember: stigmatas put the **fun** in **functional** disfigurement.

After Dinner Mints

-by Kelly Gunter

There are so many people around nowadays who want to get lyposuction performed, I'm sure that for those out there who are malnourished and who could stand to gain weight that both groups can be accommodated via the same process. You can put vacuum cleaners into reverse, so why can't you just suck the fatty tissue out of one person and pump it into another. Everyone's happy and the problem is solved. One group of people looks anorexic and the other has just been provided with their meals for the next week. And for those people who still want to lose weight, but don't possess sufficient funds for the process their could be "fat banks" where people go to contribute fatty tissue to the poor. Hell if we have a little fatty tissue left over we could make a few greyhounds look as if they've finally learned how to eat.



Cereal

-B.J. Leopold

The Sandwich: Episode III

The small man loaded his gun with his left hand while steering with his right. The car made no sound except the grinding crunch of the tires over gravel as he pulled off the highway. He had made good time from the mansion, and he knew -- the moment he looked towards the rest-stop's low building -- that his quarry would still be here, inside making phone calls or waiting for a ride home that would never come.

The Lieutenant watched the front doors of the low building, waiting patiently for his suspects to reemerge. He watched carefully as the gray woolen topcoat and black sunglasses slithered out of a nearby car and glided into the building. A second later, as the burst of the gunshot registered in his good ear, the Lieutenant discovered himself running top speed towards the doors, gun and badge in hands, his stomach churning at the thought of what he knew he would find there.

Sandy stepped out of the bathroom just as the sound of the explosion reached her, and she followed as in slow motion the cloud of blood raced out from her plaything boy and pockmarked the candy machine her chocolate bar had come from. She did not look at the body lying in front of the machine, she did not look at the grey-coated man standing silently in the middle of the room, she looked only at the now sanguine glass plate of the sugar dispenser.

And then suddenly everything was chaos. The grey man was at the glass doors going out. The cop came out of nowhere, badge waving wildly. He was at the doors, coming in. Sandy's hand went to her purse. The badge flew as the cop was ejected through the door. The shards of glass that settled over the cop didn't slow down the grey man, but Sandy's bullet in the shoulder did. She couldn't see his face, nor would she have remembered anything she saw except the bright candy-wrapper colors showing through the bloody glass. The grey man disappeared around the corner, and Sandy discovered that she couldn't move to follow him. She had collapsed in shock, and was sitting in the bathroom doorway. Her plans were utterly ruined.

The radio was shrieking, loud enough to drown out the whining engine and the shouting driver. Looking up, she caught a glimpse of her bloodshot eyes in the stolen rearview mirror and smiled broadly as she remembered her last few days. Living on little food and less sleep, she had walked, hitched and hijacked her way across three states. Now she could add grand theft auto to the list that the imaginary police that were following her would be carrying with them: checking off each offense as they tried to track her down. She smiled again at this thought, as she always did. She could picture the slow realization creep over the stupid hick faces of the cute little couple she had relieved of their car; the way they would get confused and then finally decide their car was gone, and then get confused again. She was starting to get angry again.

"Whoa, girl, take a deep breath, they're just average assholes with sub-average minds," she remembered suddenly what her father told her on his last day: "You could take 'em all on in a battle of wits with one brain tied behind your back, Jan. Yuh know that, don'tcha?"

"Yeah, Daddy, I know that. That's why I gotta go to the city, I gotta make a name for myself and teach this world a lesson," Jan smoothed out her forehead creases, took a deep breath, and decided to search through the car for anything interesting. With her free hand, she dug around in their personal junk. When her probing uncovered something cold and slimy under the seat, she jerked her hand back. Shivering and screwing up her face, she cautiously sniffed at the substance on her fingertips, and discovering only mayonnaise, she grinned. Her stomach rumbling lightly in anticipation, she sent her hand flying back around the edge of the seat and snatched the bag containing the fresh, cold Sandwich.

To be continued...