

Preface

Superstition *versus* gullibility

Emerging from the cradle of humankind we have to face an evergreen problem of our mental boundaries – namely how to define truth, and how to make distinction between good and bad.

Science is the way and it also represents the means to learn more about the relation of the world and ourselves. What is science? Branch of knowledge involving systematized observation of, and experiment with phenomena. Simply we seek, we learn. That may be enough to define the truth, however will not enable us to determine the differences between the good and the bad. The whole story can be read in the Bible written in a sort of a philosophic manner in the Book of Genesis when it tells us that God placed human being in the **Garden of Eden**, in the middle of which stood “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (2:17). The Garden of Eden was lost, and so the knowledge of the distinction between good and bad will never be delivered to us, and all members of the human race have to solve this problem themselves. How? Just in a primitive but practical way; by getting acquainted with the facts.

Our intellectual activities are influenced by two serious factors. One of them is superstition. The definition of superstition is as follows: a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation. In other assessment superstition is any belief or practise that is irrational i.e., a misunderstanding of science or causality, a positive belief in fate or magic, or furthermore – accepting theories, ideas or advices as if they were proven principles.

The latter is the case when we face the other influential factor – gullibility. Gullibility is a failure



The story of the crow and the fox in the fables of La Fontaine is an etalon of gullibility.

of social intelligence in which a person is easily tricked or manipulated into an ill-advised course of action. It is closely related to credulity, which is the tendency to believe unlikely propositions that are unsupported by evidence. Classes of people especially vulnerable to exploitation due to gullibility include children, the elderly and the developmentally disabled and in general all people with no or insufficient educational background.

Apart from the credulity problems of ourselves that may emerge from lack of information escorted by our personal goodwill and open minded behaviour, there is a special field of gullibility when intellectual and educational positions may fail or even can be ruined.

One of the most profound philosophic pamphlets ever written about gullibility is the book of Jonathan Swift edited in the 18th Century. Even the name of his hero “Gulliver” was chosen to label the story. From among the specific characters of the book, Gulliver himself was given a role to be the narrator of the social adventures described. “Although Lemuel Gulliver’s vivid and detailed style of narration makes it clear that he is intelligent and well educated, his perceptions are naïve and gullible. He has virtually no emotional life, or at least no awareness of it and his comments are strictly factual. Indeed, sometimes his obsession with the facts of navigation, for example, becomes unbearable for us. Gulliver never thinks that the absurdities he encounters are funny and never makes the satiric connections between the lands he visits and his own home. Gulliver’s naïveté makes the satire possible, as we pick up on things that Gulliver does not notice.”

At this point we return to the initial question again; what is the way and what are the means of approaching truth? I believe it is science in general, and the dissemination of scientific results in a controlled, broad and open access way to the public. Our journal, Columella provides a forum for scientific publications in the field of agricultural and environmental sciences. The journal of one of the most ambitious agricultural faculties of Hungary has a mission to disseminate novel research results in favour of improving our world.

The editors would say thanks to the authors of the present issue, and also welcome the readers who may read, use and broadcast the scientific information compiled. Also we do hope that they may become future authors as well.

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