

Letters

Doxiadis: Interpretations

Without qualification, C. A. Doxiadis' article on "Ekistics" (23 Oct., p. 393) is the best piece of satire I have read this year. He has managed to lampoon technical jargon, stereotyped graphics, and those who become experts through the device of creating a specialty with but one member. Doxiadis has done this all at once and in a smooth and surgical way.

The editors of *Science* are to be congratulated for departing from routine technical articles in order to bring their readers this really fine piece of humor. It is a testimony to the quality of the satire that it could only be appreciated in a technical journal where the readers are well versed in the subjects of the humor.

H. S. LAHMAN

13 Garrison Road,
Brookline, Massachusetts 02146

It is thrilling that *Science* is so open to innovation while maintaining its high standards, as evidenced by publishing this article with its intriguing illustrations and scientific text. Doxiadis refers to the Greeks and Romans as in a classic. He quotes almost exclusively contemporary learned sources, and presents his case clearly. One learns from it in more ways than one. Whoever may admit lack of understanding of the article's original scientific thoughts will do well not to let his voice be heard. After all, the emperor's new gown (1) was indeed wonderful. A large crowd was there to assent noisily to this. (Was the editor of *Science* there?) The little boy, who said he did not see it, made a fool of himself. But that was his fate as a fictional character. . . .

Doxiadis' article is but the latest contribution to scientific literature manifesting the emergence in science of what we propose to call the Emperor Principle. . . . The Emperor Principle takes its name from the recipient of the inventive tailors' services in the Andersen work. The principle may be defined thus: An idea, proposition,

finding, or conclusion acquires a level of elegance in its presentation, a degree of imprecise flourish in its supporting illustrations, and enjoys prominence in print or primacy in oral presentation *in direct proportion* to its improbity, provided that it arrives from the castle of authority.

Thus, added to the other perils of our profession are the grave consequences which derive from our infantile habit of believing what we see. In reading *Science*, we see a learned article, illustrated by graphs of data without ordinate dimensions, plus other illustrations appearing to resemble senseless cribbling, and in which the author manipulates an *ekistical* population unit of 3×10^{10} human individuals. Confronted with this, if we become confused, and the text does not help at all, we apparently do better to quietly assume (together with the editor) that there is a well-established scientific meaning to it all, and keep silent for our own sake.

But there remains the painful feeling of a pulled leg. Time will heal that, but time will apparently also bring more of the same. Hence, a chronic condition is established, and what choice is there but to learn to live with it?

KEVIN L. CAREY

18 Woodmore Drive,
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

GEORGE K. SWINZOW
East Thetford, Vermont 05043

Reference

1. "The Emperor's New Clothes," in *Andersen's Fairy Tales* (Random House, New York, 1958), pp. 3-10.

In view of the five principles discussed by Doxiadis, we would take issue with the meager comment concerning the cover picture of the issue: "Center of Paris, showing the wide diagonal avenues that, in the 19th century, were superimposed on the existing pattern of streets, to speed transportation."

Health and crime factors were obviously in Haussmann's mind when he rebuilt Paris, and the "speeding of

transport" at the time was more likely related to the transport of riot breakers from one end of the city to the other. In addition, and as discussed by Horne (1), the straight streets afforded excellent fields of fire, as well as good opportunities for troops coming from the oblique intersections to turn the flank of the barricade. This latter was a most important factor in the final stages of the fall of the Commune in 1871. It is pertinent that Horne quotes Haussmann as considering that at last they had succeeded "in cutting through the habitual storm-centres."

P. B. GAHAN
V. MAGGI

Faculty of Medicine, Memorial
University, St. John's, Newfoundland

Reference

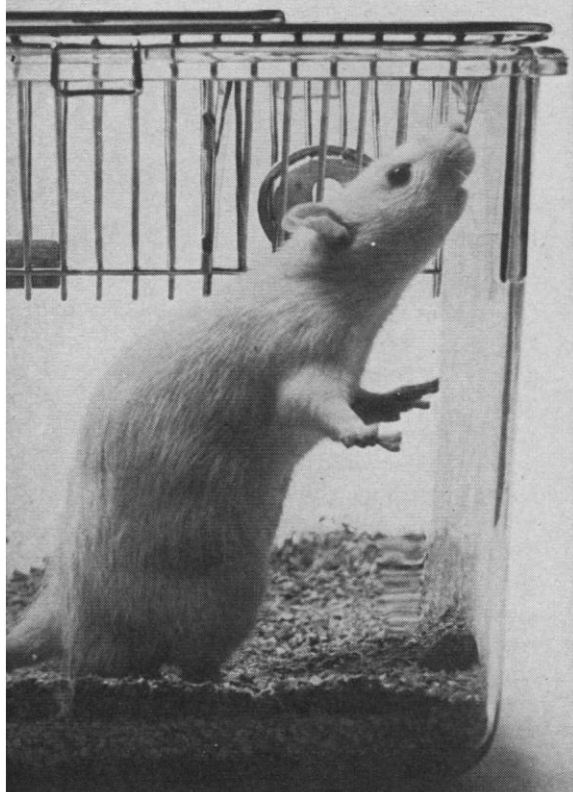
1. A. Horne, *The Fall of Paris* (St. Martins, New York, 1965).

Intrepid Analysis of Female Scientists

Like other virile young Americans born about 1910, I am schizoid about "Women's Lib" and am thinking of fleeing the country. But where's a man to go? To Switzerland, where in their wisdom they don't give women the right to vote? There the men are so busy making clocks they don't even have time to go skiing! Who knows? Perhaps I'll hie me to the Isthmus, where the gorgeous Tehuanas rule the roost and own *everything*, soul and body. There a man would have plenty of time to . . . ah, but you've no doubt heard the story about the Danish anthropologist. . . .

Whatever, all this bushwa about the Australian ad being discriminatory against female scientists is strictly for the birds (Letters, 25 Dec.). What's the real reason for lower salaries for lady scientists? The comparison I'd like to make is only theoretically possible. Suppose we took a random sample of 1000 women starting careers in science, quantified their "mortality" (numbers leaving the field) over time, and compared this mortality with that of a control group of men assumed to have equal intellectual capacity. What do you think the result would be? I'd be willing to bet plenty that the mortality among the ladies (resulting from marriage, babies, and so forth) would be much higher than that of the controls. I can't prove it. But if I were hiring people of equal capacity, I'd want to select those

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cage
is?



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whom I felt would "stay with it" longest. In this situation the *long-term* value of the commodity determines its price, not the immediate value. Lab directors just don't want and won't pay the same prices for people whom they suspect have a high chance of leaving.

I tried this letter out on a female colleague. On the dead-run out of her lab and over the crash of flying Erlenmeyers I caught her riposte: "You hammerhead, the lower survival rate is the *result* of the dollar discrimination!"

DEMOREST DAVENPORT

Department of Zoology,
University of California,
Santa Barbara 93106

Those who have written so vehemently about disparity between pay for men and women employees (particularly scientists) have not considered the employer's side of the coin. In buying the services of any equipment, mechanical, animal, human, or otherwise, the purchaser must consider return on his investment relative to initial cost, upkeep, depreciation, and perhaps other factors with which cost accountants are most familiar.

When hiring a scientist, male or female, the employer must look to the future. What is the productive life expectancy of the individual? What is the probable productivity of that person in terms of what the employer wants? How much will the individual cost per unit of output? And, could some other procurable person give comparable or more satisfactory service at the same or a cheaper per-unit cost? In view of the apprenticeship required for maximum productivity on most jobs, probable absenteeism, retirement and disability benefit costs, and so forth, these are valid considerations. Some years ago I found that some employers would not consider "common labor" beyond age 40. Their reason: It costs too much for retirement benefits for the time ahead that they can do this type of work.

I have seen no data comparing the relative per-life-unit-output cost of men and women in science, nor in any other occupation. I have heard that (i) most young women work only until they can find husbands; (ii) most mothers are engrossed with their families and not with their jobs; (iii) women are of uncertain tenure because their husbands move; (iv) pregnancy and parturition decrease the working woman's usefulness on the job; (v) women are not as dedicated to getting ahead as men are and, consequently, are not worth as much; and

(vi) women cause more friction and conflict than men.

During the past few years I have been instrumental in hiring several psychologists—men and women. My frustrating experience is that women and neophyte male psychologists are not good risks for employment in a community mental health program outside a large city. They don't stay long enough to become effective. They're looking for "a place to jump"—one with more "social advantages" and opportunity to start at the top of their profession.

I suggest that scientists come up with better predictive measures of lifetime professional output—also with short-term expectancies—before they become too exercised at what they cannot prove to be discrimination. What we see as discrimination may in fact prove economically and socially justifiable. There is no virtue in preferential treatment of a minority because it is a minority and may have been discriminated against.

MILTON B. JENSEN

1405 Jacobson Circle,
Sun City Center, Florida 33570

DDT Proponents Challenged

The counterattack by pesticide manufacturers and their associates in defense of DDT charges environmentalists with being "emotional" and "hysterical" in their efforts to curtail the use of DDT (Letters, 27 Nov.). Lykken, formerly with Shell Chemical Company, speaks of "the emotional oratory about the apparent decline of certain species of birds. . . ." Nevertheless, the literature reveals abundant documentation by competent scientists on the inhibition of avian reproduction by DDT, the mechanisms involved, and their deleterious impact on populations of carnivorous birds (1). Unsupported charges that this work is "emotional oratory" are themselves indications of irrationality, yet they continue to appear in the popular media and as letters to editors of journals. If Lykken or his colleagues have any evidence from scientific studies showing that DDT has *not* caused the declines of these birds, they have certainly kept it a closely guarded secret. Until they publish such evidence in the scientific literature, most scientists will continue to believe the numerous refereed research studies they have already seen, rather than unsupported rhetoric.