

'New Age' kookery invades the biology textbook market

by Susan Welsh

Biology: Discovering Life

by Joseph S. Levine and Kenneth R. Miller
D.C. Heath and Company, Lexington, Mass., 1991
898 pages, hardbound, \$41

Over the last year, I have noticed a change in the character of my junk mail. A catalogue for children's clothing says, "You can have a tree planted when you use your Mastercard card." The Gardener's Supply Company offers a product called "Rainforest Crunch," which it calls "the candy with an environmental conscience." It seems that "the Brazil nuts and cashews are purchased directly from the native people of the rainforest, which strengthens the local economy and encourages rainforest preservation," and a portion of the proceeds goes to environmentalist groups. A catalogue with children's toys advertises "Hugg-A-Planet: a friendly world for children"—a stuffed cotton ball in the shape of—you guessed it; another catalogue boosts an "aerobic exercise toy"—which, back in the good old days, we used to call a jump rope.

I found this foolishness and outright fraud dismaying enough, but not half so dismaying as the new college-level introductory biology textbook by Levine and Miller, which had been recommended to me as one of the best around. Amid the opulent photographs and gorgeous illustrations, I found just the same unscientific but "politically correct" claptrap.

The idea seems to be that, since undergraduates do not want to study science anymore these days, you have to capture their interest by presenting scientific material "with a student's world view in mind," as the authors state in their preface. That means, you start with sexy things like AIDS, condoms, ozone holes, and global warming. And, whereas the authors claim that their aim is "to lead students through narratives of observation, inquiry, discovery, controversy, and social relevance, rather than to present them with a list of 'established' facts and conclusions," the text is full of dogmatic conclusions of the "politically correct" variety, which give no hint of contrary evidence.

The 'ozone hole'

Let's take a couple of examples.

In 1973, F. Sherwood Rowland advanced the theory that man's production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), for refrigeration and other purposes, was generating too much chlorine which was destroying the ozone layer, exposing people to deadly cancer-causing ultraviolet radiation. This view gained ground in 1985, with the supposed discovery of an "ozone hole" in Antarctica. The environmentalist hysteria that ensued was intertwined with propaganda to the effect that carbon dioxide produced by industry was creating a pattern of global warming. The conclusion that was drawn: stop industrialization, ban CFCs.

In their introductory note to the student, Levine and Miller write: "Ecologists have discovered that some of our actions may be causing a planet-wide climate change whose long-term effects we can scarcely comprehend. Other human activities are destroying Earth's protective ozone layer." In Chapter 7, we even have a false-color satellite photo of the "ozone hole," with a caption that reads: "If those holes spread over populated areas, many new cases of skin cancer and immune system damage could result, along with crop damage and an increase in global temperature."

Totally unreported by the authors is the growing mass of evidence that the ozone hole scare is an *unscientific fraud*. To summarize this evidence in brief:

There has been no ozone depletion in the past decades, by CFCs or anything else. Temporary fluctuations in the ozone layer occur on a seasonal basis, according to latitude, and are in direct relationship to the solar cycle, not to CFCs. The Antarctic ozone hole is not a new phenomenon, but was identified in 1956 by meteorologist Gordon Dobson, and has most likely been there for millions of years; it occurs annually, at the end of the Antarctic winter, lasts 3-5 weeks, and then disappears again.

Levels of ultraviolet radiation have decreased, not increased. In any event, there is no correlation between exposure to ultraviolet radiation and malignant melanoma, the lethal form of skin cancer.

As for chlorine devouring the ozone layer: The annual production of CFCs is approximately 1.1 million tons, which includes 750,000 tons of chlorine; this amount is minuscule compared to natural sources of chlorine gases, such as 600

million tons per year from the evaporation of sea water, and many millions more from volcanic eruption. The recent increased concentrations of chlorine monoxide reported above the Arctic are most likely the result, not of CFCs, but of the eruption of the Philippine volcano Mt. Pinatubo last June, which spewed millions of tons of chlorine into the atmosphere.

Furthermore, huge volcanic eruptions, like that of Mt.

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Pinatubo (the largest volcanic eruption ever measured) affect global climate and agriculture in a major way. If you want to stop such climate changes, you'll have to ban volcanoes, not CFCs and not industrialization.

'There is no pollution but people'

Levine and Miller present in their opening chapter, as an example of "current controversies" in science, one of the most unscientific theories you can find, the kooky "Gaia" hypothesis of British biochemist James Lovelock. According to him, the Earth is itself a living being; life on Earth has evolved into a global superorganism, which must be maintained in a state of homeostasis, like an individual organism.

The authors' bland description of his theory may make it sound plausible to the uninformed; but take a look at the following excerpt from Lovelock's new book, *Healing Gaia: Practical Medicine for the Planet*, especially the chapter titled "The People Plague." It reveals the hideous malthusian ideology which is at the core of the "New Age" belief structure:

"Humans on the Earth behave in some ways like a pathogenic microorganism, or like the cells of a tumor or neoplasm. We have grown in numbers and in disturbance to Gaia, to the point where our presence is perceptibly disabling, like a disease. . . .

"As individual humans, or as small groups hunting and gathering, we once lived in symbiosis with our planet. . . . Our exponential growth will soon cease through its own contradictions. As the 19th-century economist Thomas Malthus foresaw, the human population is outstripping its food supply

and environment and must in the end be curtailed—by famine, disease, war, or natural catastrophe. Malthus's predictions are coming true at last! The statement: 'There is no pollution but people' carries an awful truth. . . .

"In the natural state there is no pollution. . . . But the dung of 100 cattle kept by a greedy farmer in too small a field is a real pollution and destroys the grass they feed on.

"None of the environmental agonies now confronting us . . . would be a perceptible problem at a global population of 50 million. Even at a billion people, these pollutions would probably be containable. But at our present numbers—more than 5 billion—and present way of living, they are insupportable. If unchecked, they will kill a great many of us and other species, and change the planet irreversibly.

"As a vast collective, the human species is now so numerous as to constitute a serious planetary malady. Gaia is suffering from Disseminated Primatemaia, a plague of people. . . . If the main disease of the Earth is the superabundance of people at the present way of living, harm will come, not just from their presence, but from the disturbance of the Earth's natural function by what they do."

These quotes are *not* provided by Levine and Miller. But it is unlikely that they would disagree with them, since they promote malthusianism explicitly throughout the text, and in their chapter on "Population Growth and Control," they hail Parson Malthus as "one of the first to recognize the problems of unchecked human population growth."

The authors even shamelessly promote the one-child-per-family policy of the People's Republic of China, which has not only led to forced abortions, forced sterilizations, and female infanticide, but is also creating a demographic nightmare: an aging population, without enough young people growing up to be able to support the elderly. This draconian and suicidal policy is given a fig leaf by Levine and Miller, who print a pretty full-color P.R.C. government poster of a smiling one-child family, with the caption: "China's powerful government has instituted the world's strictest population control measures. While encouraging families to limit themselves voluntarily to a single child, the government strictly prohibits larger families. In many areas women are coerced (psychologically) into sterilization or abortion after bearing their first child. These extremely harsh measures have slowed China's growth rate to 1.0% and helped agricultural production catch up with national food needs."

The only "alternative" view Levine and Miller present to the malthusians, is the free enterprise dogma of the Heritage Foundation. They might have chosen instead from any of a number of scientifically rigorous documents from the American System of political economy, founded by Alexander Hamilton. For example, Abraham Lincoln's adviser Henry C. Carey wrote in 1851, in criticism of the British malthusian system:

"We thus have here, first, a system that is unsound and unnatural, and second, a theory invented for the purpose of



An illustration from Biology: Discovering Life, in which a Chinese government poster promotes the one-child-per-family policy. Levine and Miller's laudatory caption is a total lie. There is nothing "voluntary" about the policy, which has led to forced sterilization and abortion, and even to widespread female infanticide.

accounting for the poverty and wretchedness which are its necessary results. The miseries of Ireland are charged to over-population, although millions of acres of the richest soils of the kingdom await drainage to take their place among the most productive in the world, and although the Irish are compelled to waste more labor than they would pay, many times over, for all the cloth and iron they consume. The wretchedness of Scotland is charged to over-population, when a large portion of the land is so tied up by entails as to forbid improvement, and almost forbid cultivation. . . . Over-population is the ready excuse for all the evils of a vicious system, and so will it continue to be until that system shall see its end."

It is the development of man's productive powers, through the introduction of new technologies, which makes it possible for a given area of land to support more and more people at a rising standard of living. Had it not been for such breakthroughs as the invention of the wheel, the world would have been "overpopulated" at the level of a few million people. Societies where the creativity of the individual is nourished, where science and technology are advancing, where capital is invested in modernizing plant and equipment, tend to *improve* the environment; whereas it is stagnant and declining societies (or ecosystems) that degrade the environment.

The AIDS coverup

While giving extensive coverage to the issue of AIDS, which is certainly of vital importance for undergraduates and biologists alike, the text perpetuates the official coverup of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, according to which AIDS cannot be spread by "casual contact," but only by three means: sexual intercourse, injection or transfusion of contaminated blood, and from infected mother to unborn child. How do we know that these are the only means of transmission? We are never told. What about the extensive body of research that shows "environmental cofactors" for AIDS? This is never mentioned.

And talk about coverups; in their discussion of the history of AIDS research, the authors report that "in 1983, Luc Montagnier and his associates at the Institut Louis Pasteur in France announced that a virus had been identified as the cause of AIDS. This discovery was quickly confirmed by a team led by Robert Gallo at the National Institutes of Health in the United States."

This statement is a historical fraud, which conceals the fact that Gallo *stole* Montagnier's virus and, as recently as 1990, still claimed its discovery as his own. In an interview with the Paris daily *Le Monde* published March 21, 1990, Montagnier charged that Gallo's claim to have discovered the AIDS virus was untrue. "Gallo must face up to the facts,"

the French researcher said. "I call on him again to do this."

A confidential inquiry in 1985 on Gallo's work by the National Cancer Institute's Peter J. Fishinger proved that Gallo had falsified the results, but the results were kept secret, according to French press reports, so that he would get the revenues for the "AIDS breakthrough," while the United States would maintain dominance over AIDS research. The U.S. Justice Department blocked efforts to get the information released to the public.

If the authors were truly interested in presenting a picture of scientific research in all its lively controversy, as they claim, one might expect them to give a truthful account of a story such as this. But instead, we are given a legal fiction, which was concocted to protect Gallo from humiliation, or worse.

The New Age as government policy

According to Levine and Miller, the shift represented by the change in my junk mail began about four years ago. "Sometime between the beginning of 1988 and the middle of 1989," they write, "the world at large suddenly woke up. . . . Finally, world political leaders felt obliged to get into the act. During a global economic meeting among leaders of the world's seven largest industrial nations in the summer of 1989, environmental issues took center stage. Their meeting, in fact, came to be called 'The Green Summit.' 'What defense has been to world leaders for the past 40 years,' an editorial in Britain's *The Economist* predicted at that time, 'the environment will be for the next 40.' "

This adoption of environmentalism as state policy was carried out under the leadership of George Bush and Britain's Margaret Thatcher, with the enthusiastic support of what was then the Soviet Union. It was the hallmark of what was to be the new superpower condominium, as the world's leaders preside over the shutdown of industry, agriculture, and scientific and technological capability. The Soviet support for this policy is well shown by the authors' quote from a 1988 speech by then-Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze: ". . . man's so-called peaceful constructive activity is turning into a global aggression against the very foundation of life on Earth."

This environmentalist "new world order" is now supposed to be signed and sealed at the "Earth Summit" in Brazil in June of this year—a followup to the "Green Summit" which Levine and Miller describe.

To what is science 'relevant'?

When I was an undergraduate in 1968, we students went on strike, protesting that our education was not "relevant" to the issues of the day. What that meant was not altogether clear, since we were also blowing our minds out on LSD, Marx, and Dostoevsky. One biology professor ventured the timid opinion that "the scientific method" was "relevant," even though perhaps we would never have occasion to put our knowledge of mitosis and meiosis to practical use. He

wasn't wrong, but there's more to it than that.

Why do American students think science is "boring"? Is it because their textbooks and teachers teach them *what* to think, rather than engaging them in a Socratic dialogue which teaches them *how* to think?

In a world in great crisis today, our greatest need is for critical young scientific minds, who question their own fundamental assumptions and ours, and look for answers to the riddles of the universe. We do not need more environmentalist, malthusian pseudo-science, or counterculture-influenced textbooks that ask us to consider, as Levine and Miller do on page vii, "what it is like to be a plant."

Bach's St. Matthew Passion for Easter

by Kathy Wolfe

Matthäus-Passion

by J.S. Bach, BWV 244
Johannes Somary, conductor; 1977,
Vanguard/Omega Classics
3 CDs, 4060-1-2, \$21.96.

J.S. Bach's setting of the Passion According to St. Matthew is one of the most powerful statements of the principles of Christianity. Johannes Somary's 1977 Vanguard recording, just issued on compact disc by Omega, is among the few to have done justice to Bach's work.

The conducting is broad and strong, and the voicing is distinct, with both of the double choruses heard with clear separation. The different musical choirs represented by the soloists, the orchestra, and the two choruses are given plenty of room to breathe. The vocal soloists, including tenor Ernst Haefliger and baritone Benjamin Luxon, sing with tremendous poetic understanding.

The power of Bach's "Matthäus Passion" derives from the power of Good Friday itself, the day of the crucifixion. Bach draws out Matthew's own spirit, portraying not only the immensity of Jesus' act, but equally, the inner psychology of every mortal human soul concerned. Bach demonstrates the full responsibility of each person, for both the events of Good Friday, and for the necessary steps which each must take, after it.

What emerges is one of the clearest pictures in literature of the *sovereign individual*, and the requirement that he or