

Environmentalism – The Dismal Religion

Almost a year ago, the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty delivered their infamous **ruling** that Bjørn Lomborg's book **The Skeptical Environmentalist** (which we highly recommend) is scientifically dishonest.

We now salute the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, which is responsible for those Committees, for robustly **overturning** that ruling:

The Ministry finds that the DCSD judgment was not backed up by documentation, and was “completely void of argumentation” for the claims of dishonesty and lack of good scientific practice. The Ministry characterises the DCSD's treatment of the case as “dissatisfactory”, “deserving criticism” and “emotional”

Is it really *emotion* that has dragged the highest arbiters of Danish scientific integrity down into the depths of unreason and pseudoscience? Whatever it is, they are not the only ones. *Scientific American*, for instance, treated Lomborg's work in an **appallingly unscholarly** way. And as for the press – well, with a few honourable exceptions such as *The Economist*, which **backed Lomborg from the beginning**, they have largely abandoned any pretence at critical examination of conventional wisdom and have fallen comfortably into the role of buying for the punishment and destruction of a heretic. *The Guardian*, for instance, was unlucky enough to award Lomborg a derisive **eco-gong** award for disservice to the environment on the very day that the Danish ministry exonerated him.

If this is an emotion, it is a widespread, powerful, destructive and dangerous one. Where does it come from?

Michael Crichton, like many others, argues that **Environmentalism is a Religion**. Basically, we **agree**, but Crichton's take on this is inaccurate in some ways. He says:

I think that you cannot eliminate religion from the psyche of mankind. If you suppress it in one form, it merely re-emerges in another form. You can not believe in God, but you still have to believe in something that

gives meaning to your life, and shapes your sense of the

world. Such a belief is religious.

No, it's not some genetically imprinted Original Sin that makes people irrational. That's letting them off far too easily. And it's letting *himself* off too easily as well: despair is always available as a cop-out, but there's no justification for abandoning the obligation to set the world to rights. The existence of human error doesn't need any great scientific explanation, any more than it needs a religious one: what it needs is correction. Which comes from creative thought, argument, and persuasion.

Crichton also seems to make the common atheists' error that just because all religions are factually untrue, they are all worthless – and in particular, morally worthless. That is not so. They are neither worthless nor mutually equivalent. Many religions have **good moral content** as well as **bad**, while the morality of the environmental movement is **fundamentally bad**. Thomas Carlyle called economics "The Dismal Science"; that was **unfair**, but environmentalism is, precisely, the dismal religion.

Sun, 12/21/2003 - 00:38 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

v nice

v nice

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Sun, 12/21/2003 - 03:55 | [reply](#)

Leap of faith

It would seem by that definition that all "Isms" are religions. I admit that I'm often confused by the way that dogmatic terms such as Environmentalism are thrown around. Blindly as any other "Ism". I'll tell you why.

Being "for" something like the environment is somewhat like motherhood and apple pie. Being an "anti" like an anti-environmentalist is not likely to be my cup of tea either.

I weigh in on the side of environmentalism, usually, but I am far from religious about it. Being an environmentalist in terms of choices can mean almost anything from not pouring used motor oil down the city sewer to driving spikes in old growth trees. It depends. I don't drive spikes in old growth trees. Neither do I empty used motor oil into the city sewer. Call it a leap of faith that one person's attitude and ideas can make a difference. Environmental choices, for example.

But don't label me.

Thinking rationally however it is not hard for most people to be "for" the environment in specific ways, at least "for" the air you

personally breath, "for" the water you drink, and "for" the land that

grows the particular food that you eat. It would be foolish to be otherwise.

You would be wrong to call me religious "for" believing that much, that environment matters, generally; but that is not the only question in the equation. I am in there too. For example, between two extremes of environmental choices I would definitely choose the ones that would benefit me. One of those benefits is to see the local rivers and tributaries cleaner and full of river life. Call me a river environmentalist. Given a choice of asphalt or trees in my back yard I would choose trees. Call me a tree hugger for liking leaves.

Greenpeace on the other hand is not on my list of favored charities. PETA certainly is not. Sierra Club has nice calendars. I am not a member, yet. But don't assume I'm a pushover. If you continue to dump your McDonald's garbage out your car window I will not consider that as your attempt at composting.

I guess I'm just not a fan of "Isms" of any kind, Environmentalism, Fundamentalism, Capitalism, Racism, Liberalism, Conservatism, Catholicism, Atheism. Together, Dogmatism. My views tend toward questioning all beliefs, a healthy skeptic-ism but not at all religious. Closer to anti-religious. Chuck the dogma. And my views tend to weigh in on the side of free markets, open societies, rational discussion, individual action, and a cleaner and saner environment to live in.

But I'm still open to being convinced otherwise.

by a reader on Mon, 12/22/2003 - 04:28 | [reply](#)

isn't opposing ***all*** isms extremism?

what about critical rationalism?

are you sure you oppose both atheism and theism? doesn't one have to be true?

what's wrong with capitalism? i suppose you also oppose socialism? do you favour not having an economic policy, or what?

-- Elliot Temple
<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Mon, 12/22/2003 - 05:55 | [reply](#)

Good question

I do not oppose all isms. However, i am not an "Ism" fan. It is all too easy to fall into the mental trap of believing one's own fave ism is the answer for all things. Skeptic-ism and critical rational-ism fortunately are not such an easy pitfall mentally as many other isms because they contain within their own process the seeds of an open mind.

I tend to oppose Socialism. I am a little less negatively inclined

towards Capitalism. I favor having a range of economic policies suited to the ways of the real world that deal in real world economic practices that affect individuals and groups within real political contexts, certainly the ones that tend to grow wealth in more than purely monetary terms, especially those policy questions that are written down, thought carefully about, and are regularly debated and examined as to whether they actually work in the way their authors say.

Not all sizes fit all or are the answer for all times. Why use a wonderful hammer and a spike when you need a toolkit of specially crafted awls? Usually we need to think carefully, that is. Hence "Isms" with a capital I are crude, tho fancifully and sometimes beautifully inscribed tools, rather useless for other than straw man arguments in some hazy hallowed hall of theoretical debate. Not that I don't enjoy that too sometimes.

by a reader on Mon, 12/22/2003 - 18:45 | [reply](#)

Environmentalism should be true Religion!

I would have to disagree that Environmentalism is a Religion as of this time, however it should be the true Religion. The meaning of life is to live and sustain, and enjoy pleasure, that is it! We live in the "Kingdom of God" for we know nothing about what happens after death. The Sun is the all loving God, all- loving being the giver of life. To enjoy living, experiencing, and enjoying pleasure, we need to take environmentalism seriously. Become vegetarian is a good goal to. Living morally and ethically should be taught at a young age, and the only things we could know for sure is Mathematics, and Scientific laws. Everything is a matter of situation and scenario. Love and Peace should be waged as a war against ignorance and Hate, because the "Kingdom of Heaven" is upon us!!!

by SEEN on Tue, 11/16/2004 - 18:55 | [reply](#)

Industrial Society Destroys Mind and Environment

Industrial Society Destroys Mind and Environment

This is about the link between Mind and Social / Environmental-Issues. The fast-paced, consumerist lifestyle of Industrial Society is causing exponential rise in psychological problems besides destroying the environment. All issues are interlinked. Our Minds cannot be peaceful when attention-spans are down to nanoseconds, microseconds and milliseconds. Our Minds cannot be peaceful if we destroy Nature.

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sushil_yadav

by [sushil_yadav](#) on Sun, 08/20/2006 - 05:46 | [reply](#)

Crichton

Since Crichton's books are full of the most appalling misunderstandings about science - Jurassic Park and Sphere are especially dreadful - I would treat anything he says about environmentalism and 'religion' with great scepticism.

by **Yoni** on Sun, 09/10/2006 - 13:34 | [reply](#)

Atheism and theism

"are you sure you oppose both atheism and theism? doesn't one have to be true?"

No.

It depends on what you mean by 'true', and philosophers have disagreed on this since the dawn of history and still do.

I happen to be an atheist, for a variety of mostly rational and a few emotional reasons. That does not mean that I insist that atheism is 'true', because I can't disprove the existence of (a) god(s). But I do think that atheism is rational while theism is not (as well as being responsible for a great deal of human misery).

by **Yoni** on Sun, 09/10/2006 - 13:37 | [reply](#)

Bjorn Lomborg's opinions on the environment are ridiculous

Bjorn Lomborg's opinions on the environment are ridiculous. He's not a biologist, he's a statistician, and his book ignores serious, pressing environmental issues like invasive species, and habitat destruction.

He has a perspective that we shouldn't ignore but he has demonstrated zero knowledge about ecology and the environment.

I posted a critique [here](#).

I'm also guessing that this retraction is political. Lomborg has enjoyed some favor since the new right wing government came to the Danes... he even has a cushy government post.

by **Will** on Mon, 10/16/2006 - 12:25 | [reply](#)

link to Greenpeaces opposition to war

could someone explain how being against war is an example of fundamentally bad morals?

by **Jay Aziza** on Wed, 12/20/2006 - 20:07 | [reply](#)

Bad Morals

One is bad if one perpetually allows those who are innocent to be

attacked and killed.

Those who oppose war sometimes do that.

by a reader on Thu, 12/21/2006 - 00:19 | [reply](#)

Opposing war is an example of

Opposing war is an example of fundamentally bad morals because it disarms the moral in the face of the immoral.

Therefore to find a warmonger go to the nearest "peace" demonstration. To find a true peace activist go to the nearest Marine Recruiting Station and sign up. Peace through strength or suffer total war. There is no third choice, cultist.

by a reader on Sat, 01/27/2007 - 05:47 | [reply](#)