



Blinkers

Scientific ignorance and evasion *The case for science*

By Charles Pasternak
Foreword by Sir Harry Kroto, Nobel Laureate

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Charles A. Pasternak

This new book by the author of *Quest - The Essence of Humanity* makes the case for science to be taken seriously.

In Britain, the United States and other Western democracies education is below the level in other competing economies. Pasternak describes how science is particularly undervalued in Britain where the notion of C P Snow's Two Cultures appears to stand in the way of teachers and students aiming at a balanced level of attainment across science and humanities.

Besides a blinkered view in society which leads to ignorance of the scientific approach to world problems, it is not only the media that promotes misinformation but scientists themselves that can be blinkered by evading any potential solution to problems other than their own. An example is the energy some scientists expend attacking the beneficial role that faith plays in the life of individuals.

How many scientists sit in British cabinets or are influential participants in US governments? Science does not inform the policy making of governments and ignorance of such concepts as risk and probability damage the legal process when cases come to court.

Blinkers – scientific ignorance and evasion removes the blinkers from our eyes. We may pay lip service to science but do we accept the need to place it at the heart of education so that it becomes natural for politicians and leaders to be well equipped to understand the world we live in? Pasternak's brief biographies of scientifically trained statesmen support his contention that an approach to education fully informed by the scientific method is the right prescription for the future.

Charles Pasternak is a biochemist and founding Director of the Oxford International Biomedical Centre. His previous academic experience has included research and teaching posts at the universities of Oxford, London (St George's Medical School), Yale and California (UCSD Medical School). While at St George's Medical School, he was founder and Chairman of the Department of Biochemistry, which he later expanded into the Department of Cellular and Molecular Sciences. He is acclaimed for his pioneering work in membrane research and is a tireless promoter of international collaboration, working with UNESCO, IUBMB and universities worldwide. The author of a number of books he founded Bioscience Reports of which he was for 28 years editor-in-chief.

About *Blinkers*

Blinkers is an informed personal account which provides a fascinating insight into how science has been used, and misused, as a tool to shape our present understanding of our world. The book clearly shows how both scientific evidence and methodology can be manipulated to influence events supporting those agendas for which the outcome has been predetermined. It is a thoughtprovoking and extremely enjoyable read which explains the pursuit of science in both historical and cultural contexts from which we should learn lessons regarding the impact of science as a tool to shape human destiny. The book is a vital read for all those interested in the communication of science.

Stephen Ham, Director of King Edward VI Grammar School Science College, Chelmsford

The book by Charles Pasternak illustrates the general syndrome of scientific ignorance in our society and its impact on economical, social and political aspects. Very logical and effective uses of facts and historical events, in the context of fair and insightful personal interpretations, help to highlight the importance for the next generations to have better understanding of science and technology in order for better society and economy. It will be a great book not only for scientists but also for politicians, lawyers, administrators and more.

Wanjin Hong, Professor and Deputy Director Cancer and Developmental Cell Biology Division, Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, Singapore

Simultaneously thoughtful and entertaining, this well-researched yet thoroughly accessible book illuminates the costs and consequences of scientific illiteracy and what can be done about it. Through copious examples from history to the present day, Pasternak's clear-headed prose shows how a lack of understanding of basic principles of probability and statistics has lost wars and allowed the general public to be manipulated by politicians, the media, and scientists as well. This book should be a clarion-call for science education.

Michael W. Quick, Executive Vice Dean and Professor of Biological Sciences, College of Letters, Arts & Sciences, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Ignorance or misunderstanding of science is endemic, not only among the public but -- more disquietingly -- among politicians and the media. This is serious because more and more of the decisions that we make as citizens, or which politicians make on our behalf, have a scientific aspect. We all need a better feel for what science can and cannot tell us, and a realistic perception of risk and uncertainty. In this highly readable book, Charles Pasternak deploys his expertise and long experience to offer a robust defence of science, enlivened by interesting anecdotes and examples from many fields. He offers important lessons for scientists, for politicians, and for those engaged with the media. All will enjoy and benefit from this stimulating and well-written book.

Lord [Martin] Rees, recently President of the Royal Society, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge

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