
"SOMETHING DIFFERENT?!"

by ELSIE SPRY

I am an unabashed deductive generalist.

If, having been born in the "dark" ages, I would have been happy that the universe revolved around me. For example, it would be a good reason to get dessert first. The sun comes up; the sun goes down: all centered on me. Something different? Ridiculous!

Unhappily, there are always inductive nags. Annoying observers that bring the rest of us unwillingly to the next step: like Archimedes, Hipparchus, Da Vinci, Galilei, Darwin, Einstein, Hubble.... Each unpopular discovery slices into complacency. And each time the nags' nasty, compelling reality and logic forces us to let the wound heal. Then, we embrace it as a new proud badge of righteousness.

No wonder groundbreaking discoveries are annoying! You can't receive institutional grants, or sabbaticals researching stuff that disprove the "correct" theories. The accepted views are comfortable blankets that guide, govern and control all endeavors. Questioning such blankets can -- literally in the case of Galileo Gallilei -- be criminal!

But, let's bring the discussion back to the point: me. I like things that work -- especially if it makes dessert easier to get. So -- eventually -- I will accept "incorrect" (but real) observations.

Jonas Salk -- who through inductive observation gave us the Polio Vaccine -- had something to say about introducing something different (paraphrased):

First stage: "Ridiculous!"
Second Stage: "Not important."
Third Stage: "Knew it all along."

"Something different" may not make me happy at first -- but I'll get over it!

IF I can still get dessert.

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Particular Concepts