

Nonscience

NEXT, the decimal year. It's quite simple really. The new decimal year will divide up into 10 months of 10 days each. Each New Day will be worth 3.65 Old Days, and Monday morning will start half way through Thursday afternoon. This is the concept of Brian Ford, a sharp young microscopist from Cardiff. If you think it's daft, he adds, then what about decimal currency, the Green Cross Code which asks kids to estimate the speed of approaching vehicles, or the fuss about long-term effects of tea and coffee. "You might just as well talk about the long-term side effects of cream of mushroom soup," he told David Blundy.

Ford is also an expertologist, an expert on experts, and he's been pulling them apart in an amusing new book called Nonscience. He says we've all been bullied by the modern expert, the new-style scientist who chases column inches as energetically as any young starlet. "Experts are opinionated, self-centred and irrational," says Ford. "They are so obscure, only other experts can understand what they are saying."

E.g. (From a seminar for sociological experts discussing poverty): A set of arrangements for producing and rearing children the viability of which is not predicated on the consistent presence in the household of an adult male acting in the role of husband and father.

Ford: "This means Dad's away."

Ford is 32, runs a lab' in Cardiff, and is also an expert on autopsies, microbiology and slag-heaps, as well as experts. But it takes an expertologist to spot an expertologist and he betrays a hint of jealousy towards Dr Christiaan Barnard, heart transplant. "He's the king of experts. He knows how to operate the media, and has had more column inches than anyone. Someone did a lung transplant in 1963; it's just as difficult as a heart transplant, but nobody heard about it."

Ford also examines the thinking of our own friendly sociologist, Desmond Morris, and says in *The Human Zoo* he imposes

new hypothetical treatments upon out-dated notions. Why is it that we assiduously avoid each other as we walk around, being careful to avoid knocking into each other? He says Desmond's answer is straight out of the school of Nonscience: It is because we have to avoid tactile contact because it has sexual implications.

Ford: "That's crap. Walking is a finely balanced manoeuvre. If we knocked against each other we'd fall over."

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