Science and all other systems of thought are also built on postulates. The assumptions of science include: The scientific method is a valid tool for investigating the material universe; objectivity is possible and the scientific method is objective; reasons and rationality work; one can understand a whole by understanding its parts; the world is a mechanism which can be explained through mechanical laws. Science, some argue, is understanding its own hypotheses, particularly with the new physics: quantum mechanics and relativity.

We must be aware of the danger of taking scientific hypotheses as real. Real science is a powerful tool for investigating the material universe, we can come to believe the material universe is the whole of reality. Because the scientific method works so well, we can come to believe it is the only valid method for investigating the universe and automatically reject all nonscientific beliefs. Because we can explain so much through genetics and physics, we can dismiss study of higher levels of organization. Because scientific truth constantly changes, we can come to believe all truth is relative. Because science has nothing to say about God, we can disbelieve in God and think we do so on scientific grounds.

Science is becoming increasingly more involved, at least in the public mind, with religious questions. The creation/evolution debate forces scientists to argue a subject beyond the scope of science. I believe creationists have approached the question in the wrong way. Instead of pointing out that science is incapable of dealing with ultimate questions about the origin of the universe, they try to teach the Biblical creation story as science. Science deals with the universe, not with what was before or is outside of it. That religious people must argue in terms of science demonstrates the way in which religion is taught in our society. It's dinner time, and I enter my friendly neighborhood dining hall. To my left, people are putting their trays on the conveyor belt to the dishwasher, many with a fair amount of food still on their plates. I walk into the serving area, and pick up a tray and silverware. Before me is a poster. "Does your cereal leave you cold?" it asks. I've always felt like answering, "Does your meal leave you sick?"

I pass the bruised apples and meat along the line, picking an entreé and vegetables. At the end of the line is the most popular item: ice cream. I exit and pay for my meal. My Vali-dine card is put into a machine, and I cringe as $6.09 is charged against my meal plan. It cost me $25 a week to cook for myself last summer; were I to eat all my meals on commons, it would cost me $65.26 a week. Behind the cashier is another poster: "Say Yes To Fors, Less Salt, Less Sugar," it reads. At the bottom of the poster someone added, "Less Commons." I pick up my beverages and salad, and sit down to eat with my friends. Several people around me complain about the quality of the food. Others grumble about the amount of money they are going to lose because they are not going to meet their minimum requirements. We finish eating — or not eating, depending on the dinner — and leave.

People do not generally seem to be satisfied with commons. MIT Dining halls really took a positive step, sending a survey to undergraduates in dormitories with minimum meal plan requirements. The survey asked students how often they eat commons, what they feel about the quality of the food and service, how important some of the unlimited items — like salad bar, bread, and ice cream — are to them. It also asked for comments on possible changes in the dining hall system, like opening the dining hall for commons on Sunday, or making meals available à la carte in the dormitory dining halls, since buying a full meal on commons often costs more than purchasing its components separately. The survey did not ask two important questions: What students would like their minimum meal plan requirements to be, and whether, in fact, students want to be on commons at all. It is not clear that all dining halls present a healthy option for all. Dining halls, like dormitories, should pay for themselves. The present situation costs like combined purchasing. Student workers could assume the positions currently filled by regular employees, like pot washers and cashiers, cutting expenses and funneling money back to students.

If you are not on commons, and do not want to pay for it, send a note to President Paul E. Gray '54. Let him know how you feel. If you are on commons, write your opinions. These results will be analyzed, and decisions will be made on the basis of what you have told us. The survey results will be made public.

MIT Dining halls probably could not care less, but perhaps they should. When mandatory commons was reinstated in 1969, it was expected to lose up to $500,000 annually. It met this expectation in each of its first two years of operation. The deficit is covered by MIT's unrestricted funds, including revenue from tuxedos, but every student sends up paying.

Dining halls are necessary in science and culture, but it is not clear that all dining halls present a healthy option for all. Dining halls, like dormitories, should pay for themselves. The present situation costs like combined purchasing. Student workers could assume the positions currently filled by regular employees, like pot washers and cashiers, cutting expenses and funneling money back to students.

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