

Volume 6 Number 2  
March/April 1992

# *The Skeptic*



## *Brainwashed Skeptic:*

Also in this issue: *The story of a cult survivor*

*Dianetics Investigated*

*Who Invented the Loch Ness Monster?*

*Arguments to Design*

*A Pseudoscientific Panacea?*

**£1.85**

---

<b>U.K. Skeptics</b>	<i>Secretary:</i> Michael Hutchinson, 10 Crescent View, Loughton, Essex, IG10 4PZ. <i>Committee:</i> Susan Blackmore, Steve Donnelly, Wendy Grossman.
<b>Irish Skeptics</b>	<i>Chairman:</i> Peter O'Hara, 5B, Regional Hospital, Douradoyle, Co Limerick, Ireland.
<b>Manchester Skeptics</b>	<i>Secretary:</i> Dave Love, Box 475, Manchester, M60 2TH. <i>Treasurer:</i> David Martin. <i>Committee:</i> Steve Donnelly, Toby Howard, Alan Ings, Frank Koval, Mike Rutter, Jon Schofield, Jack Steel.
<b>London Student Skeptics</b>	<i>Convenor:</i> Mike Howgate, Department of Biology, University College, London WC1E 6BT.
<b>Wessex Skeptics</b>	<i>Convenor:</i> Robin Allen, Department of Physics, Southampton University, Highfield, Southampton, SO9 5NH.
<b>Campaign Against Health Fraud</b>	Box CAHF, London WC1N 3XX.
<b>CSICOP</b>	The Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, Box 226, Buffalo, New York, USA.

---

<b>Electronic Mail</b>	For information on skeptical information by E-mail or for subscription or other magazine enquiries contact: Dave Love: (Love@uk.ac.daresbury).
<b>Prometheus Books and Skeptical Inquirer</b>	<i>UK Distributor:</i> Michael Hutchinson, 10 Crescent View, Loughton, Essex, IG10 4PZ.

---

## ISSN 0959-5228

*The Skeptic* relies heavily on readers' contributions of articles, ideas, letters and newspaper clippings etc. Please mark clippings clearly with the name of the publication and the date. Articles may be reprinted only by permission of the author; however such permission is automatically granted for all in-house material (unsigned or by the editors) to the publications of skeptics groups in any country. UK subscription rates (six issues) are £12 per year (see back page for overseas rates). Any additional donations to *The Skeptic* will be most gratefully accepted.

---

<p>A big thank-you to all our clipping contributors, who for this issue include: Tom Ruffles, Ernest Jackson, Chris Allen, William Dalglish, Chris Torrero, Chris Wright, Gerald Fleming, Stephen Moreton, Mavis Howard, Dave Landford, Bill Donnelly, Eileen Braben, Steuart Campbell, Redge Lewis, Eric Schneider, John Winston, Caroline Richmond, Gregory Lush, Frank Chambers, David Martin and Alan Remfry. Sorry if we've missed anyone out! Please keep the clippings coming!</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

# CONTENTS

*Volume 6, Number 2: March/April 1992*

4	<b>Hits and Misses</b> Steve Donnelly
6	<b>Ask Professor Mesmo</b> Psychic problem page
7	<b>Arguments to Design</b> Antony Flew
9	<b>Dianetics: From Out Of the Blue?</b> Jeff Jacobsen
13	<b>Talking It All Too Far</b> Michael Heap
15	<b>Brainwashing a Skeptic</b> Arthur Chappell
18	<b>Who Invented the Loch Ness Monster?</b> Steuart Campbell
19	<b>Crossword</b>
20	<b>The Medium is Not the Message</b> Terry Sanderson
21	<b>Skeptic at Large</b> Wendy Grossman
22	<b>Reviews</b>
27	<b>Letters</b>

---

**Editors:** Dr Steve Donnelly and Toby Howard

**Associate Editor:** Dr Dave Love

**Editorial Assistants:** Richard Lyst and Susan Donald

**Finance:** Dave Martin

**Typing:** Mary McDerby, Mavis Howard and Angela Linton

**Assistant to Prof. Mesmo:** Alan Remfry

**Cartoons:** Donald Room and Tim Pearce

**Proof-reading:** Jane Bousfield and Daf and Mike Tregear

**Printing:** Chapel Press, Stockport

Special thanks to David Carlisle for assistance with PostScript problems.

---

*The Skeptic* is published bimonthly from P.O. Box 475, Manchester M60 2TH, UK. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editors. Copyright © 1992 *The Skeptic*.

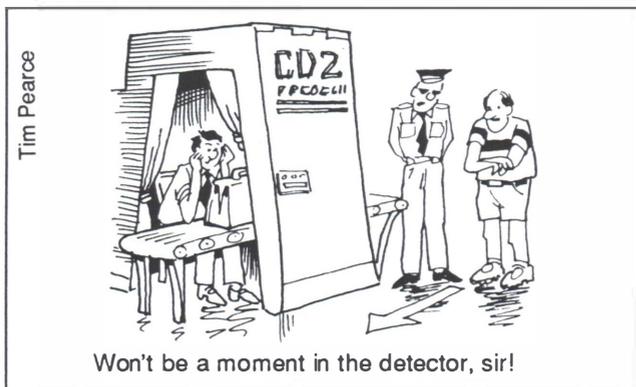
---

# Hits and Misses

Steve Donnelly

## Eastern-bloc mysticism

In *The Skeptic* 6.1, Tim Axon discussed the popularity of paranormal beliefs in the former Soviet Union. In fact, following the demise of their respective communist regimes, all of the former Warsaw pact nations seem to be undergoing an upsurge in interest in things psychic and irrational. Following a visit by James Randi to Hungary earlier this year, physicist Gyula Bencze has formed a skeptics group in that country and the Hungarian popular science magazine *Természeti Világra* will henceforth have a regular Skeptics section. According to Dr Bencze, the Hungarian Skeptics have been formed to start a war 'against pseudoscience and the flood of crackpots pouring over from the Ukraine and Russia'. Meanwhile a little bit further south in Bulgaria, telepathic customs officers are being put to good use. According to the *European* (yes, it does still exist) on 31 January, about 90 officers have been trained to 'seize drugs using extra-sensory perception'. No need for electronic sensors or sniffer dogs here as the training enables them either to find contraband psychically or to detect the agitation of the smuggler's mind. This expertise may soon be made available to the West (just think of the saving in batteries and dog food) as a spokesman for the Chief Customs Office in Sofia stated that the Bulgarians were planning to organise courses for the training of their Western colleagues.



## From the subliminal to the ridiculous

Readers of *The Skeptic* will probably not be surprised to learn the recent findings of a working party from the British Psychological Society—reported in the *Independent* on 27 January—who concluded that subliminal messages on tapes designed to help people give up smoking or to lose weight have no effect on behaviour. Professor Michael Howe from the University of Exeter and his colleagues reviewed studies spanning thirty years in an attempt to determine whether there was any scientific evidence in favour of the benefits of subliminal messages and came up with a resounding 'No' as an answer. The very act of buying a self-help tape demonstrates a positive commitment which itself may be a key

factor in any subsequent changes in behaviour. In addition 'when someone expects something to be helpful there can be a positive outcome even if the product itself is useless'. Please note that a subliminal message urging you to doubt the efficacy of subliminal messages has been concealed in this article.

## Pyramid-life crisis?

In February, the tabloids gave front page coverage to the story that the Duchess of York was undergoing treatment for back problems from a healer whose treatment consists of seating clients under a blue perspex pyramid and invoking the powers of ancient Egypt. According to the *Daily Mirror* on 14 February, Greek born clairvoyant Madame Vasso would 'run her hot hands over Fergie's body in an attempt to cure her aches and pains'. But I believe that the powers of ancient Egypt can play havoc with one's relationships and it is my theory that this had an important bearing on the recently announced break up of the Duchess's marriage. The principle by which the blue pyramid functions is, of course, not yet understood by science. However, according to Madame Vasso it is 'all about heat transfer and energy. It is important that there are no metal or nails nearby because they can drain the energy away.' It sounds awfully like a stylish blue microwave oven to me.

## Hi Fi tips

Any reader who, despite reading Lewis Jones' warning in *The Skeptic* 6.1, has recently purchased a sea-band from the little catalogue that arrives with the credit card bill may be interested in a new item now offered by the *International Buyers Guide from Innovations*. In there with the combined tyre inflator and car vacuum cleaner, the cordless rotating bristle toothbrush and the amazing foldaway walking stick is the Lasaway CD pen. This green felt-tip pen (a snip at only £9.95) is used to draw green circles along the inside and outside edges of your compact disks. As the CD player uses a laser and plays digitally encoded music it is perfectly clear that this simple expedient will result in sound which is audibly cleaner and clearer. As the description of the clever device says 'Yes we *know* it sounds incredible, but this Japanese breakthrough really does work!'. *The Skeptic* is fortunate enough to be able to give—at no cost—two additional tips (culled from the magazine *HiFi Answers* by David Fisher for his article 'Homeopathy for your HiFi' in *The Skeptic* 3.4) that should be at least as effective as the Lasaway CD Pen: (i) Wear a copper ring when listening to your HiFi system and (ii) Slip paper sheets (with no writing) into all LP sleeves and books in the room where you listen to music. Alternatively cut a corner from one page in every book, magazine and CD booklet in the room.



## Responsible TV

Talk show hosts all over the world like nothing better than to feature proponents of the paranormal on their shows, perhaps together with an occasional dissenting skeptic for a bit of contrast. But if a recent case in France is anything to go by they may soon start thinking twice before inviting faith healers to air their views on live TV. French talk show host Patrick Sabatier, who recently featured a fraudulent faith healer on his programme, has himself been charged with aiding and abetting fraud. According to the worldwide news page of the teletext service *Oracle* on 19 March, the healer, Philippe Gouezh, who police said is currently on the run, promised to treat viewers free of charge for cancer if they sent donations to a supposed charity that he ran.

## Healing with (but not for) peanuts

Meanwhile somewhat closer to home in Scotland, the *Sunday Post* on 23 February took a commendably skeptical look at the activities of John Walsh a faith healer, based in England, whose followers practise in many parts of England and Scotland. Former headmaster turned healer, Walsh operates from the Edgar Cayce Centre in Co. Durham and admits that he has no formal medical training and tells recruits to his network of healers that they do not need to be intelligent—they just need to have the gift of the gab. He sells 'healing' crystals as well as small bottles of castor oil and peanut oil and these are used by the numerous practitioners of 'Walsh healing'. At a recruitment meeting he made it clear that even people with fatal illnesses should be turned away if they could not pay the minimum fee of £7. Perhaps even more worryingly, the *Post* article highlighted the case of a nursing sister in an NHS hospital in Kilmarnock who privately offers Walsh Therapy and claims that 'a pack of castor oil placed on the abdomen for three days will cure cancer, tumours, gall bladder and arthritis.

## Heavy metal poisoning

Skeptics are often asked the question 'but what's the harm in it?' when pointing out logical objections to people's beliefs in strange phenomena—and sometimes a satisfactory answer can be difficult to find. For instance, it could be argued that a widespread belief in reincarnation and karma might compel us to do unto others as we wish to be done to

ourselves. When it comes to medical matters, however, the possible dangers are very real and it doesn't require a great deal of imagination to think of situations in which belief in the healing power of (for instance) peanut oil could endanger people's health. Two recent cases reported in a number of newspapers serve both to further illustrate the dangers of unregulated alternative medicine and to demonstrate that, at least in some cases in the UK (as in France), the law *can* be used to deal with the purveyors of dangerous quack remedies. In separate court cases—one in Bradford and one in London—two men have recently been convicted of respectively 'administering poisons and putting lives in danger' and 'supplying a medicinal substance without a licence'. In the first case Sheffield herbalist, Mazar Rana was fined £250 pounds, with £250 costs for administering a remedy which was 84% lead, and which resulted in the lead-poisoning of a factory worker (thankfully now recovered). The second case concerned Buddhist monk, Bhadant Rakshat who was jailed for three years at the Old Bailey for treating two followers with near-fatal doses of arsenic and mercury as a 'cure' for a skin disease. According to the *Independent* on 5 March, Judge Geoffrey Grigson said that a prison sentence had to be imposed because Rakshat, with no medical knowledge, was 'a real danger to the public. Perhaps prophetically, the *Independent on Sunday* on 9 February had earlier reported on the results of a government-funded study by the National Poisons Unit examining the dangers of products which do not make direct medical claims and therefore bypass the control of the Medicines Act. Dangerous remedies found by the investigators included heavy metals in Indian and Chinese plant extracts, arsenic in a particular brand of kelp tablets and a case of liver damage due to a herb (comfrey?) commonly found in a sedative. The study, which is financed by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food will continue for a further year.

## Deadly beliefs

Continuing on this fairly sombre subject (for Hits & Misses) of the possible dangers of irrational beliefs, a harrowing court case took place in March in Manchester Crown Court concerning a girl who was beaten to death in the course of an exorcism. According to reports in most daily newspapers in the second week in March, Kusor Bashir was starved, deprived of sleep, was repeatedly beaten with a stick and an ashtray and had hot chili powder forced down her throat. The exorcism of the spirit or djinn purportedly responsible for the girl's depression (for which she had received hospital treatment) lasted eight days and was carried out by an 'Asian Holy Man' and an assistant both of whom were on trial. In an attempt to drive out the ghost the girl was also kicked and stamped upon so that her body had 16 broken ribs and was covered in bruises. Mohammed Bashir (no relation to the girl), who administered the beatings was sentenced to life imprisonment and Mohammed Nourani Sayeed the 'holy man' who sanctioned the treatment was sentenced to five years in jail.

Steve Donnelly is a physicist and a reader in electronics and electrical engineering at the University of Salford.

# Ask Professor Mesmo

*Britain's leading metaphysical pure mathematician divines the answers to your psychic problems*



Dear Professor,

We are just a couple of ordinary Aussie dropouts doing the world tour (Europe) in our old and trusty/dusty Volkswagon camper van. We were travelling along the M4 before turning off to see that magical place *Glastonbury* where Prince Arthur of the Rotund table held his court and Joan of Arc planted a sacred tree. I met a very friendly lady whose pale white face and serious dark eyebrows told me that she was a fellow believer in these legends. She was *amazing*, showing us of all those ancient signs of the Zodiac in farmers' fields which she had traced out in biro on a photocopy of an old OS map. Admittedly, Noaleen said that Taurus looked like two triangles and a blob stuck together but she always had problems with her eyesight! Our most incredible experience was with another friend we had just met called Moira. She had assured us that we would see a UFO from the top of Glastonbury Tor that very night. We toiled up the hill taking only a can of Quosh to keep us company. Noaleen and I contentedly stared at the Cosmos an arm's length away (or so it seemed). Noaleen asked me how Moira knew that a UFO was about to arrive. I just reassured her that there were many things in the Cosmos that mankind couldn't comprehend. At about four in the morning we were woken by an unearthly noise that sounded like a cross between a car horn and the whine of aeroplane engines. As I blinked open my sleepy eyes I noticed that Moira had disappeared! Although we searched the cream tea shoppes and the New Age vitality centre we could not find her! I believe a local policeman deliberately misled us, when we told him of Moira's disappearance. He would only say that there were probably hundreds of Moiras in Somerset and Avon. But we are aware of these official denials and cover-ups over mysteriously missing persons. One question haunts Noaleen and myself—was Moira *abducted* by an Alien race, and were we 'sleep induced' so that it could be carried out? Noaleen has started dreaming about giant cockroaches with ray guns. Could this be a semantic impression of the abduction repressed into her sub-psyche?

A and N Woad

**Professor Mesmo replies**

I have files upon files of the type of incident you describe. Who is to say that your friend Moira was not an unwilling victim of this invitation? Witless Streaker gives many examples of missing people who have been taken on marvellous inter-galactic journeys in his book *Collusion*. There is the famous case of the Hicks' farm combine harvesters that

were lost over the Bermuda triangle. Even a middle aged couple called the Hendersons—in our country town of Oswaldtwistle—were invited (how I hate the word 'abducted', it's so unfriendly) into a UFO and operated on by Cosmonautic surgeons for a whole weekend. Try getting that on the National Health! Such encounters are now so commonplace that Scotland Yard have opened up a special (but secret) department to deal with them. You have been privileged to witness an astounding event, even if it was unconsciously. I think that Moira is probably soaking up alien wisdom, being taught alien customs and getting involved in alien practices. What countless secrets she will be able to impart to the human race—assuming she gets a lift back. Of course your wife Noaleen is perceiving unseen events and replaying them. You see, the mind is like an *ultra* sensitive tape recorder. It never forgets anything, especially if it emanates from alien sources. Sometimes the tape may stick or become a little unravelled. Even the fast forward button can get fluff inside it, but essentially we can always press that replay button. However, often unbeknownst to us some other force has its hands on our controls, and we get unscheduled or unexpected replays, rather like all those repeats on BBC1. Dreams are but events to come, or events that have occurred or events that possibly will never occur. Hope this clears things up for you.

**Professor Mesmo**

*Now that spring is here, Professor Mesmo has left on his annual six month academic retreat to Bangkok. The Skeptic has, however, been fortunate enough to obtain the services of that noted New Age prophetess and part-time Earth Mother, Olga Destinée who will take over this column until his return.*

## The Independent UFO Network Presents

Jacques Vallée, author of *Dimensions, Confrontations and Revelations* & Jenny Randles, author of *Abductions, The UFO Conspiracy and Looking for Aliens.*

**25 April 1992 12pm – 5.30pm**

Manchester Conference Centre  
Main Lecture Theatre  
Reynold Building, UMIST  
Granby Row, Manchester

Tickets £8.50 each, from Stuart Smith (pay S. Smith), 15 Rydal Street, Burnley, Lancs BB10 1HS.

Further info: Tel 0282 24837

Cafeteria • UFO Book Stalls • UFO Case Files for sale  
• UFO Models • Rare UFO Videos • and much more!

# Arguments to Design

Antony Flew

*A philosophical look at phenomena*

IT is high time and overtime to take a fresh, open-minded skeptical look at Arguments to Design. It has to be *to not from* because such arguments—which have been and remain the most widely employed and persuasive of all arguments for the existence and activities of a creator God—are supposed to be arguments from experience. Given agreement that something is in truth an artifact, then the inference to a designer or designers becomes immediate and altogether compelling. It is precisely and only in so far as there is dispute as to whether objects of some kind are indeed artifacts that there is need for argument to settle the question: and in particular, for argument from experience.

In a recent article (*The Skeptic* 5.5) Donald Room quoted the classic statement from William Paley's *Natural Theology*; a treatise which Charles Darwin like all undergraduates at Cambridge in his day, was required to study:

Suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly answer that for anything I knew, the watch might always have been there. The watch must have had a maker, who comprehended its construction and designed its use. Every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design which existed in the watch,

exists in nature, with the difference on the side of nature of being greater or more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation.

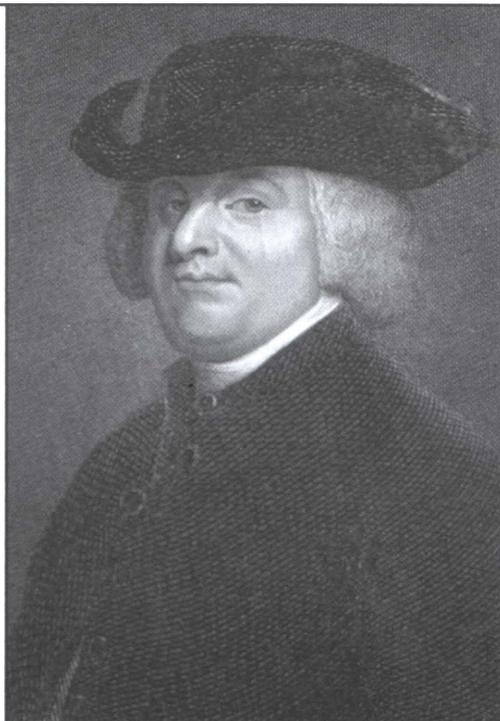
If I spotted a watch under the heather in Wester Ross, then I should certainly recognize it as an artifact; just as Robinson Crusoe, if he had found a watch lying on the beach of his island, would also have recognized that as an artifact. But we could both have recognized as artifacts also objects requiring far less skill and knowledge for their manufacture than watches. Archaeologists, for instance, are doing it all the time. For what makes an artifact an artifact is the fact that it was made: not that it is something of mind-boggling complexity; but that it is something of a kind which does not grow on trees, and is not to be found in untrodden territories.

It has been wisely and relevantly said that 'the simplest and most psychologically satisfying explanation of any observed phenomenon is that it happened that way because someone wanted it to happen that way' [1]. All arguments to conclusions so satisfactory ought to be suspect as possibly self-deluding exercises in wishful thinking. And even before Darwin a straightforward, supposedly empirical Argument to Design, should not have appeared well-founded.

Remember that such arguments are presented as arguments of Natural Theology. They are, therefore, supposed to be addressed to Natural Reason, unenlightened by any prior Supernatural Revelation of Beings undetectable by human sense and of their allegedly all-pervasive ongoings. Yet, of all the sorts of objects known to us to be absent of any such prior Supernatural Revelation, far and away the most complicated and sophisticated are in fact not products of human industry but the producers of those products.

Some lines from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are more revealing here than perhaps the authoress herself recognized. For, unlike the Yankee Miss

PALEY'S  
NATURAL THEOLOGY;  
WITH  
ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES,  
BY  
HENRY, LORD BROUGHAM, F.R.S., AND SIR C. BELL, K.G.L., &c.  
AND AN INTRODUCTORY  
DISCOURSE OF NATURAL THEOLOGY,  
BY LORD BROUGHAM:  
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
SUPPLEMENTARY DISSERTATIONS,  
AND A TREATISE ON ANIMAL MECHANICS,  
BY SIR CHARLES BELL.  
WITH NUMEROUS WOODCUTS.  
IN FOUR VOLS. VOL. I.  
LONDON:  
CHARLES KNIGHT & CO., LUDGATE STREET.  
1845.





Ophelia, poor Topsy had never been theologically indoctrinated by either parent or teacher. Yet she had had abundant opportunity to learn from rural observation what, in my young day, urban fathers used to reveal to schoolbound sons as 'the facts of life'. So it is Topsy who answers for unprejudiced common sense and common experience:

'Do you know who made you?' 'Nobody, as I knows on,' said the child with a short laugh. The idea appeared to amuse her considerably; for her eyes twinkled and she added 'I s'pect I grow'd. Don't think nobody never made me' [2]

Paley's Argument to Design appears to proceed, as if this was a movement warranted by our experience of Nature: *from the observation* that organisms and in particular human beings, which so far as we know are the most complex sort of objects in the Universe, appear not to have been made but to have developed naturally: *to the conclusion* that these objects, and indeed all other sorts of objects also, must nevertheless have been made—must have been, that is to say, created Supernaturally.

A less popular, more technical, but equally unsound variation upon the same theme was developed centuries earlier by Aquinas. For the fifth of his supposed Five ways of proving the existence of God takes off from:

the guideness of nature. An orderedness of actions to an end if observed in all bodies obeying natural law, even when they lack awareness... Nothing however that lacks awareness tends to a goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with understanding, and this we call 'God' [3]

I shudder to imagine Topsy's reaction had anyone drawn her attention to this argument. For Aquinas is confidently offering all those apparently teleological phenomena which to all appearance proceed without 'the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding' as premises from which to derive the contradictory conclusion that 'Everything in nature... is directed to its goal by someone with understanding'. He too is taking as premises for his Argument to (Supernatural) Design what ought instead to be seen—absent Revelation to the contrary—as conclusions about what actually occurs, and hence what is naturally possible, without Supernatural contrivance.

Aquinas, like Aristotle, maintained that 'All orderedness of actions to an end is observed in all bodies obeying natural laws, even when they lack awareness.' This form of orderedness towards an end, which we call teleological, is something which scientists today discern primarily if not exclusively in the development of living things. So it would be prudent to point, less comprehensively, and hence less controversially to the familiar teleological phenomena studied by biology; to make it not 'all bodies', without exception, but only all living things. Aquinas, however, proceeds from his own unqualified major premise to his minor:

Nothing that lacks awareness tends to a goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness, and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer.

Certainly an arrow requires an archer if it is to be shot. But what about all the other teleological phenomena which can be observed in the progress of organisms through their life cycles? At any rate to all appearances, as Topsy would have insisted, living things just grow. Certainly there are in these cases no observable archer-substitutes. So to conclude from the two premises presented by Aquinas that 'Everything in nature... is directed to its goal by someone with understanding, and this we call God' is to conclude, on the basis of evidence largely, if not exclusively contrary, that always and absolutely everywhere, even where there seems to be no human or other natural direction, all development is nevertheless always completely subordinate to and dependent upon Supernatural control. This argument constitutes a most gigantic begging of the question, and a begging of it in defiance of the evidence actually offered in support of the conclusion thus illicitly attained. Such a performance by the goy Aquinas requires a Yiddish-type response: 'And that you call an argument?'

#### Notes

1. Thomas Sowell, *Knowledge and Decisions* (New York, Basic Books, 1980), p. 97.
2. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Books Inc., undated). p. 206.
3. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 1, Question 2.

Antony Flew is professor emeritus at the University of Reading, and has written several books on philosophy and parapsychology.



# Dianetics: From Out of the Blue?

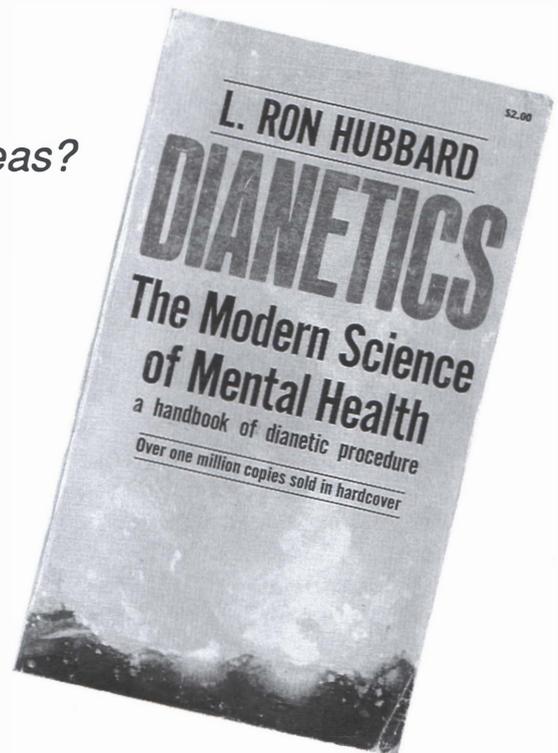
Jeff Jacobsen

*How original were L Ron Hubbard's ideas?*

**L**RON HUBBARD, author of the book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* and founder of the Church of Scientology, was a science-fiction writer before penning the book that would launch his fame. *Dianetics* is a self-help book published in 1950 which claimed to include new and unique theories on how the mind works. Hubbard claimed that this work was totally unprecedented; 'Man had no inkling whatever of Dianetics. None. This was a bolt from the blue' [1]. So there would be no doubt as to the originality of his ideas, Hubbard wrote that 'Dianetics borrowed nothing but was first discovered and organized; only after the organization was completed and a technique evolved was it compared to existing information' [2]. According to Hubbard, some philosophers of the past helped provide the foundation of Dianetics, but the remaining research had been done 'what the navigator calls, "off the chart"'. [3] *Dianetics* became a *New York Times* bestseller in 1950, and has since sold many millions of copies.

Was this really a unique theory of the mind wrought from Hubbard's 'many years of exact research and careful testing' [4], or was it a loose composite of already existing theories mixed with novel, unproven ideas? This article proposes to show that, despite Hubbard's claims of originality, many of the ideas in *Dianetics* were already existing and even in vogue before *Dianetics* appeared. Either Hubbard really studied other works before he wrote *Dianetics*, or he wasted years of his time re-inventing the wheel. Although there are no reference notes in *Dianetics* to see what are Hubbard's ideas and what are borrowed, we can quickly eliminate the idea that *Dianetics* appeared 'from the blue' by Hubbard's own statements.

In *Dianetics* itself is the statement that 'many schools of mental healing from the Aesculapian to the modern hypnotist were studied after the basic philosophy of dianetics had been postulated' [5]. Alfred Korzybski, Emil Kraepelin, Franz Mesmer, Ivan Pavlov, Herbert Spencer, and others are mentioned as resources in *Dianetics*, so we must assume Hubbard was crediting these people to some degree. He must certainly have known, then, of at least some of the research from his time which will be mentioned in this article. Hubbard in other settings acknowledged Sigmund Freud (especially through Commander 'Snake' Thompson) [6] Count Alfred Korzybski [7] and Aleister Crowley [8] as contributors to his ideas on the human mind. In a speech in 1950, Hubbard stated that he had spent much



time in the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital medical library in 1945 during a stay for ulcers, where 'I was able to get in a year's study' [9].

In fact, most of the theories and ideas in *Dianetics* can be found in scientific literature previous to the first publishing of Hubbard's theories. Parts of *Dianetics*, for example, have striking resemblance to two articles found in Volume 28 (1941) of the *Psychoanalytic Review*. *Dianetics* theory posits the existence of engrams. These are memories of events that occur around us when our analytical mind is unconscious, and they are recorded in a separate area of the mind called the reactive mind. A seemingly unique theory in *Dianetics* is that these memories begin being stored 'in the cells of the zygote—which is to say, with conception' [10]. These engrams can cause problems for the person throughout life unless handled through *Dianetics* auditing.

Dr J Sadger, nine years before the introduction of *Dianetics* in 1950, wrote that several of his patients were not cured of their psychological problems until he had taken them back to their existence as sperm or ovum. He declared that 'there exists certainly a memory, although an unconscious one, of embryonic days, which persists throughout life and may continuously determine an action' [11]. Sadger spends much time explaining how his patients' memories of the time when they were zygotes or even sperm or ovum had affected their adult behaviors, noting that 'an unconscious lasting memory must have remained from these embryonic days' [12]. There were 'unmistakable dreams' of being a sperm in the father's testicle.

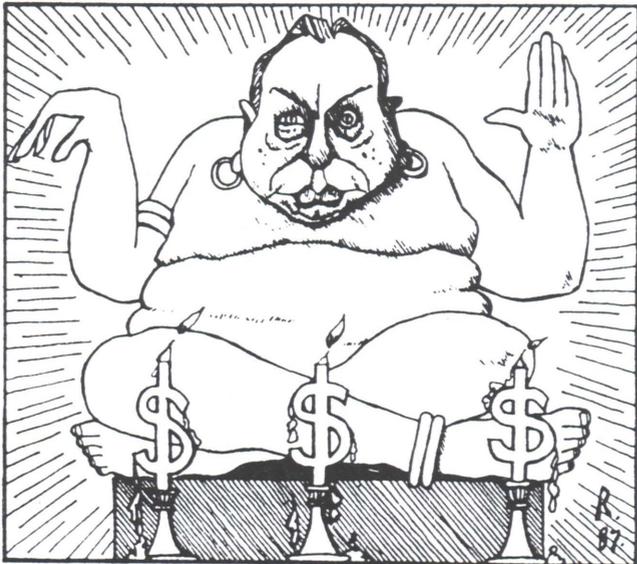
Engrams, those unconscious memories of Dianetics, are said by Hubbard to be stored in the cells of the body and passed on to their clone cells and finally on to the adult being. Hubbard claimed to discover that 'patients sometimes have a feeling that they are sperms or ovums... this is called the sperm dream' [13]. It was impossible, he claimed, to deny to a pre-clear that he could remember being a sperm. But Sadger wrote about this first, and Hubbard could well have read this in his 'year's study' at Oak Knoll Hospital. Another coincidental discovery of Hubbard and Sadger was that mothers often attempt to abort their child. Sadger states that 'so many a fall or other accident of a pregnant woman is nothing else than an attempt at abortion on the part of the unconscious, not to mention those cases where the mother seeks to free herself more or less forcibly from the unwanted child' [14]. Hubbard concurs; 'Attempted abortion is very common' [15], and in fact 'twenty or thirty abortion attempts are not uncommon in the aberee' [16]. Again, not an idea 'from the blue'.

Life in the womb was not very kind, according to one of Sadger's patients: 'Perhaps when father performed coitus with mother in her pregnancy I was much shaken and rocked. Shall that have been one reason that I so easily became dizzy and that all my life I have had an aversion even as a child from swings and carousels?' [17]. Hubbard, in a similar vein, insists that the mother 'should not have coitus forced upon her. For every coital experience is an engram in the child during pregnancy' [18]. 'Papa becomes passionate and baby has the sensation of being put into a running washing machine' [19]. There are at least three other similarities like the 'sperm dreams', commonality of abortion attempts, and fetus discomfort during parental sex. This seems quite a coincidence, but it is not known whether Hubbard read Sadger's article. Suffice it to say that these are major ideas in Dianetics, but they are not new ideas. The second article under discussion from *Psychoanalytic Re-*

*view* deals with the unbearable conditions during birth and the effects of these in later life. Grace W Pailthorpe, M.D., argued in this 1941 article that patients should be psychoanalyzed more deeply into the period of infancy, or at least to the 'trauma of birth'. Otherwise no lasting therapeutic effect could be expected. Birth has traumatized all of us, she declares, and these unconscious memories drive us in our adulthood. 'It is only when deep analysis has finally exposed the unconscious deviations of our vital force' [20] that we can recover and enjoy life. In *Dianetics*, the reader is left with the impression that the ideas of birth and pre-birth memories and traumas, multiple abortion attempts, and fetal discomfort in the womb are new discoveries. As can be seen, this is not the case. And there are many other impressions of 'new' and 'unique' that are incorrect as well.

With Pailthorpe's article, for example, we can also note the dramatic similarities of Dianetics with simple Freudian psychoanalysis. There is in both the return to past times in the patient's life to search for the source of his or her current problems. Once these problematic memories are discovered and treated the problems vanish. In Pailthorpe's article we have a man who was hopelessly traumatized by the events at his birth. He was cruelly kicked out of his 'home' in the womb, and his resistance to this was assumed to be the cause of the immediate traumas of the nurse's and mother's attentions (which were 'painful to the child's sensitive body' [21]). These traumas caused headaches and social disorders in adult life. Psychoanalysis discovered the causes (birth trauma) and when these were brought to the conscious level with their meaning explained, the headaches and social dysfunctions were alleviated. Dianetics follows this line of reasoning to a great degree. According to Hubbard, engrams (past traumas) are discovered in the pre-clear's past, and bringing these engrams into consciousness (from the reactive to the analytic mind) alleviates the disorder. Hubbard claims that after auditing people (he had the pre-clear lie on a couch in Freudian imitation), 'psycho-somatic illness . . . by dianetic technique . . . has been eradicated entirely in every case' [22].

A theory in psychoanalysis known as abreaction is so similar to Dianetics (and preceding it by many years) that it must be mentioned in more detail here. A 1949 article by Nathaniel Thornton, D.Sc., gives a brief overview of abreaction and his views on its value. Abreaction began with Freud and was considered early on to be 'one of the very cornerstones of analytic therapy' [23]. This is a method of freeing a patient 'from the deleterious results of certain pathogenic affects by bringing these affects back into the conscious mind and re-experiencing them in all their original force and intensity' [24]. A patient of one of Freud's colleagues, under hypnosis and 'with a free expression of emotion' [25] was freed of all her psychosomatic symptoms using abreactive therapy. Pierre Janet is credited in the article with utilizing abreactive therapy to restore painful memories to consciousness and thus relieving a patient's symptoms. A patient being treated with this method must continually work through such painful memories until the patient 'could accept the fact that the original experience no longer loomed up as a threat to him' [26].



**D** **i** **A** **n** **E** **t** **i** **c** **S**



quackery than therapy.

Children often have engrams that are restimulated by their parents. Hubbard states that it may be necessary to remove the children from their parents if this is the case, until the engrams are processed [47]. Here again we have Hubbard making an outlandish proposal of splitting families in order to produce healthier people. The cells of the zygote, according to Dianetics theory, record sounds during a period of pain (Hubbard often uses a husband beating his pregnant wife as an example), such as 'Take that! Take it, I tell you. You've got to take it!' [48]. From this engram we are to believe that the child grows up to be a thief. Cellular recordings of sounds by the cells can even be in another language unknown to the adult or child and still cause similar problems. All of this, again, has no evidence accompanying it, and without such evidence it may as well be classified as mere science-fiction. We have in *Dianetics* a work by a science-fiction writer who claims to have created a totally new and foolproof handbook of the mind with no documentation to prove his claimed research. This book has been actively sold by Hubbard's Church of Scientology for many years, and yet it is simply a synthesis of already published ideas with bizarre, unsubstantiated claims thrown in. The theories in this book, other than those found in previous works by others, have never been scientifically validated, and in fact, one attempt came up dry [49]. There is little scholastic or societal benefit to be derived from this work. S I Hayakawa put it well in his review of *Dianetics*: 'The appalling thing revealed by Dianetics about our culture is that it takes a 452-page book full of balderdash to get some people to sit down and seriously listen to each other!' [50].

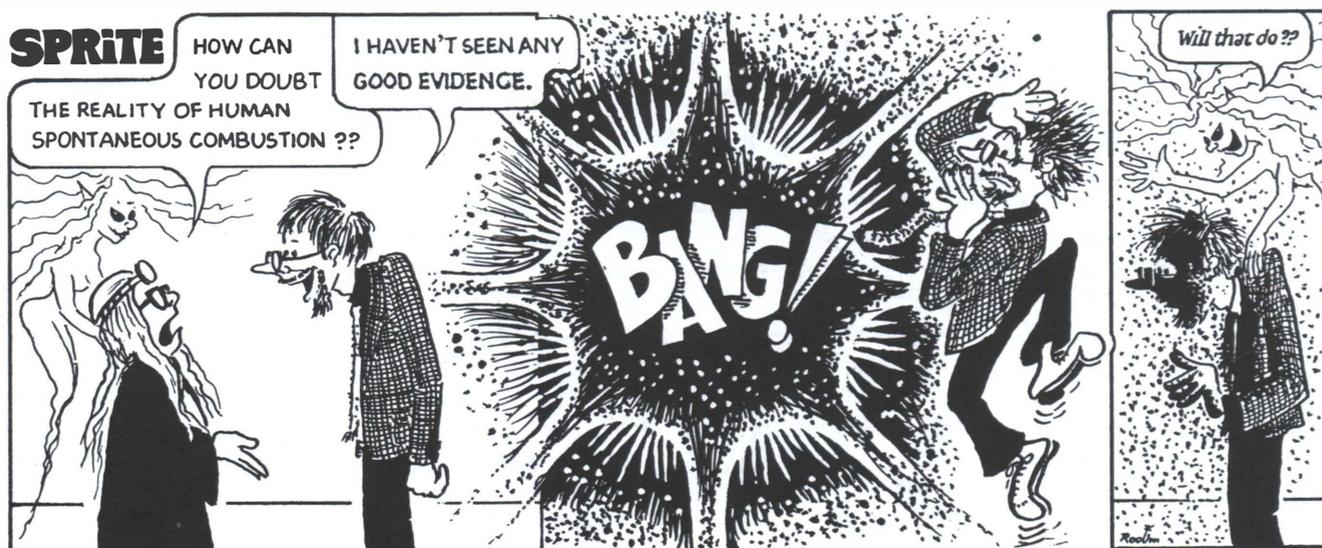
#### Notes

[1] Quoted in *L Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman?*, by Bent Corydon and L Ron Hubbard, Jr. (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1987) p. 262. [2] L Ron Hubbard, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (Los Angeles: American Saint Hill Organization, 1950), 12th printing, paperback, August 1975, p. 340. (Henceforth *Dianetics*.) [3] *ibid.* p.400. [4] *ibid.* p. ix. [5] *ibid.* p.122. [6]

Russell Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah* (N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1987), pp.230-231. [7] L Ron Hubbard, cassette tape, 'Introduction to Dianetics,' Dianetics Lecture Series 1. 1950. Bridge Publications, Inc. [8] Stewart Lamont, *Religion, Inc.: The Church of Scientology* (London: Harrap, 1986) p.21. [9] 'The History of Dianetics and Scientology' cassette tape. [10] *Dianetics*, p.130. [11] Dr J Sadger, 'Preliminary Study of the Psychic Life of the Fetus and the Primary Germ.' *Psychoanalytic Review* July 1941 28:3. p.333 [12] *ibid.* pp.343-4. [13] *Dianetics*, p.294. [14] Sadger, p.336. [15] *Dianetics*, p. 156. [16] *Dianetics*, p.158. [17] Sadger, p.352. [18] *Dianetics*, p.158. [19] *Dianetics*, p.130. [20] Grace W Pailthorpe, M.D., 'Deflection of Energy, as a Result of Birth Trauma, and It's Bearing Upon Character Formation.' *Psychoanalytic Review* July 1941 28:3 pp. 305-326, p.326. [21] *ibid.* p.307. [22] *Dianetics*, p.91. [23] Nathaniel Thornton, D.Sc., 'What is the Therapeutic Value of Abreaction?' *Psychoanalytic Review* 1949 36:411-415. p.411. [24] *ibid.* [25] *ibid.* p.412. [26] *ibid.* p.413. [27] *Dianetics*, p.206. [28] *Dianetics*, p.62. [29] Corydon and Hubbard, Jr., pp. 266-269. [30] Albert I Berger, 'Towards a Science of the Nuclear Mind: Science-fiction Origins of *Dianetics*', *Science Fiction Studies*, 1989, vol. 16:123-141. p.135. [31] Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics; or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1948). [32] *Dianetics*, p.43. [33] Wiener, p.150. [34] *Dianetics*, p.323ff. [35] *Dianetics*, p.ix. [36] *Dianetics*, p.93. [37] *Dianetics*, p.92. [38] *Dianetics*, pp. 90, 193. [39] *Dianetics*, p.170. [40] *Dianetics*, p.417. [41] L Ron Hubbard, cassette tape, 'What *Dianetics* Can Do,' Dianetics Lecture Series 2. 1950. Bridge Publications, Inc. [42] *ibid.* [43] *Dianetics*, p.168. [44] *Dianetics*, p.253. [45] *Dianetics*, p.278. [46] *Dianetics*, p.179. [47] *Dianetics*, pp.154, 155. [48] *Dianetics*, p.212. [49] Jack Fox, Alvin E. Davis, and B. Lebovits, 'An Experimental Investigation of Hubbard's Engram Hypothesis (*Dianetics*),' *Psychological Newsletter* 1959, 10, 131-134. [50] S I Hayakawa, 'From Science-fiction to Fiction-science, etc: A Review of General Semantics', 1951 Vol. 8 (4) 280-293. p. 293.

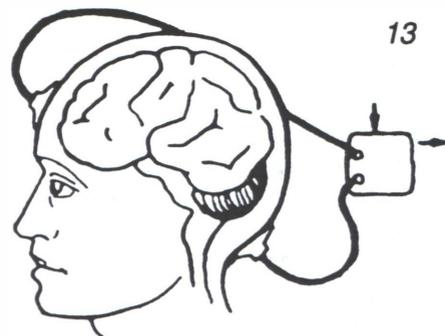
Jeff Jacobsen originally wrote this article for the *Arizona Skeptic*, from which it is reprinted with kind permission.

Copyright © 1990 by Jeff Jacobsen. For permission to reprint this article, contact: Jeff Jacobsen P.O. Box 3541 Scottsdale, AZ 85271



# Taking it all too far

Michael Heap



*A look at the 'Synchro-Energiser': a pseudoscientific panacea?*

**T**HOSE who ply their trade in the market place of unorthodox remedies and practices have an ambivalent attitude to science. Their reluctance to expose their notions and products to scientific examination, and their not infrequent insistence that these are beyond such scrutiny, are commonly equalled by their keenness to promote them by reference to ideas and phenomena derived from or refined by science. Thus we have an industry of quasi-science whose entrepreneurs covet all the advantages of science, but none of its discipline. Maybe this has always been so, but in a paradoxical way the success and popularity of modern science and technology feed this industry, just as they do—quite legitimately—science fiction.

The inevitable outcome of this is that scientific concepts, phenomena and discoveries become extended beyond their range of validity or useful application, and even become endowed with almost magical properties. 'Force', 'energy', 'vibrations', 'field', 'magnetism' and 'gravity' have long fallen victim to this kind of plundering. More recently we have witnessed the same with 'vitamins', 'bio-rhythms', 'biofeedback', 'allergy', 'subliminal perception', 'alpha rhythm', and the 'right and left brain'. The latest scientific finding to be exploited in this way is 'endorphins'. 'It increases the body's endorphins' is the claim of purveyors of the 'flotation chamber', a relaxation device in which the user floats blissfully in a tank of Epsom Salt solution.

The flotation chamber is one of a number of pieces of pseudo-scientific technology available from the anti-stress and 'mind-bending' industries. They are not quite New Age material because they are promoted on the basis, not of mysticism, but of scientific knowledge, albeit a misrepresentation of that knowledge. Another example is the 'Synchro-Energiser', manufactured by Synchro-Tech of Cleveland, Ohio. Not only is it claimed that this device will assist the operator to achieve desirable states of tranquility, creativity and mental balance, but it is also presented as a panacea, curing phobias, improving sexual functioning, correcting learning difficulties, eliminating pain, boosting intelligence and so on. I should like to present an account of this device which I was asked to prepare not so long ago for the producers of a television documentary.

## **The Synchro-Energiser: a high-tech computer-driven brain balancer**

From my reading of the information on this device, I understand that the operator wears a pair of goggles and a pair of earphones. He or she hears a series of sound pulses and

observes a series of white light pulses. (In fact, repeated stimulation by white light pulses at low frequency may cause epileptic auras and convulsions in some susceptible people, and discotheque strobes are required to be set outside of these frequencies.) In the Synchro-Energiser, the frequencies of both sets of pulses can be controlled and varied within a range of 1 to 60 per second and the two eyes and ears may be stimulated in various combinations (both eyes and both ears, left ear and left eye only, and so on). The blurb also speaks of an additional form of stimulation ('light/sound and electromagnetic stimulation'). I have difficulty in understanding how the operator is experiencing this third type of stimulation. Light is, of course, electromagnetic energy of a particular wavelength and frequency to which the eye is sensitive. However, the blurb states that there is an electromagnetic field 'heard separately through the goggles and the earphones'. Of course a person cannot hear through goggles, and the ears are responsive to vibrations and sound waves, which are not electromagnetic waves. None of this makes any sense.

The blurb informs us that certain mental states such as alert concentration, relaxation and sleep, are associated with certain bands of frequencies observed in the EEG recordings of the brain. Here, electrodes attached to the skull pick up the electrical activity of the brain and although the pattern of activity (the electroencephalogram or EEG) involves many different frequencies, the composition of these frequencies changes under different circumstances, including the mental state of the person. Four bands of frequencies have been identified as particularly significant and these have been designated by the Greek letters alpha, beta, gamma and delta. The distribution of these frequencies across the brain also changes according to the type of activity in which the person is engaged—speaking, visualising, performing arithmetical calculations, remembering, performing skilled tasks, sleeping, dreaming, and so on.

It is apparently assumed that visually and auditorally stimulating the brain to produce more of a particular band of frequency creates the kinds of mental states associated with those frequency bands. This is a complete fallacy. There is no one-to-one relationship between EEG frequency and mental state. For example, when a person relaxes, more alpha rhythm is detected in the EEG, but alpha rhythm may be abundant in the recordings of people who are far from relaxed, and a sizeable minority of people produce little or no alpha rhythm at all, yet have no problem in relaxing. An analogy is the relationship of anxiety and sweating: an

anxious person sweats more, but you do not make a person anxious by causing him or her to sweat, say by increasing the room temperature. All sorts of experiments have now been performed in training people in alpha production and the general finding seems to be that it is the *expectancy* of achieving a tranquil mental state which is the crucial factor rather than increasing alpha activity. If people are trained to *suppress* alpha but are informed that this will lead to a calm meditative state, they are as likely to report achieving that state as people likewise instructed to enhance their alpha. So there is nothing to suppose that receiving the kinds of stimulation produced by this device will have any special effect on the operator's mind and state of consciousness, other than that produced by the expectation created by the information given in the instructions. (Probably, alpha rhythm is linked to something like the relaxation of visual attentiveness which is associated with, but not necessarily dependent on, mental relaxation [1]).

In addition to these fallacies regarding EEG rhythms, there are a number of blatant factual errors. For example, it is implied that stimulating the ears separately with sound is equivalent to stimulating the two sides of the brain separately. This is not so. The nerve fibres from each ear go to both sides of the left hemisphere. So it would be more accurate to talk about stimulating the two hemispheres by presenting stimuli in the *two visual fields* separately. However, since the information is passed to the other side of the brain in a fraction of a second, the whole idea is a non-starter. It must be remembered that although the upper part of the brain is divided into two halves, the two halves function as one unit and it can be demonstrated by monitoring the on-going activity of the brain, that whatever the brain is doing involves an integrated pattern of activity over the whole of the brain. It is true that when the brain is interfered with in some drastic way—such as temporarily deactivating one hemisphere by electro-convulsive therapy, or the injection of drugs, or severing the connections between the two sides, each hemisphere can be shown to have a particular way of functioning which, under these extraordinary circumstances, can proceed independently of the other hemisphere. However, in the intact brain, information received via the senses is distributed, processed and integrated by the whole brain. It is meaningless to talk about stimulating the two sides of the brain separately, and the current hype over left and right brain thinking (for example, developing your left and right brain) is largely misplaced and erroneous.

In addition to the above, the manufacturers claim that the machine will enable the user to achieve some impressive sounding state or condition which, with the benefit of a little thought and knowledge, can be seen to be meaningless. One example is 'total awareness'. Another is 'enhanced cognition'. We also have 'mood equilibration' and 'brain balancing'. The latter presumably has something to do with the later-mentioned notion of 'most of your brain cells working in harmony' and the ultimate claim of being able to 'synchronise the entire nervous system'. None of these ideas has any basis in neurophysiology or neuropsychology; likewise 'the ability to shift from left to right hemisphere whenever needed, '(integrated) right and left hemispheres',

'(weaving) to the left-right and front-back quadrants of the brain', 'a more comprehensive, scanning type of awareness', 'a balance between the visual and auditory...cortex', something called 'automatic receptivity for learning new subjects', and 'dipping into a body rhythm'. These ideas, though they sound impressive and extraordinary, have little or no meaning in neurophysiology or neuropsychology.

The manufacturers' blurb also refers to scientific concepts which have little or no meaning in the context in which they occur. As mentioned above, they speak of the left and right sides of the brain, EEG rhythms (alpha, beta, and so on) and an electromagnetic field. We are told that as a result of the stimulation from the device, there is a following response elicited in the brain cells and this creates a 'magnetic induction field'. We are also informed that the visual effects such as colours and shapes, produced by the light pulses, are a 'psychedelic experience...influenced by what chemicals the brain secretes'. More likely they are examples of the commonly observed effects of white light on/off stimulation which, for example, results in different colours being seen. You can see this effect if you observe the after-image of a bright light. You will see that it goes through a flight of colours as it gradually fades. Also, if you look at a rotating black and white disc you will see an interesting display of different colours. This phenomenon is caused by the different rates of fatigue and recovery of nerve cells which respond to different wavelengths of the light and thus give the experience of colour.

### Conclusions

What principles are at work here? One of them, which interests me greatly, is the extension of ideas and methods beyond the range of their validity or demonstrated effectiveness. This commonly happens in medicine, whether mainstream or unorthodox, and other treatment systems such as psychological therapies. It may also be observed with methods of assessing or predicting human characteristics or behaviour. Sometimes the range of validity will be minimal or non-existent. Astrology is a good example; 'Biorhythms', subliminal perception and certain alternative medicines are others. Sometimes there *is* a range of valid application but the methods and ideas are extended beyond that. Biofeedback, graphology and mainstream medical remedies such as antibiotics, antidepressants and tranquillisers are examples of these. The forces which determine the actual (as opposed to the theoretical) range of applications of ideas and procedures are complex and are such as to allow even completely invalid practices to flourish indefinitely (like astrology). Such forces include the needs (personal and financial) of the practitioner. I have discussed some of these thoughts elsewhere [2] and I hope to pursue them at a later stage.

### Notes

[1] Barry Beyerstein, *The Myth of Alpha Consciousness and The Skeptical Inquirer*, 1985, Vol. XXI, pp 42-59.

[2] M Heap and W Dryden, *Hypnotherapy: A Handbook* (Chapter 2), Open University Press 1991.

---

Dr Michael Heap is Honorary Secretary of the British Society of Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis.

# Brainwashing a Skeptic

Arthur Chappell

*A moving story of escape from the grasp of a frightening cult*

I AM often told that only the deeply religious get into religious cults. I am regularly informed that I must have been searching for something spiritual. I was in fact an atheist when I was recruited into the Hindu rooted cult, Divine Light Mission (DLM).

I had been raised as a Roman Catholic, but my left handedness led to my being brutally treated by the nuns who taught at my infant school. I was forced through a series of knuckle raps with a ruler to write right handed with the rest of the school. The result was illegible handwriting and my rapid conversion to Nietzsche's notion that God is dead. I was skeptical, cynical, hardened and indifferent to all that had anything to do with religion. If anything, my deep aversion and fear of religion helped to make my recruitment easier. I had read nothing on cults. I hadn't heard of the Moonies, the Scientologists or the Krishnas. Words like 'brainwashing' meant nothing to me. There are about 500 cults active in Britain. I was ignorant about all of them.

The death of my father in 1980 and the long-term unemployment I faced in 1981 brought me to a state of temporary despair. I was unsure of myself or my immediate future. It is

at such moments of displacement that cults are most likely to strike at a person. The theory that people going through some period of transition in their lives are the most vulnerable to cult recruiters, was advocated by Professor Margaret Singer of the American Cult Awareness Network, and it certainly applied in my case. I'd left school with no prospects; no friends, and no interests beyond an introspective love of cheap Science Fiction.

It was at a bookstall that I was recruited in May 1981. The bookseller, a young lady, invited me to a lecture on 'Transcendental Meditation'. I accepted her invitation, because it sounded like something to do; and a chance to develop a relationship with her. I took the promised lecture for something academic. I was naive enough to miss any sense of the religious in what I was invited to. The lecture turned out to be a series of discourses and personal testimonies (called 'Satsangs') concerning a man called Guru Maharaj Ji. The esoteric jargon-riddled language of the speakers baffled me, and to some extent also amused me. At one moment it was highbrow, and at the next, anarchically offbeat. One girl announced proudly that Maharaj Ji's knowledge was like the best orgasm she had ever had.

The speakers were also surprisingly hostile to the Christian teachings that I had my own reasons to be averse to. They felt that the scriptures had been distorted by some conspiracy to remove the references to the true inner experience of God; experiences that Maharaj Ji allowed his followers to have again. To me, so cocooned and isolated from all religious expression, this was audacious and exciting talk. My friend, and her colleagues, relentlessly swamped me with beaming smiles, hugs, and anecdotes. I was curious to know more, and I started asking questions... lots of questions. I had to go back a few weeks later to ask more questions... I was hooked, but I still had my doubts. My aunt, an outsider, had met these cultists before; she told me that they were the Divine Light Mission. This was news to me. I took them for a group of friends who just got together once in a while. I asked the cultists if they were in fact DLM. They claimed to be the 'Divine Understanding Order' (DUO). (I should point out that 'Transcendental Meditation' is a separate cult entirely, and despite the original tone of my invitation, TM has nothing to do with DLM). The romantic date was also out—DLM members are sworn to celibacy, as I would be for four and a half years.

I went to the library and read up on how the young Guru



Maharaj

Maharaj Ji had once had the support of his mother and three older brothers. Their support lasted until he married an American air-hostess and renamed her as Durga Ji, the name of a Hindu fertility goddess. As Maharaj Ji himself comes from a Hindu based order, this was extremely offensive to his mother, who renounced him in public as a fraud. This had left many of DLM's followers ('Premies', or 'Lovers of God') to abandon the cult. The surviving hard-core elite continued to spread their Guru's praises by word of mouth, and the cult avoided all publicity (so successfully, in fact, that many writers think that the cult has ceased functioning altogether).

My intense display of questions, doubts and skepticism was quickly squashed. In raising questions about Maharaj Ji's forgotten past I was frightening other potential converts away. I would have to suspend such deluded thinking: in DLM theology all thinking is a delusion of 'the Maya'. Maharaj Ji said 'Because your mind troubles you, give it to me. It won't trouble me' [1]. You have to accept Maharaj Ji at face value. I was told in no uncertain terms to stop questioning, or get out of DLM. Now I wish I had chosen excommunication. I was ordered to turn my skepticism off at the source, my mind. I was to learn by experience, and emotion, but not analysis. My mind was an agent of demonic temptation, out to distract me from attaining what was my true birthright. I was taught that Maharaj Ji was my real mother, father, brother and friend.

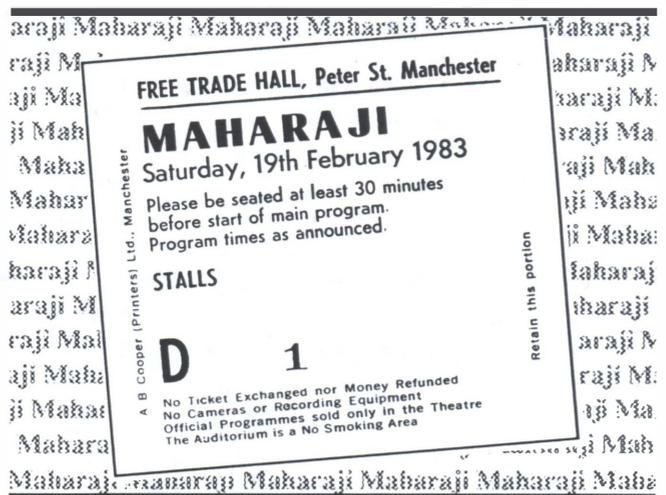
Remain in the hypnotically soft and repetitious atmosphere of a DLM meeting (Satsang) and you come to accept all that Premies say of Guru Maharaj Ji as true (Satsang means 'to be in the company of truth'). My earthly mother was horrified by my mental disintegration. I was aggressive, withdrawn, unable to take an interest in anything other than DLM. I didn't even bother myself with matters of personal hygiene. I heard all my relatives, one by one, pour scorn on Maharaj Ji, but they had the disadvantage of knowing less about the cult than I did. I was experiencing it first hand. I knew how to answer the most scathing criticisms imaginable. I was getting ready to receive the 'Knowledge'—the four secret meditation techniques that prove Maharaj Ji is God incarnate (an Avatar on par with Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and the rest).

On 20 October 1981 I received this proof. It consisted of focusing on the Third Eye, after the Initiator (the Premie empowered by Maharaj Ji to reveal the Knowledge) poked me in the eye with her finger. I was to witness his Divine Light inside my head. I saw the light alright, and I took it for God. I'd heard Premies describe it as God for six months. had no other contextual definitional way of interpreting the Light. Today I see the Light as anything but God; I see it as my having stimulated the pineal gland, activating the chemical processes that normally come to life when you are dreaming or taking LSD. I was seeing the effects of a state of getting high. Quite simply, I was stoned.

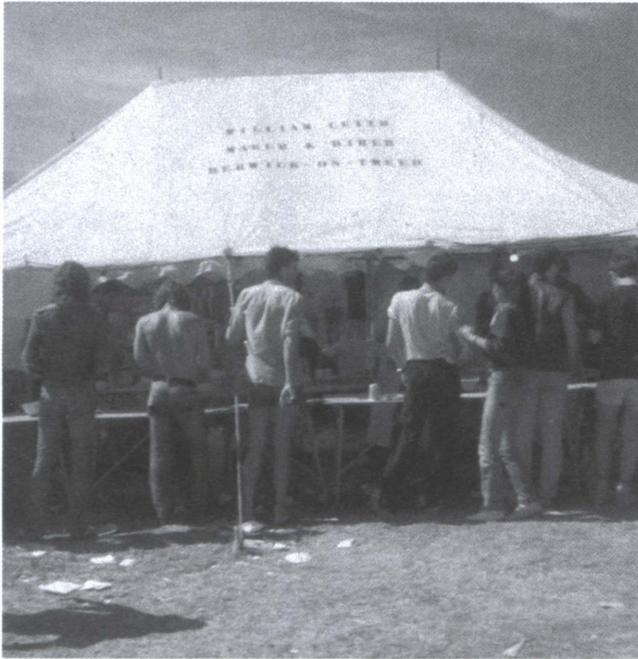
There are a number of related techniques. The second, the 'Music Meditation' involves sticking your thumbs in your ears, but so hard as to hear the blood pounding through the veins in the earlobes. You pull back just enough to avoid hearing that; and then hear the 'singing of angels'. The third

technique is a hyperventilational breathing discipline which over-oxygenates the brain, creating a buzz. I later learned to use this 'Holy Name breathing' in support of the other God-seeing meditations, and in my daily activity. My Initiator even told me that if regulated carefully just before going to sleep, this technique could keep me breathing 'Holy Name' throughout the night. I had no reason to doubt it... The fourth technique, that of 'the Nectar', involves placing the tongue as far back towards the throat as possible, and tasting the sweetness thus generated. This sweetness turns out to be mucus dripping down the nasal/throat passageway.

I believed it all because I had no reasoning ability left. The very mind-bending deceptive, limited information process (often called brainwashing) which DLM used to indoctrinate me and hundreds of others, stifles the skepticism that sets any alarm bells ringing within. I was subjected to four and a half years of mental atrophy. Cultists know that doubt and skepticism are a threat to them. They therefore set out to hide from that part of us that asks embarrassing questions. Or, they feed those questions with misleading, ambiguous answers. They got me because I was totally ignorant of any information about them—other than what they themselves gave me. By the time I was able to see any objective, critical information on DLM, it was too late. Had I read that they ate babies and had an atom bomb I would have stayed with them...



Eventually I did get out. DLM has only itself to blame for that. When I was recruited it was a highly active, dynamic organisation. I worked for their promotion (a service for which I, like many, was unpaid) and I shared in their Satsang discourses which took place nightly. In time, it became felt among the hierarchy of DLM that such time was not being used productively enough. The spontaneous Satsang talks became more stage managed; speakers were vetted and shortlisted in advance. Many Premies left in disgust, so there were fewer meetings to attend. I was getting used to the creative opportunities for spontaneous communication presented by such meetings (I was a regular speaker at house meetings, but spoke only once at a public meeting). DLM actually made me more articulate. When these meetings declined I started looking for other ways to pass the time, especially in creative writing. My mind started to free itself of its immobilization. I wanted to know the



DLM food stall at the Glastonbury festival

answers to a few questions: How could Maharaj Ji claim to have no ego? Why was celibacy advocated by a man with four children? Why couldn't his followers love each other as well as loving him? I asked him this last question directly and to my astonishment the Premies in my community were forbidden to refer to the occasion at their public meetings. I saw the petty jealousy and frustration that really motivated the cult members with any true power. I'd had enough.

I left DLM in mid 1985. It was not easy. I found that the addictive meditation effects caused me to go into involuntary trances long after coming out. It was getting into other activity that saved my sanity; I got into my writing with a vengeance, and I undertook a philosophy and literature degree that included an honours dissertation on cults. Today I help others to break free of cults through groups like Family Action, Information and Rescue (FAIR) [2]. I am now without a God once again. I am certainly not anti-religious. I see religion with a far greater respect. I see the needs of the Christian, the Jew, and so feel safe in looking at different belief systems. If a sect or cult claims compatibility with your faith you need to ask, skeptically and critically, if that really is the case. I personally doubt the validity of the claims made about the divinity of Jesus. But, if a Christian has faith in Jesus, that is fine by me. I am concerned only when that Christian is approached by someone who claims to share that faith in Jesus in order to trap the Christian into an order that somewhere along the line of its doctrines and practices, spits Jesus out in favour of other teachings.

Cults share a hidden agenda beneath their highly polished sales pitches. Christians and atheists alike need to be skeptical in dealing with them. It's bad enough to be deceived over a second hand car, but religion is about peoples' souls, and no one should deceive us into accepting a teaching we would have no wish to invest in, if given free choice in the matter. Though not religious, my interest in different religions is high. My skepticism emerges in response to

those who choose either to ram their beliefs directly down my throat, or try to convince me that they are not peddling religion, but something else which is supposed to be a little more acceptable to me. A true religion to me, as an atheist, is not one that has a God that I can believe in, but a religion that presents its theological doctrine with all the cards on the table. Cults invariably fail to achieve this. If someone asks me to suspend disbelief about what they are offering in future, they are likely to have to answer a lot of questions first.

Cultists are ready for the usual skeptical response of 'Oh you'd never see me in a movement like that'. Such skepticism is based on fears, but also on a lack of knowledge as to how cults recruit. Moonies know that if they say 'Psst, over here... wanna to be a Moonie?' you would be off like lightning. Instead, cultists will find out about you, invite you to something you *do* want to join, like a party, a lecture, a pressure group, or a fraternal society. They then direct their religious beliefs to you in a disguised form. This recruitment method is called 'Heavenly Deception'. The end justifies all means of getting you and your money involved. Later, the cultists will apologise to you, and say that it was for your own good really.

Most people, if asked, will express skepticism about cults. If asked why they are skeptical they refer to 'brainwashing'. But if asked to define brainwashing they will rarely have an answer—their skepticism, in fact, lacks depth and definition. Also, many people confuse the cults with one another (I am often asked, and sometimes told, that Guru Maharaj Ji was the man who converted the Beatles to Indian meditation. He didn't. That was the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.) Maharaj Ji has now dropped 'Guru' from his title as Great King and now respells his title Maharaji. Divine Light Mission is known as Elan Vital, and despite the claims of many commentators, the group is still very active. I have spoken and exchanged letters with many ex-victims, relatives and former colleagues from my own days in the cult.

To be skeptical, we have to know what it is we are being skeptical about. Don't assume that cults are a problem but that they won't affect you. Learn what you can about the nature of the problem, and direct your doubts and skepticism in a constructive, pragmatic, practical way. My mistake, when aged 18, was to assume that being skeptical about 'X' meant having nothing to do with 'X'. That was a fallacy. I really ought to have looked at 'X' closely to ascertain why I ought to have been skeptical about it. That search should have been on my terms, not on the distorted perceptual terms that 'X' wished me to look at it with. Today, I'm skeptical about cults, but I know *why* I am skeptical.

#### Notes

[1] Conway and Seigleman, 'Information Disease (Have Cults Created a New Mental Illness?)', *Science Digest*, January 1992. See also Mangalwadi, *Visual—The World of the Gurus Vikas*, 1977, and Bob Larson's *Larson's New Book of Cults*, Tyndale 1989. [2] FAIR can be contacted at: BCM Box 3535 P.O. Box 12, London WCIN 3XX.

---

Arthur Chappell is a writer living in Manchester.

---

# Who Invented the Loch Ness Monster?

Steuart Campbell

*A search for the origin of the Loch Ness legend*



**I**N his book *The Enigma of Loch Ness* (1986), Henry Bauer describes how he recalled having read long ago in a semi-autobiographical novel, that the Loch Ness Monster had been the invention of journalists. So he wrote to the author (whom he called Lester Smith) on 8 July 1980.

'Smith' replied (on 25 July) that, in the early 1930s, he and two partners ran a publicity service in London. One of the partners was a native of Lossiemouth, 'not far from Loch Ness', and he brought an account from a group of hotels 'in that area' who wanted publicity. Around the same time, they were offered a more important account by an estate agent in the Okanagan valley of British Columbia (in Canada). Because they knew of reports of a monster (Ogopogo) in Lake Okanagan (which 'Smith' thought had been invented by the estate agent), they were reminded by the partner from Lossiemouth that a similar monster was believed to inhabit Loch Ness. Consequently they 'arranged' for the Loch Ness Monster to be sighted and claimed their fee. All this was hatched in their 'board room', the saloon bar of a pub just off Trafalgar Square! Bauer found that this account agreed pretty well with the claim made 30 years before by 'Smith' in one of his books, which he did not name (*ibid*, pages 3-4). Bauer implied that the instruments of the false report were a couple (the Mackays) who leased the Drumnadrochit Hotel and whose report of seeing the Monster was printed in the *Inverness Courier* on 2 May 1933. It was this report, conveyed by the *Courier's* Fort Augustus correspondent and local water bailiff Alex Campbell, which started the modern myth of the Monster.

I learned of this tale when Bauer sent me a draft of his book in May 1984. He told me that 'Smith' did not want his true identity revealed because, on a previous occasion,

when he facetiously claimed to have met the Wandering Jew in Sydney he was overwhelmed by correspondence. 'Smith' had written more than forty books, besides stories, articles and scripts, and used more than one pseudonym. Only in September 1985 did Bauer reveal that 'Smith' was in fact Digby George Gerahty, who wrote under the pseudonyms 'Stephen Lister' and 'Robert Standish'. Bauer wondered how Gerahty had gone about arranging for the report of the Monster and whether or not he was indeed responsible for the report by the Mackays. Perhaps Gerahty was behind the report by a London company director (Mr F T Spicer) that he had seen a creature cross a road beside Loch Ness. Was Spicer Gerahty's partner? Bauer wondered what I could find out, and so did I. I also wondered which hotel group was involved and why they thought a report of seeing the Monster in Loch Ness would help trade at Lossiemouth 80 km away! In short, I wondered if Gerahty was telling the truth; he had begun his letter to Bauer by pointing out that he wrote fiction, or 'truth with trimmings'.



Fortean Picture Library

The Loch Ness Monster photographed by Anthony Shiels on 21 May 1977, from Urquhart Castle

Gerahty died in 1981, and although his widow still lived in France, she could not help me. However, a 1933 London directory of press, publicity and printing personnel listed Gerahty as 'Director of Canadian Publicity' at Canadian Government Exhibition Buildings (or Canadian Buildings) in Blackburn Road, London. In fact Gerahty was Director of Canadian Trade Publicity in Great Britain, that is, a Canadian Government official! This explained his knowledge of Lake Okanagan. However, it seemed most unlikely that he was permitted to operate a publicity company independent of his employment. One can see how his 'board-room' had to be in a pub, and why it was near Trafalgar Square, where the Canadian High Commission was then located.

It began to look as if Gerahty had been economical with the truth. As he was responsible for trade publicity, it would fall to him to handle an account from someone near Lake Okanagan. However, it is certainly not true that anyone invented Ogoopogo; stories about a Monster in Lake Okanagan go back to the aboriginal inhabitants. There appeared to be some confusion between Ogoopogo and Nessie, and the lack of any details as to how he arranged for Nessie to be reported induced scepticism. According to Nicholas Witchell, Spicer was a director of a firm of central London tailors, Messrs Todhouse, Reynard & Co., but I have not been able to verify this.

In 1933 John Mackay and his wife were tenants of the Drumnadrochit Hotel, but their fairly modest report of a creature moving near the north-east end of Loch Ness would

have been ignored if it had not been distorted and exaggerated by Alex Campbell. There is no known connection between Gerahty and Campbell. In the 1930s the hotel was owned by the Seafield Estate, whose office (now) is in Elgin, only 8 km from Lossiemouth. According to Clive Limpkin, a *Daily Mail* journalist who claims to have traced Mrs Mackay to a fisherman's cottage 80 km from Loch Ness, the hotel was owned by brewers, who sold it as soon as publicity made it valuable. Records show that the hotel changed hands, but not until 1935. Mrs Mackay lives in the Black Isle, not at Lossiemouth.

Nessie did not make international news until a series of articles written by journalist Philip Stalker appeared in *The Scotsman* in October 1933. Even then, the story would have died out if Constance Whyte had not written about it in 1957 (*More Than a Legend*). There is no known connection between either Stalker or Whyte and Gerahty.

I conclude that Gerahty had nothing to do with the reports from Loch Ness in 1933 and that he was claiming credit where it was not due. With some friends, and unknown to his employers, he may have run a publicity agency 'on the side', but none is listed in his name. It seems possible that, hearing about the reports from Loch Ness, and perhaps having an account in the area, they claimed responsibility to earn a fee. If anyone invented Nessie, it was Alex

Steuart Campbell is a science writer and author of *The Loch Ness Monster: the Evidence*

## Prometheus Books Prize Crossword

by Skepticus

### Across

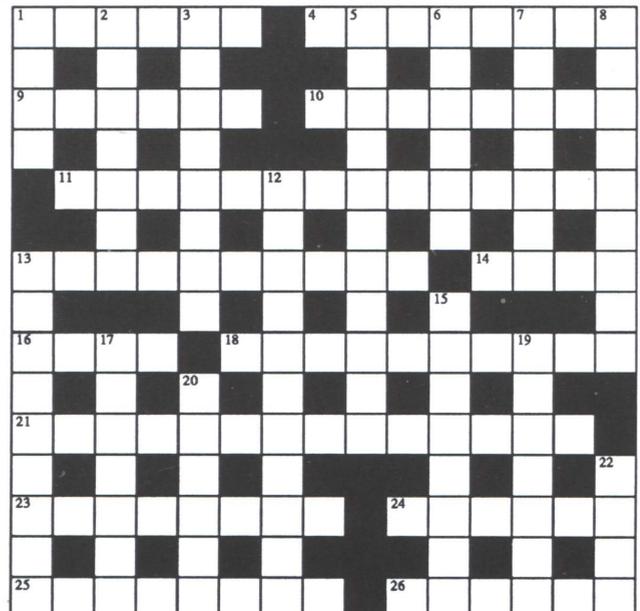
- 1 Abscond from trade campaign (6)
- 4 Rum one knots strange things (8)
- 9 Amount of medicine, if homoeopathic would swindle wise man (6)
- 10 Confusingly, ESP at tea, with no partitions (8)
- 11 Post in hell? What a let down! (14)
- 13 The Head's Study? (10)
- 14 The picture shows an heroic work (4)
- 16 Egg on dour gent - don't remove (4)
- 18 Cat and candle I mix up not by design (10)
- 21 Grasp a holy copy mixed up with study of strange powers (14)
- 23 The completeness of yen, trite (8)
- 24 The content of 'gentlemen talk', about the mind (6)
- 25 Unflinching, pig's home involves confused ideal (8)
- 26 Laurel Church posture (6)

### Down

- 1 Clothes which don't go with a bang? (4)
- 2 Person in bank - i.e., crash crash! (7)
- 3 Headache caused as I'm getting up with corn (oriental) (8)
- 5 Sid, getting up, can gush with one inside, see the difference (11)
- 6 Ascribe guilt to. Mess up. Time up (6)
- 7 Plane AI scrambled in a way to clear a barrier (2,1,4)
- 8 Elastic PC bounces around and becomes critical (9)
- 12 Sounds like a parrot with New Age device - a mixed up state (11)
- 13 Quiet, shapeless mass, at monster's home, in a fleshy state (9)
- 15 Recklessly determined to find fiery place, not straight (8)
- 17 Got tear, twist and strangle (7)
- 19 Drunken Cockney bird, remove the slack (7)
- 20 Spread confusion but allowed to go free (6)
- 22 This helps you to fill in the spaces (4)

The sender of the first correct entry to materialise in *The Skeptic's Orgone Energy Accumulator* will win a copy of Martin Gardner's new book *The New Age: Notes of a Fringe Watcher*, published by Prometheus Books. Send your entry to *The Skeptic* (Crossword), PO Box 475, Manchester M60 2TH, to arrive no later than 10 May 1992.

**Prometheus Books** specialises in skeptical books about the paranormal. For a free catalogue, write to Prometheus Books, 10 Crescent View, Loughton, Essex, IG10 4PZ.



# The Medium is Not the Message

Terry Sanderson

## *Fighting crime with the psychics*

Not long ago a television mini-series called 'The Hillside Stranglers' was screened. It was based on a true story of two men working together as 'serial killers' in Los Angeles during the 1970's. Between them they murdered twelve young women for no apparent reason. The very arbitrariness of the crimes made them difficult to solve, and the television film concentrated on the mounting pressure being exerted on the policeman at the head of the investigation. His failure to make any progress in tracking down the murderers was underlined when, in one scene, an old man appeared at the door of his office. 'It's the medium who wrote to you from Germany,' says the detective's assistant, 'you remember, the one who wanted you to pay his fare over here because he had vital information on the case. 'Bring him in here', says the cop, ready to try anything.

In comes the old man, who is visiting relatives, and has been obliged to pay his own fare. He tells the policeman that he should be looking for two Italian brothers who are driving a red car. The detective loses his patience and tells the assistant: 'Get this creep outa here'.

Needless to say, when the murderers are eventually apprehended they are Italian in origin, but they are cousins, not brothers. The red car is, in fact, a red van. 'Isn't this what that old man said?' asks the incredulous detective. I don't know whether the incident has any truth in it, or whether it was added to the dramatisation in order to perk it up a bit, but claims by psychics that they have given valuable information to the police in difficult cases are quite common. Take the dear departed Doris Stokes, who was a seasoned operator of the celestial switchboard ('just one moment please, I'm putting you through'). She made all kinds of extravagant claims about kidnap victims she had located, and hidden bodies she had led the police to. None of these were ever verified by the authorities and, indeed, the only time I ever saw them checked up on was when a Sunday newspaper asked Scotland Yard for details of Doris's miraculous sleuthing. They denied ever having heard of her.

Now Scotland Yard has issued the findings of a report it undertook in 1990 monitoring London's eight major investigation pools, which deal with the most serious crime. As a result Detective Chief Superintendent Eddie Ellison was able to say: 'There were no cases of psychics either offering effective help or being invited to assist investigations'.

Are you really surprised? Even Tony Ortzen, editor of

*Psychic News*, has to admit: 'Anyone can call themselves a medium, and often, if you get a child murdered in a brutal fashion, one of these people will write to the police or family and say 'I was just washing up last night, and this name came to me as that of the murderer'. There are a lot of tea-cup mediums around who will take advantage of any situation.

Mr Ortzen, though, as you'd expect, doesn't hold with the view that all mediums are misguided. He feels that if the police were to find 'the right ones' they might discover that spiritualism has a lot to offer.

Of course, if we could only find the 'right ones' we wouldn't need the police at all—except perhaps for crowd control and helping old ladies across the street. There only need be a few arresting officers to go around mopping up the miscreants that the mystics had pinpointed. Who needs all this forensic balderdash when a quick trance could save so much time and effort? Strange that this economically appealing idea never seems to get much further. Think what could be saved in public spending (and public unease) if we could reduce the police to the role of traffic wardens.

Given that those on the other side know the answer to every cosmic question that has ever flummoxed a philosopher, it's amazing that they never get around to giving any information. Why don't mediums ever ask Christian wraiths whether they have met God, and if so whether he accepts Muslims and Hindus at his place. Why don't they ask whether they still have sex in heaven. (I'd particularly like an answer to that one because if they don't, I'm not going.) Wouldn't Bertrand Russell want to give us the answers now that he has them? Wouldn't Dickens want to let us know how *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* worked out? Wouldn't Mahler like to tell us what he thought about other people completing the symphony he left unfinished at his death—and what kind of job they made of it?

The sinister side of this, of course, is the exploitation of the recently bereaved. Doris Stokes was a devil for that. Those who are in the vulnerable state of having to let go of their loved ones are easy prey for those who promise one last glimpse.

Spiritualism is appealing, of course, but I think we ought to accept that it doesn't pose much of a threat to the criminal fraternity.

---

This article originally appeared in *The Freethinker*, and is reprinted with kind permission.

---

# Skeptic at Large

Wendy M Grossman

*No one knows anything*

As I write this, it's election time. In America, primaries are proceeding. In the UK, Kinnock, Major, and Ashdown are rushing visibly around the country. It is prediction time.

Sky News—normally a good service—reacted to the announcement of the election by getting an astrologer to come on the air to predict, live, the result—unfortunately, I tuned in too late to hear her prediction. I was in time, however, to hear the interviewer ask her if Reagan's belief in astrology was well founded: did astrology have any real predictive value. Oh, yes, replied the astrologer confidently, it provides a very real 'indication'.

I haven't seen any astrologers predicting the outcome of the US elections, which of course are a much longer soap opera that will run until November. In the US what we get are historical patterns: almost no one ever beats an incumbent president; Tsongas is dead as a candidate if he doesn't sweep the South; no one ever wins without taking New Hampshire. And so on. This week, in fact, a journalist for the *Washington Post* complained (in an article downloaded from CompuServe) intelligently about this kind of historical prediction, saying that it stifled debate and investigation, and resulted in the premature anointing of candidates who in fact might not be the best choice for the nomination.

It's amazing how many people make a living from speculating about what the future will bring—despite the fact that, as William Goldman put it in his tirade about writing for the film industry, NO ONE KNOWS ANYTHING. There are journalists—the day after Sky News had the astrologer it had Matthew Parris, who writes for *The Times* on to do the same sort of job—and bookmakers, and campaign managers, and opinion pollsters, and psychics, and all those senior management executives who make the decisions for large corporations—like the guy at M&M's who turned down the invitation to supply candy for the movie *E.T.*

Psychics, of course, are a lot of fun. I have a folder labelled 'Prediction Track'; most of the stuff in it dates back to 1987/1988, so now might be a good time to review some of its contents. You may make your own assessment as to the success rate of the following predictions, all for the year 1988.

Jim Elliott, described by the *Sunday Sport* as 'Britain's top psychic' predicted on January 3, 1988, that Prince Charles would be the victim of an assassination attempt.

Dublin's *Evening Press* got its predictions from Zak Martin, at the time a recent returnee to Dublin. On the cards for 1988 were: U2 to lose a member; a telecommunications strike; economic recovery in Ireland; Sinn Fein's becoming a major force in Irish politics; health problems for the



Queen; marital problems for the Waleses; and a general worsening of relations between Ireland and Britain.

Stephen Alexander, quoted in the *Sunday Mirror*, predicted that Jeffrey Archer would be the next Prime Minister—after Margaret Thatcher won the next, that is this current, election.

Jonathan Cainer, in *Today*, predicted that Gabriela Sabatini would win Wimbledon in 1988 (the winner was Steffi Graf, and Sabatini lost in the fourth round to Zina Garrison), and that house prices would recover and rise slowly. 'Fergie' was also supposed have a near-miss in her helicopter in May.

Rather obvious stuff, isn't it? Jeffrey Archer was in the news at the time because he had just won his libel case. Royals always make good copy—and the obvious things to focus on are marriages, health, and safety. And Wimbledon, well...

But much more fun is a book called *The Experts Speak*, by Christopher Cerf and Victor Navasky (Pantheon, 1984), subtitled 'The definitive compendium of authoritative misinformation.'

Ronald Reagan, for example, was not offered the starring role in the 1964 movie *The Best Man* because one executive felt that, 'Reagan doesn't have the presidential look.'

In 1943, Thomas J Watson, then chairman of the board at IBM, said, 'I think there is a world market for about five computers.'

Or what about politics? 'FDR will be a one-term president' (journalist Mark Sullivan, writing in the *New York Herald*; FDR of course was the longest-serving president in US history). Or the predictions, too numerous to list, that former New York State governor Thomas E. Dewey could not fail to be elected president. Harry S. Truman won—but before the final results were in the *Chicago Tribune* had already published its morning edition, with the headline 'Dewey Defeats Truman'; Truman gleefully posed for a picture with a copy of the newspaper.

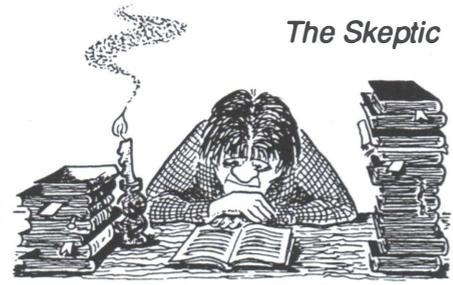
Like the man said: No one knows anything. For the UK election, I firmly predict that there will be another Prime Minister. For the US? I predict that...um...can I wait until the UK election is decided before I commit myself?

---

Wendy Grossman is the founder of *The Skeptic*, a member of the UK Skeptics, and a writer and folksinger. Her CompuServe ID is 70007,5537 and she can be reached by electronic mail (Internet) as wendyg@cix.compulink.uk or 70007.5537@compuserve.com.

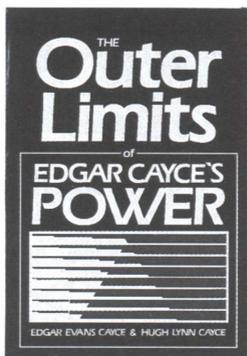
---

# Reviews



## Catalogue of errors

Edgar Evans Cayce and Hugh Lynn Cayce, *The Outer Limits of Edgar Cayce's Power* (ARE Press, distributed by Element Books, 1991 (originally published in 1971) 154pp., hbk, £9.95)



Edgar Cayce, known as 'the sleeping prophet', provided tens of thousands of 'psychic readings' in the period 1901 to 1945. An assistant would read out questions as Cayce lay in a 'sleeping' state, and Cayce would answer, in an idiosyncratic manner heavily influenced by his daily Bible readings (his sons report that Cayce never read anything except the newspaper and the Bible). Cayce answered questions on a wide

range of topics, most commonly concerning the diagnosis and treatment of illness, the meanings of dreams, the success of business enterprises, Atlantis (yes, Atlantis!) the nature of the afterlife, reincarnation, spiritual truth, the location of missing objects and persons, buried treasure, and so on.

The Association for Research and Enlightenment (ARE), based in Virginia, maintains an archive of Cayce's readings and publishes a vast number of books about him. This particular book is a curiosity because it actually deals with those occasions when Cayce's readings proved to be *wrong*. Naturally enough, the authors begin by making a case for the reality of their father's 'psychic powers', and justify their analysis of his unsuccessful performances thus: 'In some ways, his failures tell us more about Edgar Cayce and his psychic 'reach' than an examination of those cases where he was accurate.' Hmm.

In fact, what is on display here is not so much Cayce's psychic ability (or lack thereof), but rather the ingenuity of the authors in trying to come up with plausible explanations for his failures and mistakes. Although one can understand and respect the authors' faith in, and love for, their late father, some of their rationalisations of Cayce's psychic boo-boos are unintentionally hilarious. Consider the incident concerning the famous kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's son in 1931. Cayce was asked by friends of the Lindberghs to conduct a reading to try and find out where the child had been taken. He came up with a collection of information which turned out to be completely wrong. In the authors' analysis, because Cayce had not had personal contact with the Lindberghs themselves, he was actually

picking up a pattern of thought forms of *other* people who had planned to kidnap the child but had never followed the plan through! In the words of the authors: 'Edgar Cayce in this instance did not tune into the event, only to the thought plans for it which were distorted... mental static must be very heavy in such circumstances.' And here's you and I thinking that Cayce was just plain wrong. Not a bit of it! There are plenty more examples in the same vein.

Wrong or right, Cayce remains a curiosity. The ARE continues to devote an extraordinary amount of time to the cataloguing, indexing, cross-referencing and analysis of his readings. It is exceedingly unlikely that Cayce was a deliberate fraud, and by all accounts he was an altruistic man, convinced of the reality of his 'psychic gifts'. However, given the fact that he specialised in diagnosing medical conditions and prescribing (often quite bizarre) health treatments, let us hope that he did not make too many mistakes of the kind described in this book.

—Les Francis

## A Glastonbury collection

Frances Howard-Gordon, *Glastonbury: Maker of Myths* (1990, 68pp., pbk, £4.95); Geoffrey Ashe, *The Glastonbury Tor Maze* (1988, 16pp., pbk, £2.95); John Michell, *New Light on the Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury* (1990, 192pp., pbk, £9.95); Moyra Caldecott, *The Green Lady and The King of Shadows* (1989, 128pp., pbk, £4.95); Lynne Elstob and Anne Howes, *The Glastonbury Festivals* (1987, 144pp., pbk, £9.95).

This little clutch of books comes from Gothic Image, the booksellers and publishers at 7 Glastonbury High Street. It's a mixed bunch, too. *Glastonbury: Maker of Myths* is a 68-page booklet (with plenty of illustrations and a street plan) to the Glastonbury area, and its many 'mystical' sites. Whatever you think about Glastonbury, this guide will help you find your way around, and give you lots of background. It sometimes seems wilfully credulous, but if you want to know what tempts so many people to a rather dingy little market town in an out-of-the-way corner of the country, then this will make a good starting point.

*The Glastonbury Tor Maze*, by Geoffrey Ashe (the Arthurian writer) is a 16-page pamphlet, arguing that the terracing on the sides of the Tor is the remnant of a prehistoric ritual maze. He tells you in detail how to walk the maze, but in placing it in an archaeological context, he seems long on speculation and short on real conclusions. Nonetheless, I would not dismiss his proposal out of hand. Anyone who has read W Matthew's *Mazes and Labyrinths*

(1922, reprinted by Dover in 1970) will not be unsympathetic; all I can say is—try it and see if it works.

The most substantial volume is *New Light on the Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury*. Those familiar with John Michell's earlier work will know what to expect: a bran tub of speculations, facts, and legends, all indiscriminately jumbled up. Michell writes well; no-one could ever complain that he is dull or pedestrian, and he hopes that the Glastonbury story will be an inspiration for those who seek to escape from the shackles of 'modern thought'. One thing puzzles me: why, if Michell is so keen on the value of revelation as a means of establishing the truth, does he attempt to argue his case in terms of empirical evidence (especially when so much of his evidence is dubious)?

Moyra Caldecott's book is a novel about Glastonbury. I cannot commend its style, those who crave this kind of stuff may prefer to try John Cowper Powys. True, he couldn't write good prose either, but his characters usually had psychologically interesting motives for their actions. Ms Caldecott's merely wander about under appellations like Gwythyr, son of Greidyawl, coming out with dialogue that sounds like it has been recycled from an American soap opera ('I get the feeling that you and Lukas have some kind of secret between you').

Finally, *The Glastonbury Festivals* is a pictorial record, a photo album, of the rock festivals from 1971 to 1986. For those of you who were there, it will make a marvellous souvenir. For those of you who weren't... well, perhaps you'll just conclude that you haven't missed anything.

—Hobgoblin

## Holy gossip

Kenneth L Woodward, *Making Saints* (Chatto & Windus, 1990, 200pp., hbk, £18.00)

Prior to reading this book, all I knew of the process of saint-making was what I had learnt from 'Father' Guido Sarducci, on the US TV show *Saturday Night Live*, commenting in an outrageous fake Italian accent on the miracles that had qualified a fictional American woman for sainthood. *Making Saints* is an intriguing—if less humourous—introduction to the process of canonisation in the Catholic church. I am now very much better informed about Vatican politics, and the machinations in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints that churn out saints and blessed, chewing up their biographies and squeezing them into the *positio*, the requisite formal prospectus for canonisation.

Unfortunately, from the point of view of a skeptic, I learned little from the book about the miracles which are required of most prospective saints. The author is open about his belief, as a Catholic, in miracles, and his presentation of the investigations of claims made on behalf of candidates for canonisation is informative, but limited in scope and not very penetrating. Despite being quite well written and in places fascinating, with its gossipy details of the private lives of the holy, the book is unlikely to be of more than passing interest to the skeptic.

After dipping into the uncritical and lurid accounts of

obscure saints who went for years without sustenance or, like Father Pio, sported a stunning set of stigmata, I was left unsatisfied, and wondering if Father Sarducci was all that far off the mark.

—Martin Hempstead

## Cursing the Devil?

Robert D Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult* (Prometheus Books, 1991, 420pp., hbk, £15.50)

Robert Hicks is an ex-police officer who, for several years now, has devoted his efforts to debunking, in the United States, the belief in 'Satanic' sexual abuse of children. This is his *magnum opus*, though why it has to be quite so big I am not at all sure.

Let me first of all be slightly positive about this book. Hicks is useful in reminding us not to be over-credulous regarding 'Satanic' cults and to proceed with some caution, especially where the views of fundamentalist Christians are concerned. Unfortunately, he then goes on to utterly reject all suggestions that something is amiss: and he does it in a way that is often far from impartial or objective. In other words, his methodology seems akin to that which he criticises vehemently.

So, what are my doubts about the book? First of all, I have doubts about its accuracy on details. For instance (on page 184) his comments on the Cleveland affair in this country are factually wrong. Then again, he makes the book *Nursery Crimes* by the universally respected David Finkelstein a central target for his criticisms. Yet that book is a far more sophisticated piece of research than Hicks indicates. So what does that say about his own critical values?

Another major weakness is that Hicks seems unclear as to what precisely he is debunking. Sometimes it is the concept of a 'world-wide' Satanic network. But too often the focus slips so that occasionally it feels as though he is denying the existence of ritualistic abuse (that is, that which does not necessarily have to involve 'Satanism'), child sex rings, and even elements of sexual abuse itself. Everyone actively working in the field of sexual abuse (including relative sceptics) now accepts that: sexual abuse is a major social problem; child sex rings are also common; and ritualistic abuse does exist. Whether, or how far, the latter includes 'Satanic' elements is open to *doubt*, but not certainty *one way or the other*.

Hicks bases much of his case on undermining the evidence for 'Satanic' abuse. This is not without some justification since the frequent lack of 'hard' evidence (such as babies' corpses and so on) cannot be ignored. On the other hand, we know from previous experience with non-'Satanic' sexual abuse (which was also doubted in its time) how easy it is for abuse to be kept secret. It is also possible that the most lurid elements reported in cases of 'Satanic' abuse result from the drugs administered to victims: we do know that such administration is relatively common in ritualistic abuse and child sex rings.

Hicks is also scathing about the spoken evidence pro-

vided by alleged survivors who often also manifest Multiple Personality Disorder. Such criticisms would carry more weight if they did not sound so similar to the arguments once deployed against disclosures of non-‘Satanic’ abuse: arguments which are now almost wholly discredited. He states (page 167) that such survivors ‘would have us believe that members come from esteemed professions, people whose public behaviour appears model in every respect, yet covertly such people commit almost unimaginable brutality and cruelty...’. Ten years ago in this country exactly the same statement was being made about non-‘Satanic’ sexual abuse to dismiss its existence. Very few doubt its reality now. Will we have made the same realisation about ‘Satanic’ abuse in 2002?

The central dynamic of Hicks’ views is perhaps revealed on page 376 where he glumly surveys a change in all fields of human existence and enquiry: ‘...subjectivity, feelings, intuitive understandings, and above all a reality that is ego-centric and self-reflexive now run the show’. Of course this is true: post-structuralism and post-modernism have dislocated many of the old verities and even the natural sciences hold few certainties. In this context, Hicks is no doubt right to warn against clinging too readily and uncritically to new truths. However, someone ought to tell him that it is equally dangerous to cling to old, discredited certainties which *may* prevent new forms of truth emerging.

—Keith Pringle

## Body and karma

Bruce Thomas, *The Body of Time and the Energies of Being* (Arkana, 1991, 144pp., pbk, £5.99) and Penny Thornton, *The Forces of Destiny; Reincarnation, Karma and Astrology* (Aquarian, 1991, 224pp., pbk, £7.99)

Both of these books are ‘New Age’, and proceed poetically rather than scientifically, reflecting their authors’ energy, evident sincerity, and generally uncritical approach. Neither mentions any of the standard skeptical authors, although Ms Thornton is aware that not all anecdotal material is entirely trustworthy. Both authors endorse a Neo-Platonist view of the world and the individual.

Mr Thomas seeks to integrate the philosophy of Gurdjieff with the Platonic tradition (he states, incorrectly, that Plato anticipate Gurdjieff’s notion of life recurrence), the ideas of Robert Fludd and Sigmund Freud, shamanistic practices, David Bohm’s implicate order, the holographic universe concept, Assagioli’s psychosynthesis, the works of Herman Hesse, and various modern bodywork techniques.

He postulates higher ‘dimensions of energy’ which are experienced when the grounded body is brought into a healthy unity with mind and spirit. He is really describing ‘peak experiences’, or even classical ‘mystical experiences’, and I would have preferred a discussion of whether such states are (perhaps) purely psychological in origin (though nonetheless valuable), rather than necessarily transcendental.

Ms Thornton traces the theory of reincarnation from the ancient world, via Atlantis, Buddhism, Christianity, the

Gnostics, Kabalists and Cathars, through to the Theosophical Society, Rudolph Steiner, the New Age, and of course Shirley MacLaine. She confuses Origen’s theory of pre-existence (of the soul in heaven) with reincarnation proper, and claims that John the Divine (the writer of the fourth gospel) was actually a ‘diviner’ (that is, a ‘dowser’), as was John the Baptist—mistranslating the Greek verb ‘baptizo’ (‘I baptize’) as ‘I dowse’.

She adapts the karmic theory to contemporary astrology, suggesting that the soul reincarnates when the heavens are in the correct configuration, due to subtle electromagnetic harmonies connecting the individual with the solar system.

In support of her ideas, she cites cosmic consciousness, the harmony of the spheres, Edgar Cayce, Rupert Sheldrake, Jacques Benveniste’s cosmic (or comic?) homoeopathic resonances, and the (unproven) astrological theories of Percy Seymour and Michel Gauquelin. She gives examples of astrological charts and their interpretations which often fit the subjects’ experiences; however, she makes no reference to skeptical criticisms of astrology, self-validating readings, and so on.

She also refers to near death and past-life (regression) experiences—while acknowledging criticisms of some of the latter (for example by Ian Wilson), she still feels that they are valuable, even where not objectively true, because of the psychological benefits people may gain from them.

I would have preferred a discussion of the possible psychological origins of these phenomena (which are clearly of value to many people), as the uncritical assumption of their objective reality may mislead unwary readers, perhaps with unfortunate results—but then, you know how hard we Leos are to convince of anything!

—Mike Rutter

## Monkey business

Kendrick Frazier (Ed.), *The Hundredth Monkey and Other Paradigms of the Paranormal* (Prometheus Books, 1991, 400pp., pbk, £14.95)

This is a collection of 43 essays and articles, by distinguished authors. They are (often extensively) updated versions of items which have been published in *The Skeptical Inquirer*, the official publication of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), during the period of Autumn 1985 to Winter 1990. The authors include a number of the most eminent figures of that organisation such as Paul Kurtz, its founder and chair, Martin Gardner and Carl Sagan. This is the third such collection, each volume having been published at five yearly intervals since the establishment of CSICOP in 1976.

The articles are split into nine sections covering almost every aspect of the paranormal world. The first two sections of the book consider general topics and, through a series of short articles, introduce the concept of skepticism and the techniques of ‘critical thinking’ and of the scientific evaluation of evidence—techniques which are required to reach rational conclusions in the face of the sensationalized accounts of events, which are so often taken as evidence for

the paranormal. These sections also provide a very well argued consideration of the reasons why, despite the enormous increase in the average level of education amongst the general public, superstition and belief in paranormal phenomena, far from disappearing, stubbornly refuse even to diminish.

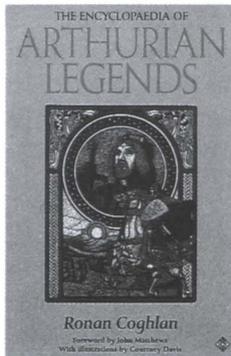
The remaining sections of the book consider a wide range of the paranormal phenomena which are commonly held to exist under the headings of 'parapsychology', 'medical controversies', 'astrology', 'crashed saucers' (including the now infamous MJ-12 hoax) and a single section, entitled 'examining popular claims', which covers a number of unconnected topics (such as fire-walking, graphology, spontaneous human combustion and the 'Hundredth Monkey' phenomenon from which the book takes its title). The common theme is that they all involve the debunking of some popularly held belief through a scientific re-analysis of the evidence by qualified practitioners of appropriate sciences. The final section of the book, 'controversies within science', describes the two most recent major controversies in science: the 'cold fusion' debacle and the claims for homeopathy made by researchers in biology at the INSERM research establishment in Paris.

These articles provide a very broad skeptical arsenal for the refutation of the phenomena they cover and, over and above that, many of them also attempt to give a well considered insight into the reasons why these phenomena find such credence amongst the general public. Overall this book contains an excellent set of articles, well chosen and organized by the editor and numerous authors, to produce a useful, informative and very readable book suitable for anyone with a general interest in the skeptical viewpoint on the paranormal.

—Matt Cooper

## Arthurian trivial pursuits

Ronan Coghlan, *The Encyclopaedia of Arthurian Legends* (Element, 1991, 234pp., hbk, £10.95)



With a foreword by the ever-present John Mathews and some quite nice illustrations by Courtney Davies, this is less an encyclopaedia than an A-Z of Arthurian trivia (some of the entries are only one or two lines long)—or perhaps a *Who's Who*; the emphasis is firmly on presenting a *dramatis personae* rather than discussing the concepts or themes occurring in the legends. It may well be a help to

anyone whose Middle High German or Breton is a little rusty, and who needs guiding through the translations.

Of perhaps more interest is the introductory chapter, which covers the growth of the legends both as root material for literary works and as a system of belief. The author is remarkably frank about the complete lack of any contemporary reference to Arthur, being primarily concerned with examining the complex historical development of the mythos and the reasons for its continuing and increased popularity,

rather than an examination of the historical seeds per se.

The drawing together of strands from Romano-Celtic, Welsh, Lowland Scots and Irish mythology to form the *Historia* of Geoffrey of Monmouth is succinctly described, and the early presence of supernatural motifs—Merlin, Cath Palug, the Isle of Apples and hence the return of Arthur—is noted. The effect of a learned, Latin work was wide dissemination of the legends among the educated classes; the modification of its content between the twelfth century *Historia*, and the courtly romance, as typified by the late mediaeval *Morte d'Arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory, is related to the political, religious and social changes resulting from the explosive spread of the material through France, Germany and Italy to Scandinavia and Spain.

In a separate line of development, the oral versions were continuing to evolve in their passage amongst a different social stratum, passing into France via the Cornish and Breton, only to merge into the romantic literature during the mediaeval period. Inclusion of the Grail legends is shown to derive from Celtic otherworld legends as much as the incorporation of Christian mythology.

The author is clearly uncomfortable with modern (post 1600!) developments in the Arthurian literature, deeming it inferior and outside the scope of the work, yet feeling the need to examine it as a cultural phenomenon. The decline in Arthurian content of mainstream literature up to the 19th century is related to industrialisation, rationalism, the growth of characterisation in the modern novel, and Protestantism; yet the author avers that the process of evolution and accretion continued in folklore. On reaching the twentieth century in his survey, however, we are treated to his views on spiritual hunger, the need for mysticism and the inadequate way this is fed by the more cerebral forms of theology; the rise of the modern fantasy novel from its Tolkienesque beginnings; and a brief stab at the cult of omnipotent science.

These urgings to diagnose the modern illness are swiftly contained, and Mr Coghlan scuttles back to the safety of the respectably old works before the chapter is out. And yet, the issues he briefly raises deserve some attention. If the works of Chaucer and de Boron form part of the Arthurian literature, then surely *The Mists of Avalon* by M Z Bradley is equally a part? And if the archetypal content he insists we need is independent of historical fact, it could more easily be provided by watching *Star Wars* than delving in obscure works which, as he states, are not accessible to the general reader. The relevance of such studies is called into question by his own arguments.

—Chris Lilley

## Hypnosis: what's in a word?

Robert A Baker, *They Call It Hypnosis* (Prometheus Books, 1991, 313pp., hbk, £13.95)

Hypnosis has long excited the imagination of lay people and professionals alike. Most would admit to curiosity, if not concern, about what it can do. To most people, therefore, the central thesis of this interesting book will be a disappointment: it is that 'Strictly speaking, every time the word

'hypnosis' is used it could be placed in quotation marks. This is because there is no such thing as hypnosis' (page 17).

The laudable aim of the book is to demythologise and debunk, just like the street urchins in the fairytale who told the Emperor that he was wearing no clothes. Baker believes that hypnosis is analagous to some other concepts which have confused and confounded scientists, for example phlogiston, the ether wind and N-rays. He is especially critical of the concept of 'trance' as a defining characteristic of hypnosis. Right at the very end of the book, Baker informs us that hypnosis is 'exactly what King Louis's commissioner said it was: imagination. And all the rest of the phenomena are due to relaxation, suggestion, expectation and compliance' (page 273). Notwithstanding this, like King Louis's commissioners, Baker does not doubt that what is called hypnosis can be used effectively in the treatment of various problems including habit disorders, addictions, anxiety problems and pain.



The book, therefore, is an apologia for the 'nonstate' view of hypnosis, and as such is a useful presentation of the view that hypnosis is nothing more than a complex combination of social compliance, relaxation and suggestibility. However, perhaps the state-nonstate dichotomy is a misleading distinction. Relaxation is an altered state of consciousness accompanied by well described psychophysiological changes: even if hypnosis were nothing but relaxation, it would be an altered state of consciousness, albeit one which is not unique. Furthermore, leading state theorists would be in complete agreement with Baker's critical view of age regression, age progression, cryptamnesia and hypnotically refreshed memory. Moreover, no informed adherent of the state position nowadays would doubt the importance of demand characteristics and expectancies in the genesis of hypnotic phenomena, and this book is unlikely to convert them to the nonstate view.

Baker suggests that the fantasy prone personality is the key to understanding reports of alien abductions and hypnogogic and hypnopompic hallucinations. The term 'fantasy prone personality' is used to describe individuals who fantasise extensively and deeply much of the time. They can hallucinate voluntarily, they are good hypnotic subjects and they may report psychic powers. Readers of *The Skeptic* are likely to find this part of the book particularly interesting, as well as the sections on channelling, CIA abuses, stage hypnosis and missing time.

This intriguing, mostly comprehensive book will be easily read, even by non-specialists. Anyone interested in the experimental psychology of hypnosis, the use of hypnotic concepts to explain various phenomena such as alien abductions, and the history of hypnosis, will benefit from reading this worthwhile, scholarly contribution. However, although

persuasive, I suspect that some readers will be left wondering if the Emperor is still wearing his underclothes or really has been completely denuded.

—Leslie G Walker

## Time gentlemen please

Murray Hope, *Time: The Ultimate Energy* (Element, 1991, 200pp., pbk, £8.99)

The purpose of this book is to relate scientific, psychological and metaphysical concepts of time and to show that time can be regarded as a form of energy. However, the author uses 'energy' somewhat loosely, also referring to time as 'a living conscious self-regulating entity...a self-energizing intelligence, whose footfall is gravity and whose voice is sonics'

The central theme of the book is that time has many aspects which fit into the categories of 'inner time' and 'outer time'. Inner time represents what we would normally think of as time. Outer time is non-linear, contains the past, present and future in an eternal 'now' and is not constrained by physical laws. The author maintains that with training or because of chance conditions the human mind can access outer time and thus gain knowledge about past or future events.

Hope first presents an assortment of descriptions of various scientific theories such as relativity, quantum theory and chaos. Succeeding chapters then meander around varying topics ranging from parallel universes, to time-warps and even crop-circles! The second part of the book contains chapters dealing with time in myth, history and religion, the psychology of time and the metaphysics of time. The final chapters present the author's theory of 'Time as an Energy' and speculations and predictions for the future.

The material is presented in a mostly readable fashion, but I found the book very frustrating to read because of the author's very loose use of scientific and computing jargon. Also there is the assumption that astrology, precognition and other paranormal phenomena are all proven and that there exist parallel universes at different 'frequencies' (of what?) which render them imperceptable to us in everyday life. An example of the kind of reasoning throughout the book is the assumption that because you may dream about something that does not belong in this world, then your mind is actually accessing a parallel universe. Or, that because time in a dream may not relate to 'real time', that the mind is somehow escaping from the normal confines of space-time while dreaming.

The author also has a tendency to mention a scientific theory or fact and then use it to somehow justify a theory of her own, occasionally asserting that this makes 'sound metaphysical sense'. The problem here is not that her statements are necessarily wrong, but that they do not follow from the facts which she mentions. In conclusion, the book is a patchwork quilt of assorted theories and confused logic which doesn't delve deep enough into anything to give the reader any real information.

—Dave Snowdon



# Letters

## Irrational thoughts

Like thousands of other 'irrationalists' (no doubt), I felt compelled to leap to Wendy Grossman's defence against Ray Ward's absurd assertion that 'the scientific validity of I.Q. tests is established beyond all reasonable doubt'.

Is this man not familiar with the theory dependency of observation statements, the concept of 'hypostatization', the works of Michel Foucault, Paul Feyerabend or the Dialectics of Biology Group?! (Rhetorical Question).

In order to demonstrate the truth of his assertion, Mr Ward needs to show that:

1. There is an objective, independently existing reality.
2. Within this reality there is an identifiable entity 'intelligence'.
3. This entity can be 'measured' objectively and,
4. I.Q. tests constitute this objective measurement.

Personally, I am prepared to concede step one to Mr Ward, but others may not be so generous. However, I am yet to be convinced that 'intelligence' is anything different from 'schizophrenia'; that is, a bucket concept, a convenient social construct used to categorise a variety of objectively unassociated phenomena. Like many others, I have great difficulty believing that *any* human behaviour these days can either fruitfully or genuinely be described as 'intelligent'. Why not go the whole way then and deny that such an entity actually exists?

**John S. Green**  
Altrincham

## Measure for measure

Ray Ward's letter of Jan/Feb issue included the following assertions: "the scientific validity of IQ tests is established beyond all reasonable doubt" and "they [IQ tests] are the

best and most objective indicator we have." Possibly true, but at least two questions follow. Validity as what? Indicators of what? I agree that IQ tests are very accurate—in fact the very best tool possible—for measuring ability to perform IQ tests. What else are they a measure of? Ability to be a productive human being? Ability to be happy? To be rich? To be imaginative? None of these things. There are many people who are productive, happy, rich and imaginative who would probably not get into Mensa. They would probably not be interested in doing so.

What would Ward propose doing with IQ tests? (Other than using them as the basis for entry to a club, that is?) Most people in this society already achieve far less with their lives than they could with proper encouragement. The 'cut-off point' elitism espoused by Mensa, placing people on some crude scale of intellectual competence, is hardly likely to change this.

Finally, it is also disconcerting to read a letter from a 'skeptical' chastising someone for having changed their mind about something.

**Nick Beard**  
London

## Miracles under scrutiny

Daniel O'Hara believes that the Gospels do not support my contention that Jesus dared not use the supernatural power he believed he possessed. In Matthew 26:53, Jesus is reported to have said, 'Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?'. However, in the next verse, he is reported to have noted that, if he did this, the prophecies concerning the Messiah would not be fulfilled. He was also constrained by Deuteronomy 6:16 (as I pointed out before). If this does indicate that Jesus did not dare use supernatural power, I should like to

know what it does indicate.

I agree that some accounts in the Gospels are complete invention—The Birth Narrative is one, and the reason for its invention is known. However, it does not follow that the accounts of miracles do not have an origin in real events (even though they have been misunderstood or distorted to fit preconceptions). Anyone who believes that a miracle story has been invented *ab initio* should show why it has been invented. Absolute scepticism is not justified without good reason. Is O'Hara claiming that Jesus did not exist?

Hilary Evans, in his article *Where do we file 'Flying Saucers' (The Skeptic, 6.6)* agonizes over where to file visualizations of flying saucers et al. He asks 'Where do we draw the boundary between the real and the rest?'. The answer is that the line should not be drawn. All man-made illustrations are suspect and must be treated as fiction. I would file flying saucers under 'flying saucers'!

**Stewart Campbell**  
Edinburgh

## Erratum

*We regret that due to a printing error the text of Daniel O'Hara's letter in the last issue of The Skeptic was mangled. The second sentence should have read:*

While the 'Temptation Stories' in both Matthew's and Luke's Gospels certainly represent Jesus as abjuring certain sorts of self-promotional miracles, all four Gospels nevertheless represent him as working miracles or 'signs' or 'mighty acts' which on any view (including that of the writers) demonstrate his supernatural power and suspension of the usual 'laws of nature'.

# Subscribe to *The Skeptic*

*The Skeptic* is published bimonthly; a year's subscription covers 6 issues. Postpaid rates are shown below—please make cheques/P.O.'s (£Sterling only, please) payable to **The Skeptic**.

Postal area	Sub. (1 year)	Back issue
UK	£12	£2.10
Europe (airmail)/		
Rest of world (surface)	£15.50	£2.70
Rest of world (airmail)	£28	£4.50

From: **The Skeptic (Dept. B), P.O. Box 475, Manchester, M60 2TH, U.K.**

## Back issues

### Volume 1 (1987)

1-4 Out of print.

- 5 **Abductions in perspective** (Hilary Evans); Magicians, mediums and psychics-1 (David Alexander); Carl Sagan's universe (William Steele); Science vs. pseudoscience-1 (Peter O'Hara).
- 6 **Creationism in Australia** (Martin Bridgstock); Noah's Ark founders on the facts (Stephen Moreton); Hunting Nessie (Steuart Campbell);

### Volume 2 (1988)

- 1 **Geller's sailboat** (Frank Koval); Magicians, mediums and psychics-3 (David Alexander); Knock: some new evidence (David Berman); Telepathy: a mechanism? (Gordon Gray); Alternative medicine (Michael Heap).
- 2 **Doris Collins and the Sun** (Wendy Grossman); Paul Kurtz interview-1 (Wendy Grossman); State of the art (Frank Chambers); S.G. Soal: master of deception (Chris Scott).
- 3 **Findhorn** (Steuart Campbell), Paul Kurtz interview-2 (Wendy Grossman), The case against ESP (Anthony Garrett), Telepathy: a mechanism? No! (Steve Donnelly); Recognizing pseudoscience (Sven Ove Hansson).
- 4 **A Thorn in Geller's Side** (Michael Hutchinson); (Wendy Grossman); UFO days (Steve Donnelly); Comparative astrology; dreams and visions of survival (Antony Flew).
- 5 **Is there antibody there?** (Richard Kay); Dowsing (Denys Parsons); The saints and martyrs of parapsychology (H.B. Gibson); UFO hunt (Marcel Hulspas).
- 6 **Bristol psychic fair** (Hocus Pocus); The incredible Mr Newman (Frank Chambers); Predictions for 1989 (Marjorie Mackintosh); Joe Nickell on the Shroud of Turin.

### Volume 3 (1989)

- 1 **Firewalking in Indonesia** (Chris Wright); Randi in Manchester (Frank Koval); Complacently irrational or irrationally complacent? (David Fisher); Alternative medicine (Nick Beard); The paranormal on radio.
- 2 **Perpetuum mobile** (Anthony Garrett); Joseph Newman followup (Frank Chambers); My psychic odyssey (Mike Rutter); Cosmic crystal crankery (Stephen Moreton); Some rational and irrational feedback (David Fisher).
- 3 **The Committee Against Health Fraud** (Nick Beard); Pyramids, pyramids and pyramidologists (Barry Williams); Near-death experiences (Sue Blackmore); Twitching sticks (Anthony Garrett).
- 4 **Remembering Richard Feynman** (Al Seckel); Two unpublished Feynman stories; The world of weird HiFi (David Fisher); The lessons of 'cold fusion' (Dave Love); A new test of religion? (Anthony Garrett); Eye-to-eye with iridology (Hocus Pocus).
- 5 **Elementary, my dear mystic** (Medawc Williams); Science vs Religion (Barend Vlaardingbroeck); The Cultist's defence (Anthony Garrett); Scepticism: universal or occasional? (Antony Flew); The Nullarbor UFO mystery—solved (A.T. Brunt).



### Volume 4 (1990)

- 1 **Hypnosis and the occult** (H.B. Gibson); Hypnosis: fact or fiction? (Lewis Jones); The myth of ley lines (Medawc Williams); Romancing the stone (Tom Ruffles); Debate: the case for PSI (John Beloff); the case against PSI (John Maddox); Predictions for 1990; Skeptical quiz.
- 2 **UFOs over Russia** (Tom Ruffles); The Moses barrier (Lewis Jones); On coincidences (Clive Hunt); Gullibility and the appliance of science (Gerald Haigh); Crop circles: circular arguments and straw men (David Fisher); Enquiring minds (Marc Moran).
- 3 **Denizens of another world** (Dave Langford); A skeptical look at astrology (Anthony Garrett); The sign of the RAM (James Gorman); Why do people believe in the paranormal? (Jean Dorricott); The art of fakery (Mike Howgate).
- 4 **Past life regressions: fact or fantasy?** (Melvin Harris); The Houdini file (Frank Koval); Return to Silpho Moor (Roger Ford); Science, fringe science and pseudoscience (Cornelis de Jager); Psi and the skeptic (John Lord).
- 5 **Stephen Fry on paranormal piffle**; Meta-analysis: For (David Fisher) and Against (Jessica Utts); Creationists at large (Jean Dorricott); UFOs on the telephone (Dave Love); Management pseudoscience.
- 6 **The man who invented UFOs** (Roger Ford); The new demonology (Andrew Belsey); Reflections on past life regressions (Michael Heap); What is scientology? (John Clarke); Polywater (Bill Penny); Crossword.

### Volume 5 (1991)

- 1 **Paul Daniels interview**; Canals on Mars (Sean O'Brian); Nostradamus and the Middle-East crisis (Allen Lang); Potty training (Ian Woods); The case for super-skepticism (David Fisher); Skeptical predictions.
- 2 **The New Age and the crisis of belief** (Tim Axon); The Mary Celeste mystery—solved? N-rays (Bill Penny); Wet and dry skepticism (John Lord); 1991—the final crash of the UFOs; Crossword.
- 3 **Why not to test a psychic-1** (Lewis Jones); Speaking in tongues (David Christie-Murray); Passing the torch (Ian Woods); Another look at Scientology (Allen Hunt); Sharp blades or sharp practice? (Harry Edwards).
- 4 **James Randi interview** (Steve Donnelly); Why not to test a psychic-2 (Lewis Jones); The inside-out cosmos (Bill Penny); The Free-thinker: 1881-1991 (William McLroy); More light on Medjogorje (Hilary Evans); Dualism, ESP and belief (Carol Sherrard).
- 5 **The documentation of a miracle?** (Dr Peter May); Psychics and semantics (Mike Rutter); Smith and Blackburn: hornswagglers extraordinaire (Martin Gardner); Spirits at large (Lucy Fisher); Thicker than water (Bernard Howard).
- 6 **The summer of '91** (Martin Hempstead); Seeing is believing? (Susan Blackmore); Ask Professor Mesmo; Assessing evidence (John Lord); Alternative medicine in Europe (Wim Betz); Review of 3rd EuroSkeptics conference; Crossword.

### Volume 6 (1992)

- 1 **Paranormal trends in the USSR** (Tim Axon); Faking an alien (Ole Henningsen); Where do we file flying saucers (Hilary Evans); Psychic questing (Lucy Fisher); Future imperfect (Robert Sheaffer); Bands of hope (Lewis Jones).



This document has been digitized in order to share it with the public through AFU's project, running since 2010, to share files donated/deposited with the AFU foundation. Please consider making single or regular monetary donations to our work, or donations of your files for future preservation at our archival centre.

Archives for the Unexplained (AFU) · P O Box 11027 · 600 11 Norrköping, Sweden · [www.afu.se](http://www.afu.se)

Paypal: [afu@ufo.se](mailto:afu@ufo.se)

IBAN: SE59 9500 0099 6042 0490 7143

BIC: NDEASESS – Nordea/Plusgirot, Stockholm

Swish (Sweden only): 123 585 43 69