



Cincinnati Skeptic

Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought

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Motto: Though God cannot alter the past, historians can.”

— Samuel Butler (1835-1902)

In this Issue:

Critical Thinking.....	1
The Hollow Earth.....	1
Pain, Placebo and Pseudo.....	2
From the Un-Easy Chair.....	3
Too Many Books.....	4
Puzzle for Thinkers.....	5
Letter to the Editor.....	7
From the Amazing Randi.....	8
Membership information.....	11

The Hollow Earth

by Wolf Roder

“Some people believe the earth is a hollow sphere, with another whole civilization living on the inside edge.”

-- Lawrence Block *A Long Line of Dead Men* p. 121

June Meeting

Critical Thinking - An Anchor to Reality

Steven Schafersman, currently visiting assistant professor of geology and paleontology at Miami University in Miami, Ohio, has been active in the skeptical movement in the U.S. for decades. He is a founding member of CSICOP, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, and has interests in creationism, catastrophism, and the shroud of Turin. He led the effort to get evolution into science textbooks in Texas and founded the Texas Council for Science Education and the Houston Association of Scientific Thinking.

His years of experience in these areas have led him to the conclusion that opposing creationism and similar pseudoscience directly is fruitless. But if an individual can be taught to think critically, then belief in nonsense is less likely.

Scientific thinking in his view is a subset of critical thinking. Critical thinking is applied to learning in all areas of human investigation, and scientific thinking is applying to learning about nature. Although many groups have set standards laying out what constitutes critical thinking and scientific literacy, 95% of the population is not scientifically literate and cannot think critically. Students commonly graduate from high school and college without essential critical thinking skills.

Although the essential elements of critical thinking were developed by the ancient Greeks, an integrated approach to scientific thinking did not emerge until the 17th and 18th (cont. pg 9)

Last December like a message in a bottle a crazy paper was floated on the Internet by one Robert McElwaine, which claimed the earth is hollow, has great openings at the North and South Poles, and many "people" living inside the hollow earth. McElwaine in fact was following a long succession of off beat, not to say utterly bereft writers on this topic. His message, indeed quoted a number of his predecessors.

Yet, like so much nonsense, this weird idea had a rational beginning in the seventeenth century in the writings of the astronomer Edmund Halley. Yes, of comet fame. Halley had a very practical interest in earth magnetism and drafted the first map of compass declination, i.e. deviation of the magnetic needle from true north. Such map was indispensable to navigators of the time. In the process he incidentally may have drawn the very first contour (isopleth) map. In 1692 he published his researches with a hypothesis about the structure of the earth inferred from its magnetism. He envisioned an earth consisting of several internal shells, whose differential rotation generated the magnetic field. Today we surmise from seismic wave measurements the earth probably consists of a solid inner core (radius 780 miles, rotating once per 400 years), a liquid outer core (radius 2150 miles), and the mantle (thickness 1800 miles) for a total radius of 4000 miles. The magnetic field is now thought to be generated by slow thermal currents in the mantle. The same thermal currents are thought to be responsible for shifting the surface tectonic plates of the earth.

Halley's theories were well received and reprinted. Cotton Mather in the United States picked them up for his popular treatment of religion and natural science. It is thought, but not known with certainty that Cincinnati's own John Cleves Symmes got his basic ideas from that source. Symmes was a nephew of the man with the same name, who as a Revolutionary War hero was granted large tracts of land (cont pg 9)

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The By-Laws require that officers for the following year be elected annually at the May meeting. They begin their duties on following July 1.

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**President's Corner****Pain, Placebo, and Pseudo.**

At Lunch after the September meeting I got involved in a discussion of pain and how it may be alleviated by a copper bracelet. How can you understand the positive evidence in this case where the victim is a fine skeptic? Of course the placebo effect was mentioned but the issue was not resolved.

Then on the following Tuesday, the September 21 copy of the *New Yorker* arrived with a *medical dispatch* by Atul Gawande entitled *the Pain Perplex*.

Atul reviews the current status of pain research and

his review indicates that pain is a bad outcome variable for scientific studies despite its importance. All measurement of pain involves its evaluation in some way by the sufferer. This subjective element is unavoidable since there is no physical system that displays pain for measurement. Worse yet the naive view of pain used by scientific medicine was based on an incorrect, or incomplete, model proposed by Rene Descartes in the seventeenth century. The stubbed toe sends a physical signal to the brain, which thinks: "ouch! my toe hurts."

With chronic pain in cases where no organic cause or problem can be discovered, the patient is sent to a pain specialist or even a psychiatrist because "its all in your head." Pain in the work force is increasing as the amount of manual labor has dropped significantly. In one study greater pain was associated with less, not more severe injuries. World War II casualties were matched with civilian injuries of similar type, 58 percent of the soldiers reported little or no pain and only 27 percent requested medication.

The problem involves cases where no, or little injury seems to cause pain outrageously out of proportion to the problem. The prevailing theory was that the pain signal had to pass through a "Gateway" on the spinal cord which could diminish or amplify the effect. Rubbing the injury site helps because it closes down the gateway. The most amazing aspect of Ronalds Melzacks gate control theory is that the gate is affected not only by the nerve signals, but also by your mood, emotional state, gender, beliefs, and memories. Experiments showed that suggestions of great results were as effective in many cases as real medication, the placebo in action.

Gate Control theory still cannot explain pain from missing limbs where no physical cause exists. The simple pain definition is heading toward a decidedly more complicated version - the neurological toe pain module. This module has connections from all parts of the brain. The nerve signal is now mixed with emotional signals, mood signals, toe pain signals and much more. Is this a mind-body interaction?

One amazing characteristic of the pain neuro-transmitter is that it can go off without the toe stub. In fact relatively minor injury can cause the module to become hypersensitive and fire virtually continually for example the continuous pain accompanying a chronic diseases like arthritis. Current theory has been developed based in part on neuro-surgical evidence. Dr. Lentz, a

neuro-surgeon is able to find and stimulate a module to reproduce this pain. Cauterization of the area eliminates the chronic pain. Pain is more severe in women except for two weeks before delivery, for college students compared to ballet dancers, for those in bad marriages and the depressed. Morale and social surroundings can send you for an analgesic as surely as a toe stub. Surely pain studies will need to be interpreted in a multivariate way. Sloppy measurement of facts based on poorly defined outcome variables is a sure path to the edge of pseudoscience. The article is worth a read. Here, I can only skim the contents. Pain is influenced by focusing of attention, by emotions, by memories, by anticipation. All of these factors take the solo pain signal and convert it into a pain symphony. In some cases the pain is reduced as a result and in other cases increased.

--Joe Gastright

From The Un-easy Chair



Life and History

It is important, I think, to keep the historic record straight. Historic misconceptions can wreak as much havoc in society as erroneous beliefs about science. Men have justified war with misinterpretations of the past, and history as much as science is an endeavor to get the facts accurately and precisely correct. Elsewhere in this issue we publish a review of a memoir by Elise Schindler who is interested in "making my peace with the world, with history, with the truth" as well as with Spielberg's movie and Kenneally's book. At the same time, we need to be cognizant that memory after half a century is of limited reliability, and that each participant sees the events of a complex time differently.

In a second book review we look at the "Outlaw Tradition" in popular culture of the English speaking world. Song and story about the outlaw are not to be taken as "truth" in the historic or scientific sense; yet these writings have something important to say about how we view right and wrong in our society. Perhaps the real question we have to ask ourselves is, at what point and under which circumstances would I go against the law and ordinances of my country?

We Americans will have difficulty appreciating the fate of many eastern Europeans in the first half of this century. Emilie Schindler is counted a German, but she never lived in Germany except for a short period after the War. She was born in Austrian Moravia, which became part of Czechoslovakia after the first World War, and is now part of the Czech Republic. If she had never moved from her small farming home village, she would have lived in four different countries within four very changing borders, and would have experienced numerous political regimes. Emilie Schindler's mother tongue is German, but her native language was Czech. Yet the book is translated from the original Spanish, since she has lived in Argentina since 1949 where she has become a citizen.

— editor



Crazies of the Month



Crazy #1

A "real" personality.

Patricia Burgus, 42, has won a \$10.6 million settlement against her psychiatrist and hospital. Her suit alleged Dr. Bennett Braun used "repressed memory therapy" to convince her that she had some 300 personalities, when she sought treatment for depression. Among other identities he convinced her she was a cannibal who made meatloaf out of her friends, had molested her children, and was the high priestess of a satanic cult. In consequence she was committed to a psychiatric hospital for two years, and lost her two children for three, after she was misdiagnosed as having a split personality disorder.

Her own common sense ultimately prevailed. "I began to add a few things up and realized there was no way I could come from a little town in Iowa, be eating 2,000 people a year, and nobody said anything about it," Burgus explained. (AP)

Crazy #2

....without comment

Community Education courses at Northern Kentucky University:

The Unquiet Dead. Do you believe in ghosts? Are there really haunted houses? Do the dead try to contact the living? Perhaps as many as one in five people have experienced the paranormal. ...

Psychometry: The Art of "Reading" Vibrations. Do you think you have an intuitive nature? Want to test your ESP skills? You'll team up with another person and have the opportunity to test your psychometry skill in this unique class. ...

Introduction to Aromatherapy and Essential Oils. Explore the art and science of pure essential oils. You'll find out how to enhance wellness through scent, and how to use oils to calm, balance, and rejuvenate body, mind, and spirit. ...

An Introduction to Feng Shui. Discover the beautiful Chinese art of placement to direct and correct the flow of energy in your home and workspace.

Be on the look out for more **Crazies of the Month** in the media. If you find one, please send the following information: **Date, Time, Media, Names** and a brief **description** of the claim(s). If it is an article a newspaper or magazine please send a copy to the address for this newsletter. If you want, you can also send an e-mail message to me at doughry@fuse.net. We will put it in the a future issue of the Cincinnati Skeptic.



Too Many Books....

Too Little Time....

The Outlaw Legend: A Cultural Tradition in Britain, America and Australia.

by Graham Seal

(Cambridge University Press, 1996.)

Carrying out the plan his title implies, Seal looks--mainly via ballads and folk tales--at the history of the outlaw/hero, including actual agents (Dick Turpin, Billy the Kid, Ned Kelly), fictional ones (the Wild Colonial Boy), and such mythic blends as Robin Hood, who apparently has some historical precedent, but whose elevation to the aristocracy is a seventeenth-century adornment. Seal notes the underlying motif of such stories is that the outlaw/hero robs the rich to help the poor; further, he is courteous to women, even the rich ones he robs, avoids gratuitous killing, and is usually conscious of his status as righter of social wrongs. (Ned Kelly had a standard speech about the reason he and his companions had become road agents and bank robbers).

Seal is careful to note that few of the highwaymen, etc., achieved the rough nobility won by Jesse James, and that even those who did were not always the gentlemen rovers in practice that they were in song. However, the outlaw legend transcends the practice, for legend and tradition have social value beyond the actions done or not done by individuals. Moreover, the heroic outlaw is contrasted with the more despicable people who use the power of the law to abuse the common folk. Today's outlaw/hero may be the computer hacker or environmental activist who fights the power of (my speculation) Microsoft or "international logging conspiracies" who seek to make everyone use X software, or to destroy the last blade of grass to enrich a handful of wealthy shareholders. The actual benefits to society of the outlawry seem dubious to me, but the idea of the outsider who fights corruption and tyranny is of long-standing.

Seal's book offers a sizeable number of ballads and excerpts, which I found, in a way, the least satisfactory part of the book. They're important examples, but most of the ballad writers were no Cole Porter. With the exception of Billy Gashade's (I've also seen the name as Gashee and Geshay) song about Jesse James, and the ballad of the Wild Colonial Boy, most of the songs strike me as minor aesthetic crimes. However, Seal's own writing is clear and thoughtful, his annotation (many studies in folk and popular culture included) is comprehensive and helpful to anyone

wishing to pursue this topic further, and the illustrations enrich the text. I was particularly taken with his discourses on Jesse James and Ned Kelly. (I love the picture of Mick Jagger as Ned Kelly, from a 1970 film). The closest I can come here to the outlaw tradition is to note that the book runs to \$54.95 but is available in paperback, which should run less.

— reviewed by Frank Oglesbee, Eastern Illinois University

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Where Light and Shadow Meet: A Memoir.

Emilie Schindler with Erika Rosenberg
trans. Dolores M. Koch.

(New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1996)

"To be Emilie again, simply Emilie," is one of Emilie Schindler's goals in writing a memoir about her life both with and without Oskar Schindler, whose life has been made famous by Steven Spielberg's cinematic version of *Schindler's List*. In addition, Emilie seeks to explain events as they "actually took place," to desanctify the heroic image of her husband, not out of bitterness but for the sake of "truth."

The story begins with Emilie's childhood in Bohemia, an innocence brought to an end with Oskar, whose marriage proposal provided an opportunity to leave behind a family life which was becoming oppressive. Once married, it did not take long for Emilie to learn her husband's many faults and attributes. Oskar Schindler was a generous and kind man, but his many infidelities, his immaturity, and his opportunistic, work-shy, hedonistic, self-indulgent lifestyle strained their relationship nearly from the beginning of their marriage. Discussing the war years, Emilie gives priority to topics related to Oskar's spying activities for the *Abwehr* (counter espionage during WWII) and how it affected her, his acquisition of *Deutsche Emailwaren Fabrik* (DEF), their relations with Nazi officials, and their mutual efforts to save Jews working at DEF as well as at the munitions factory at Bruennlitz.

Emilie tries to correct misinformation from Spielberg's movie, *Schindler's List*, and to a far lesser extent Thomas Keneally's book by the same title. Among other things, Emilie claims that Oskar did not try to take advantage of Jewish slave labor and recalls that they were unaware that people bribed their way onto the list. In addition, we learn that Emilie took a more active role in caring for Jews at both DEF in Cracow, but especially at the munitions factory at Bruennlitz. Emilie lived in constant fear and terror knowing the dangers of aiding Jews, yet she was instrumental in obtaining the permit to establish the munitions factory. (The

quartermaster general responsible for issuing permits for such undertakings turned out to be Emilie's childhood swimming teacher.) Emilie also secured additional food supplies for the Jewish workers, engaged in black market trading, and nursed Jews back to health who arrived at Bruennlitz on the verge of death.

The end of the war did not bring immediate safety for the Schindlers, and in Emilie's account, she displays more savvy and acumen than Oscar, who was in a "state of shock" (103). For nearly five years, the Schindlers lived in Regensburg where Oskar resumed his pattern of infidelity and neglect. The Schindlers' 1949 move to Argentina was Oskar's idea, though Emilie welcomed a change of scenery. However, this move ultimately led to their permanent separation in the spring of 1957. Oskar, who returned to Germany to collect reparations for the loss of the Bruennlitz factory, virtually abandoned Emilie, leaving her with a financial debt largely brought on by his own irresponsible business deals. Emilie, who never saw her husband again, tells us how deeply hurt she was by his final act of negligence which stands in sharp contrast to the heroic images which viewers are left with in the final frames of Spielberg's movie. Several references are made to the movie in the memoir, in which Emilie's presence is anecdotal and misrepresented. Yet, despite its inaccuracies, Emilie applauds the "excellent film" (143) which brought attention to her own efforts to help "Schindler's Jews."

A disappointing feature of Emilie Schindler's memoir is not how she exposes Oskar Schindler's flaws, but her failure to emerge fully out of the shadow cast by the legend surrounding her husband, and to be "simply Emilie." Most of the thoughts and feelings she reveals in some degree or another are privileged by Oskar Schindler's far-from-noble treatment of her and the legend of the List. So, for example, when Emilie is hospitalized for several months (either in 1941 or 1942), we learn about how Oskar neglected to visit her even once, prompting her to question their entire relationship. Yet we gain little additional insight into how this hospitalization affected her. (Compare this image to the film where Emilie leaves Oskar because of his unwillingness or inability to promise her fidelity.) Emilie was clearly a self-reliant, honest, and hard-working woman, whose story is significant not solely because she was Mrs. Schindler, but because of her vast experiences which she downplays modestly. During her lifetime, Emilie has been part of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, a German woman living in Nazi-occupied Poland, and challenged with rebuilding her life from practically nothing after the most destructive war in the twentieth century. In short, the subject matter is largely defined by her life with Oskar Schindler. Still, the vignettes of their lives are woven together in an interesting and revealing manner.

Emilie Schindler's memoir provides a new dimension to the legend of Schindler's list, and it reminds readers that heroic accolades are problematical at best. After reading Thomas Keneally's book or viewing Steven Spielberg's

movie, we are challenged by Emilie Schindler's memoir to reexamine our conception of heroes and heroism. Emilie does not deny the important role that she and her husband played in saving Jewish lives, but as she noted, they did what they had to in what proved to be a unique situation.

-- L. M. Stallbaumer, Bloomsburg University
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When: Saturday, October 31, 1998

At the Ghostly hour of 7:30 PM

Where: Nurit Bowman's Place.

Watch your mail for more information.

What to bring: Potluck!!!!

bring a favorite Halloween dish

R.S.V.P: Nurit at 731-0642





ART BUSINESS

**First Meeting of ART's Eighth Season**

ART members convened at James Tavern in Blue Ash on Saturday, September 12 to hear that ART membership is at an all-time high of 86 members and that contributions are badly need to fill the gap between the \$15 yearly dues and ART's expenses (chiefly the newsletter, but also the web site and a few miscellaneous expenses).

Because ART may be **required to reincorporate** in order to receive recognition as a tax exempt organization, we may have an **opportunity to change our name**. Suggestions made at the meeting included Cincinnati Skeptics, Ohio Valley Skeptics, Association for Rational Thinking, Association for Critical Thinking (ACT) and Foundation for the Association for Critical Thinking (FACT). **Send your suggestions** to President Roy Auerbach, raa@one.net or 731-27724 (home).

ART's web site was formerly hosted by Anthony Walls, who ran a free web server for skeptical organizations until it became too expensive and too vulnerable to hackers to maintain. Now the ART web site will be placed with a local Internet provider service, which will cost \$50 a month. The web site attracted 7500 visits during its first eight months, mostly local visitors interested in the Blurbs, concise statements of scientific thinking on an assortment of pseudoscientific topics.

Vice-President Nurit Bowman announced that she will host a Halloween potluck Saturday, Oct. 31. Details elsewhere in this newsletter.

Program Chairman Brad Bonham announced that WVXU's Thursday morning Interconnect talk show seems to be turning away from spiritualistic issues and back more to health and community issues, a welcome change induced it seems by local complaints. Brad also announced that Dr. Dean Edell, an outstanding skeptic, will be back on the air at 6-8 A.M. Saturday mornings on 1360, otherwise a largely all sports format.

Steven Schafersman spoke on critical thinking and science (see article elsewhere in this issue.) About 14 members stayed for lunch at James Tavern after the meeting.

-- Reported by Virginia Jergens.

**A Puzzle for Thinkers****Who'd want to be that Old?**

Jennifer, the computer wiz and numbers nerd was idly contemplating the license plate of the car in front of her while stuck in a traffic jam. It suddenly occurred to her that (1) that was her year of birth, and (2) was at the same time the square of her current age in years. In what year was Jennifer born, and in which year did she make this observation?

Then Jennifer started thinking whether this was an unusual occurrence, or more specifically when was the last previous, or the next time someone could make the discovery that the square of their age was equal to the year of their birth?

— adapted from Brian Bolt, *Mathematical Jamboree* (1995)

Solution to last months puzzle:

There are 32 cards in the Skat deck, so the first card dealt could be any of 32, the second any of 31, the third any of 30 and so on down to 23 which is the tenth card. The number of possible hands then is the product of the numbers from 23 to 32, or 2.341×10^{14} ; (234,102,016,513,000). This result can also be obtained using the $n!$ (factorial) function on your calculator. Since $n!$ is defined as the product of all whole numbers from n down to one, it follows that $32!/22!$ will give you the correct result.

In case you wonder what happens to the extra two cards after three hands are dealt, they are dealt into the center and constitute the "skat." Players bid to name trump. The winner improves his hand by adding the skat and discarding his worst two cards. He plays his hand against the other two players combined.



Adam Götz, a thirty year old German tourist, claimed he was a "spiritual psychic" and indicated the Pyramids of Egypt, provided him with "spiritual energy" that would allow him to "transcend humanity". The energy would make him "free from death", or so he told his girlfriend Sarah, who was traveling with him. After climbing to the top of the 187-meter (614 feet) Cairo Tower, Götz told Sarah he would prove this was true and jumped off. He was killed on impact. (Reuters)

**Letters
to the**

Editor:



(The following letter was received at the national magazine *Skeptical Inquirer* when that journal published a photo of the "Face on Mars," but claimed it was not real.)

Dear Skeptical Inquirer,

Your correspondent David Morrison and his comments on the Global Surveyor photographs surely are off the point. Nobody would claim "that NASA faked the new image." (*SI*, July/Aug. pp. 23-24) Any face on Mars will of course be a Martian Face. Just as a face of Christ painted in Europe will have blond hair and blue eyes, or a Christ carved in the Congo will be black and look African, so will a face on Mars be Martian. Anyone who knows that can clearly see photo no. 2 in the article shows a distinct Martian visage. The two noses are visible as two knobs near the center of the image, and although the lower mouth is deeper and more prominent, the upper mouth and lips are definitely outlined. There are of course no ears. Martians never had them as the thin air on Mars (approx. 7 mb pressure) does not carry sound very well or much. Remember also that the millenia have abraded this sculpture. Wind erosion tends to smooth and round the rock remnants as well as dissect it into pillars, pinnacles, and needles.



Don't listen to the claims of that ignorant Esmeralda von Löwenzahn-Dentdelion. She claims Martians have (or better had) three noses. She bases that merely on the idea such would make the total number of features seven, a magic number. Just because she is a professional bio-astrologer doesn't make her an expert on planetary biology. In any case, whatever looks like a third nose is merely a resistant rock outcrop, in fact quite possibly a "yardang." --Franz Bibfeldt, theologian



Sometimes Your Taste Won't Tell You.

The Dutch equivalent of our Consumers' Union reported on tests of expensive bottled mineral waters served in restaurants around the Netherlands. Among 31 establishments examined they found that eleven actually served nothing more than carbonated tap water. This water proved chemically "exactly the same" as the water the surveyors collected from taps in the cafe toilets." (AP)

A Plea for Investigation Cooperation:



Investigations arise from the membership's desire to investigate something in the light of reason and truth. Consequently, **every** member is invited to submit to the Investigations Officer any proposal or item that could be studied together. So far, most investigations have been done by individuals within the Association. If you are doing such now, the whole membership would be delighted to hear from on your research. Please contact the Investigations Officer, Dick McGrath, (606) 334-3395, and let him know what you wish to investigate.

News from Academia

(from *Ohio Academe* for September 1998, p. 7)

(UPI, 26May) Bowing to pressure from the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the Trustees of the city University of New York have voted to phase out all remedial classes in its four-year colleges. The vote means that CUNY's long-standing open admissions policy will come to an end. Applicant will have to pass basic skills tests.

(New York Times, 27 May) The Western Governors University (WGU) has opened its doors to potential students, educators and corporations interested in joining the on-line virtual campus. WGU is a competency-based, degree granting, virtual university and plans to offer courses from a wide array of sources, including state universities and colleges, as well as course work from private corporations. This university is located at <http://www.wgu.edu>. Participating universities include state institutions in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. AT&T, with a \$500,000 grant, is a major corporate sponsor.

From the Amazing Randi...

Sony sees sense to discontinue ESP research Benjamin Fulford in Tokyo

Japan's Sony Corporation says it has proved extra-sensory perception exists - but has closed down its ESP research facility because there did not seem to be any way to turn the knowledge into marketable products.

Sony had a team of five researchers, who spent seven years inviting people who claimed to have psychic powers into their laboratories for a series of scientific tests to see if they really did have these powers, company spokesman Masanobu Sakaguchi said. "We found out experimentally that yes, ESP exists, but that any practical application of this knowledge is not likely in the foreseeable future," he said. Mr Sakaguchi said a typical experiment involved having a qi gong practitioner put qi, or spiritual energy, into a glass of water and then having another practitioner detect which glass contained the qi. "They were right 70 per cent of the time, and if it was random guessing they would have been right only 50 per cent of the time," he said. The experiments were repeated so often that any chances of a statistical fluke were ruled out, he said. Other experiments produced similar results for things like discerning hidden objects and detecting colours without looking, he said.

"We were unable to detect qi with any machine; it seems only people can detect it," he said. Possibilities like packing qi gong energy in batteries were thus too remote to justify more research, he said.

Masaru Ibuga, one of Sony's founders, set up the ESP research centre in 1991 after he became interested in qi gong and other unexplained aspects of Chinese medicine. His death this year may be the real reason the research was discontinued.

-- Japan, *South China Morning Post*, Internet Edition, Tuesday 7 July 1998

There exists an "Institute of Ecolomics" for which actor Dennis Weaver is the president. On the surface, as with so many of these inventively-titled groups, it seems to have the very worthy objectives of making ecologically beneficial activities economically attractive.

All that glowing promise was destroyed when Weaver appeared on a L.A.-based TV show to announce that he's promoting the use of a magnetic device which is fitted to automobile fuel systems, and "changes the molecular structure of fuel to improve power and clean up the emissions." He said that he has one on his car, and that it had reduced the CO [carbon monoxide] emissions from 10,000 ppm, to 30 ppm. He gushed that "if everyone in Los Angeles fitted one of these wonderful devices, the smog problem would go away overnight."

Weaver is probably referring to one of these quack devices like "Inset," that has been definitively tested by the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and found to be a total failure. Not to our surprise, the Inset owners are now suing the NJIT for announcing their findings. Once more, or should I say, still, we're faced by the use of litigation to re-write history and erase the truth -- truth which is inconvenient and troublesome, and thus not tolerable in this politically correct society.

When will the law cease to be an instrument of vengeance, and begin to serve the cause of justice?

Now on Video!

James "The Amazing" Randi Live at Lexington

The First Annual KASES Skeptics Lecture
The Amazing Randi speaks his mind on
science, the paranormal...and cats!

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from: The KASES File
*The Journal of the Kentucky Association of
Science Educators and Skeptics*
Vol. 11 No. 1 Spring 1998



A psychic is someone who can clearly discern what is hidden from her client, namely that he is a half-wit.

— bio-astrologer Esmeralda von Löwenzahn-Dentdelion

Critical Thinking from page 1

centuries in Europe. The Greeks developed three schools of philosophy which each centered on an essential element of scientific thinking: empiricism, rationalism, and skepticism. Greek thinkers tended to adopt and use just one of these. Centuries later European scientists combined all three into what we think of today as scientific, critical, or analytical thinking. Used pervasively in science, this method of determining reliable knowledge has been adopted by business, commerce, law, government, and non-scientific academic disciplines.



Scientific thinking has been so successful because it provides the only source for reliable information. There are many other kinds of information, including hearsay, testimonial, anecdotal, revelatory, spectral, emotional, and authoritarian. Ninety percent of the U.S. population reports using revelatory information, finding information in ancient religious writings, usually the bible.

Most of the information people have is information that was passed along by an authority, a teacher or a parent. This method of acquiring information is highly efficient, but prone to passing along errors. So it is very important that children acquire the basics of scientific thinking, rationalism, empiricism and skepticism in order to distinguish reliable from unreliable information taught by authorities.

While it may or may not be true that children arrive in this world with some inherited tendency to respect authoritarian information, it is overwhelmingly clear that critical thinking must be deliberately taught. In addition to formal courses in logic and critical thinking, reading and writing persuasive essays is a good way to learn critical thinking, as is learning how to play a musical instrument or how to repair anything.

Scientific thinking begins where most human reasoning begins, with dreams, intuition, a gut feeling, hopes and wishes. Most people never go any farther than using these elementary forms of thinking and information acquired from parents, teachers, and other authorities. But such thinking provides no means to distinguish reliable from unreliable information. Deliberately teaching the skills of scientific thinking gives people the skills they need to evaluate information reliably.

Critical thinking is essential to avoiding the pitfalls of self-deceit, fraud, bigotry, nationalism and other miseries based in illogical reasoning and unreliable knowledge. To learn more about Steven Schafersman's thorough going approach to critical thinking, visit his web site at <http://www.muohio.edu/~schafesd/homepage/>. There he has excellent summaries of criteria developed by various organizations to describe scientific literacy, characteristics of critical and scientific thinking and other useful material.

He promises to add an excellent table comparing critical and non-critical thinking.

-- Reported by Virginia Jergen

Hollow Earth from page 1

in Hamilton County. Symmes Township and the City of Cleves bear his name. Symmes Township and the City of Cleves bear his name. His nephew fought with distinction in the War of 1812 rising to the rank of captain. An officer's commission then as now lent a certain credibility to what a man had to say. The younger Symmes spent his later life promoting the idea the earth was (1) hollow, and (2) had large openings to the interior at the south and north poles. Entire civilizations he thought lived in the interior of the Earth under a powerful internal sun. Symmes had friends introduce appropriation bills and almost succeeded in persuading Congress to help him raise an expedition to the North Pole to enter the earth's interior through these openings.

Symmes never put his thoughts on paper, but relied on the lecture circuit to propagate them. We depend on two sources for his doctrine. His most devoted follower James McBride published a book laying out the hollow earth ideas in 1826, and his son Americus compiled another volume from his fathers notes fifty years later. Americus Symmes also raised a monument to his father in the town of Hamilton, where the family lived. There it stands to this day, a simple plinth supporting a hollow globe. The inscription has become undecipherable over time.

Symmes left no impression on the science of his day, but a number of novels and stories in the science fiction genre appropriated his ideas. Edgar Allan Poe's never completed *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* was intended to describe a journey to the interior of the earth. Or so it is surmised.

It is not known how or whether Symmes influenced Cyrus Reed Teed, who formulated another hollow earth theory in 1869. Not only is Teed's earth hollow, but we live on its inside. There is nothing outside. The diameter is the same eight thousand miles estimated for the globe. What we see as the starry sky is a central body encrusted with radiating points of light. Day and night occur because a much smaller sun revolves about the central body.

This earth does not move. Reed thus rescued a biblical stationary earth from the horrors of Galileo and from a vast universe with an infinite number of competing worlds, solar systems, and galaxies.

Reed called himself Koresh (Hebrew for Cyrus) and the religion he founded became known as Koreshanity. How it became propagated in Germany is not clear, but it was a native of that country who in 1890 presented Koresh with sixteen acres along Estero Bay south of Ft. Myers in



Florida. Here the Koreshans built their New Jerusalem complete with *The Temple* and a *Planetary Court*. By 1903 the headquarters of the cult and many of its members were settled near Estero. With some two hundred inhabitants the utopian colony prospered, and survived even the death of its founder in 1908.

During the Nazi period of the thirties the community was able to rescue some of their co-religionists from Germany. Others came after the war as displaced persons, giving the colony a renewed lease on life. By then the hollow earth doctrine was deemphasized in favor of other aspects of Reed's religion such as reincarnation. Today the utopian colony is no more. The land and buildings have become the *Koreshan State Historical Park* of the State of Florida.

The bibliography is listed in order of date of first publication. It permits following the trail of the hollow earth from first rational idea to the present. The bibliography is unique in that I stick my neck out to indicate which writings are rational assessments. Others may be entirely off the wall, or they may be fiction using the hollow earth theme.

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For the future, all of the draft skeptical objections will be entered in the web site and eventually, it will be possible to download an electronic version of the newsletter.

--David Wall, Web Site Manager

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Preview Of Coming Attractions....

First Meeting of the 1998-1999 Season!

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Date and Day: 12 September 1998 -- Saturday

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program
 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM -- lunch



Place: James Tavern at Cooper Road and Reed Hartman Highway. It is a great place to gather and then have the lunch/social portion of each meeting. This location is very accessible for folks wielding walkers, wheelchairs and the like. Coffee is available with a small donation during the meeting.

Topic: & Speaker: **IT'S UP IN THE AIR!**

Unfortunately, as we go to press, we're still not sure what the program topic will be for the October meeting. We're working hard to conjure up a ghostly topic appropriate to the season. However, if we fall short on that front, we'll either present an account of successful UFO launches over Middletown, Ohio, during the summer of 1995 or a program on the role of psychics in police investigations. Members should watch their mail for a postcard or flyer containing final details (& info on the Halloween party mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter).

-- Brad