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BBC: A Question Of Science

From: Giuliano (Jimmy) Marinkovicc <9a4ag@9a0tcp.ampr.org>
Date: Mon, 05 Oct 98 20:13:17 +0200
Fwd Date: Mon, 05 Oct 1998 21:45:31 -0400
Subject: BBC: A Question Of Science

[Lightly edited --ebk]

SHORT REVIEW OF BBC SHOW. The length of the show was 45 minutes so I guess that's too long for me to make a transcript (in the sense of my time) so I present this short review of the programme as I have promised.

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BBC WORLD SERVICE
BBC World Service
Bush House
The Strand
London UK

BROADCAST PROGRAMME: A QUESTION OF SCIENCE
RECORDED FROM SHORT WAVE FREQUENCY: 12,095 MHZ

TIME OF BROADCAST:
04th OF OCTOBER 1998. - SUNDAY (premiere)
14:01 - 14:45 GMT

05th OF OCTOBER 1998. - MONDAY (re-run)
08:15 - 08:59 GMT

A QUESTION OF SCIENCE is presented by John Wilson and produced by Graham Eastern and Martin Redford

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RELATIONS BETWEEN PARA-SCIENCE AND MAINSTREAM SCIENCE

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1. PART OF THE SHOW:

- INTRODUCTION
- Introduction of subject (the current position of Extra-terrestrial life, UFOs, telepathy, ESP, etc. in science).. Host John Wilson asks "does science in our time have the right tools to investigate those supernatural things?"
- THE X-FILES THEME music theme.
- Graham Eastern, BBC reporter also gives short introduction to show. He says that The X-files and the influence of paranormal subjects and aliens, are invading our homes. Media

programs, pop culture and other TV series are presenting paranormal subjects today. But Graham asks do they stand on solid ground. "Is the border between mainstream science and para-science still sharp?"

- Graham is speaks about SETI and then BBC plays a clip from astronomer Martin Griffiths of the Univerity of Wales. Martin makes his comments. He says that we must continue to listen to space because if we don't search, we will never know whether extra-terrestrial intelligence really exists.

- Graham speaks about debate connected with intelligent space craft. BBC plays a clip in which Philip Mantle from BUFORA (British UFO Research Association) comments about UFOs. Philip says that most UFO research is done by civilians who have the skills of different disciplines - the primary function is to record and investigate UFO sightings. A small number of UFO sightings can't be explained by current science. Other sightings, of course can have conventional explanations.

- Graham then says that many teams around the Earth are investigating strange phenomena (telepathy, ESP, moving objects with the mind, crop circles etc). BBC plays clip from the interview with Robert Morris who is professor of para-psychology at Edinbrough University in Scotland. After 12 years of research, Robert is convinced that something unusal is going on. It is not a statistical anomaly and it is strange. But for someone else it is hokus-pokus, and Robert has a message for skeptics: "first read our research reports and then we would love to hear your logic."

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2nd. Part Of The Show

- Conversation With The Guest Inside The Studio In London
What Is The Science In Para-Science?

- Programme transfers to guests inside London studio.
The guests are:
Dr. Richard Wiseman,
prof. John Durant of Imperial College London,
Jane Watkins - editor of the magazine Fortean Times,
linked from USA is prof. Robert Park from the University of Maryland
and Dr. Susan Blackmoore who is linked from University of Western England.

- Host John Wilson wants to hear the comments from the guests about John Morris' claims that unusal things exist. John is also asking can those things be put in scientific categories.

- Susan says that there is no connections between telepathy and extra-terrestrial life because extra-terrestrial life is science.

- Jane says that that un-expected science is paranormal also.

- John Durant says that potential conventional science is extra-terrestrial life, because we think that it is there, and if we will find in the future that ET life doesn't exist then that would be strange.

- Robert says that ET life is good for scientific research. That is the real science and it is the most exciting frontier around. But the other stuff, such as ESP, can't work. Robert says that research has been done inside those areas for the last 150 years and there hasn't been progress.

- Richard says also that there are groups which are doing bad science but there are also small groups in those areas which are trying to do a good science. So his conclusion is that a scientific approach is possible in all those areas.

- John Durant says that bad science has also been done in the conventional areas of science and that bad science has been published in conventional journals. John also says that ESP and UFOs are the things where you are dealing with the borders of science and if any of those areas become truth the implications would be so big because they are pushing the current perspective of what we know. The effects will be so spectacular because

claims doesn't fit with today's picture of science. So they would be revolutionary.

- Susan says that it is good that someone is doing those investigations but it is very simple to investigate those things. For example, she says, if you want to investigate telepathy, simply put 2 people in 2 different rooms. I have tried that 100 times, she says, but there are no results. Susan is wonders why very few people have results there like Robert Morris (mentioned earlier).

- Jane says that her magazine Fortean Times is recording strange events and the magazine presents views from the both sides. Debate must be active in those areas.

- Richard says that those claims are revolutionary ideas but because of that we must be careful. But, Richard also says that if those stories are not true, its interesting why so many people believe in that.

- Jane says that scientists sometimes comment that people who are doing super-natural research are mad, but one the other hand they are glad that anyone is doing research because if its confirmed that would be great.

- John Durant says that he is skeptical about those areas but he is glad that there are some good scientists who are doing research. He also says that we must know that those kind of investigations are expensive and it is very hard to get good results. So its not suprising that people don't want to be involved in it.

- Susan says that although ESP events are not real experiances its good that we are learning about those experiences from the psychology side. She said it is interesting to monitor people's claim that they are abducted by aliens when in fact they aren't.

- Robert says that he agrees that these are fascinatings areas but they are not going to be solved if we are going to look at the strange lights in the sky (refers to psychological characteristics of those events).

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3rd. PART OF THE SHOW

- SO CALLED EVIDENCE

- John Wilson asks why some scientists are convinced that there is some hard evidence and good ground in those areas. He then says that for example Peter Sturrock from Stanford University has said in June that UFOs should be investigated. So John asks why some scientists are ready to research UFOs and flying saucers if the process is not going to be too expensive.

- BBC reporter Graham presents a short review of the Peter Sturrock statement from end of June, 1998. Peter stated that science can find new things and it can learn from UFO reports. The investigation of the panel was supported by Mr. Rockefeller. World Wide media broadcasted the news in June when astronomer Peter Sturrock said that UFOs are serious thing.

- BBC plays a clip recorded in June where Peter says that we must investigate the psychological part of UFO claims together with phycical evidence.

- After that BBC plays recorded interview with Dr. J. Malosh from The Lunar and Planetary Laboratory in Arizona. He is a meteor expert. He says that he was invited, along with others, to the meeting where the panel presented the best evidence of UFOs. But Malosh says that the panel wasn't independent because they have connections with UFO community. He said that it was clear that they are not clean.

- Graham speaks about Peter Sturrock again. He says that Sturrock is President of The Society For Scientific Exploration. Other members of panel are convinced in theories of remote viewing, cold fushion, reincarnation and warp drive - they are 'Star Trek' scientists.

- But then BBC again plays recorded statement from Peter

Sturrock where he says that UFO phenomenon was ignored and ridiculed in the past. He says that in the past, a few hundred years ago, people were convinced that meteors - "rocks from the sky" and ball of lightning were a joke. But today we know that they are real. So we could maybe learn something from UFOs in the future although we don't know what that is for now.

- BBC plays continuation of the recorded interview with Dr. Malosh. He says that the so called "evidence" from scientific panel is not so convincing and it is un-scientific. There is no hard evidence or fragments from UFOs which could change our mind. Malosh states that he will not devote his time any more to UFO subject.

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4th. PART OF THE SHOW

- TOOLS OF SCIENCE

- John Wilson asks Robert Park and other guests for their views about those events connected with the Scientific Panel and UFOs and is it possible to investigate that phenomenon?

- Robert says that people see strange things sometimes. He also says that if people want to see bears, they will see bears although it will be a bush. He also says that inside ufology there isn't any good piece of information available. He states that he doesn't know how UFOs could be investigated in the first place. "Are we going to put TV screens to monitor the sky? I can't imagine how we could do that!"

- John Durant says that science has limitations. For example ET life still isn't detected because for now the ultimate speed is Light Speed and the distances in space are too big.

- John Wilson asks Susan how she looks at the so called evidence inside para-science and is that "soft evidence".

- Susan says that she was a lucky enough to meet a man who has claimed that he was abducted by aliens. He had given her a piece of metal and said, "here it is, a piece of evidence!" He claimed that it was a alien implant and he then said to Susan, "you are probably not going to test it in the first place." And Susan has answered "why not, if it is true that could be the revolution inside science." After that Susan says that she has tested that piece with other scientists and that it was a ordenerly dental filling.

(***Laughter in the studio from the hosts and from the other guests***)

- Susan continues and says that the point is that she has tested that thing and that others helped because we wanted to see the answer.

- John Wilson asks how could we be convinced then that something is real.

- Richard answers that it is a relative view. It depends on the views of the scientists. For UFOs it is hard to have the procedure and tools for investigation because psychological effects are also involved.

- John Wilson asks do personal beliefs effect the research itself.

- John Durant answers that they do. Science is the process of individuals who are offering their ideas and arguments.

- John Wilson concludes that UFO researchers are not so eccentric then.

- Richard answers that if you look at the polls about UFOs, majority now believe that UFOs are real. Those who do not believe in UFOs are a minority now. But, he says, that is also the way of aproach. If you believe in that stuff you will find arguments and if you don't believe in that stuff you will also find arguments.

- Robert says that science is a process which is open to new claims. But, he says, the reason why some people are continuing

to investigate some areas where it is clear that they don't exist, is because they were involved long time in that. They have invested much emotion and money in that area and for them it is hard now to admit that they have failed.

- John Wilson asks is the role of modern crusader attractive. For example if you claim that you know something and all others are saying it is not true then it is probably an interesting role for crusaders and attractive.

- Susan answers that he started with that point "I have knowledge and the rest of others are wrong". She started by investigating Out of Body Experiences and telepathy because she believed in that. But she said later she has changed her mind. She also says that some people are not ready to change their minds although the evidence is suggests other conclusions.

- John Wilson then says that Graham has done the poll at Bush house to see how ordenery people feel about para-science.

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5th PART OF THE SHOW

- RECORDED SURVEY

- BBC plays recorded "un-scientific survey" done by Graham Eastern.

- Most people surveyed state that they believe in strange events and that they want to see better scientific work and investigation of those subjects.

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6th. PART OF THE SHOW

- PARA-NORMAL INFLUENCE

- John Wilson asks does TV and radio form the views of the general public and why do people believe in those subjects.

- Jane says that people always want to believe in something and it seems that religion is not attractive for them any more. That also may be linked with our past, imagination and younger days.

- Richard says that it could be s substitute for religion. He also says that if you are emotionally crushed (the death of someone that you knew) then its easy to get hooked by that field. Pop culture and media also has an influence and role in that.

- John Wilson concludes that it is the chicken and egg problem. What's happened in the past? Events or media influence? Then John Wilson says that today science is so powerful so it is sometimes attractive to say that there is no answer always for everything and that could be also the reason. It is also attractive to say "there is more."

- Robert says that 2 extremes exist. First are the people who are afraid of science. They become connected with myths and ESP and so on. At the other extreme are the people who love science too much. Those are, he says, probably the UFO people. Both groups are pseudo-science.

- Richard says that there are also some positive things in the paranormal. When you have some strange experience you can become interested in science if you want to solve your problem and that event.

- Jane says that paranormal programmes have influence on the opinion of the general public so maybe we will have more scientific work in those areas in the future because the public wants to know.

- Susan states that we must be very cautious with paranormal areas because they are also dangerous. You can spend much money on the astrologers and other people who are claiming that they have some powers. So other effects are also there because wrong decisions can be based on false data.

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7th. PART OF THE SHOW

- PROGRESS OF PARA-SCIENCE

- John Wilson concludes that ethics are in question inside para-science. Then he asks the guests what they think there will be any progress inside para-science in the future, for 50 to 100 years or it will be completely debunked.

- John Durant answers that he is glad that he can answer that question because he will not be alive then. He thinks that borders between science and paranormal will probably move but there will also still be others who will believe in some things that don't exist.

- Richard answers that maybe we will find out more because we will have better tools in the future but he also concludes that he wouldn't want to put money on that.

- Jane says that she and her magazine have been around for 25 years now and that she expects that in the future there will be some new approaches towards the problem and that we will learn more about the un-consciousness and physical world.

- Robert Park concludes that there always will be people who will be "alienated" from the world and who will believe some weird stuff.

- Susan says that she will not research ESP any more because it exist. But she says that maybe in the future we will much better understand out of body experiance because we will understand the brain then. But she concludes that there will always be people who will believe in souls and life after death and they will not find answers there.

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8th. PART OF SHOW

- SIGNING OFF

- John Wilson concludes the program with the statement that listeners should continue to ask the questions about para-science. John signs off the show.

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9. PART OF SHOW

- CREDITS

NOTE: Please note that the spelling of the names in this file is not maybe exactly right. Unfortunately I have material only in audio form so maybe the written names could contain some errors. Please send corrections send to 9a4ag@9a0tcp.ampr.org

Although this BBC programme had more of a debunking slant than progress for ufology, it is a fact that ufology is being presented more and more by mainstream media. Scientific debates about ufology are happening more and more. It is important that we all are talking about the subject.

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