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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: Beyond Closed Minds

From: Greg Sandow <[gsandow@prodigy.net](mailto:gsandow@prodigy.net)>  
Date: Wed, 12 May 1999 01:15:00 -0400  
Fwd Date: Wed, 12 May 1999 21:29:59 -0400  
Subject: Re: Beyond Closed Minds

>Date: Tue, 11 May 1999 12:12:47 -0500  
>From: Alfred Lehmborg <[Lehmborg@snowhill.com](mailto:Lehmborg@snowhill.com)>  
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
>Subject: Beyond Closed Minds [was: Tesla]

>>Anyone can have  
>>a closed mind, and all of us are most likely to act like we have  
>>one when somebody criticizes the ideas we most cherish.

>And again the scientist alludes that they can operate beyond  
>even \_that\_ particular pale, don't you agree? Consider all their  
>double blinds, data recording techniques, and peer review? Isn't  
>the peer review's responsibility to perform the peer review,  
>perhaps, a lot like the CIA performing an internal investigation  
>and finding itself faultless in every degree, and category?

This is a thoughtful point, but I disagree. "Peer review," in science, doesn't refer to any examination of the full structure of scientific thought. It's a practice used for relatively narrow matters. To take an example from my own field, suppose I want to publish a paper on aspects of musical form in Haydn's symphonies. If I submitted it to a scholarly journal in music, they'd have it read by authorities on Haydn. The disadvantage of that, if you like, is that if I wanted to say something really radical, maybe the authorities would prove to be conservative, and would reject the paper simply because they didn't like what it says.

The advantage, however, is that -- under ordinary circumstances -- it saves us from reading nonsense. Suppose I had interesting ideas, for instance, but didn't know my facts. Suppose I had some grand theory about how events in Haydn's life influenced the development of his music, but I'd done careless research, and didn't really know the facts about his life. Situations like that are what peer review is meant to deal with. If you like, you can think of it as a kind of licensing procedure. Sometimes it's really helpful to know that somebody really knows his or her stuff. Like when you need a plumber...you really don't want to get involved with argument about the conservatism of the plumber's union. You just want to be sure that the plumber really knows how toilets work.

We should understand that most scientific and scholarly papers don't deal with radical questions, where conservatism and closed-mindedness are likely to affect peer review. Most scientific papers deal with small, high technical matters, which may, in the long run, prove really useful -- if, that is,

they're correct!. The very fact that we're communicating all this by e-mail, for instance, is the result of lots of scientific work over the years. We ought to be grateful that it was peer-reviewed -- that, for instance, people making tiny contributions to the science that goes into computer chip design were required to show that they knew what they were talking about. Because of that, we have computers that work.

Science, in any case, isn't nearly as conservative as many of us on this list seem to think. Because we're dealing with UFOs, we run up against one of science's well-known blind spots. But scientists are forever overturning each others' theories, and radical new ideas are often accepted -- as, for instance, when it was recently proved that adult mammals can grow new brain cells, something that scientific orthodoxy had long held to be impossible.

A day or so ago, somebody posted an article he'd written for UFO magazine in Britain, about faster than light travel. He cited something from a 1995 issue of New Scientist, about an experiment that seemed to show that subatomic particles may sometimes -- in very restricted quantum circumstances -- travel faster than light. This, of course, is something that Einstein's theories, universally accepted by physicists, hold to be impossible. Nevertheless, there was the data, right in a scientific publication -- data about experiments (of which the article posted here cited only one) which seem to prove that Einstein was wrong. These experiments weren't suppressed, weren't classified, weren't forbidden -- instead, they were presented as fascinating information that absolutely had to be dealt with, and were duly discussed at considerable length, not just in one issue of New Scientist, but in succeeding ones as well.

And has anyone here read much about quantum theory? That stuff is not conservative, not by miles. Some of it -- like the experiments that show beams of electrons occupying two places at the same time, or work that shows particles influencing each other at great distances without any apparent mechanism -- is pretty wild.

>>Somebody

>>who loves Tesla can be just as closed-minded as the chairman of  
>>the physics department at the most conservative university.

>Fairly put, but that conservative is coasting on a lot of juice and  
>perogative that the tesla lover will never see -- and why are those  
>papers of Tesla classified anyway?

But some Tesla lovers, to judge from some of the stuff that's been posted here, say things that make absolutely no sense. And if they're not peer reviewed, they're not held to any standard of responsibility. That is, they could write absolutely anything, true or not, and the rest of us reading them would have no way of knowing whether their claims were accurate.

So we have a dilemma, one that's not easily solved. It's true that orthodox scientists have advantages -- status, access to funding and the media -- that Tesla advocates don't have. It's also true that with that status comes a certain conservatism. But at the same time, people advocating things that science rejects can sometimes be irresponsible, making claims there isn't really evidence for. And nobody's policing them, the way scientists (within their limitations) police themselves. There's no reason we have to accept this irresponsibility, just because we don't like some of the ways that scientists operate.

I'll give a small example. The post I referred to, about faster than light travel, had some mistakes. I was curious about the citation from New Scientist, and was able to find the article on the web. I discovered that the writer of the post was right in some ways -- that is, there really had been experiments that appeared to show subatomic particles moving faster than light. But the writer had also omitted some important points, which -- for the sake of fairness, accuracy, and scientific objectivity -- should have been mentioned.

First, these experiments don't present data that's beyond any dispute. This is scientific work at a very early stage of development. The experiments need to be replicated, for one thing. Furthermore, scientists dispute their meaning. Some think

that the experimental data does not, in fact, show anything moving faster than light. Others think that the data can be reconciled with Einstein's theories, even if, superficially, it seems to violate them.

Second, these experiments don't even begin to suggested that spaceships or human beings could travel faster than light. The experiments deal with quantum phenomena, which include many paradoxes (some of which I mentioned earlier). Many quantum phenomena appear to violate the kind of physical laws we're used to in everyday life, but that doesn't mean that the physical laws aren't valid. Quantum phenomena, on the subatomic level, seem to obey rules of their own -- rules that don't apply to the world human beings inhabit. So it's not clear that anyone can take these faster-than-light experiments, and generalize from them into the world of everyday physics.

It's not like somebody took a potato, let's say, and hurled it across a football field at speeds faster than light. That would poke a huge hole in Einstein's theories. Instead, these experiments made photons seem to move faster than light, which is a very different thing. A photon isn't even an object, the way a potato or a spaceship is. (And, as one scientist said, commenting on the experiments, photons are light! So the experiment seems to show light moving faster than its usual speed, which, possibly, might not quite mean the same thing as something else moving that fast.)

In a peer-reviewed journal, the writer of this post would have had to mention these things. He'd have to dot his i's, and cross his t's -- he'd have to give all relevant data, rather than simply the parts of the story that suited his purposes. And, yes, I've seen peer-reviewed papers that completely misrepresented the abduction phenomenon, so, once again, I'll grant that peer review isn't always faultless. A little of it, though, would be really welcome to keep us grounded when we talk about things that science rejects.

Which reminds me -- how do we know that Tesla's papers really were classified? And if they were, how do we know that the classified papers said anything radical?

Just asking.

Greg Sandow

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