

Humphrey's book *Soul-Searching (Leaps of Faith in the United States)*¹, suggests that we can save ourselves the trouble of looking at claims of the paranormal by invoking Hume's argument that it is more reasonable to believe that human error lies behind such claims than it is to "believe that some fundamental law of nature has been disrupted".

(2) Hyman, for the purposes of dismissing apparently strong evidence for a 'remote viewing' capability^{2,3}, asserts somewhat similarly that no matter how many investigations of the paranormal, carried out by whatever means, yield positive results, there will still be no proof that the alleged phenomena occur.

In response to enquiries as to why the usual mechanisms of science should be abandoned in this special context, our observer would be directed to study *Soul-Searching* in order to understand why claims of the paranormal are not taken seriously by scientists. But a subversive parapsychologist would suggest looking also at my review⁴, whereupon our friend would realize that Humphrey's arguments are flawed and hence of no value. He would study also some of the original research⁵⁻⁷, and wonder whether the scientists might not be making a monumental error in condemning it so vehemently.

The fact that scientists at large do not come to the same conclusions as our mythi-

cal observer stems, I believe, from two main factors, whose existence mocks the claim of science to be the agent of unveiling the truth, however strange that truth may appear: 'received knowledge', reinforced by the activities of propagandists; and the publishing policies of journals, which limit very effectively the acquaintance that the ordinary scientist has with parapsychological research, and thereby make informed assessment of the work in general effectively impossible.

The references below will provide readers with a better perspective with which to evaluate the evidence. And, for the benefit of those with access to the World-Wide Web, I have created a page, located at <http://www.tcm.phy.cam.ac.uk/~bdj10/psi.html>, with links to the text of some of these and to sites where more information may be obtained.

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2. Lehrman, S. *Nature* **378**, 525 (1995).
3. *J. Sci. Exploration* **10** (1), 3-62 (1996).
4. Josephson, B. D. *Times Higher Educ. Supp. No.* 1206, 19 (1995).
5. Bem, D. J. & Honorton, C. *Psych. Bull.* **115**, 4-18 (1994).
6. Utts, J. *Stat. Sci.* **6**, 363-403 (1991).
7. Radin, D. I. & Nelson, R. D. *Found. Phys.* **19**, 1499-1514 (1989).

True but strange?

SIR — Ernst *et al.* (*Nature* **381**, 361; 1996), in writing about complementary medicine, do not reflect the true results achieved with homeopathy.

For example, initial aggravation in a homeopathic case is the optimal reaction that can be expected from a correct constitutional remedy. Mental effects, if they are not qualified, mean nothing. For instance, if depression changes into irritability, that is a good sign and a prognostication that a cure will eventually ensue. And Ernst *et al.* do not differentiate between classical and 'mongrel' homeopathy, which is giving mixtures of remedies repeatedly for the disease and not for the patient.

I agree that "such survey data are inevitably limited". For instance, aggravation may occur because of wrong homeopathic prescribing, when a lot of remedies mixed together are given repeatedly. But there are also curative reactions — apparent aggravations — that foretell a complete cure with correct prescription as in classical homeopathy with one remedy and one dose only.

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