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COVER: A growing number of openminded scientists see ESP and other psychic phenomena as worthwhile areas of investigation. See p. 298 (Drawing: M. C. Escher, Escher Foundation, Haags Gemeente-museum—The Hague)

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november 10, 1973

to the editor

Science and superstition

Your correspondent, Clarence G. Zike, is quite correct when he observes that "As true of science in general, every major discovery in astronomy raises more questions than it answers" (SN: 10/6/73, p. 251).

He can put his mind to rest, however, about his imagined lack of a most logical explanation of the phenomena which seem to violate physical laws, e.g., "intelligent intervention."

It is just this thinking that is as old as the history of mankind that led to the separation of science and religion—remember Galileo?

How else can Zike explain the existence of superstition even in this enlightened age?

*John W. Orner
Wilmington, Mass.*

In her letter entitled "Not a valid hypothesis" (SN: 10/27/73, p. 259), Lois Ann Horowitz raises an important point. While it is not particularly difficult to suggest unorthodox explanations for various phenomena, it often requires unusual intelligence to see ways in which to test such ideas, thus converting them to "valid hypotheses." It is this uncommon vision that allows the scientific method to act as a challenge rather than as a shield.

*David Dunthorn
Oak Ridge, Tenn.*

Moonshine

I am intrigued by your comment on the density of the moon's atmosphere in the correspondence section of the Oct. 6 SCIENCE NEWS. Based on the 5 trillion to one earth-moon ratio which you quote, I have computed the total weight of the moon's atmosphere to an altitude of 1 mile at under 40,000 pounds. Take away the total weight of volatile effluent from all U.S. and Soviet moon craft, dumped in moon orbit, and what is left? The answer probably falls between Heisenberg's principle and Murphy's law.

*John P. C. Allen
New City, N.Y.*

Collar and Tye

SCIENCE NEWS is just great—I welcome its arrival every week and recommend it to my friends. Keep up the good work.

"It's All in the Name" seems to have tickled the fancy of a great many of your readers and has led to the submission of

a number of new and amusing examples where the names really count. Here's another.

During World War II there were a couple of very bright scientists at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, England, whose frequent collaboration and jointly published reports led to quiet amusement in those days when there wasn't too much to smile about. One of them, Prof. A. R. Collar, became vice chancellor of the University of Bristol; the other, Mr. Walter Tye, became the chief executive of the British Air Registration Board. I think the names on their joint reports always appeared in that order.

*John J. Green, Ph.D.
Ottawa, Canada*

P.S.

Both men are, I believe, well known to the aeronautical fraternity in the U.S.A.

Human aggression

Studying war will not provide answers to questions about human aggression nor will studying human aggression provide solutions to ending wars (SN: 10/20/73, p. 251).

Wars cannot be treated as manifestations of human aggression. They are politico-economic expedients instituted by handfuls of men (governments) for some very pragmatic reasons. Ordinary people who fight wars don't want to . . . Their aggression is motivated by self survival on a battlefield.

In historical perspective, the questions we need answered are: How have we, the troops, allowed the leaders to subvert what evolution has taught us, namely the intelligent control of aggression.

*Lewis Schwartzman
Flushing, N.Y.*

Cultural diversity?

The claim by the Soviet anthropologist J. V. Bromley of the Soviet attempt to maintain "a diversity of languages and life styles" among various ethnic groups (SN: 9/15/73, p. 170) is certainly negated by the treatment of Ukrainians and Jews. Indeed, in the latter case it amounts to a form of cultural genocide.

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