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Incorporating Science News Letter

to the editor

writer and not a magician and therefore is in no position to judge whether Uri Geller has used magical means to accomplish his feats.

Steven Okulewicz
Staten Island, N.Y.

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COVER: The growing popularity of meditation has prompted Western scientists to investigate the workings of this ancient Eastern tradition. The lotus position helps meditators sit perfectly still and breathe freely. See p. 378. (Photo: R. J. Trotter)

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ESP or magic

Robert J. Trotter's article on ESP and ASC (SN: 11/10/73, p. 298) is a superb piece of reporting on the challenging new development in parapsychology at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn. I especially like the example of the writer (a senior editor himself) serving as a demonstration subject; that would be hard to beat. Also the place and space you gave the article impress me greatly. May this fine piece help these men at Maimonides to support their promising but precarious program!

J. B. Rhine, Ph.D.
Durham, N.C.

I was almost ashamed to find an article about ESP featured in your fine magazine. As an amateur magician with a fair background in science I am disgusted.

I know enough about this subject to know ESP "researchers" are being taken in.

P. M. deLaubenfels
Corvallis, Ore.

Your article on ESP is most informative. It is my belief, however, that people are attracted to this science more by the wish it were true, rather than by convincing statistics.

G. A. Baker
Dept. of Psychiatry
New Mount Sinai Hospital
Toronto, Ontario

In regard to the article on "ESP and ASC" by Robert Trotter, Charles Honorton states that "We will have to adopt the strategies of science rather than the mentality of magicians," in relation to the study of "psychophysical problems." Being a young scientist and amateur magician, I must object to this statement. Professional magicians make their living from their trade and know magic inside and out. Professional psychophysicists are in the same category, but one cannot do the work of another. A good sleight-of-hand man can fool anybody but another sleight-of-hand man. So, the mentality of a magician is not something to be looked down upon since they may be the only people who can pick the psychic fraud from the genuine article and save the researchers much of their valuable time and money. Also, may I remind Trotter that he is a

Science and technology

Suggesting that the Opinion Research Corp. poll was flawed by leading questions, Richard W. Lasher (SN: 10/6/73, p. 211) takes exception to the finding that "... the general public feels that science has changed the quality of life." Then, without citing chapter, verse, or other authority, reader Lasher decrees that "... it is not the function of science to change the quality of life." Good Grief! Mr. Lasher would do well to buy some new glasses and some post-Renaissance dictionaries.

First, "science," as a field, is not once referred to in the poll: Every one of the five questions is phrased in terms of "Science and Technology" (emphasis mine). Your article reporting the poll (SN: 9/8/73, p. 151) clearly concerns science and technology, those three words appearing together ten times. The word "science" appears alone four times but, within the context, it is obviously interchangeably used with "science and technology." Only once, and quite incidentally, is there even a hinted differentiation ("opinion . . . depends on the particular field of science or technology . . .").

Second, "science," as the word is understood and used today, most certainly affects the "quality of life." One need mention only the social sciences, political science, or (for heaven's sake!) even military science. Mr. Lasher may have intended to address himself to "pure" science (defined, not altogether facetiously, as study having no known application to society), but, even there, an attempt to argue that there is no effect on the quality of life is folly, or, at best, an exercise in pedantry. Yesterday's "pure" science is today's way of living: One can trace a direct path from the failure of Michelson and Morley's ether drift experiment to the atomic destruction of Hiroshima. And who, watching a delayed telecast, in color, via satellite, would argue that the semiconductor work of Bardeen, Brattain and Shockley was not scientific, on the one hand, or that it had no effect on the quality of life, on the other?

Lawson E. Richtmyer
Potomac, Md.

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