

New Zealand Skeptic

Newsletter of the NZCSICOP (inc.)

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Editor: Keith Lockett
72 Awanui St
New Plymouth

The spiritual Science of Alpha Beta, healer to the stars

David Shanks

The skeptics having been invited to Mr Beta's lecture, I went along to clutch, if not wave, the flag. I duly arrived at the local spiritualist church, a commanding fading edifice at 14, Gullible St. A chap with a withered leg hobbled up the front steps; things were auguring well. An audience of approximately 100 slowly assembled, 90% women, mostly middle aged.

Mr Beta began the first part of his three part lecture with a long series of slides, providing 'positive proof' of various paranormal goings on. He kicked off with a spirited defence of Philippino psychic surgeons. Various gory slides quickly had the audience glued. Anyone who suspects these Philipinos of trickery is an 'idiot'. An anonymous New Zealand G.P. has carefully examined these photographs and concluded that the surgery 'must be genuine'. An anonymous German eye specialist who doubted that the human eye ball can be removed from its socket and placed on the cheek, still attached, was 'ignorant'. When one puts the question to these 'scoffers'; "How long have you studied this surgery in the Philippines?", that always gets them (approving nods and smiles from the audience). The audience marvelled at a shot of an open Bible being held over a patient. The surgeon wafts the 'healing energy' in the book down into the patient helping the release of particularly stubborn growths. Then a piece of goo, the size of an orange, is flashed onto the screen. "How could anyone hide a thing that size up his sleeve, especially as they always work with their sleeves rolled up?" (positive hums of appreciation). After spending a long time studying these 'wonderfully skilled' healers, Mr Beta has refined their technique to the point where he now completely 'dematerialises', tumours, clots etc and then throws them away, in their still dematerialised state.

Many Hollywood stars have benefited from Mr Beta's ministrations. A slide of the late Lee Marvin surrounded by his many fishing trophies and Mr Beta impressed the audience. So too did a slide of 'old timer' James Coburn. Mr Beta also 'absent healed' actor Martin Sheen over the telephone 'the night before Sheen was shot doing the Kennedy film' (laughter and warmth abounding). Rita Coolidge (Rita who?) and her sister pleaded with Mr Beta to absent heal their father, Dick. Dick was in San Francisco and Mr Beta in Malibu but Dick's terrible pains in the neck were healed enabling Dick to sleep nights. A slide showed Alpha performing the healing on the absent Dick, leaning over an empty table. Judging from the strain on Mr Beta's face, the

healing may have taken a lot out of him.

Then followed detailed accounts of several healings. A nine year old Auckland girl had a pet lamb that died of a 'pulpy kidney'. Mr Beta went with the distraught child to the animal and after running his hands over it detected "a small flow of energy". The lamb was promptly healed and later went on to win the Champion of Champions award at the A and P show. Other healings of cats and dogs are cited to prove rebuttal of those who 'falsely believe that this kind of healing only works with Christians'. Then there was the girl with the worst case of 'weepy wet eczema' ever seen. Mr Beta is worried that doctors can not figure out what causes eczema when 'even farmers know' that it is caused by a bad liver. In this case, Mr Beta 'went to the root of the problem', dematerialised the eczema causing poisons therein and threw them away in their immaterial state. What is more, anyone could do this.

Anton was 2 1/2 when he was diagnosed to have leukaemia in Waikato hospital. A 'hopeless case' he was given two weeks to live. After healing, doctors were 'absolutely amazed'; he is now 6. Roderick was a terminally ill AIDS patient in a Santa Fe clinic. (Mr Beta was clearly uncomfortable about this one; the case was given a bent spoon award for credulous reporting in 1987). "I am not saying that I healed this patient, only that something dramatic happened". Roderick was able to check himself out and take a plane to Scotland where he has disappeared. Another AIDS case Mr Beta has 'worked on' was the subject of a half hour documentary for Los Angeles cable TV subsequently beamed by satellite all over the States and Hawaii. A new born baby with only hours to live was in trouble with what its doctors had diagnosed as 'its genes would not mix'. After healing, the doctors were 'absolutely amazed'. An American geneticist is involved in this case and is to provide a written report on it.

The second part of the lecture consisted of slides on various occult matters. First came "photographic proof" of the existence of UFOs. The Book of Ezekiel was quoted to the effect 'a wheel within a wheel, and eyes all about it' and Genesis supplied 'a race of fair haired people coming from without'. More convincing was a slide of an area of

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flattened grass in Keri Keri which is a regularly used landing site for UFOs. Then came a photograph of two spoons one straight and the other bent double. He pointed out that 'seeing is believing'. He had actually seen a six year old girl bending spoons and went on to fulminate against the hard time poor Uri Geller was getting from nasty skeptics, 'liars or frightened of the truth.' He wagered that if a six year old girl's mind had been poisoned by people who say spoon bending is a hoax, then the girl would be unable to bend spoons. Her spoon bending gift is a result of her 'purity of mind'. Scientists are particularly to blame for they go about planting negative seeds in people's minds. Science produces atom bombs and 245 (sic) while spiritual science i.e. creative science, goes with nature and heals and spreads love. Often repeated and always eliciting a warm response was "It is so difficult educating the educated. It is so much easier with the uneducated, for they have open minds".

Mr Beta is also deeply into pyramids. His slide showed a bit of stale bread, a kidney and a knob of steak, that had been under a pyramid beside his bed for six years. Mrs Beta has a keen sense of smell and this constituted a rigorous field test, passed with flying colours. An improved version of the pyramid is kept in his 'healing room'. It is called a five by four generator (five little pyramids support four others with a metal plate on top). A beaker was put on the metal plate, an egg cracked into it and even months later there is no smell. "Who could possibly miss the smell of a rotten egg?".

A scribbled diagram of what was later described as arteries was flashed onto the screen. It was heavily annotated and a 'clott' (sic) emphasised. Mr Beta then related the tale of an anonymous psychiatrist who had been practising for 4 1/2 years. He paid an unexpected visit to Mr Beta while the

latter was treating a female patient in the healing room. For some unexplained reason, the psychiatrist asked if he could draw a portrait of the patient, permission being granted, he set to. When Mr Beta went to look at the work it was, in fact, the diagram of the arteries shown and the artist had pinpointed the position of the clott in the patient's neck artery which Mr Beta had previously dematerialised and thrown away. So overcome was the psychiatrist by this revelation that he has given up his profession as a load of rubbish and taken up full time diagnosis.

Mr Beta has made at least one other convert within the medical profession when he was giving healing lessons recently in Queenstown, immediately above the doctor's surgery. The doctor was led to join in the healing sessions, unasked.

Part three was the highlight of the evening. Mr Beta was under the impression that the Skeptics were going to provide a patient to be healed. When none appeared he grumbled that 'these people let us down'. However he managed to get a patient from the audience and soon a middle aged lady was lying on the table. First, he explained his diagnostic technique. Without touching the patient he moved his hands backwards and forwards over her entire body. His hands were 'seeking out centres of negative energy', those where the root of the problem was. He chatted continually to the transfixed audience, who were craning over or standing on chairs for a better view. Small concentrations of negative energy were occasionally found, drawn out and flicked away with a loud click. While working, he said: "When I first started this work, 15 years ago, I would ask people what was wrong. But in 50% of the cases I would find my hands going to places other than where I would have expected them to go from what the patients told me. I soon came to the conclusion that what they were telling me

New Zealand Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (inc.)

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Mr. Keith Lockett (Editor, *The New Zealand Skeptic*), 72 Awanui Street, New Plymouth.

of course, was what the doctor told them what was wrong. As the source of the problem is often quite different from what the doctor diagnoses, I now find it much better not to know what is wrong with the body, so that my hands can come up to the source of the problem and I don't have to worry about why it is there and not where the doctor would have said".

The hands continued to move incessantly, flicking and clicking. Suggestions were now put to the audience: "For those who do see and I hope there are some here tonight who do see and can describe the light coming out of my hands. I was speaking and demonstrating 18 months ago at the first alternative medicine exhibition at Auckland University when two young men saw streams of light around my body and flowing out of my hands while I was healing a patient. They also saw this grey stuff coming out of the patient and then saw how I scooped up this grey stuff and threw it away." Apparently no one in the audience saw anything.

The hands continued to move and the speech went on; "When I am healing patients, some feel light headed, some are aware of floating sensations, some are aware of levitation. Success. The patient responded "I'm aware of it, I'm aware of it. I'm levitating", but no movement she made. The audience was becoming restless. All of a sudden, Mr Beta located a 'high negative energy source'. His hands could not move past it; "Look at that, it's just like a brick wall". With much struggling, grunting and grimacing, he finally scooped up this invisible entity and at about a metre away from the patient, it broke away. He then threw it into a corner, soundlessly. "Everything always breaks away, The worse the problem is, the further away from the body it breaks. If that had been a bad cancer, or something, it would have broken away about here" (indicating a spot about three

metres from the patient).

That concluded the entertainment. I asked him if he had ever had his healing powers tested under controlled, clinical, conditions. He said that he had tried and tried to have this done and had even approached George Gair about it. I asked if such a test could be arranged by the Skeptics, would he agree to that?. He eventually said yes, provided 'everything is above board and no one tries to put it across'. He refused to disclose the name of the Queenstown doctor who joined his healing sessions because it would be 'unethical to divulge this information'. Nor would he give a copy of the American geneticist's report, despite his earlier promises, because 'I know what you are up to'. A battalion of smoldering eyes was now beaming down on me and I thought it time to go. He became angry when I asked him how much his healing sessions cost, "I have never charged anything for my healing classes, in my life". In view of his deteriorating demeanour, I bade him good night, after first reminding the audience that Mr Beta's healing lessons are free.

Could a test or tests be devised? It seems to me that in principle they could. The usual escape clauses are not open to Mr Beta. He, after all, heals lambs, cats and dogs. Neither is there divine intervention in his healing because 'there is no such thing as miracles'. Anyone (with an open mind) can acquire these skills because they are a function of 'universal, natural laws' and nothing to do with the supernatural. The beguiling clicks that continually accompany his 'throwing away' of toxic material are not only audible to me, but can rearrange the ferric oxide on my dictaphone tapes. Whatever is generating these sounds is presumably material rather than immaterial and could therefore be scientifically investigated.

NIBIRU

Zecharia Sitchin's 12th Planet, called "Nibiru" by the Sumerians and "Marduk" by the Babylonians, if it exists has five times the mass of Earth, travels an elliptic orbit around the Sun every 700 to 1000 years, and was known to the Sumerians 6000 years ago. Our little Moon produces tides of 10 meters (32.8 feet) or so. Nibiru would produce a "Super-tide" on Earth, pulling the waters of our oceans up to where Noah's Ark was found on Mt. Ararat at the end of the "40 days and 40 nights" of rain. Of course, rain could not have produced such a flood as the Great Deluge, but Nibiru could have.

The remnants of marine life found on Lake Titicaca at an elevation of 12,500 feet in the Andes, can be explained without pushing the Andes up. Nibiru pulled the ocean waters up as it passed, filled a depression, then released the waters after passing, leaving Lake Titicaca high in the mountains. If Nibiru was red hot when it passed Earth and Mars, it burned their surfaces, destroying all life and vegetation. Earth recovered, Mars did not. Earth's recovery was due to the fact that a few people were able to survive in underground cities.

When will Nibiru return to Earth's vicinity? One of the dates in Maya astronomy calculations give it exactly to the day, but which one? It may coincide with a date that modern geology gives us when the Earth's magnetic field was reversed. Another clue may be in old Chinese texts, because the Maya and the Chinese were the same people once, with the same language and same writing. It has been said that some old Chinese and Tibetan scholars could read Maya glyphs. Maybe one of them still can.

Vladimir N. Gercke, Box 143, Weimar, CA 95736 USA.

From: *Ancient Skies*

Offical Logbook of the ancient Astronaut Society vol 15, no 5, 1988

Editorial

This will be the last editorial that I write as in September, my wife and I will leave for Thailand, where we shall be doing voluntary work. The first issue of the Newsletter went to 80 members, the last one went to 180 (with another 55 going in bulk to the U.S.A.). Such growth in just over 3 years is very gratifying and the credit for that belongs to our members who have so faithfully sent in articles and cuttings. (Especially thanks to Malcolm McCleary who has just sent me more material on the infamous Time Life series of loony books. \$35 a throw). I am not naturally efficient, and if I have failed to use your contribution, I apologise. It was my policy to use everything sent to me and if I failed in this it was not intentionally. Thanks are also due to Mark Davies and his gang at Vic who, apart from the first few issues, typed out the material, duplicated it and stapled it together. If you look back over the past issues, you can immediately tell when Mark took over by the startling improvement in the layout and appearance of the newsletter.

My wife and I will work without pay in Thailand but this is not such an act of altruism. The rate of taxation in this country is such that one can live better in Thailand without pay than on ones pension here. We expect that this move will be a real challenge and of special interest to us as skeptics. The Thais are predominately Buddhist and therefore believe in reincarnation. I hope to discuss with young people there the extent to which the traditional values have a hold on them. Is there, for example, a quarrel between science and religion? My wife and I are both teachers and here again there will be a challenge. Thai children tend to sit, silently, in rows treating their teacher as the fount of all knowledge. Throughout my career, as a teacher of Science, my motto has always been 'You are not to believe a single word that I say, unless you can confirm it by your own experiment or your own experience.' To introduce discovery methods into Thai schools will be some challenge and will not be attempted too precipitately.

However, we are going to Chiang Mai which everyone says is the nicest town in the country, with the prettiest women (I hope to investigate this point; Chiang Mai is in the far north, the people there are lighter skinned, is that why they are considered more beautiful? A research report will follow). We shall be at Montfort College and we should be pleased to welcome any skeptics passing through. The climate, especially in the Northern winter, is delightful and a visit to the surrounding hill tribes an unforgettable experience. The Thais are charming and energetic people with much to teach us.

In conclusion may I thank all members for the friendships established over the last three years; may I express my gratitude for all the help and forbearance you have shown to me. Finally, I ask you to extend the same qualities to my successor, whoever he may be, confident that the Newsletter will continue to be the most interesting of the regional ones and will continue to grow in membership and excellence.

— Keith Lockett

From the Chairman

With this issue we farewell our editor Keith Lockett, who has served us so well in the nurturing and development of the *New Zealand Skeptic*. We have all seen how, from modest beginnings, the Newsletter has grown in stature and contents to a periodical that can hold its head among like journals internationally. Even the bleak patches when Keith was desperate for contributions proved temporary and recent editions demonstrate that we have a lively and informative journal that we will be proud to place in libraries in New Zealand and exchange with groups overseas.

Keith, we wish you and your wife, well in Thailand and hope that you will be able to continue your interests in the scientific approach to problems (such as the source of the beauties of the far north of Thailand).

With Keith's departure the committee must appoint a new editor and whoever he or she is has the challenge of a fine standard of quality to maintain. They will also be on the lookout for letters and other contributions so keep them coming in, folks.

The time of the annual conference has returned. This year the celebration is in Christchurch on the campus of the University. Denis Dutton and Bernard Howard have put together an impressive program, parts of which (the hot coals part) I am not looking forward to. As Denis puts it—it all depends on how skeptical you are! But then I'll be saving \$500. I am certainly going to learn how to do horoscopes in the Sunday morning workshops—I can always fall back on an assured income when the Universities are finally disemboweled by the Government!

We will also be presenting the bent spoon awards and holding the society's Annual General meeting during the conference.

— Tony Vignaoux

P.S. Can you teach me to read coffee grounds too, during the workshop, Denis?

Electronic Skeptical Network

For those of us who cannot communicate by paranormal means, email is a useful alternative to letters, FAX, and phone calls.

The US CSICOP is compiling an Electronic Mail Directory. The most recent edition, the fourth, April 1989, contains 50 email addresses, mainly in the USA but from a number of other countries as well. There are three from New Zealand so far:

NZ Skeptics	skeptics@comp.vuw.ac.nz
	(the production team for this Newsletter)
Kerry Chamberlain	K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz
Tony Vignaoux	vignaoux@vuvisor.vuw.ac.nz

Other entries would be welcome both to us and to CSICOP.

There is a proposal out for a Skeptics newsgroup to carry discussion on things skeptical and otherwise, on the Internet news groups.

There are also a couple of skeptical teleconferences operating in the USA on CompuServe.

For information on these, email me at the address above.

— Tony Vignaoux

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The Editor
New Zealand Skeptic
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9 July 1989

Dear Keith

Grant Duncan in his letter in the June 1989 N.Z. Skeptic has I feel been unfair to me in what I wrote about homeopathy; and he seems bent on being unfair to himself too.

I made no claim to have considered all the papers on homeopathy, but only those in English that I had been able to track down, I am not familiar with the German medical literature nor can I read German. I certainly would not rely on the English abstracts as "evidence", but in any case, Clausen's paper gives no indication that it is reporting a double blind controlled trial nor does that of Gassinger *et al.* Hitzengerger *et al.* is clearly unfavourable to homeopathy. Wiesenauer and Gaus's paper fails to show statistical significance and then seeks a back-door entrance to respectability by talking of "clear trends".

It is not I but Duncan who is misreading Gibson *et al.*¹ (I assume he has read the whole paper). I suspect that he is confusing the ordinary meaning of the word "significant" with the technical, statistical use of the word. In the latter sense, differences can be both very small and highly significant, Couzigou *et al.*² criticised Gibson's revised paper on statistical grounds.

It really will not do for Duncan, having just not presented the "best scientific evidence possible", to claim that it has failed to shake my faith in accepted beliefs and then to lump me with the charlatans of this world. I think the worst charge that can be laid against me is that of being honest enough to confess to unease if presented with an impeccably designed trial with results unequivocally favourable to homeopathy. Reilly *et al.*³ induced just such unease and the reason is of course that it would conflict with many accepted paradigms of science.

When the paper was published I pored over it, feeling confused and puzzled. I obtained a copy of one of the key papers cited as validating their method of assessment and spent some time with a professional statistician looking for obvious flaws in both papers. I followed the correspondence in the *Lancet* and noted the criticisms, some of which were not valid. The only flaw that I could find was the one which I quoted. The correct course now is for someone to attempt to replicate the experiment.

It is easy to answer Duncan's rhetorical question about where science would be today if scientists always felt ill at ease with evidence that conflicts with previously held theories. I think it would be roughly where it is now, as even a superficial acquaintance with the history and philosophy of science will show. Well tried theories and methods which "work" are generally slow to be discarded unless displaced by something powerful which explains or predicts better. While "There is ... abundant historical evidence for an almost pathological psychological resistance by many scientists against the 'paradigm shift' needed to see their subject in a new light ... nevertheless, the predominance of this indoctrination and intransigence may be exaggerated."⁴

I feel that Grant Duncan has perhaps overestimated the strength both of the scientific evidence in favour of homeopathy and my intellectual intransigence when faced with it. This would be a poor reason to withdraw from the Skeptics which need people like himself who are able to be challenging and provocative.

Yours sincerely

W.J. Morris, M.A., M.B., B.Ch. (Camb).

1. Gibson, R.G. *et al.* Homeopathic therapy in rheumatoid arthritis: evaluation by double blind clinical trial. *Br. J.Clin.Pharmacol.* 1980; 9:453-59.
2. Couzigou, P. *et al.* Letter, *Lancet*, 1983; 2:482.
3. Reilly, D.T. *et al.* Is homeopathy a placebo response? *Lancet*, 1986; 2:881-86.
4. Ziman, J. An introduction to science studies. p97. Cambridge, 1984.

Letter to the Sunday News

Tawa, 26 May, 1989

Dear Sir,

Recently your newspaper has featured several articles on the UFO phenomenon, with special reference to the theories of Jan Pajak from Dunedin.

Not knowing the philosophy of your paper, in reporting news with or without verification of the content, I would still like to point out, that Jan Pajak is not a formal UFO investigator, nor does he apply scientific methods to this research on this subject. After 5 decades of worldwide, serious, UFO research, and a vast amount of scientific papers on the subject, I had hoped that the media would adopt a more responsible attitude in reporting on the UFO phenomenon.

It is usually not the aim or task of a true UFO investigator to speak out against fringe elements surrounding the UFO phenomenon. However Mr Pajak has gone too far, both in his hypothesis as well as in claims of his being the only-person (or scientist) in NZ to carry out formal research on the topic. Jan Pajak is not only considered an embarrassment to the serious UFO investigator, but also to the scientific community in general.

Mr Pajak indulges in crack-brained, shakey hypotheses, which surpasses even the wildest science fiction stories. His theories are based on misinterpretation of natural phenomena, contortion of facts and straight-out lies. Mr Pajak is a typical example of the religious-like mania which the subject of UFO traditionally has attracted. He is on the same level with members of the Aetherius Society (people who telepathically communicate with extraterrestrial beings) and followers of for example Aucklander Bruce Cathy.

Here follow some remarks on the specific content of your articles

1) Pajak's spaceship impact at Tapanui, South Island, New Zealand.

Pajak's translation for the words 'Tapanui' and 'Waipahi' is totally wrong. The maori word 'Tapanui' does NOT mean 'Big explosion', it means 'Large crack', or 'Great edge'. This is in line with the geological feature seen at Tapanui. Waipahi means 'Flowing water' and not 'Place of the exploding fire'. The maoris did not have a word for explosion until 1840.

The Tapanui feature is a normal, terrestrial, semi-circular, landslide scarp, which is not formed by an impact of any sort. The scarp has formed a large 'edge' at the hill side. The land slide contains 'China-man stones' (not China-stones as reported). These are silicified quartz conglomerates, also known as Sarsen stone. These quartz deposits are a geological sequence of regional extent. The stones have been extensively studied and are found to contain some silicified plant remains only; no remains of animals or people!! Pajak's claim of inclusions of mysterious metal splinters of alien spaceships, is a pure figment of his lively imagination.

Nelson caves dug by UFOs?

A DUNEDIN scientist says he believes UFOs may be responsible for an unusual series of tubular caves discovered near Nelson.

Dr Jan Pajak has appealed for information about the caves, which he said could help in his quest to build a magnetically propelled spacecraft, called a Magnocraft.

Dr Pajak said other civilisations had already developed such Magnocrafts and these vehicle had been used on Earth, giving rise to UFO sightings.

"When the Magnocraft is finally built on earth it will display a number of unusual capabilities.

"For example, it will be able to fly not only in free air, space and water, but also underground where it will produce (evaporate) long, glassy and technological-looking tunnels," Dr Pajak said.

"UFOs are able to fly through solid matter.

"During such flights they evaporate a unique type of glassy tunnel, identical to the tunnels I am inquiring about."

Nelson Speleological Group spokesman Arthur Freeman said cavers had been investigating a series

of caves which fitted the description offered by Dr Pajak.

Mr Freeman said the tubular caves in the Ellis Kurste field at Mt Arthur had smooth but not glassy walls.

Dr Pajak has been collecting information on UFOs for some years and has been looking for evidence of tubular tunnels since his arrival in New Zealand in 1982.

"The purpose of collecting this evidence is to complete our Magnocraft faster and easier," he said.

When UFOs landed on earth, the propelling devices acted like huge microwave ovens which magnetically scorched and sterilised the ground, he said.

"Such sterilised soil provides ideal mushroom-growth conditions.

"The former UFO landing sites are subsequently populated by mushrooms that form a unique type of ring: such rings are called Fairy Rings in New Zealand."

Dr Pajak said he was the only scientist in New Zealand doing formal research on UFOs.

"I am the only scientist who has accumulated overwhelming evidence that indicates the continuous use of these vehicles on earth, and who is not afraid to admit openly that these vehicles do exist."

Sunday News,
21 May 1989

Pajak's mushroom rings do not grow as a result of heavy doses of microwave radiation. Pajak's Tapanui flu comes under the umbrella of ME (Myalgic Encephalitis) which is a worldwide, common, affliction, and not restricted to Tapanui.

Pajak claims that there is a magnetic anomaly over Tapanui, throwing out the navigational instruments of airplanes. I have checked with navigation experts at Civil Aviation, Airforce and aviation training centers; they all confirmed that no magnetic anomaly exists over the Tapanui area, or any other area in NZ for that matter, which affects navigation.

2) Pajak's Magnocraft.

In the years of UFO-mania, many crazy designs of saucer-like spaceships have been dreamed up, but the Magnocraft beats them all in idiocy. I can not find superlatives strong enough to describe the preposterous propulsion proposal for Pajak's craft. His propulsion is generated from spheres, in which the atoms of an entire planet are contracted to one meter in diameter. Each craft would contain 5 (or more) of these spheres, making each as heavy as a gigantic planet (if one can conceive such weight). Still, the manoeuvrability of his craft is that of a featherlight flying-machine. His magnocraft design is so ridiculous that it becomes entirely fruitless to point out its endless array of shortcomings. To mention only one: the gravity field of the craft could possibly create a blackhole and suck up our entire solar system.

The tunnels with polished shiny walls, in the Nelson district, are not formed by passing extraterrestrial magnocrafts. The tunnels are formed by underground rivers; a terrestrial feature found in many other limestone caves all over the world.

In other articles Jan Pajak wrote about his 'Devil stones'. Here he claims that all large solitary rocks scattered along the country side are strategically placed by extraterrestrials and contain electronic devices to guide their spaceships over the surface of this planet. After having traversed the universe do the aliens require every few kilometers a hearing-device to check their whereabouts?

The UFO phenomenon constitutes an international problem, studied by scientists of all disciplines. More than 95% of the reported cases are explained as misinterpretation of natural or man-made events. The remaining 5% form a remarkable atmospheric phenomenon with a high degree of strangeness. Although attractive to many people, an extraterrestrial explanation is premature. That UFO's (better defined as an 'Unusual Atmospheric Phenomenon') do exist is a fact! Their explanation may be psychological or physical, but at present it is better to adhere to no explanation than the wrong one.

I would ask representatives of the media the following question: If astronomers announce a breakthrough in the understanding of processes in the universe, would you consult an astrologer on the verification and scientific clarification? Please, in reporting a UFO sighting, seek advice with somebody knowledgeable on the subject.

Scientist seeks UFO tunnels in local rock

A Dunedin scientist believes UFOs may be responsible for an unusual series of tube-shaped caves discovered near Nelson.

Jan Pajak has appealed for information about the caves, which he says could help in his attempt to build a magnetically propelled spacecraft, called a Magnocraft.

Pajak says other civilisations had already developed Magnocrafts and they had been used on Earth, giving rise to UFO sightings.

"When the Magnocraft is finally built on earth it will display a number of unusual capabilities. For example, it will be able to fly not only in free air, space and water, but also underground where it will produce (evaporate) long, glassy and technological-looking tunnels," Pajak said.

"UFOs are able to fly through solid matter. During such flights they evaporate a unique type of glassy tunnel, identical to the tunnels I am inquiring about."

Nelson Speleological Group spokesman Arthur Freeman said cavers had been investigating a series of caves which fitted the description offered by Pajak.

Freeman said the tubular caves in the Ellis Karst field at Mt Arthur had smooth but not glassy walls.

The phreatic tubes known as the Tomo Thyme Caves were formed by water pressure under the water table, Freeman said.

The caves were discovered 15 years ago but Nelson climbers began new investigations 18 months ago.

"The purpose of collecting this evidence is to complete our Magnocraft fast and easier than it would take without having a ready operation model to copy from," Pajak said.

When UFOs landed on earth, the propelling devices acted like huge microwave ovens which magnetically scorched and sterilised the ground.

"Such sterilised soil provides ideal mushroom-growth conditions," he said.

"The former UFO landing sites are subsequently populated by mushrooms that form a unique type of ring; such rings are called Fairy Rings in New Zealand."—NZPA.

Sunday Star, 21 May 1989

For Readers of German

As you know, we occasionally get copies of the Newsletter of overseas skeptical groups. We recently received a copy of *Skeptiker* (2) 1989, a beautifully produced newsletter from Germany

If any German reading member would like to see it, please contact me.

Tony Vignaux

Twins, souls and abortion

H Young

I wonder if scepticism toward pseudoscience has any contribution to make to the abortion debate?

The thought arises because the theory of L Ron Hubbard (disposed of in a recent *Skeptical Inquirer*), that foeti can hear and understand voices outside the mother and react to them, is clearly pseudoscientific.

What about the theory of the anti-choice brigade that "the human being" comes into existence at the "moment" (now known to last hours) of conception?

There is a *reductio ad absurdum* of this view: while most conceptions go on to produce one individual, identical twins arise after at least one division of the zygote (fertilized ovum), more hours after conception. Therefore, in the anti-choice view, twins and other multiple births comprise only one "human being".

If that were the case, the Auckland doctors recently faced with the decision whether to separate conjoined twins should have had no hesitation in sacrificing one of the twins: only one "human being" had come into existence at conception, and they would have merely been restoring the status quo.

There used to be another case involving a similar paradox, "Locked twins" are fortunately now almost unknown, occurring only under circumstances of extreme neglect. If birth of twins was allowed to begin so that part of both

bodies blocked the birth canal, both of them would die and probably the mother too. Or one could be saved if the other were sacrificed. There was even an instrument for this purpose, whose very name will set your teeth on edge — a "cranioclast", or skull-breaker. Catholic midwives and obstetricians would rather try to save both by breaking the mother's pelvis, crippling her for life. According to their own argument, they could have sacrificed one twin without qualms.

What most anti-choice people really believe, but never say in the abortion debate, is that a supernatural entity called "the soul" is infused into the foetus at the "moment" of conception, and it is this that makes it human. Presumably they believe that the Deity knows how many individuals will result from any conception, and infuses an appropriate number of souls, to share a zygote until it divides.

Let me say that I would like abortion to be a woman's last resort, and if it be done, let it be as soon as possible to prevent any possibility of suffering to the foetus: that, I think is the real issue. Again paradoxically, it is the efforts of the anti-choice faction that delay abortions until the brain has started some kind of function, and suffering is more likely.

AGM

All financial members of NZCSICOP are invited to attend the
Annual General Meeting
at 12.00 noon
September 3, 1989
Room S4, Science Block, University of Canterbury, Christchurch

Join us in Christchurch...

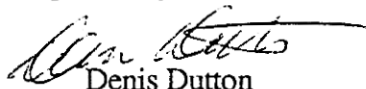
Dear NZCSICOP Member,

The Skeptics have organised some splendid meetings over the years, but our 1989 conference at the University of Canterbury promises to be the hottest ever—*peaking at about 900 degrees celsius, to be precise....*

- * Who are the UFO faithful, and why do they believe?
- * What are the cruel illusions alternative medicine is lately offering cancer victims?
- * We know lots about paranormal scams overseas, but what are the specifically Kiwi contributions to paranormal nonsense?
- * What can the government do to promote in New Zealand a more informed regard for science and rationality?
- * How can *anybody* learn to read palms, tea leaves, or horoscopes? (We'll teach you at the Sunday morning workshop!)
- * Finally, do you really want to learn *exactly* how to bend a spoon, Geller-style? Australian magician and Geller-debunker Ben Harris will give lessons.

All this, plus a spectacle so terrifying it will make All Blacks faint dead away, or at least weep warm tears: *Barefoot skeptics will walk over hot coals.* Firewalking courses cost upwards of \$500 when promoted by paranormal scam artists, but the New Zealand Skeptics will teach you this astonishing art merely for the price of the conference registration. (Overly skeptical Skeptics can watch from the sidelines.)

So bring your spouse, bring your friends—perhaps even your asbestos boots—and join us for an outstanding meeting!


Denis Dutton

Registration Form

Pre-enrol me for NZCSICOP's Fourth Annual Convention, to be held at the University of Canterbury, all day Saturday, September 2nd and till noon Sunday, September 3rd.

Member: \$25.00 [] Member plus spouse: \$35.00 [] Non-member: \$30.00 []
(Enquire about family rates.)

I wish to have lunch with the group on Saturday: \$14.00 []

I wish to attend the Saturday night Annual Dinner, to be addressed by Brian Priestley, with Media Awards and complimentary firewalk: \$29.00 []

Please reserve accommodation at the University's Rochester Hall for the nights of
September 1st [] September 2nd [] (\$30.00 per night, includes breakfast)

Name: _____ Address: _____

Telephones: _____

Include cheque with this registration form. *Please respond before the end of July!*
Return to B.H. Howard, 150 Dyers Pass Rd. Christchurch 2. (phone 320-521)