

# Letters

## West German Breeder Cost

Lest the reader of Nigel Hawkes' article "*Science in Europe/The antinuclear movement takes hold*" (News and Comment, 16 Sept., p. 1167) be left with the impression that my work (1) on the West German fast breeder program is part of the West German antinuclear movement, it is not. In my analysis, which is intended as a case study of government decision-making, I take a neutral stance on fast breeder safety, and my economic assessment is based on the assumption that a moderate growth in nuclear power is justifiable.

As for the fast breeder capital cost quoted by Hawkes, a comparison of the cost of the West German SNR-300 plant with that of commercial light-water reactors comes out more favorably on the side of the fast breeder if more recent data are used, since the cost of light-water reactors has increased in real terms over the last few years.

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### References

1. O. Keck, "Fast breeder reactor development in West Germany: An analysis of government policy," Ph.D. thesis, University of Sussex (1977).

## Investigating Paranormal Claims

I generally found Nicholas Wade's description (News and Comment, 30 Sept., p. 1344) of our recent differences within the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal to be accurate. However, those unfamiliar with my writings might construe his statement that "Truzzi sees it [public interest in the paranormal] as a threat not to science but to conventional religion" as suggesting I oppose claims of the paranormal because I wish to defend conventional religion. That is not the case. I have simply argued that most new adherents to paranormal and occult claims include those disillusioned with orthodox religion rather than orthodox

science. The competitive threat of the new occultisms is therefore greater to conventional religions than it is to science.

The dispute within our committee represents a very old tension between science's appropriately conservative and skeptical character and the need to both assimilate and even seek the anomalies that will allow us to expand our mapping of the empirical world. Maintaining a balance between preserving our accumulated knowledge and seeking change in the structure of that knowledge to better accommodate new and significant data remains an uneasy task. I hope our committee can meet the challenge of recovering that balance.

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## Cryptology and National Security

In their article on cryptology (News and Comment, 30 Sept., p. 1345), Deborah Shapley and Gina Bari Kolata assign the "job of protecting national security" solely to the National Security Agency. By implication, researchers have no obligation to help accomplish the job. Their legitimate concerns are listed as academic freedom in research, commercial exploitation of their results, and evasion of the technical data controls of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations. But researchers are citizens, as well as—perhaps even *before*—they are researchers. As citizens of a democracy they too are responsible for national security—a responsibility quite as significant as their various rights. A just and workable balance between rights and responsibilities, while supremely hard to attain, is nevertheless essential if government of the people is to endure. In striking this balance in their personal lives, it is not enough for scientists to turn "the problem over to their universities' lawyers," for the moral question transcends the legal. Perhaps the cryptologists have searched their consciences and decided (correctly or otherwise) that publication of their findings is in the national, as well

as in their personal, interest. Shapley and Kolata, however, report no such agonizing appraisal nor even seem to recognize such an obligation. The article reflects a short-sighted view that citizens should demand their rights while relegating their duties to government agencies, which they are then free to treat as adversaries. On the contrary, if scientists ignore their responsibilities for the nation's political freedom, they will likely find that their academic freedom has vanished as well.

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## Einstein on ESP

The Research News article by Gina Bari Kolata "Einstein skeptical of ESP after all" (30 Sept., p. 1349) contains several factual errors. It is true that Einstein wrote an introduction to a book on telepathy by Upton Sinclair. Its title is *Mental Radio*, not "*Mind Reach*." *Mind-Reach* is the title of a recent book written by R. Targ and H. Puthoff (1) of the Stanford Research Institute. I must also note with regret that I never had the honor of being a friend of Einstein, as stated in the article. My contact with him was confined to our correspondence. Einstein's letter to me was written in 1946, at a time when experimental parapsychology was still in its infancy. This may be one of the reasons for his harsh criticism of the subject. Einstein's letter is one of my precious possessions, and I never released it for publication. Indeed, I am puzzled as to how Martin Gardner, or *Science*, obtained a copy of the text without my knowledge. Was it a case of extrasensory information transfer after all?

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### References

1. R. Targ and H. Puthoff, *Mind-Reach* (Delacorte, New York, 1977).

Ehrenwald is correct about the title of Sinclair's book. Einstein's introduction was written for the German edition of *Mental Radio* and is translated in Sinclair's book *My Lifetime in Letters*.

Martin Gardner obtained a copy of the letter by perfectly ordinary means, since it is part of the Einstein estate. Gardner was kind enough to forward a copy of the letter to me.—G.B.K.