

# SCIENCE

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# EDITORIAL

## Self-Esteem Through Fantasy

My New Year's resolution for this year is to improve my self-esteem. I have been reading in the newspapers that individuals, ethnic groups, and even nations embark on antisocial behavior such as aggressiveness or apathy as a result of lack of self-esteem. It seemed to me that editors and scientists should be included because they are routinely blamed for most of the ills of the world and are themselves desperately in need of improved self-esteem. I have also read that fantasies cure many people of their dysfunctional states; therefore, I decided to adopt this method of therapy to increase my effectiveness in 1993.

In fantasy number one, I suddenly awake in the middle of the night, having realized that I have hit on a mathematical equation that is even better than the unified field theory and can readily lead to a cure for AIDS, a filling up of black holes, a solution to the hole in the ozone layer, and the resolution of the problem of a car in every garage without any increase of CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere. Although my only desire is to help humanity, the fantasy gets away from me, and I am carried on the shoulders of a jubilant sea of humanity that is shouting, "Scientists are not ruining the world, they are saving lives."

In the second fantasy, I discover a new journalistic process called computer-designed pages, in which each reader fills out an interest profile. We then accept all manuscripts that are submitted so that each issue of the journal is approximately 3000 pages and all authors are ecstatic about *Science*. The subscriber, however, gets only those articles that fit his or her interest profile. As a result he or she gets a journal the size of the current *Science* and cries out, "My God, I'm interested in every article in the current *Science*."

In the third fantasy, I am attending the dedication of the new Getty Museum when the director says that the President of the United States, who was supposed to open the ceremony, will be late and asks me to take his place. I graciously consent and, without any preparation, give a 5-minute talk in perfect iambic pentameter that convinces everyone that massive increases in the science budget are the only way that the world can afford to keep everyone employed, save the environment, and create a rational society. The audience is so moved that it greets the end of the speech with total silence, and the speech is called the second Gettysburg Address.

In the fourth fantasy, I hear that the United Nations has passed a resolution that the delivery of *Science* should be a first priority of the post offices of the world, and the Security Council passes a resolution that they will militarily occupy post offices of any nation that does not get copies of *Science* to its customers within 3 days.

In fantasy number five, I am in a room full of journalists and scientists in which the journalists as a group say, "We realize we've been overstating fraud in science. It is truly incredibly low in frequency, probably lower than in any other profession, and scientists are intensely concerned about it because it is so detrimental to their livelihood." At which point the scientists as a group say, "It isn't because scientists are superior beings, it's because the system is so filled with checks and balances that no one gets away with fraud for very long." The two groups then walk out arm in arm, singing each other's praises.

In the sixth fantasy, the transition team of the Clinton administration calls to ask my advice as a distinguished younger statesman of science, saying that they believe that basic research is good for the country and the world and should be increased. Rather than the National Science Foundation becoming an applied research institute, it should maintain its original mission, and research with national goals should be extended to other areas on the National Institutes of Health model. Thus, the Environmental Protection Agency would sponsor extramural and intramural environmental research, the Department of Transportation extramural and intramural transportation research, the Department of the Interior extramural and intramural biodiversity and public land research, the Department of Commerce extramural and intramural economic and technology transfer research, and so on.

In fantasy number seven, an author calls to tell me that even though his article was rejected, he believes that the reviews were fair, and that he understands *Science* can't publish all the papers that it receives.

At this point I really know I am dreaming but find I can rerun the fantasies over and over again without ever getting bored. Each time I repeat them, they become more believable. As a result, I do not expect to have much time to get actual work done, but my self-esteem will be enormous.

Daniel E. Koshland, Jr.