

COMMENTS BY STEPHEN BRAUDE:

I am in substantial agreement with Hyman about how scientists ought to respond to the radical or unorthodox proposals and hypotheses of their colleagues. And I agree that scientists often disgrace themselves and damage their profession through the manner in which they attach apparently heretical claims. But ironically, Hyman's paper appears simply to be a non-hysterical example of the sort of practice it purports to condemn.

Hyman first describes proponents of radical or unorthodox hypotheses as "deviant" scientists whose claims are ineptly or irrelevantly attacked by the scientific establishment. And as he discusses the undesirable impact of such procedures upon the scientific community, the reader is led to believe that Hyman wants to be a spokesman for a rational and fair assessment of such unorthodox claims. But then a sudden and revealing shift occurs in Hyman's dialectic. He begins by referring to the class of unorthodox or radical proposals as "failures" and "follies," even though he acknowledged earlier that pathological science sometimes attacks hypotheses that are later vindicated and incorporated into the body of accepted scientific knowledge. Moreover, this choice of words is not merely an isolated verbal slip. The remainder of the paper strongly supports the conclusion that Hyman (despite his apparently self-serving protestations to the contrary) is really an ally of those whose critical practices he decries.

I'll return to this last point shortly. But first I must remark that there are no grounds, as far as I can see, for condemning the studies of D.D. Home as "failures," or Wallace's investigation of psychic forces as "ignominious failures." For example, Hyman's apparent assurance that the case is closed, so to speak, on Home flies in the face of the considered judgment of many competent people who have studied this material closely and thought about it (and associated issues concerning the acceptability of spontaneous case material in parapsychology) very carefully. It seems to me that, under the circumstances, a defender of non-pathological science ought to be more agnostic, or at least open about the fact that others in the scientific community do not regard the Home case as closed.

I have a similar reaction to Hyman's indictment and cavalier dismissal of all studies of psychic photography as 'follies.' I am confident that Hyman realizes that many people have studied this material carefully (I suspect more carefully than he), and do not regard the case as closed on psychic photography either. In fact, I have studied this portion of the parapsychological literature rather closely recently, and in my view the shabby treatment of Jule Eisenbud's studies of Ted Serios would make an ideal example of the dishonest and intellectually cowardly criticism that Hyman thinks can only harm the scientific community. Again, it seems to me that the position Hyman ought to take--the one consistent with his objection to pathological science--is to acknowledge that such cases are still controversial, no matter what his own intuitions about such alleged phenomena might be. If Hyman were not victim of

the sort of pathology he describes, I would think he would not select currently debatable cases as examples of failures and follies in science.

Anyway, returning to the subtleties of Hyman's dialectic later in the paper, consider the force of the analogy from medicine he uses in his final paragraph. Hyman refers to the scientific defense of bizarre positions as "sicknesses," something requiring remedy. Apparently, Hyman has forgotten that he earlier admitted that in the history of science, some radical proposals, no matter how maligned they may have been at one time, later became incorporated into the body of science. It would appear that Hyman regards the "objective" study of radical proposals as merely a way of cleaning the scientific house by a respectable method. But he sees it as housecleaning nevertheless. (Analogously, I suppose, one might argue that it is better to remove a derelict from one's doorstep by asking him nicely to leave, rather than by kicking him bodily into the street. And of course, construed this way, what is at issue is the best way to get rid of something undesirable.) Hyman apparently does not see the scientific enterprise as one whose method permits, not only the close scrutiny of radical proposals, but also their eventual acceptance if they pass the test of such scrutiny. A disease, after all, is something that must be destroyed. A radical proposal, however, may prove to be revolutionary and salutary.

Another telling feature of Hyman's discussion is his decision to call what should neutrally be designated as radical, alternative, or unorthodox positions as "bizarre." Some, of course, are. But to use this term throughout the paper to refer to the entire class of radical proposals is prejudicial already.

It seems to me, then, that Hyman does not really advocate the impartial, open-minded assessment of radical scientific claims, and that he is specifically unwilling to entertain seriously the radical proposals of parapsychology. His paper is only a plea to banish them in a way that preserves the surface integrity of the scientific community. To use the overworked terminology of T. Kuhn, Hyman's paper would seem to be a manifesto in defense of current normal science, and in fact appears to display a deep lack of confidence in the scientific method. And as a result, Hyman's description of pathological science turns out to be rather shallow, ignoring a very important kind of symptom of the pathology. It strikes me as significant and revealing that Hyman fails to observe (both in print and in practice) an important truth. The pathological response to radical scientific claims need not be manifest either in the shrill indictments or the supercilious disregard of those claims and their advocates. It may, instead, be expressed perniciously under the guise of objectivity and fair play. Like Brutus, perhaps, Hyman professes one set of attitudes and beliefs, and betrays another. One's dagger may be brandished openly or concealed under one's cloak. Real malevolence may be served either way.