

May 17, 1988

Andy Rooney,
c/o CBS, INC.,
513 W. 57th St.
N.Y., N.Y., 10019

RE: Human Brain and Hogwash

Dear Andy:

Long ago in Russia, a Rabbi used to cross the street everyday, walking between his home and the synagogue. A Russian official watched him do this for years. One day the official stopped him as he was crossing the street and inquired "Where are you going?"

To which the Rabbi replied "I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know. I've seen you cross this same street at the same time every day for years."

Again the Rabbi replied, "I don't know."

In anger, the official grabbed the Rabbi and hauled him off to prison for insubordination.

"See, the Rabbi replied, You just never know."

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Do the stars control us? Does faith healing work? You reply HOGWASH. Certainly there are enough gullible people and charlatans who take advantage of them to justify your response, and your belief in the power of the human brain to provide us with rules, guidelines, and rational inquiry.

HOWEVER, if someone had said 500 years ago that the moon makes tides rise; or that humans could in fact control aspects of their "autonomic" involuntary nervous system, and that emotions and thoughts have physiological and biochemical effects, we would likewise have said hogwash. Yet, through scientific study, we have determined planetary relationships, human skills, and brain/body connections we didn't think possible.

The brain is miraculous, as a method of understanding the

world (and itself)--through both rational and intuitive/experiential inquiry; and as a source of healing--through thoughts, attentional focusing, and imagery. *Also, able to fool itself*
And this same brain is also able to fool itself, rationalize, be driven by emotions without conscious awareness.

Yes, many overstated claims are being made. No, we don't yet have the data to justify many of those claims. But nor do we have, I believe, any conception of the awesome power and beauty of our brain.

Let us learn to say HOGWASH, and not be gullibly taken in, but let us also learn to keep the gentle awe of the "don't know" mind (and watch how we cross the street)!

Sincerely,

Deane Shapiro

Deane Shapiro, Jr., Ph.D.
Associate Professor In Residence