

AMERICAN SOCIETY for PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, Inc.

5 West 73rd Street, New York, New York 10023 U.S.A.

Telephone: (212) 799-5050

Fax: (212) 496-2497



2 Plane Tree Lane
Dix Hills NY 11746
July 30, 1992

Gary P. Posner, M.D.
6219 Palma Del Mar Blvd. #210
St. Petersburg FL 33715

Dear Dr. Posner:

I have still not sent your letter to Hansen because I wanted to copy edit it first. When I finally had time to do so, I found that I could not finish it without some additional information from you. I have put it into standard JASPR and APA style. The latter requires that personal communications be inserted in the text, giving the complete date. Can you supply the month and day of the letter from Clark? I also need the complete citation for the Clark reference in IUR. And if I could have a copy of Clark's editorial, that would be great.

I am in sympathy with the point you are trying to make, which as you say, stems from compassion rather than from the need to put denigrate someone. If Hansen oversteps his bounds, I will try to see that a sense of fair play rules. That is part of my job. For whatever reason, some people can get carried away. I think you have good grounds for being apprehensive, but I will insist that Hansen temper his reply if it seems required.

Please make any changes you see fit and return the manuscript to me. I'll make the changes in my computer and send a copy to Hansen.

Sincerely,

Rhea A. White
Editor, JASPR

JOURNAL of the
AMERICAN SOCIETY for PSYCHICAL RESEARCHRhea A.. White
EDITOR2 Plane Tree Lane, Dix Hills, N.Y. 11746
Telephone 271-1243 Area Code 516

September 23, 1992

Dear Dr. Posner:

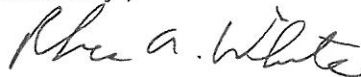
Enclosed is the corrected version of your letter. I sent it to Hansen in the same mail that I sent you the enclosed. I trust all is well from your point of view.

In reading your letter side by side with Jerome Clark, I can only say that to my mind he appears to be reacting irrationally to something you did not say. If Hansen does the same thing, and it appears that he will, I will tell him I won't publish the letter unless he can demonstrate that you are castigating all (so-called) parapsychologists, which you are not. I don't see why your point is not well-taken, and I don't see why the tendency is to blow it out of all proportion. That's is more disturbing in itself than the point you are trying to make, which seems perfectly rational and humane.

Thanks for the Klass review of Out There. How can Blum get away with making up falsehoods? Won't he be sued???

I was quite taken by his psychological observations in the epilogue, but I myself am not a believer in UFOs as being physical objects. I am willing to entertain the possibility that they are hallucinations, and collectively shared hallucinations to an extent, but it doesn't seem anyone has indicated their origin. (I am no expert on the UFO literature though.)

Sincerely,



Rhea A. White

GARY P. POSNER, M.D.
6219 PALMA DEL MAR BLVD. #210
ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA 33715

February 1, 1993

Rhea A. White, Editor
JASPR
2 Plane Tree Lane
Dix Hills, NY 11746

Dear Ms. White,

Thank you for sending me a copy of George Hansen's response to my letter. I find it infinitely more objectionable than the original remarks to which I took offense.

I took care in my letter not to attack Hansen — I simply noted that by having quoted a few phrases from my lengthy *S.I.* letter out of their context, he mischaracterized my position. His response, which includes a veiled defamation as to my "compassion" and an outright one regarding my patients' allegedly pitiful plight, seems unworthy of even *Fate*, much less a journal such as yours.

It is true that my *S.I.* letter did not cite any specific previous article or comment, but it clearly pertained to the "Uri Award" nominations for "silly" and "naive" paranormalists (I did not wish to single out any individuals, as Paul Kurtz had done two issues earlier). The "context" of my phrases was not simply in my "mind" — it can be found throughout my *S.I.* letter. And to quibble about the term "sweeping statement" — you will note that in my *S.I.* letter my "sweeping statement" was in fact a clearly labeled "opinion," which I immediately admitted may be "correct or not."

I regret that I have now named Weinberger in my *JASPR* letter. I have only done so in an effort to defend myself against Hansen's article, which implies that my *S.I.* letter was about mere "believers" who may comprise "over half the population in this country." It clearly was not. I would be agreeable to a rewrite that eliminates any reference to Weinberger (let me know).

I fear that your readers might not appreciate the inappropriateness of Hansen's "Edison" analogy. Though Edison may have attempted to build a machine to contact the dead, he certainly published no articles (as far as I am aware — please correct me if I am wrong) claiming to have successfully and repeatedly made such contact, as Weinberger did (claiming 94 hits in 138 usable trials).

And of course, in truth (if such matters anymore), I do not rely on "a *Fate* columnist" for "psychiatric diagnoses" of anyone, much less my patients. My correspondence with Clark, as the citations in my *JASPR* letter make clear, took place seven years after my *S.I.* letter was published.

In your note to me of September 23, you observed: "In reading your letter side by side with Jerome Clark, I can only say that to my mind he appears to be reacting irrationally to something you did not say." You then added: "If Hansen does the same thing, and it appears that he will, I will tell him I won't publish [his] letter . . . I don't see why your point is not well-taken, and I don't see why the tendency is to blow it out of all proportion. That is more disturbing in itself than the point you are trying to make, which seems perfectly rational and humane."

Whether Hansen's response is deliberately dishonest, unavoidably irrational, or simply inept, I do not know. But I do not find it constructive to the goals of factuality and rational discourse, or the least bit appropriate for publication in an ostensibly scholarly, scientific journal. I trust that you will agree, and I would appreciate hearing from you again on this point prior to your committing my letter, and Hansen's ill-conceived and defamatory reply, to print.

Sincerely,



Gary P. Posner, M.D.

Copy

JOURNAL of the
AMERICAN SOCIETY for PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Rhea A. White
EDITOR

2 Plane Tree Lane, Dix Hills, NY 11746
Telephone: (516) 271-1243

J
A
S
P
R

September 14, 1993

Dear George:

I am enclosing the copy-edited version of your response to Posner. I must say it seems not only intemperate but misguided and incorrect in its assumptions. At least, the only way I can read Posner is that he raised the (to me perfectly legitimate) possibility that sometimes people believe in the paranormal because of psychiatric illness. I don't see where he is making any blanket accusations. It could be that this might occur only once in a million cases, but the point is, whether or not it occurs or has occurred or will occur, it is potentially a legitimate explanation for the stance that some people might take. Of course it could not be diagnosed on the spot and therefore it is unlikely that a proper psychiatric diagnosis could be made at all, for purely practical reasons, but should the time, funds, and personnel be available, it could be a legitimate explanation for the belief certain people have in the paranormal or aspects of it. To me, that is all he is saying and I don't see anything wrong with it.

If others agree with me, then your rather biased view does not make you look too good, so if you want to temper your response, here is a chance to do so. If you want to persist with it, then I will publish it along with Posner's original letter and his reply to your letter in its present form. You may also reply at the same time, and that will close the correspondence.

I cannot set a publication date yet for the correspondence, because of other factors. I may have to cut back on the length of JASPR for financial reasons. I also must give higher priority to my backlog of articles and reviews. I would like to wait until I can publish this exchange with other letters in a group as I customarily have done in the past. But if there are a couple of blank pages left at the end at page proof time, I would stick it in at the last minute. Therefore it is best to finalize the correspondence so it is ready to go at a moment's notice.

To recapitulate: if you wish, you can change your response and I will send it to Posner for a reply, if he so chooses. If you stand by what you have written, I will publish Posner's original letter together your response, his reply, and if you choose, your second response.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Posner to keep him apprised.

Sincerely,

Rhea A. White
Editor, JASPR

JOURNAL of the
AMERICAN SOCIETY for PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Rhea A. White
EDITOR

2 Plane Tree Lane, Dix Hills, NY 11746
Telephone: (516) 271-1243

J
A
S
P
R

October 6, 1993

Gary P. Posner, M.D.
1113 Normandy Trace Road
Tampa, FL 33602

Dear Dr. Posner:

I enclosed a copy of the letter to Hansen with your letter. I remember checking to make sure it was in the envelope. Perhaps it got stuck or something. I am enclosing another printout.

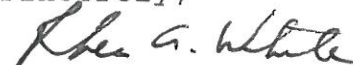
I have not written since because I am waiting to find out if Hansen is going to change his reply. I heard from him the same day as your post card. All he said was that he had shown it to a couple of people and they felt his position was not making a fool of him. But he said he would show it to a couple more people before deciding what to do.

So I can't do anything until I hear from him. Then I will let you know.

I can't promise to publish your correspondence in a specific issue until I either get some letters to publish together or find at the time I get the proof that there will be room at the end. I can't start a whole new signature for what will probably take 1 1/2 pages, not given the ASPR's present financial situation.

The January issue is almost ready to go to press. When the proofs come back in a month or so, and if I have heard from Hansen and you are ready to go ahead, I will publish it even if I have no other letters to publish but those two. That's all I can do.

Sincerely,



Rhea A. White
Editor, JASPR

P.S. Sometimes I think I must be crazy because I can see your point and the others apparently can't, but I'm too far gone now to change. I still remain confident that any sensible person reading your letter is bound to see your point no matter what Hansen writes. Otherwise blue is red and up is down. I plan to stick to the view that up is up.

To the Editor of the *Journal*:

I have just been made aware of George Hansen's (1992) article entitled "CSICOP and the Skeptics: An Overview," which on page 42 quoted from a *Skeptical Inquirer* "Letter to the Editor" in which I (Posner, 1978) had speculated that perhaps the "irrational behavior of many [I wish I had said "some"] paranormalists" may be explainable by "a thought disorder that manifests in . . . a faulty sense of reality" (p. 79). It would

be easy to infer incorrectly from Hansen's out-of-context quotes and from the sentence that follows them that I had offered this hypothesis as a blanket explanation for belief in the paranormal.

As I attempted to clarify in 1985 correspondence with Jerome Clark of the Hynek Center for UFO Studies, one of Hansen's acknowledged sources, who also had not appreciated the context of my comments when he quoted from them in an *International UFO Reporter (IUR)* editorial (see Clark, 1985), my 1978 letter was in response to remarks made by CSICOP Chairman Paul Kurtz (1978) in the *Skeptical Inquirer*. Kurtz (p. 94) had ridiculed and nominated for a "Uri Award" for "naiveté" paranormalists such as Julius Weinberger (1977), who claimed to have communicated with the dead by using a Venus flytrap as the medium.

As a compassionate physician, I suggested in my letter (Posner, 1978) that although "it is inevitable that examples arise in which Committee [CSICOP] members marvel aloud (and in print) at the 'naiveté' of the proponents in question. . . . [and while] making light of such persons by nominating them for a 'Uri Award' may seem appropriate," in cases of "bizarre intellectual behavior . . . the possibility of a true thought disorder should be considered before bestowing a 'Uri Award' for silliness or naiveté" (p. 79). Translation: One should not ridicule those who actually may be afflicted with a subtle form of mental illness, no matter how ridiculous their claims may sound. And although Clark dismissed my response to his remarks in *IUR* by accusing me of "engaging in what I can only assume is deliberate obfuscation," he did acknowledge to me that at least the Weinberger case "should be in the psychiatric [rather than the 'paranormal'] literature" (Clark, personal communication, October 11, 1985).

REFERENCES

- CLARK, J. (1985, May-June). Editorial: A crackpot enterprise. *International UFO Reporter*, p. 2.
- HANSEN, G. P. (1992). CSICOP and the skeptics: An overview. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 86, 19-63.
- KURTZ, P. (1978). Review of *Future Science: Life Energies and the Physics of Paranormal Phenomena*. *Skeptical Inquirer*, 2(2), 90-94.
- POSNER, G. (1978). Faulty sense of reality. *Skeptical Inquirer*, 3(2), 79.
- WEINBERGER, J. (1977). Apparatus communication[s] with discarnate persons. In J. White & S. Krippner (Eds.), *Future Science: Life Energies and the Physics of Paranormal Phenomena* (pp. 465-486). Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor.

GARY P. POSNER

1113 Normandy Trace Road
Tampa, Florida 33602

To the Editor of the *Journal*:

Posner objects to my quoting from his letter published in the *Skeptical Inquirer* (Posner, 1978), saying that I took it out of context. His letter cited no previous article or comment. Its "context" existed in his mind.

Now Posner clarifies his meaning and implies that notions of "bizarre intellectual behavior . . . a true thought disorder," etc. apply to Julius Weinberger (1977). Although I might have some quibbles with Weinberger's work, it is clearly described and constitutes a reasoned, rational approach. Perhaps Posner would label Thomas Edison an "ambulatory schizophrenic" for his attempts to build a machine to contact the deceased.

In his final paragraph, Posner proclaims himself to be "a compassionate physician." I feel fortunate that I am not his patient.

REFERENCES

- POSNER, G. P. (1978). Faulty sense of reality. *Skeptical Inquirer*, 3(2), 79.
- WEINBERGER, J. (1977). Apparatus communication with discarnate persons. In J. White & S. Krippner (Eds.), *Future Science: Life Energies and the Physics of Paranormal Phenomena* (pp. 465-486). Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor.

GEORGE P. HANSEN

Princeton Arms North 1, Apt. 59
Cranbury, New Jersey 08512

To the Editor of the *Journal*:

In response to the preceding reply of George Hansen to my "Letter" (see p. 181 of this *Journal*), I would point out that the "context" of my 1978 letter to the *Skeptical Inquirer* is apparent throughout. The letter began with a reference to how "Committee [CSICOP] members marvel . . . in print [i.e., in the *Skeptical Inquirer*] . . . at the 'naiveté' of the proponents [of the paranormal] in question," and concluded with a reference to CSICOP's inappropriate (perhaps) "bestowing [of the] 'Uri Award' for silliness or naiveté" (p. 79). Nowhere did I focus on the approximately 50% of Americans who are merely passive "believers in the paranormal," as Hansen's article recklessly charges.

Though Edison may have believed in life after death, and may even have attempted to build a machine to contact the deceased, I am unaware of any scientific claims on his part to have successfully and repeatedly made such contact, as Weinberger claims to have done.

If my medical colleagues were to openly ridicule a patient who believed that he was in frequent communication with the dead through the use of a Venus flytrap (or some other comparable belief), I wonder how Hansen would have me react?

GARY P. POSNER

1113 Normandy Trace Road
Tampa, Florida 33602