

## EDITORIAL

In this issue we turn to things weird and paranormal. Huge numbers of people believe in telepathy, astrology, flying saucers, religious miracles and a great many other other-wordly and occult phenomena. Indeed, a recent poll indicated that more US citizens now believe in alien abduction than believe the theory of evolution.

Are such beliefs wholly silly and irrational? Or might there be *something* to at least *some* of them?

In issue three we look particularly closely at the claim that people might be able to communicate telepathically. The parapsychologist Dean Radin argues that the experimental evidence bears this claim out. The physicist Robert Park, on the other hand, suspects parapsychologists are guilty of practising 'voodoo science'. I hope that the articles by the parapsychologists Steinkamp and Radin, the philosophers King, Penelhume and Sprigge and the physicist Park will help to get you thinking about reasonableness, evidence, and about what good science actually *is*.

We also return to the topic of *relativism*: the view what's true for one individual or community might be false for another (for example, that the claim 'Female circumcision is wrong' might be true for we Westerners but false for certain Sudanese people). Issue two contained three articles attacking relativism (by Robert Kirk, Simon Blackburn and myself). Here, the philosopher Michael Lacewing suggests that there might be more truth in *moral* relativism than we supposed. And the anthropologist David Mills explains why he believes there is still value in a form of *methodological* relativism.

Also in issue two, Mary Midgley attacked Richard Dawkins for suggesting that human beings are 'not quite real'. In 'Misunderstanding Richard Dawkins', Jeremy Stangroom argues that some of Midgley's earlier attacks on Dawkins were based on a misunderstanding of his position. Stangroom sets the record straight.

Scientists and philosophers are currently very much engaged with the problem of explaining consciousness. Just how does that walnut-shaped lump of grey matter between your ears give rise to your rich inner world of conscious experience? Many believe this to be the last great scientific mystery. In 'Wittgenstein and The Problem of Consciousness', Oswald Hanfling argues that the problem of consciousness is really a pseudo-problem. There is no scientific 'problem of consciousness'!

Finally, in 'Soham, Widdecombe and The Death Penalty', Piers Benn asks whether Anne Widdecombe's recent call for the return of the death penalty is justified.

In issue four we will be examining faith and reason. Nick Bostrom, Brian Davies, Richard Dawkins, Antony Flew, Paul Helm, Richard Norman and others will examine arguments for and against the existence of God, focusing particularly on the suggestion that the universe shows signs of intelligent design.

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