

EDITORIAL

This issue of the *Journal* is my first as Editor-in-Chief. I'm pleased, but more than a little surprised, to find myself in this position. Only a few months ago, well into the process of veering erratically toward retirement, I imagined I'd spend the next several years doing little more than what senior philosophers often do: writing memoirs, musing about big and abstract ideas, flaunting my lack of practical wisdom by publishing incompetent but more accessible reflections on everyday concerns, or just becoming tragically curmudgeonly.

So much for my predictive (or precognitive) abilities. And as it happens (actually, as it so often happens), I'm glad I got it wrong. I very much welcome the opportunity now before me. In my view, the *JSE* plays a vital role in our intellectual ecology. We continue to need a respectable forum in which qualified members of the scientific and wider academic communities can address theoretical and empirical issues that more mainstream publications are—shamefully—reluctant to touch. It's not just the complacency, smugness, and conceptual rigidity of many scientists and academics that highlights the need for a publication like this. It's also the attitude of students who are often much more curious than their mentors and also more willing to question the received wisdom of their disciplines. I'd prefer to think that the inquisitiveness and open-mindedness I find in my students marks a generational change, something that will eventually alter the overall intellectual climate and allow a journal like the *JSE* to become more mainstream (or perhaps even to render its existence totally unnecessary). But I recognize how improbable that scenario really is. It's more likely that much of this curiosity and enthusiasm will be suppressed or snuffed out, at least temporarily, in the cutthroat process of pursuing advanced degrees. For those students wanting to acquire top-notch academic credentials, a resolute (or even just declared) interest in scientific anomalies and unfashionable theories can quickly be a professional kiss of death.

Still, it can be striking to observe the conceptual gulf between students and their mentors. A few years ago I tried to give an invited lecture to my university's physics department about the evidence for psychokinesis and related philosophical topics (e.g., the nature of replicability and the concept of explanation) that I know these colleagues hadn't considered carefully. I was virtually shouted down by angry members of the physics faculty before I had gotten 10 minutes into my talk. The display I witnessed was one I've seen many times: scholars speaking, ostensibly authoritatively and derisively, about matters that they clearly knew only superficially, and whose ignorance could easily be exposed. (However, I should add that one member of the physics faculty, a renowned expert from China in nonlinear and quantum optics and laser physics, spoke up in my defense and cited studies done in his country on qigong.) Several graduate students approached me

afterwards to express their surprise and dismay at the reception I had received. They wanted to know more, and they couldn't understand why their teachers were expressing such intense anger and hostility over what seemed to them merely to be a matter of empirical and theoretical inquiry, and which in their minds deserved a more dispassionate appraisal.

Now if history is any guide (or unless I'm even more inductively challenged than I realize), before too long many of those students will have embraced the ignorant and condescending stance of their teachers. I realize that scholarly maturity too often leads to a loss of a sense of wonder over the remaining mysteries of nature. But the disparity I've often witnessed between students and their mentors isn't simply that the latter have become stale intellectually. On the contrary, I believe it's very revealing to respond, not simply with sarcasm, but with cries of outrage to a sympathetic and well-informed interest in an empirical anomaly, especially one to which genuinely serious research has obviously been devoted. That's not merely the reaction of a tired soul. In my view, that behavior betrays something much more disturbing—an expression of a deep intellectual cowardice, typically expressed as a kind of arrogant posturing. As I've mentioned elsewhere (Braude, 1997), I used to believe naïvely that scientists and philosophers were committed to discovering the truth. And as if that weren't naïve enough, I also believed that these ostensible truth-seekers would actually be pleased and perhaps even excited to learn they'd been mistaken, so long as that revelation brought them closer to their goal of getting at the truth. Although I long ago lost my innocence about that matter, I still cling to the belief that complete cynicism is unwarranted. And in fact, I've been fortunate to find a few professional societies—the Society for Scientific Exploration among them—that serve as a refuge for those who haven't lost their curiosity and excitement about the unknown, and who are willing to think outside the box and challenge various areas of received wisdom.

I've often had the opportunity to let students and audiences know about the *JSE* and to recommend that they peruse its articles. Despite my cynicism regarding the academic community and its alleged devotion to free inquiry, I continue to believe that something from the *Journal's* pages will rub off on at least some of the readers. I'm confident that they will admire the fair and careful-but-adventurous spirit of research to which the SSE is devoted and which the *JSE's* articles reveal, and I hope that many will want to emulate it and will at least eventually join both the SSE and the ranks of *JSE* authors.

So I'm very pleased to find myself now in a position where I can more actively work on behalf of the *JSE* and both protect and promote the standard of inquiry that it exemplifies. It may alter the trajectory of my declining years and delay my succumbing to a life of sloth and the joys of rampaging disillusionment and pessimism. But I can live with that.

I'm delighted, then, but hardly surprised, that my first issue as Editor-in-Chief is so stimulating. Credit for that, however, must go to my predecessor, Peter Sturrock. I've simply been fortunate to inherit the fruits of his labors. In any case, readers will find the customary intriguing mix of topics in this issue.

One final matter: To what I imagine will be the relief of some, I don't consider the editorial page of this journal as a forum for the regular expression of my views. I've had plenty of those opportunities already. However, I probably won't shun them entirely in the future, if I feel it's appropriate.

I should also mention one relatively minor editorial change I plan to enforce, and I encourage prospective authors to take note. Previous issues of the *JSE* have allowed some flexibility in the displaying of references and notes. Some papers embedded references into endnotes, whereas others confined references to a separate section following the endnotes. Henceforth, the *JSE* will adhere to that latter practice. I know and value the fact that the *JSE* is an interdisciplinary journal. But while journals in all fields typically have their own differing styles of formatting references, I don't believe there are pervasive disciplinary differences in the way references and notes are displayed. However, every first-rate journal I'm familiar with has a consistent policy concerning the display of notes and references, and from now on, so will the *JSE*. References must be confined to their own section following endnotes, and papers not conforming to that practice but otherwise accepted for publication will remain unpublished until the author(s) makes the appropriate revisions.

Finally, let me add that I'm very grateful to my predecessors, Henry Bauer and Peter Sturrock, for their encouragement, counsel, and support as I take on the job of Editor-in-Chief. Peter has been especially generous with his time (and patience) in preparing me for this role. Thanks also to SSE President Garret Moddel for his unjustifiably flattering expressions of confidence as he tried to convince me to take on this job. I'm also fortunate to have a first-rate editorial staff to assist me as I learn the ropes. Assistant Managing Editor Kristen Jarboe has done some truly heroic hand-holding, and retired (but hardly forgotten) Managing Editor Joy Richmond and her worthy successor Eleanor Lohmann have also been a delight to work with. I very much look forward to our continued collaboration.

Reference

- Braude, S. E. (1997). *The Limits of Influence: Psychokinesis and the Philosophy of Science* (Rev. ed.). Lanham, New York & London: University Press of America.

