FASHION 2001
JONAS SALK SPEAKS OUT
SMART DINOSAURS
4TH-DIMENSION CHAIRS
THE NEW SILICONOMY
PAST-LIFE SKIING
To the Editor,

Keith M. Hearne (JSPR, June 1982) is correct in pointing out that a number of investigators who have studied hypnosis, notably T. X. Barber and his followers, do not believe there is any need to postulate any special "state" underlying hypnotic phenomena. As someone who has been involved in modern hypnosis research for 20 years, however, I would like to balance this point by noting that Barber's views are not accepted by many of the leading investigators studying hypnosis or by the majority of clinicians using it. I and other prominent investigators consider much of Barber's research biased in favor of "explaining away" hypnosis in a way that makes it methodologically inadequate, and so of much more limited applicability than it is generally credited with. Many of us consider that in some individuals hypnosis is, indeed, an altered state of consciousness. In other individuals, hypnotic-like behavior can indeed be manifested as part of their ordinary functioning, and it simply confuses the issue to attribute an altered state to these latter people.

The important thing is not to use the term hypnosis too glibly: it has been used far too broadly in the past. We need to assess the actual changes in individuals' mental states that go along with processes traditionally associated with inducing hypnosis, not simply assume that an altered state occurs automatically: it does not. Fuller discussions can be found in my States of Consciousness book (Tart, 1975) as well as elsewhere (Tart, 1972a; 1972b; 1978; 1979; 1980). As I have argued repeatedly, a sophisticated use of hypnosis (Tart, 1980) may have great potentials for enhancing psi functioning.

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References:


