

GELLER

URI

Superminds

A Scientist Looks at the Paranormal.

By John Taylor.

Illustrated. 183 pp.

New York: Viking Press. \$10.95.

John Taylor is professor of mathematics at King's College, London. His credentials as an authority on certain

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aspects of physics, including black holes, are impressive. In this book he attempts to find explanations for various paranormal phenomena, which he believes in without question.

Much of "Superminds" centers on the effects produced by Uri Geller, the young Israeli showman who claims to demonstrate telepathy and the psychokinetic bending of metal objects both in public, money-making performances and private "controlled" sessions under the scrutiny of scientists.

In trying to evaluate the productions of Geller and other "psychics," investigators must always consider the possibility of fraud, either conscious or unconscious. According to professional magicians, who are masters of fraud, scientists are especially easy to fool because they think in predictable ways. Scientists who set out to investi-

gate Geller and others like him should, therefore, have professional magicians on their team. Surprisingly, they almost never do.

Professor Taylor dismisses the possibility that Geller and others tricked him as insignificant and goes on to elaborate possible physical mechanisms for the wonders he has seen, including some variant of electromagnetism produced by the "superminds" among us.

James Randi, an American magician who has dogged Geller and branded him a fake, has just published his own account of Gellerism, "The Magic of Uri Geller," (Ballantine; paper, \$1.75). In it he reveals Geller's history as a professional stage magician, analyzes the "controlled" experiments on him, and gives his own nonwonderful explanations for the effects. He also

describes a visit to Professor Taylor, whom he calls "very gullible" and careless in taking precautions against trickery. Of course, this is not to say that none of what Geller does is real, but Taylor should have been a lot less credulous before he started monkeying with electromagnetic theory.

"Superminds" is lavishly illustrated, sometimes with bizarre photographs of small relevance to the text, such as pictures of mediums producing ectoplasm from their mouths and ears. The ectoplasm looks like gauze or rags, of the sort exposed as such by Harry Houdini in his classic debunking of mediums.

Morals: 1) Scientists should stick to their fields of expertise. 2) It takes a magician to catch a magician. ■

