



Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances

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*Of the uncertainty after all, that we might be deluded,
That maybe reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That maybe identity beyond the grave is but a beautiful fable only,
Maybe the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills, shining and flowing waters,
The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, maybe these are (as doubtless they are)
only apparitions, and the real something has yet to be known.*

— Walt Whitman

This month's edition of *Psychiatric Annals* is honored to present a second in a series discussing statistical methods in psychiatry and behavioral sciences. This edition is again very ably guest edited by Robert D. Gibbons, PhD, who has brought together a group of some of the world's cutting edge statisticians who created a series of articles that should be basis for our attempts to comprehend reality in the arena of psychiatric treatment.

The approach to reality by clinicians consists of steps toward their clinical enlightenment. The first step is: It worked for me once — or it worked for my buddy, Igor — I'll try it; nothing else is working. The second step to enlightenment is — think, "I'll check Pubmed on my computer to see what's been published on this."

The third step to enlightenment is to be able to interpret the studies available on Pubmed to reach the highest stage of clinical reality for our patient's treatment and turn those interpretations into clinical experience. Note the examples that were presented in this

series that found using the correct statistical approach found an important treatment effect that would have been missed using less powerful statistical approaches. Once at the gates of enlightenment, if you blindly accept what you are told, without understanding the limitations of the data presented to you, you may be deluded, just as my friend Walt Whitman worried.

The final step to scientific enlightenment is what this series is about. This series should not only be read, it should be re-read. It should be studied, preserved — maybe with nitrogen — it is that valuable. What keeps us from reaching pure enlightenment is the problem of interpretation of what is presented to us. Goodness knows, there is no shortage of information. It does or should require some effort for most of us to interpret the truth in it. Anyone taking the time and effort to appreciate this series will join me in thanking Robert Gibbons and his colleagues for gifting us with his issue of *Psychiatric Annals*.

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