

## Tutorial

Confused about the difference between science, pseudo-science and all that? Fear not, with Teresa Heinz Kerry's **help**, we can now present a short tutorial:

Heinz Kerry ended with what she called "a highly effective" remedy for arthritis that drew laughter and some skepticism from the audience.

That laughter and scepticism were **science**.

"You get some gin and get some white raisins — and only white raisins — and soak them in the gin for two weeks," she said. "Then eat nine of the raisins a day."

That was **magical thinking**.

Despite the laughter, Dr. Steven Phillips, director of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Nevada quickly supported the prescription.

That was the **politicisation of science**.

Phillips, on stage with Heinz Kerry as part of the panel, said sulfur and sulfides found in grapes are increased by the alcohol and could perhaps alleviate joint pain.

That was **scientism**.

Dr. Michael Gerber, a noted homeopathic doctor

That was **pseudo-science**.

in Reno, also said the formula has merit.

"It makes sense," said Gerber from his office. "People go to hot springs to soak in the water and that water is very high in sulfur. So Mrs. Kerry's remedy is pretty plausible."

That was **bad science**.

Dolores Jackson of Reno, a Kerry supporter who attended the rally, took the raisin and gin remedy seriously.

"There are really other remedies where we don't have to

use so many drugs," Jackson said. "I really believe in alternative medicine."

And that was old-fashioned gullibility. Alas, there's a lot of it about.

Sat, 10/16/2004 - 01:02 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

## query

Phillips, on stage with Heinz Kerry as part of the panel, said sulfur and sulfides found in grapes are increased by the alcohol and could perhaps alleviate joint pain.

That was scientism.

Don't understand - why is this bit scientism?

by [Tom Robinson](#) on Sat, 10/16/2004 - 02:14 | [reply](#)

## Re: query

OK perhaps that one was a bit of a stretch. We usually define scientism as the purported use of science to resolve non-scientific issues, especially moral issues. But a closely related pattern of irrationality, for which there is no specific name at present, is the purported explanation of mystical, magical, fraudulent etc claims for which there is no evidence by postulating a physical mechanism for which there is no evidence. Thus people say 'maybe telepathy exists and is caused by electromagnetic communication between one brain and another -- after all, brains are electrical'. Or they say 'maybe Teresa's gin-raisins really are "highly effective" against arthritis -- after all, some raisins contain sulphur and some researchers hope that some sulphur-containing drugs might have a beneficial effect on arthritis'.

by [Editor](#) on Sat, 10/16/2004 - 03:05 | [reply](#)

## And note that even the "scien

And note that even the "scientism" explanation couldn't explain why ONLY white raisins. I mean, right? --Blix

by a reader on Sat, 10/16/2004 - 03:38 | [reply](#)

## Only white raisins? Sounds l

Only white raisins? Sounds like scieracism to me.

by a reader on Sun, 10/17/2004 - 15:07 | [reply](#)

## anti-racism

actually, b/c most raisins are black, and have been for ages, it's

anti-racism to advocate for the under-represented white raisins.  
they are just victims and need a boost now to restore equality.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Sun, 10/17/2004 - 17:06 | [reply](#)

## There is now

"But a closely related pattern of irrationality, for which there is no specific name at present, is the purported explanation of mystical, magical, fraudulent etc claims for which there is no evidence by postulating a physical mechanism for which there is no evidence."

The Geller-Taylor syndrome.

by **Alan Furman** on Mon, 10/18/2004 - 11:31 | [reply](#)

## Elliot, Try and tell the S

Elliot,

Try and tell the South African black raisins that a minority can't be the beneficiaries of racism.

by a reader on Tue, 10/19/2004 - 14:49 | [reply](#)

## d00d i was joking

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Tue, 10/19/2004 - 19:32 | [reply](#)

## gin raisins - and running!

This recipe was given to me by a friend when I had mentioned all my new aches and pains as I increased my miles while training for a marathon. Amazingly enough, after weeks of eating my raisins (although I covered them and some gin remains in them) my aches and pains are gone. My hips and knee feel better from the raisins - more so then when I was taking the "now bad for you" Celebrex.

by a reader on Sat, 12/18/2004 - 13:08 | [reply](#)