

**Shrink Rap Radio #122, December 3, 2007, Shrink Rap Radio LIVE! #1  
David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” and Jerry Trumbule, M.A.,  
ABD**

(transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Susan Argyelan)

**Dr. Dave:** Surprise, everyone! Here’s an unexpected bonus show for you. As you know, I’ve been planning to do a live call-in show using BlogTalkRadio. So, my friend, Jerry Trumbule, and I decided to do a trial run today, December 2, in preparation for the one that we’ve announced this coming Sunday, December 9. Well, we recorded today’s trial run, and I thought I’d put it out here in the feed to share with you all. We didn’t get any call-ins, but we did have ten listeners drop by, according to the BlogTalk stats. I’ll give you more info about joining us for next Sunday’s show, and I hope you will, after you listen to today’s show. The time flew by for Jerry and me, and I think we had a very good, unscripted interaction that you’ll enjoy. And, because this is a recording of a recording, the sound isn’t great, but it is intelligible. I’ve skipped over most of the part where we introduce ourselves. Let’s jump in on the tail end of that, where Jerry is finishing up the description of Shrink Rap Radio. Take it away, Jerry!

**Trumbule:** I think anything that has the word “psychology” in it, is in your purview. I’ve been amazed at the variety. In fact, that’s what I love about the show. I have my own particular area of interest in psychology, but listening to your – what is it, 120 shows now?

**Dr. Dave:** No. 121, actually, just went up.

**Trumbule:** 121...

**Dr. Dave:** Yep.

**Trumbule:** I’m blown away by the new ideas that I hear from your guests, things that I wouldn’t have normally even considered, and often it inspires me to do some additional research, you know, from an Internet point of view, following up on things like lucid dreaming and other areas that I do have an interest in. And then, like I say, opening up new areas.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, that’s great, and I get that feedback from listeners as well. I was just reading an article in my morning paper about iTunes University. There was a big story in there. I don’t know if you’re aware of it, but quite a few – I don’t know, “quite a few,” but that might be too big a claim. But a number of leading universities are making certain lecture series by professors available through iTunes, so I was inspired by that. Well, first of all, the reason I bring it up now is, I was, the thought flitted through my mind: well, jeez, maybe Shrink Rap Radio should be part of iTunes University just because it *is* so educational.

**Trumbule:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** However, since it's not been sponsored by a university as part of a university lecture series, that's probably unlikely. But it is, I think, fully as educational as some of the content I hear there. I know you're interested in theoretical physics, so I was looking at, there is a lecture series there on theoretical physics. And so, I just tapped into it a little bit this morning, to see... Actually, it's a video one, so the guy was up at the blackboard – or the whiteboard, in this case – and I wanted to see, hmm, how much math do you need to know? (laughs)

**Trumbule:** Right. That's always the question, isn't it? (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs) Yeah, right, in order to follow this thing, so... And, indeed, the first thing, he went up there and he started writing an equation, and then he started talking about the differential equation...

**Trumbule:** Oh, yes...calculus, calculus!

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah...(laughs) You know, and I had, I took calculus, actually, late in life.

**Trumbule:** Yes...(laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Not so long ago. But you know what? I couldn't remember what the heck it was.

**Trumbule:** (laughs) Yeah, right.

**Dr. Dave:** So I dropped out of that one. Then, I looked at one, I looked at one on existentialism. There is this professor who's very highly rated at Cal Berkeley, a philosopher, and so I tuned in a little bit on a couple of his, just to kind of pick up on the flavor of it.

**Trumbule:** Yeah, that's really an interesting idea. I think it was a couple years ago, MIT announced that they were putting all of their coursework on the Internet for free.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Trumbule:** And I was going, like, wow! That's totally amazing! Because as you know, I have a somewhat jaded view of "the Academy..."

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Trumbule:** ...in that it seems, in some cases, that basically, you're buying a piece of paper, and you're paying with four years of your time. And, this idea means that

you can now get the information, and presumably the education, for free. You still can't get the degree...

**Dr. Dave:** Exactly.

**Trumbule:** And, to me, it makes it more obvious that the degree is just a receipt for probably what amounts to, these days, \$60,000, \$70,000 over a period of four years.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, it's not only a receipt, though, but it's also an "e-ticket," (laughs) you know. Like in Disneyland, you get to go on the good rides if you have the ticket.

**Trumbule:** That's about it, yeah. But I think it's, I mean, this broadening of information, education, it's just fantastic to me. In fact, ever since 1980, when I first got into computers, I spend very few hours that I'm *not* on the computer. And people have criticized that and said, "Well, you need to get a life."

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Trumbule:** And the other day, I read an article about the "online life" of people, and I thought, well, yeah... that's more like what I do. Because when I wake up in the morning, I feel like – and I turn on my computer, and I jump right on the Internet; start doing whatever it is that I have planned for the day, or *not* planned – I feel like I've stuck my head into the biggest library in the universe...

**Dr. Dave:** Exactly!

**Trumbule:** ...where everything is available in just one or two clicks away. And, I do indulge in – I guess "surfing" is what you call it. I wander around, but I find the most amazing things when I do that.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, right! And you know, this article that I was reading about, iTunes University, they gave the example of a long-haul trucker who's been taking this complete course in philosophy and existentialism, and also the course in quantum physics...

**Trumbule:** Wow...

**Dr. Dave:** You know, and to think of how ideal it is for this guy. He doesn't have an iPod, by the way. I know you are allergic to everything that starts with the letter "i."

**Trumbule:** (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs) And, he's using some other set-up, and he has it set up in the cab of his truck so that it's playing through a stereo loudspeaker system.

**Trumbule:** Wow...

**Dr. Dave:** And so here's this guy, you know, he's spending hours and hours on the road, and he's getting an education from top scholars in the land.

**Trumbule:** Wow. That is truly amazing. Yeah, you've got to love it. It's kind of like the democratization, I guess, of information, of education. Because in the past, it's always been basically a wealthy person's endeavor; and then, of course, as the university system began to open up community colleges, two-year programs and so on, it became more "democratic" with a small "d." And now, it's like you can learn anything you want. And, when I see the kids – I mean, I've been blown away by six-year-olds whipping around on the Internet, looking up stuff and getting more and more information. I just, I think it's going to lead to a generation of well-informed, maybe not geniuses, but it'll certainly be a big step forward from what it has been in the past, where you had to go to a library, check out a book... Not an impossible thing to do, but nonetheless, it's kind of some planning involved in that. And now, it's just, oh, I think I want to find out; go to Google, boom-boom-boom-boom, there ya go. You've got a whole list of resources to check out.

**Dr. Dave:** And, the amazing thing, too, now, is that if you have an iPhone, or you have a laptop computer and a wi-fi connection, it's portable. You could be, you know, most anyplace in the world or the country, and you have access to this vast storehouse of human information, knowledge, history, etc. It's funny, sometimes I reflect that we *live* in the future. We live in the scientific future that, you know, we read about that would have been science fiction when we were kids...

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** ...and it would've been kind of mind-blowing science fiction. And it's amazing how the human mind so quickly adapts to things that we just become totally blasé. You know, like, well, duh... (laughs)

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...yeah. Yeah, yeah. In fact, interestingly enough, I saw recently an article about the growth of Internet users, which you would expect, well, of course it's the young people, but no. The fastest-growing segment is the older people, 55 and up.

**Dr. Dave:** That's interesting, and marketers don't seem to tumble onto that. You know, I have, I wear another hat, in which I'm a marketing research consultant.

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** And, often the people who hire me, they're still wanting to pitch everything to the younger crowd, and they don't seem cognizant of what you just said, that so many of the people who are online, in fact, are in an older demographic.

**Trumbule:** Yeah, they don't get it yet, but I think they will, soon enough. Let's face it, although the young have a lot of money for discretionary spending, the old people have a lot more. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Hey, we have more! Yes, we do. (laughs)

**Trumbule:** Really. They'll... I'm sure you'll see a shift. Just to give you an example, I get these questionnaires to fill out, and I would get paid five or ten dollars for filling out the questionnaire. And, I learned of that link through you and your show, and you warned me that I would probably find that I wouldn't qualify for some of these questionnaires because of my age.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Trumbule:** And indeed, that is almost always true. I am 67; I put in my real age. And, after two or three more questions, then I'm told I don't qualify, so I don't get to take the quiz. So, it seems they haven't learned the lesson yet, but I'm guessing they've got their ear to the ground and they will figure this out soon.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, while we're on this topic of the Internet and how it's changing us, and all of the electronics and so on, I just, I think it was in Scientific American Mind. I just got the latest issue, and I think I saw a note in there that somebody's done some research with women and videogames. They exposed a group of women to a certain sort of action-oriented videogame – I think it was some sort of World War II-type game; I don't remember the exact name of it. But you know, typically women score poorly on tests that have to do with spatial relationships...

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** ...that is, in comparison to men. And, they found that after 10 hours of experiencing this videogame, the women came up to score comparably with men, in terms of some standardized test of spatial orientation.

**Trumbule:** That is really interesting. In fact, along the same line, I remember reading that surgeons these days who use these microscopic instruments, if they have a history of playing videogames, they do a lot better in the surgery, or at least in the learning process of this microsurgery stuff. So, it's interesting what you, the study you just quoted, because I'm amazed it only takes ten hours to get them up to speed.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, and of course, I don't think this study did a follow-up to see how long either how far that new learning generalized, or how long it persists. So, of course, there would need to be additional research to follow up on that. You know, while we're talking about things read in magazines, and science and all of that, I want to share with you and any potential listeners – and by the way, you know, I think this

will be archived, and I may just also “re-purpose” it and send it out. So, this will *not* go to waste.

**Trumbule:** Okay, good, good.

**Dr. Dave:** So, the current issue of The New Yorker magazine – I want to alert you and everybody who might eventually hear this – the December 3, 2007 issue of The New Yorker has one of the most astounding articles I think I’ve ever read. It starts on page 64, in their section called Annals of Science, and it’s titled “Darwin’s Surprise,” and the subtitle, “Why Are Evolutionary Biologists Bringing Back Extinct Deadly Viruses?”

**Trumbule:** (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** That’s a good question, and...

**Trumbule:** Yeah! (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** And some...

**Trumbule:** What’s the answer to *that* one? (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Well...(laughs) I don’t know! It’s pretty scary. It was like, “Hey, why are you even telling us...?” They even give a nod to the fact that yeah, terrorists could make use of this information! Okay, thanks, New Yorker, for printing this, then.

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** But, you know, of course there’s always that positive potential upside that the reason they’re doing it is because – you know, kind of cut to the chase – it is that there is the potential of developing vaccines against such viral diseases as AIDS and other viruses. But, the thing that’s fascinating me about this article – and I don’t even fully grasp it and incorporate it yet, because it is way out of my field of expertise...but, it’s in a popular magazine, though, so it’s certainly expressed that a person like me can understand it – is the extent to which viruses, which are somewhere between life and “not life...”

**Trumbule:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** They’re not alive in any sense that we would normally think of as life, but what I get from these articles, this article, is that the virus is able to, that it has a parasitic relationship such that it gets inside a cell and then it takes over that cell, and it starts replicating itself like crazy.

**Trumbule:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** And these viruses are millions of years old.

**Trumbule:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** Billions of years old. (laughs) They're among the oldest things on the planet, and the degree to which they have shaped human evolution... This is what the news is to me, that they can get in there – these retroviruses – and they can mess with the DNA and mess with things that are heritable. So, here's yet another level at which we're not as much in control of what we think and who we are and our personalities, etc., as maybe we imagine. Maybe these little buggers are in charge!

**Trumbule:** It may well be. In fact, along the same lines, I can't remember the details – I blogged about this at one point; I'd have to look it up – but most cats carry a certain virus. And, what they found was that the virus can jump from cats to rats. And, they also found that when it's in the rats, it makes them like cats. So, in other words, it kind of modifies their behavior so they lose some of their fear of cats; therefore, making them more susceptible to be *eaten* by cats. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Trumbule:** And, the theory was that the same virus can affect people, and of course, you do have some people who are staunch cat lovers. And actually, I told this story to my daughter and my granddaughter because they have cats, and they were, “Oh, no, that's not it!” But they, it's common knowledge that pregnant women should not change litter boxes, and that's the reason, because of this virus that's carried by cats. It's I guess during the first trimester, or something like that, when women are susceptible to it. And, it can have an effect on the unborn child. So, yeah, it's interesting to think that these little machines, these little viruses, are grinding away at something that we're not even aware of (laughs) and maybe, you know, “Oh, look at that cute little kitty!” (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, right. Well, in a different article, I read something about people who are chocolate lovers, or “addicted” to chocolate. In fact, that addiction – and I think I might be one of those people – is driven by some sort of microbial activity in their gut, that some people have certain microbes in their gut.

**Trumbule:** I read that same article. And, I truly believe...in fact, where have I seen this, I don't know, but we're a collection of bacteria, viruses, and then, of course, our own cells. But, we are totally inhabited by these other creatures.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Trumbule:** And then to point out we like to think that we're in charge. In fact, I see more and more evidence every day that we're *not* in charge. In fact, I think our conscious mind, if you want to use that term, is basically just this little [homunculus](#) sitting on the top, and the rest of it's all running off by itself, sort of half out of

control, with the immune system, for example, being the most critical part. And, if we don't get enough sleep, for example, our immune system goes down, other organisms get to attack us, and so on. Man, it's almost like we're trying to marshal the forces of this large army – our own cells – but we really don't have the ability to do it! (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, and the interesting thing to me is that Freud, you know, made that assertion early on, that only about 5%, you know, of who we think we are is... You know, I guess his assertion was that 95% of what we do is for unconscious reasons. And so, he might not have...you know... Obviously, he didn't have access to everything that we know now about what's going on underneath the surface, but, you know, he was on the right track with the idea...

**Trumbule:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...that hey, there's a lot going on beneath the surface that we're not aware of that's directing our behavior.

**Trumbule:** Totally, I think it's totally correct. In fact, the... Here's a question for you, Dr. Dave. Do you think that if we – if humans – did not have language, that we would have consciousness? Now, I know that's a big one. That's a good one to throw at you off the cuff, here...

**Dr. Dave:** It is! Dr. Dave always gets nervous when people start off questions with, "Now tell me, Dr. Dave..."

**Trumbule:** (laughs) Yeah!

**Dr. Dave:** Dr. Dave puts on his armor at that point! (laughs)

**Trumbule:** I was just reflecting on this idea that consciousness is this voice in our head, talking simultaneously with everything else; kind of monitoring who we are, what we do, how we interact. And then, I was wondering, okay, we, I mean, this question has come up a lot: Do "lower organisms," as we call them, do they have consciousness? And clearly, they do; you know, self-awareness – however you want to define it – anyone who's ever owned a dog can look at their dog and tell that their dog is thinking certain things. And, do they have self-awareness? I don't know. I just, I'm just wondering how much consciousness depends upon language.

**Dr. Dave:** Right. Well, that's a great question. And, it just so happens that I was – and this may be a slightly tangential answer – but I was listening to a podcast interview just yesterday, as I was driving down to San Francisco. And, it was the Australian podcast series that I really love – and anybody who's really interested in psychology should know about this one, though they shouldn't listen to it to the *exclusion* of Shrink Rap Radio (laughs)...

**Trumbule:** Oh, of course not!

**Dr. Dave:** ...in addition to. It's called All in the Mind. Comes out of Australia. And the interviewer was interviewing [Steven Pinker](#), who is a psychologist at Harvard University, and he's written several books, and he's got one that's just come out that's all about language and thought.

**Trumbule:** Mmm, mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** And he was making the point that thought does exist, independent of language.

**Trumbule:** Okay.

**Dr. Dave:** And to me, that really registered. As a matter of fact, I commented on there. I kind of stopped it and commented to my wife, who was also in the car. Because I remember when I was an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, where you and I first met long ago...

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm... Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** ...and I remember, I think I remember a composition teacher saying to me or saying to some student in there – some student probably raised what is a common undergraduate complaint when they get marked down on an essay: “Yeah, well, I knew what I was trying to say. I just didn't, I didn't express it that well. But I really do understand it in some complexity.” And the standard professorial rejoinder is, “If you can't say it, then you don't really know it.”

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** Basically, that's the version. But evidently, psychology has now come to a place that kind of, can refute that idea; that in fact, it's possible to know things that you *can't* articulate very well. And certainly we see that in certain kinds of learning disabilities, or aphasia, where we know people maybe have...that there's certain kinds of knowledge that's locked up in the brain, but that people aren't able to express.

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** But that maybe bears a little bit on the question that you asked.

**Trumbule:** I think so. In fact, you can imagine an emotional feeling without words, when you were saying that people can experience things and then not be able to describe them. Yeah, close your eyes, and reach out and feel a surface, and then how would you communicate that feeling, that sensation, in words? You could

stumble around and probably say, “Well, it feels smooth,” but that’s just a label you’re sticking on it. You’re not really describing the feeling, the sensation...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah.

**Trumbule:** So I can imagine that dogs, for example, are having all kinds of feelings, sensations. They’re also having emotions, and they just don’t have the layer of words...but maybe their language of barking gives them some mechanism to communicate. I always am drawn to the conclusion that the biggest mistake that humans have consistently made – and it goes way back in history – is to consider themselves the center of the universe, or the highest on the [phylogenetic](#) scale...

**Dr. Dave:** Right, right.

**Trumbule:** We’re always making the assumption that this little guy inside of us, or this little girl inside of us, is really the king of the universe. (laughs) And everything centers around us. I had a discussion about religion recently, and one of my pet peeves – although I don’t think people should have peeves as pets –

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, right! (laughs)

**Trumbule:** One of my pet peeves is the idea that a lot of religious people have, that somehow, they are in contact with God – they get messages to and from God – their life is God-driven, and I’m going, “Like who do you think you *are*, you know?” (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Right.

**Trumbule:** That God has selected you from all the little piles of cells in the universe, and he’s just checking you out and going to help your football team win? I don’t think so.

**Dr. Dave:** Right.

**Trumbule:** I don’t think so.

**Dr. Dave:** But, you know, this observation immediately branches out in several directions. One is the animal thread that I want to stay with. And then, before we got onto the show, here, you had mentioned something about alien abduction (laughs) that kind of relates to the God idea, so I want to go to that next.

**Trumbule:** Okay.

**Dr. Dave:** But before we do that, touching on the animal thing, again, in the current issue of Scientific American Mind – which I think is a great magazine, and I wish they would sponsor my show; I’m still trying to talk them into that, because I’m

sure I could sign up a lot of subscribers for them. I'm giving them a free plug right now.

**Trumbule:** I'm writing it down right now!

**Dr. Dave:** Okay! (laughs) There is a nice little sort of column piece here about Alex, the African gray parrot.

**Trumbule:** I know Alex.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, the famous Alex, who evidently died recently.

**Trumbule:** Yes.

**Dr. Dave:** He died 20 years before he was expected to die because he caught an arterial disease, which took away his little life.

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** And, he was a controversial bird, but most psychologists were – all but the most sort of hard-headed ones – were persuaded that in fact, he had linguistic and thinking skills...

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** ...because he was able to – oh, we have a guest here. How wonderful! I see we've got Guest 175, it says: "Sorry I'm late." And let's see, there's a way... Do you have a chat screen open, Jerry, where you're able..."

**Trumbule:** No.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, here's what I can type. I'm just going to type, "Welcome. So glad you found us. Are you a regular Shrink Rap listener?" I'll ask.

**Trumbule:** Okay. I'm not seeing this...

**Dr. Dave:** You're not seeing it?

**Trumbule:** Is this on the BlogTalk site?

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, and...oh! It's Anne the Man in Israel!

**Trumbule:** Oh, good.

**Dr. Dave:** And, so Anne is a regular listener, and so I'm so glad that you've joined us, and I want to finish this thought that I was just into with Jerry, here. But it's

wonderful to know that at least one person (laughs) is listening, and all the way in Israel. How wonderful. Here I am, in the San Francisco Bay Area, and Jerry is in Colorado, in the Denver area?

**Trumbule:** Yes, yes. Yes, and I'm familiar with [Anne the Man](#) through your website and the comments he's made in the Comments section. So, I kind of feel a connection with him...just through Shrink Rap Radio.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. And he reviews the Shrink Rap Radio episodes pretty regularly on his website that he's devoted to reviews. And he's also a real smart guy! He has a Ph.D.

**Trumbule:** (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** So we have to be real careful. (laughs)

**Trumbule:** Are we going to be able to hear him talk, or is it just text?

**Dr. Dave:** Right now, it's text. Anne, I'm under the impression that there is a button that you can click on, somewhere on the site. He types, "Thanks." I don't know why you can't see this chat, Jerry. You should be able to see it.

**Trumbule:** I'm movin' around on the site, trying to find it...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah. Somewhere, there's a place where you should be able to get on and see the chat.

**Trumbule:** Okay.

**Dr. Dave:** He says he's going to have to drop off for a moment...

**Trumbule:** Okay.

**Dr. Dave:** So, maybe he'll be back with us. But at any rate, I'm going to get back to the story of Alex, the African gray parrot...

**Trumbule:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...because this parrot had a huge vocabulary. I've forgotten just how big it was, and they don't say that here. But for example, they say that he was able to think in ways that seemed really inventive. Now, they said he could apply newly learned concepts to novel situations. Often, he used his limited vocabulary in inventive ways. For instance, when presented with an apple for the first time, he reported called it a "bannery" (ph), a portmanteau of the familiar labels "banana" and "cherry."

**Trumbule:** Wow! I love it! (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs) Yeah! Yeah! So he, you know, it would be hard to account for that simply in terms of a stimulus/response conditioning, or some other, you know, non-linguistic model. Now here's an interesting thing, and maybe you'll know something about this. They say, "To teach Alex to talk, psychologist [Irene Pepperberg](#) of Brandeis University refined the [model-rival technique...](#)" I hadn't heard of that technique before. Have you?

**Trumbule:** Well, interestingly enough, my daughter-in-law was – and still is – highly interested in parrots and has worked with Irene Pepperberg...

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, my goodness.

**Trumbule:** ...and I got a copy of her book – I'm looking up the name of it right now – regarding her body of work, the studies that she's done. And Janet asked me to read the book because she knew of my background in behavioral psychology. And so, I read the book. I wanted to approach it with an open mind, and I was totally blown away. I was totally convinced by Pepperberg's work that she was getting to the heart of the matter with this model-rival technique. It takes two trainers and the bird sitting together, and the parrot is kind of in the role of the student and tries to reproduce the behavior that they've just seen from the model.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, it reminds me of Bandura's work because there's a kind of vicarious learning going on evidently...

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** ...where, you know, somebody is learning by seeing another learner learn...

**Trumbule:** Yes, yes.

**Dr. Dave:** ...is what I got from it. So, this will reinforce what you just said. So, going back to this, "To teach Alex to talk, psychologist Irene Pepperberg of Brandeis University refined the model-rival technique, in which a third party demonstrates the correct response and competes for the teacher's attention. Sometimes, this third party was another scientist in Pepperberg's lab; sometimes, it was Alex..." who's the African parrot "...helping to train a younger bird." Now, this is interesting. "This role reversal is such a powerful learning tool that clinicians are now successfully using the technique with autistic children, extending Alex's scientific contribution far beyond the study of bird brains."

**Trumbule:** Wow. Fantastic. In fact, it's interesting: I, because of this relationship – as I mentioned, my daughter-in-law, Janet, having worked with Irene Pepperberg – she would often talk about the back story, which was the rejection of Pepperberg's work because of the scientific community's inability, basically, to grasp what was

going on. And I know, for example, she worked at MIT for a while, and then she couldn't get grants to continue her work. And there was a time when she really had no base for conducting her research because the typical psychologists – and there's probably no such thing – but they are not ready to listen to the facts of the matter. They're, you know, science is notorious for ignoring important new discoveries because they didn't fit with the old models. And they just rejected out of hand that a bird *brain* – specifically a bird brain – could have language ability because the brain is different – smaller, of course – and centers that we think of as being language centers are not there. And so, on that basis and others, they just said, “No, this is, they're not really using language.” The same arguments were used with the chimpanzee that recently, I think, recently passed away, who had a large vocabulary and could pass the tests of language use – not just “parroting” (laughs), interesting word, what they heard, but actually using them in the construction of new sentences. And I think that's what you were just talking about.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow. Hey, by the way, we have another listener in here, Karen – Karen O. – I'm not sure if she's a regular Shrink Rap Radio listener or if she's just kind of stumbled upon this episode here. Let us know, Karen, in the chat room. Says she's from something called “Sanity Squad.” (laughs) You know, that's interesting...

**Trumbule:** Wow.

**Dr. Dave:** That must be another show. And unfortunately, she said she came early and then got involved with something else...

**Trumbule:** Hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** ...and so evidently has missed a bunch of this. So, yes, it's too bad. Too often in the history of science, you know, at least initially, major important discoveries such as this one that we've just been talking about kind of get shoved to the side...

**Trumbule:** Mm-hmm...

**Dr. Dave:** ...but then later, you know, will be recognized.

**Trumbule:** Yeah, I've forgotten the exact sequence, but there's this sequence that people talk about of rejection, and then – I've forgotten all the stages – but eventually, it gets to acceptance. And then, it gets to claiming that they discovered it first. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Yes! Exactly! (laughs) Exactly, yes. Well, look, we've got maybe five more minutes left, and I know that alien abductions was something on your topic list...(inaudible)

**Trumbule:** Yeah, I recently met an interesting person, seemingly sane, and she had written a book. And she asked me if I wanted to read it. It's still in manuscript form, and I did. And the story was interesting, but a sidelight to the story was a person she met who, from the beginning, she thought seemed sort of alien in his ways. There was something about his skin that she noticed; she said it looked like it had Saran Wrap on it. And then she describes an experience where she was talking to him one time, and the iris of his eyes turned gold and filled in completely – it filled the pupil in – and turned square.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow!

**Trumbule:** And then, and she was like totally blown away while this was happening. And then, and then it would slowly fade away. And this happened on a number of occasions. Then, later – years and years later – she met another guy who asked her if she wanted to go up to a place near Sequoia National Park. And they went up there, and then he, after a couple hours of talking, he said, “Do you want to see where the spaceships land?” And of course, she said, “Yeah! Let's go.” So, they drove over to a place that she called a “rift” in the mountain, where they could observe, and sure enough, a spaceship came and landed. And they were able to observe it, and I asked her to describe it. And it was pretty much round, hovering – you could hear an electronic, or electric hum kind of a sound. And she didn't see any creatures. It had, the spaceship had lights on it – pretty classic description of a spaceship – and then it went away. And I said, “Well, can we go back there?” (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Trumbule:** And she said she didn't think she could find it again, because she wasn't driving. But I got on Google Earth, Sequoia National Park, and kind of tooling around, and I found a place called Split Mountain. And I don't know if that's the place she described or not. But in discussing this with her, I was thinking, “Is this person just totally delusional? Are they, are they actually seeing these things? Are they misinterpreting something? Or what's going on here?” So I thought I would ask Dr. Dave!

**Dr. Dave:** Well. (laughs) You know, that's a big question, and I don't have the ultimate answer to it, but I'm... There is a guy who recently passed away, and I'm going to block on his name – it's John something. And he was a psychiatrist at Harvard University. And he did a study of people who claimed to have been abducted by aliens, and they did not have any psychiatric disorders that he could detect. He decided that he would, you know, treat them with respect and hear out their stories, etc. And for (inaudible) research study, he studied a bunch of these people. He's written a book, and I have a great video which – I'll have to send that video to you...

**Trumbule:** Okay.

**Dr. Dave:** ...or tell you where you can get it. And I think you'll find it very interesting. And maybe if you remind me on the next show, I'll look up the information so that I can provide it to anybody that hears this that wants to know (laughs) his name...

**Trumbule:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...and just blocking on it. But –

**Trumbule:** So his finding was that these people are normal?

**Dr. Dave:** Well, yeah, that they're normal; they're not psychotic. And, you know, their stories are, yeah, their stories are pretty, pretty bizarre by normal standards, but they seem like otherwise normal people. And as you might imagine, these experiences really shook up their lives in some pretty big ways. So it looks like we're going to run out of time here.

**Trumbule:** Wow.

**Dr. Dave:** We did have Karen O. who dropped in, who says she'll check us out next week, which would be wonderful...

**Trumbule:** Great!

**Dr. Dave:** ...and you mentioned your blog. Just very quickly, I want to give you a chance to put that blog...

**Trumbule:** Yeah, I have two of them. One's called [Astounding News.com](http://AstoundingNews.com) and that's for just my general thoughts. But most of my time these days is spent on [Denver Direct.TV](http://DenverDirect.TV), which is me running around with a video camera, trying to keep track of the local politics here in Denver.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, and we'll be on next week. I'm not sure if we're still on the air now or not, but we'll be on next week, same time, same place, and hope to have a lot of people checkin' in.

**Trumbule:** And just remember, *It's alllll in your mind.*

**Dr. Dave:** That's right. (laughs) I forgot to say that!

**Trumbule:** (laughs) I know!

**Dr. Dave:** *It's allll in your mind.*

