The editor welcomes letters, by e-mail to ped@iop.org or by post to Dirac House, Temple Back, Bristol BS1 6BE, UK.

Intuitive physics

In his letter in the July issue of *Physics Education*, Stuart Leadstone makes the valid point that the 'questions about the solar system' in my article on intuitive physics (*Phys. Educ.* **39** 123–4) were not spelled out.

He is right, of course, that planet mass is an important factor, but since his table shows force rather than centripetal acceleration, there is no clear pattern. Planet mass was rarely proposed as a factor by the students who were asked to compare the force acting on planets in two different orbits. However, this may in part reflect the way that the question was set up. I clearly need to write up this work and get it in the public domain to allow informed discussion to take place.

More seriously, the purpose of the article was to discuss the way that we all have intuitions about how the world is, and my comments were the subject of criticism in Bernard Spurgin's letter (*Phys. Educ.* **39** 366). Sadly, I have received a private communication from Stuart informing me that Bernard died on 1 July at the age of 83. I never knew him, but I am impressed that he maintained such an active interest in physics education and I am disappointed that he will neither have seen his letter in print nor had the opportunity to challenge my response.

Obviously no-one wishes to have the final word on a topic in such circumstances, and – although I do not share Bernard's views – I very much hope that his letter stimulated reflection among readers, and some discussion in physics prep. rooms wherever *Physics Education* is read. I imagine that is something that he would have appreciated.

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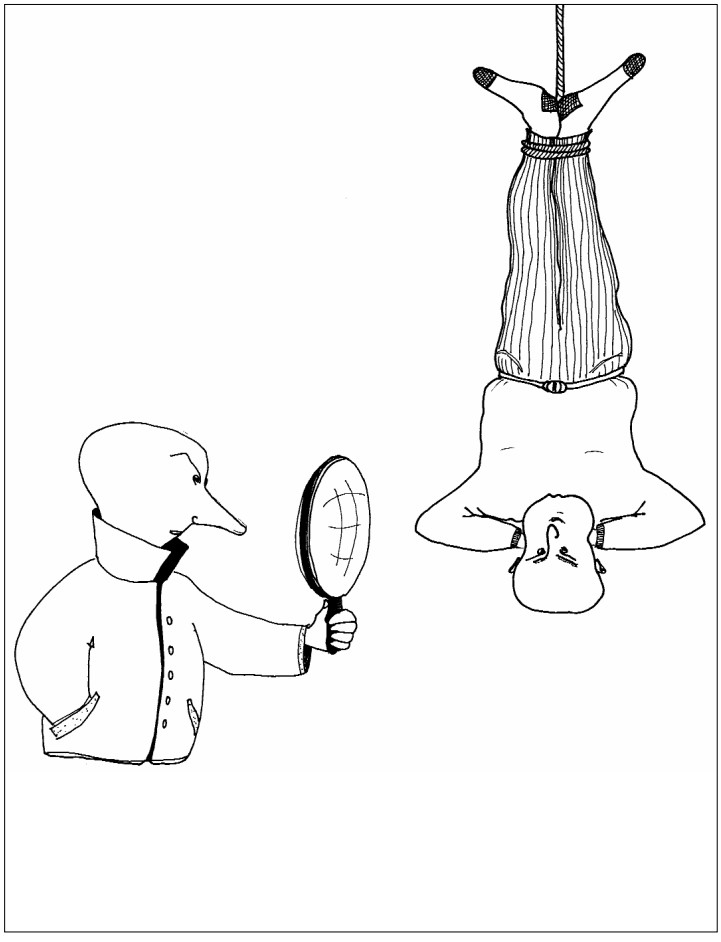

'Angus found everything looked upside down through his lens...with one exception!' (Lesley Ford) © Gorazd Planinšič.