

'Discarnate spirits' in the courtroom as 'healer' is cross-examined

By [Michaela Whitbourn](#)

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It must be among the most arresting opening questions ever uttered in a cross-examination.

"In the time you've been in this courtroom, have there been any discarnate spirits in the [room]?" Tom Molomby, SC, asked Sydney tennis coach turned spiritual healer Serge Benhayon in the NSW Supreme Court on Wednesday.



Serge Benhayon arrives at court on Wednesday.

Photo: AAP

So began his questioning of Mr Benhayon, 54, who is suing former client and acupuncturist Esther Rockett for defamation over social media posts branding him a sexual predator and cult leader.

Mr Benhayon, who operates the business Universal Medicine from his home near Lismore in the NSW Northern Rivers region, has described himself in court as a "teacher" and "practitioner" whose healing techniques include "esoteric breast massage", which is taught by him but performed exclusively by women.

He told the court on Wednesday that he "had an understanding", which was stronger than a belief, that in one of his many past lives he was Leonardo da Vinci.

"The essence that was in that life is today in this body before you," Mr Benhayon said.

Mr Benhayon said he felt "raped" and "stripped" by a November 2014 blog post by Ms Rockett, which was followed by two comments on the post and a series of tweets in 2015. Her writings were an attempt to demolish his reputation, he said.

Ms Rockett has accused Mr Benhayon of being a "sleazebag guru" and claimed he performed a "sleazy ovarian reading" on her during a treatment session that involved inappropriate touching.

Mr Benhayon is suing her over that allegation and a host of others he says she made, including that he is delusional, dishonest and the leader of a "socially harmful cult".

He denies the claims and says he brought the defamation case in 2015 not only to protect his reputation but because "it's one of my principles that we should live in a fair and decent society".

Ms Rockett has pleaded a range of defences, including truth and honest opinion.

On the second day of the three-week trial, Mr Benhayon told Ms Rockett's barrister Mr Molomby he could indeed sense discarnate spirits in the courtroom but declined to count them.

He denied this was because he couldn't really feel their presence, saying "I could [count] if I wanted to but it's not something I practise and it's not something I'm allowed to do".



Esther Rockett leaves the Supreme Court in Sydney on Tuesday.

Photo: AAP

He told Mr Molomby that he felt the discarnate spirits "particularly when you walked in" to court.

On Tuesday [Mr Benhayon had told the court about his successful former career](#) as a tennis coach.

On Wednesday, under cross-examination by Mr Molomby, he admitted he went bankrupt in 1995 and emerged from it in 1998.

He agreed he had amassed a considerable number of assets in the past 20 years, when his focus shifted to spiritual healing.

He now lived "very comfortably". In 2016, he had a taxable income of more than \$188,000 while his wife Miranda made \$176,000. He agreed this was "rather better" than when he was a tennis coach.

About \$50,000 of his income that year came from the Universal Family Trust, which also distributed \$129,593 to his daughter Natalie, about \$100,000 to his son Michael, \$59,812 to his son Curtis and a further \$34,890 to Curtis' wife Isabella. Another \$400,000 went to a company.

Mr Benhayon's first wife Deborah received a salary for working as chief financial officer for Universal Medicine.

"Really, the whole of your extended family gets their living from Universal Medicine?" Mr Molomby asked.

"That's correct," Mr Benhayon said.

Asked where the money came from, Mr Benhayon said "the business". This included running workshops and selling books and recordings.

Asked if Universal Medicine also received donations, Mr Benhayon said it had received some contributions and he felt "more comfortable" with that word.

"I consider if a person uses their own volition to give some money, that's a contribution," Mr Benhayon said.

He agreed those contributions may have been in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Universal Medicine had also received bequests, including a half share of a woman's house.

"You are on the title of the owner of half that house now, aren't you?" Mr Molomby said.

"That's correct," Mr Benhayon said.

Asked if he had said this woman might be reincarnated as his grandchild, he said this was suggested "playfully".

Mr Benhayon agreed that after the woman died he said she had returned as the child of a German woman, although he did not use the word reincarnated.

"Reincarnation is a science," Mr Benhayon said.

"Is it taught at universities?" Mr Molomby asked.

"Not yet," Mr Benhayon replied.

The hearing continues.



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