



July 20 – 23, 2017, Titania Hotel, Athens, Greece

60<sup>th</sup>

Annual Convention of the  
Parapsychological  
Association

Abstracts of Presented Papers

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**Abstracts of Presented Papers**

**60th Annual Convention  
of the Parapsychological Association**

**Titania Hotel  
Athens, Greece  
July 20th-23rd, 2017**

**Callum E. Cooper, PhD  
Programme Chair**

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## **Introduction to the Programme**

Welcome to Athens, Greece, where we have all come together to participate in the 60th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association. This year we received an extremely pleasing number of submissions (approximately 45). Following the review process for quality and relevance, this has resulted in 23 paper presentations, 1 panel discussion in honour of the recent passing of Gerd H. Hövelmann, 9 posters, the Presidential Address, and the J.B. Rhine Banquet address. Additionally – thanks to Nikolaos Koumartzis (our Convention Arrangements Chair) – there will be an ancient Greek inspired live musical demonstration, and an exhibition of photos, documentation, and other paraphernalia, throughout the convention concerning the history of psychical research and parapsychology in Greece.

This looks to be a busy, and hopefully, inspiring event for all. The collection of submissions received shows that parapsychology continues to present wide interest in our need to learn more and make advancements in science. It fills me with confidence and motivation to see so many people sharing this passion and journey, and appreciating the importance of parapsychological exploration.

Looking to the introductions of previous chairs of the Parapsychological Association Annual Convention, I've wondered what I could say about Greece that might interest or inspire. This will be my second trip to Greece, and my first was also due to involvement in parapsychology. In 2014, members of CSAPP from the University of Northampton, including myself, attended a conference on Mental Health and Qualitative Methods. Our place in the conference was to present a symposium of work we'd been involved in (and still are) regarding parapsychology within health care. Many might have assumed that health care professionals would not want to know about the benefits of counselling for anomalous experiences, the impact of anomalous experiences in bereavement, and parapsychology's work in general. However, we were delightedly surprised to discover the complete opposite. It seems times are changing for the better. Our learning and understanding will never advance unless we open up and listen to findings of serious research, contemplate, debate, and move forward. I've come to see parapsychology at this cross-road, where we can explore the ontology of anomalous processes, or the impact they have on people. To me, both avenues easily stand their ground and demonstrate their importance in the wider picture of science and healthcare. Therefore, I have nothing but good memories of Greece, and hope to make new ones at this 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association.

I would like to thank all of the members of the Programme Committee for taking the time out of their busy schedules to review papers within a short space of time – with some reviewers going above and beyond the call of duty (you know who you are!). Thanks to the Convention Committee, for keeping me on track, and answering my numerous questions. And to our President, Professor Chris A. Roe, who encouraged me to consider being Convention Chair – hopefully I've done it some justice. Finally, thank you to the Programme Assistant, Erika A. Pratte, who in my mind has essentially acted as the Vice-Programme Chair. Erika has been there day to day, and through the small hours, helping me handle and discuss submissions, and the editing of this book of abstracts and the programme schedule, while we both worked around our busy daily lives. Thank you all!

To all attendees, I hope the hard work put into this convention pays off, and you all have an enjoyable and thought-provoking time. I look forward to greeting you all – **απολαύστε το** [enjoy!]

*Callum E. Cooper, PhD*  
2017 Programme Chair

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## Convention Venues

All the venues where the convention will take place are at the heart of Athens, and at a convenient walking distance one from each other.

### Addresses:

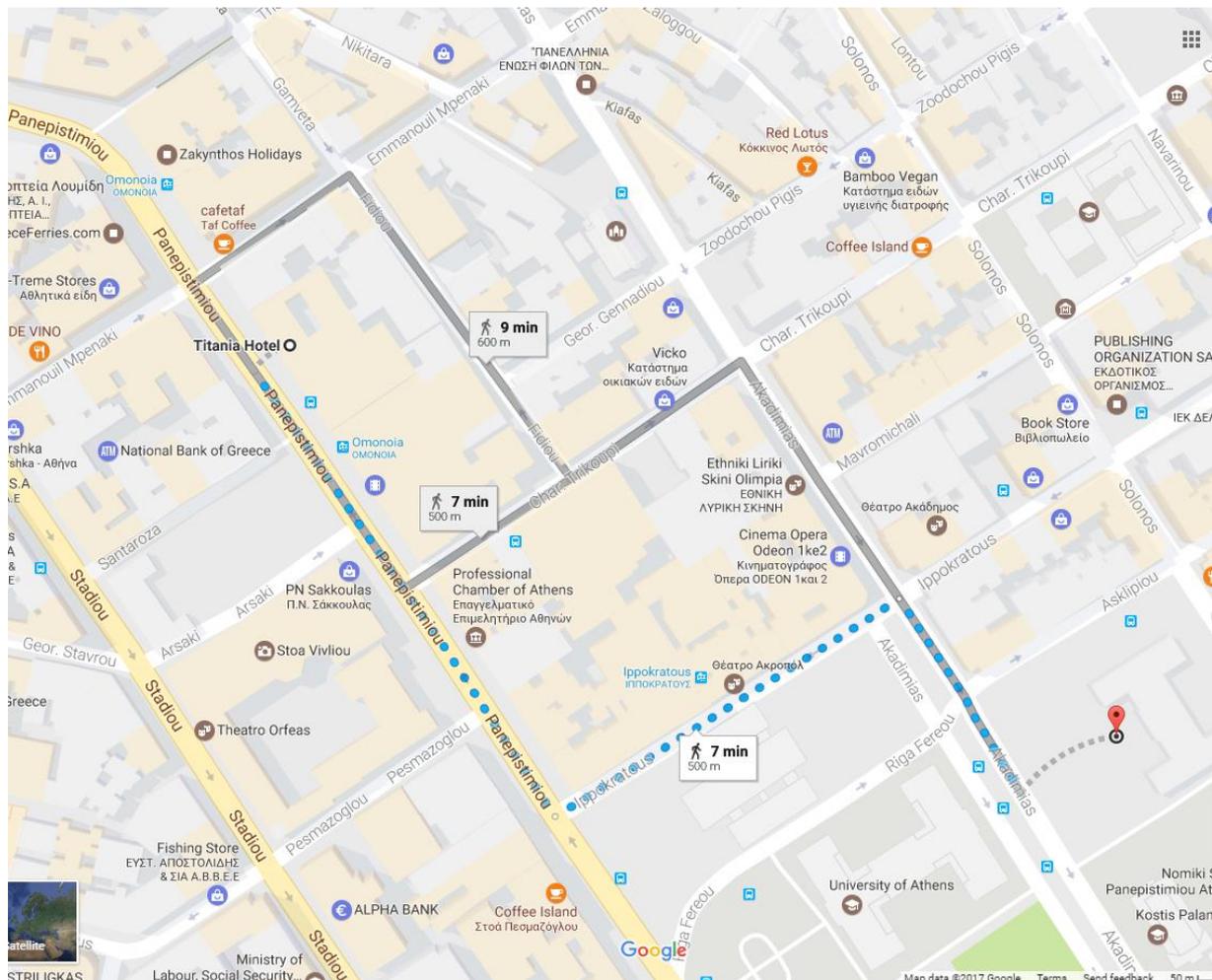
Titania Hotel: Panepistimiou 52

City of Athens Cultural Centre: Akadimias 50

Hypatia Mansion: Ipeirou 2 & Patisision Ave (opposite the National Archaeological Museum)

### Titania Hotel to City of Athens Cultural Centre

- Walking distance: 6 minute walk (500 metres), through Panepistimiou, then Ippokratous and finally Akadimias roads)





## **Programme Schedule**

### **Thursday, 20 July, 2017**

- 1:00pm – 6:00pm     *Pre-Convention Event –  
Engaging the Oracle: An Introduction to Parapsychology*  
An afternoon of free public lectures held at the City of Athens  
Cultural Centre (address: Akadimias 50)
- 6:30pm – 8:00pm     Registration Open (Titania Hotel foyer)
- 8:00pm – 11:00pm    Welcoming Reception (Titania Olive Garden rooftop garden)

### **Friday, 21 July, 2017**

#### **All Convention Sessions Held in Europa Hall (Mezzanine), Titania Hotel**

Registration: 8:00am to 9:00am and during coffee breaks

9:00 am            **Welcome & Opening Announcements**

**Paper Session 1: Historical Perspectives**

Session Chair: Elizabeth C. Roxburgh

- 9:15 am            Peter Mulacz – *The “Vienna Circle” and parapsychology*
- 9:45 pm            Evrard Renaud, Claudie Massicotte, Thomas Rabeyron – *Freud as psychical  
researcher: The impossible Freudian legacy*
- 10:15 am           Michael Tremmel – *A brief history of Psionics* (Schmeidler Award Address)

**10:45 am           Coffee break**

**Paper Session 2: Beliefs and Perspectives**

Session Chair: Erika A. Pratte

- 11:15 am           Malcolm B. Schofield, Ian S. Baker, Paul Staples, David Sheffield –  
*The creation and validation of the belief in the supernatural scale*
- 11:45 am           Leonardo Martins – *Anomalistic psychology, parapsychology, psychology of  
magic and psychology of religion: An integration proposal to deal with  
the complexity of the paranormal*

**12:15 pm           Buffet Lunch at the Vergina Resturant (Mezzanine), Titania Hotel**

**Paper Session 3: Experimental Approaches (Part 1)**

Session Chair: Roger Nelson

- 1:45 pm John Palmer – *Training anomalous cognition in a motor task with subliminal auditory feedback*
- 2:15pm Edwin C. May, Lory Hawley, Sonali Bhatt Marwaha – *Do changes of thermodynamic entropy at a remote site enhance the quality of anomalous cognition?*
- 2:45 pm David J. Vernon – *Exploring the effect of a contingent cash based reward on the precall of arousing images*

3:15 pm **Coffee break**

**Paper Session 4: Experimental Approaches (Part 2)**

Session Chair: Etzel Cardeña

- 3:30 pm Christine Simmonds-Moore, Donadrian Rice, Chase O’Gwin – *Exceptional experiences under placebo God helmet conditions*
- 4:00 pm Kate Archer, Rachel Cooper – *A test of morphic resonance using Urdu words*

**4:30 pm Poster Session 1** (Europa Hall, Mezzanine, Titania Hotel)

- Nikolaos Koumartzis – *The Greek History of Psychical Research: A Photo-Exhibition*
- Marcelo Eremián – *Medical diagnosis and death detection: A replication of reading faces through photographs*
- Hideyuki Kokubo – *How do RNGs detect psychokinesis? The proposed CAW model (coupling, analog signal anomaly, and wave-like field model) as a mechanism of detecting PK*
- Gerhard A. Mayer – *What about parapsychology and anomalistics? Results of a WGFP and GfA member survey*
- Marco Zdrenka, Marc S. Wilson – *Individual difference correlates of psi performance in forced-choice precognition experiments: A meta-analysis (1945-2016)*

**5:30 pm Dinner Break**

**7:00 pm Presidential Address** (Hypatia Mansion, Ipeirou 2 & Patisision Ave)

Introduction by Alejandro Parra

Chris A. Roe – *Withering skepticism: Inclusive criticism, or hackneyed mantras and extraordinary standards?*

- 8:00 pm Presidential Reception (Hypatia Mansion)  
Nikolaos Koumartzis, Iordanis Koumartzis, Theodore Koumartzis, George Saratsis – *Pythia: An ancient musical instrument exhibition and live performance*
- 10:00 pm Closing remarks and announcements for Saturday session

## **Saturday, 22 July, 2017**

Registration: 8:30 am to 9:00 am and during coffee breaks

### **Paper Session 5: Precognition and Psychokinesis**

Session Chair: John Palmer

- 9:00 pm Eric Dullin, David Jamet – *Scientific evidence of telekinetic effects on a spinning mobile – A scientific attempt to detect and study telekinetic effects even in a non-confined environment*
- 9:30 pm Jacob Jolij, Dick Bierman – *Implicit psi in a stimulus detection task – Can uPK and precognition affect perceptual performance?*
- 9:50 pm Mario Varvoglis, Peter Bancel, Djohar si Ahmed, Jocelyne Boban, Jean-Paul Bailly – *The Selfield: A precognitive study using an immersive display system*

### **10:20 am Coffee break**

- 11:00 am Panel Discussion – *A Tribute to Gerd Hövelmann (1956-2017)*  
Organisers: Renaud Evrard (Chair Person)  
Panellists: Eberhard Bauer, Peter Mulacz, Renaud Evrard

### **12:30 pm Group photo (location to be announced)**

### **1:00 pm Buffet Lunch at the Vergina Resturant (Mezzanine), Titania Hotel**

### **Paper Session 6: Spontaneous/Exceptional Experiences Research**

Session Chair: Callum E. Cooper

- 2:30 pm Alejandro Parra – *Descriptive analyses of various anomalous experiences of nurses and carers: Personality, perceptual and cognitive factors associated with anomalous/paranormal experiences reported by nurses*

*Abstracts of Presented Papers*

- 3:00 pm Gerhard Mayer – *The Bélmez faces – An investigation of a supposedly strong case*
- 3:30 pm Lesley-Ann Smith, Johnny T. Ryan, Rachel E. Evenden – “*Logic is only half the equation*”: *Exploring psychedelic drug usage and transformations of identity, spiritual awakening, the transcending of ordinary states of consciousness and enlightenment experiences following LSD consumption*
- 3:50 pm Chris A. Roe, Rebecca Linnett – *Content analysis of spontaneous cases of psi included in the Alister Hardy religious experiences research centre database*
- 4:10 pm Poster Session 2 (Europa Hall, Mezzanine, Titania Hotel)**
- Nikolaos Koumartzis – *The Greek History of Psychical Research: A Photo-Exhibition*
- Miruna M. Bara, Callum E. Cooper – *An interpretative phenomenological analysis of after-death communication in the bereavement process of professed sceptics*
- Callum E. Cooper, Chris A. Roe, Graham Mitchell – *Spontaneous post-death phenomena and their positive impact on experiencers*
- Callum E. Cooper, David T. Saunders – *A pilot study of floatation tanks and sensory isolation in producing psi conducive imagery*
- Erika A. Pratte – *Therapeutic approaches towards integrating near-death experiences*
- Johnny T. Ryan, Chris A. Roe, Lesley-Ann Smith – *Exploring the parapsychological and transpersonal dimensions of the psychedelic drug experience: A mixed methods analysis*
- 5:10 pm Break Time**
- 6:30 pm Banquet (Olive Garden and Bar Restaurant, Rooftop, Titania Hotel)**
- 8:00 pm 2017 Parapsychological Association Awards  
Session Chair: Chris A. Roe**
- 8:30 pm J.B. Rhine Address**  
Introduction of Speaker by Chris A. Roe  
Efstratios Theodosiou – *Invisible world and modern astrophysics*
- 9:30 pm Closing and announcements for Sunday**

**Sunday, 23 July, 2017**

Registration: 8:30am to 9:00am and during coffee breaks

**Paper Session 7: Altered States of Consciousness**

Session Chair: Renaud Evrard

- 9:00 pm Etzel Cardeña, David Marcusson-Clavertz – *The relation of psi and alterations of consciousness in Ganzfeld and hypnosis contexts*
- 9:30 pm Louise N. King, Chris A. Roe, Elizabeth C. Roxburgh – *Dreamy states and cosmic wanderings: An autoethnographic narrative of spiritual experiences in epilepsy*
- 10:00 pm Johnny T. Ryan, Lesley-Ann Smith, Rachel E. Evenden – *Transformative features of the psychedelic drug experience: An Interpretative phenomenological analysis of ayahuasca users in Britain*

**10:30 pm Coffee break**

**Paper Session 8: Reflections, and ‘New Directions’ in Parapsychology?**

Session Chair: Rosemarie Pilkington

- 11:00 pm Sonali Bhatt Marwaha, Edwin C. May – *The Star Gate archives: Reports of the US government sponsored psi program – 1972-1995. An Overview.*
- 11:30 pm Bevis Beauvais – *Exploring the model of pragmatic information: Implications for the classification and explanation of psi*
- 12:00 pm Adrian Ryan – *Open Data in Parapsychology – Introducing PSI Open Data*

**12:30 pm PA Business Meeting**

*Open to all PA members and convention attendees*

**1:15 pm Closing Announcements and Acknowledgements**

**3:30 pm Optional Group Trip to the Acropolis**

## **FULL PRESENTATIONS**

### **THE “VIENNA CIRCLE” AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY**

Peter Mulacz

*Austrian Society for Parapsychology, Vienna, Austria*

*Sigmund Freud Private University, Vienna, Austria*

#### **ABSTRACT**

The “Vienna Circle” was a rather informal group at the University of Vienna, comprised of scientists mainly drawn from the natural and social sciences, logic, and mathematics, and of a few philosophers, chaired by the philosopher Moritz Schlick - though originally founded by the mathematician Hans Hahn who remained the pivotal personality until his untimely death. The philosophical position of the Vienna Circle, who met regularly from 1918/1924 resp. until 1936, was the so-called Logical Empiricism (Logical Positivism or Neopositivism); important aims were the critique of metaphysics, the search for an empiricist criterion of meaning, and the unification of the sciences in a postulated Unified Science.

Given the pronounced anti-metaphysical position of the Vienna Circle, it might come as a surprise that several members of the Circle, foremost Hans Hahn, took a keen interest in parapsychology (irrespective of the fact that linking parapsychology to metaphysics is but a widespread misconception by laypersons). On the other hand, when considering their empiricist position (supposed to be open towards new empirical phenomena), one might be astonished that this interest was partly met with lack of understanding or even harsh critique.

During these years following the end of the First World War, there were different groups in Austria, almost exclusively in Vienna, interested in promoting research in psychical research. Several institutes were founded with great ado in the papers and shortly afterwards vanished without traces. A brief outline of the early history of parapsychology in Austria may serve as the foil in front of which the parapsychological interests and engagements of various members of the Vienna Circle are presented.

The then famous mediums Willy and Rudi Schneider were in turn invited to Vienna for séances held both in private circles by Czernin-Dirkenau and for scientific investigations by Edmund Holub, the head physician of the mental asylum “Steinhof”. Hans Hahn took frequently took part in the sittings at the Steinhof. An incident causing much excitement was the pseudo-exposure of Rudi Schneider in 1924.

Already in 1923, a committee of professors of various disciplines (medicine and science) at the University of Vienna, chaired by the (later Nobel prize- winning) psychiatrist Julius Wagner-Jauregg was formed in order to investigate the phenomena of physical Mediumism. Moritz Schlick was a member of this ill-fated committee that failed to arrive at solid conclusions; eventually the committee dissolved itself after only two years of operation.

The most important research in physical mediumship was carried out by Hans Thirring, chair in Theoretical Physics at the University of Vienna. While Thirring was no formal member of the Vienna Circle, he was closely affiliated to it as he served as a secretary of an association “Verein Ernst Mach” established to popularize the philosophy of the Vienna Circle. Hans Hahn and Moritz Schlick were both board members of that “Verein Ernst Mach”.

Early in 1926, Eleonora Zugun, a Romanian poltergeist agent-girl, was brought to Vienna by Zoë, Countess Wassilko-Serecki who had formerly played an important role in the exposure of a fraudulent medium investigated by Thirring’s group at his institute. Hans Hahn participated in the early investigations of Eleonora Zugun; although his presence was not very frequent he became witness to much more phenomena than anybody else except for the Countess herself. A few years later, another poltergeist girl-agent, Frieda Weissl, was investigated in Vienna, and again Hahn took part.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference for Psychical Research, held 1927 in Paris, Countess Wassilko gave a lecture on the famous Zugun poltergeist case that became instrumental in the run-up to the foundation of the Austrian Society for Psychical Research. Eventually late in 1927, the Austrian Society for Psychical Research was established by Countess Wassilko, Hans Thirring (first president), Hans Hahn, and several other interested persons, mainly scientists at the University of Vienna. Hahn was not only a board member; he gave, introduced by Thirring, the first public lecture of the newly established Society. It might be added that this Society, after a hiatus during the years 1938 to 1945, was re-founded after the war and is still in existence, however, presently operating under the denomination “Austrian Society for Parapsychology and Border Areas of Science”. The fourth of these international conferences has taken place in 1930 in Athens with Hans Hahn, Countess Wassilko, Baron Winterstein and some other researchers from Austria attending.

Summarizing the parapsychological activities or inclinations of members of the Vienna Circle (or otherwise their antagonism):

*Moritz Schlick:* member of the committee of university professors attended a few séances at Thirring’s Institute of Theoretical Physics.

*Hans Hahn:* he was the member of the Vienna Circle who was by far most deeply engaged in parapsychology, he participated in investigations of both Schneider brothers, at the “Steinhof” under Holub and at the Institute of Theoretical Physics under Thirring, and he was a member of Countess Wassilko’s circle investigating the Zugun phenomena. For the theoretical aspects, Hahn argued that some persons exhibit faculties that the majority of people are lacking, such as absolute pitch; analogically, some persons may have paranormal abilities most people don’t have. Moreover, for Hahn the confused stuff uttered in mediumistic trance was an indicator that it is not necessarily a matter of premeditated deception. Hahn was a founding member and board member of the Austrian Society for Psychical research, delivered the first public lecture, and served as their president in 1930 in which capacity he attended the Athens conference.

*Kurt Gödel:* in several ways deviant of the Vienna Circle’s philosophy, he was a believer in a Platonic world of ideas and was working on “rational metaphysics”. He believed in the existence

of telepathy and precognition which might or might not be seen in the context of his well-known psychic instability, and he participated in mediumistic séances. With his wife as the subject, he conducted some two hundred experiments convincing him that she excelled in the foreknowledge of random numbers. A few quotes on his opinions: “The brain is a computing machine connected with a spirit.” “There is mind separate from matter, and this will be proved scientifically.” “There may exist spirits which have no body but can communicate with us and influence the world.” And, “There are other worlds and rational beings of a different and higher kind.”

*Rudolf Carnap*: interested in the existence of ostensible parapsychological phenomena and their explanation despite of the triviality and stupidity of purported mediumistic messages. He defended the scientific importance of parapsychological phenomena in an argument with Wittgenstein who in turn was shocked that a reasonable man could be interested in “such rubbish”. Wittgenstein was outraged when he discovered a book by Schrenck-Notzing in Carnap’s library and — according to one anecdote — he threw that book on the floor and quit dealings with Carnap.

*Carl Menger*: as a stand-in for Hahn he attended one séance with Frieda Weissl (who was then accommodated in a hotel room) and was shocked by the loud knocks that could be heard even on the street. He summarized his experience as follows: “I certainly could not explain the knocks that I had heard, whatever may have caused them. I decided never to visit a séance again.”

*Otto Neurath*: he reproached Hahn for his participation in séances, so Carnap reports, arguing that such activities would “encourage supernaturalism” which was countered by Hahn that scientists have the right to investigate all incidents or supposed incidents regardless whether or how others might use or misuse their results.

*Hans Thirring* (affiliated via the “Verein Ernst Mach”): participation in the séances at the “Steinhof”. Following Rudi Schneider’s pseudo-exposure he stated: “I became sceptical of the sceptics, and resolved to study these matters a little more closely. I joined the [...] research committee and in the spring of 1924 the sittings with Willy were commenced in my laboratory in the Physical Institute of Vienna University.” Founding member and first president of the Austrian Society for Psychical Research.

Hahn died in 1934 and Schlick was murdered in 1936 by one of his former doctoral students. With the two protagonists dead as well as with the increase of anti-Semitism in the 1930’s the Vienna Circle dissolved even before the Nazi takeover.

## **FREUD AS A PSYCHICAL RESEARCHER: THE IMPOSSIBLE FREUDIAN LEGACY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sigmund Freud constantly attempted to distinguish psychoanalysis from occultism by explaining allegedly paranormal phenomena (such as so-called prophetic dreams) as the results of unconscious processes. His attitude towards the paranormal, however, evolved according to his increasing interest in the possibility of thought transference. In 1925, he reproduced Gilbert Murray's experiments associating telepathy and free associations. Then, he became convinced of the reality of thought transference and shared his conviction in "The Occult Significance of Dreams." Yet, Ernest Jones, his biographer and then president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, was reluctant to associate psychoanalysis with psychical research and therefore worked to marginalize Freud's interest. This article aims to retrace the context of this rarely discussed text and the experiments which preceded it to re-examine their role in ulterior definitions of the Freudian legacy and the association of psychoanalysis with experimental research on telepathic dreams.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF PSIONICS**

### ***Schmeidler Outstanding Student Award (2016) Invited Address***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The term *psionics* was presumably coined by Jack Williamson and derived from parapsychology's psi concept. *Psionics* originates from science fiction literature of the 1950s and '60s, and since then it has become a well-known meme of Western popular culture, which is used, for example, in the renowned tabletop role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons* and the *StarCraft* video game franchise. Over time, *psionics* has become associated with psychic energy as well as with gadgets that are supposed to function by means of such energy.

In the parapsychological literature, the term *psionics* occurs only rarely, whereas the term *psychotronics* is slightly more frequently used. These two terms are not only lexically related but

also seem to overlap in meaning, as psychotronics is occasionally associated with psychic energy and instruments related to such energy.

Moreover, *psionics* has been used as a label for certain techniques practiced as part of a subculture. The so-called *psiball* and *psiwheel* are presumably the most prominent of these techniques, and they can be traced back to theosophical and academic literature from the late 19th and early 20th century. A psiball is a ball ostensibly formed out of psychic energy, which resembles what is called *thought-form* in theosophical literature. By contrast, a psiwheel is a paper cone placed upon a freestanding pin and supposedly set in motion psychokinetically, resembling what is called *sthenometer* by Paul Joire (1916) as well as an instrument without precise designation constructed by Charles Russ (1921). New Age books from the 1970s and '80s used this psionic(s) label, took up these early references, and presented their own versions of these techniques.

In the 1990s, online energy communities, which used these techniques, formed themselves. One of the earliest online primers featuring a psiball was the *Practical Psychic Web Book*, later called *Playful Psychic*, by Jenny Gable alias Skywind. This primer later was hosted on presumably the most frequently visited website on this topic, PsiPog.net, short for "Psychic Students in Pursuit of Guidance," created by Sean Connelly alias Peebrain. The term *psionics* appears only rarely on Gable's website and more frequently on PsiPog.net. These two websites and similar ones have provided articles on certain other techniques as well. Over time, a comprehensive vocabulary has developed, reflecting the fact that these communities engaged in theory building. Remarkably, a change in meaning gradually occurred. Psi in this context is no longer a collective noun for ESP and psychokinesis, which require explanation, but here it denotes an energy or substance that is supposed to explain how ESP and psychokinesis function.

Many terms of the communities' vocabulary can be traced back to fictional and New Age literature. However, many of the techniques' descriptions appear to be derived from empirical values. On her own admission, Gable was psychic to a notable degree, recognized already at a very young age. Assuming this is true, she arguably could teach other people not only from books but also from her own experience. Overall, advantageous conditions were in place when the techniques and terminology developed in these communities. First, the purpose of the generic members was not to become famous or make money but rather to teach and learn from and with each other. Secondly, they took a highly pragmatic approach with only a minimal metaphysical framework. Thirdly, doing this on the internet has allowed people from all over the world to participate. If psychic abilities—assuming they exist—are a rare gift, these platforms might have provided the opportunity for people who were gifted or motivated enough to become so to connect on an unprecedented scale. Of course, not everyone involved must have necessarily been talented.

Looking at psi from such an amateur perspective might allow a rediscovery of topics in parapsychological research that are neglected nowadays but may be valuable for the act of theorizing. First, although psi phenomena—assuming they exist—are often depicted as being non-local in nature, they might also entail an element with local properties. Such an element might function as a proxy for more remote sources of information, and information might be transmitted locally by this proxy. Secondly, it might be easier to receive emotional psi information than

rational psi information, possibly because the former is more salient. Thirdly, assuming these assumptions prove to be true, a part of what constitutes psi abilities might be open to learning and even transfer.

## **THE CREATION AND VALIDATION OF THE BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL SCALE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study presents the development and validation of the Belief in the Supernatural Scale (BitSS). The BitSS acknowledges the nuanced nature of religious and paranormal beliefs and enables researchers to measure them both together, and separately, with equal degrees of clarity. The measurement of these concepts has been problematic as the primary measure in the field, the revised Paranormal Belief Scale (rPBS) (Tobacyk & Milford, 1983), contains a ‘traditional religious belief’ subscale indicating that religious belief is regarded by researchers as being an aspect of paranormal belief. The term ‘supernatural belief’ has been used to refer to either ‘paranormal’ or ‘religious’ concepts and such arbitrary usage is dependent upon what the researcher is investigating. In contrast, Metaphysical Chauvinism theory (Beck & Miller, 2001) suggests that people can believe in different ‘supernatural’ concepts and that there should be a separation of religious and paranormal beliefs.

While measures such as the rPBS and the Australian Sheep Goat Scale (ASGS) are sound measures, there is a need for a scale that can measure the overarching concept of supernatural belief, incorporating both religious and paranormal beliefs, whilst maintaining the distinctions between them. Two studies were carried out to create and validate a new scale to measure supernatural belief. A total of 382 participants (study one) and 318 (study two) were recruited from the University of Derby and via social media. In study one an item pool was created by taking items from previous scales that measure religious, spiritual, and paranormal belief.

There were three stages in the process of selecting items for the item pool; stage one was the initial search for scales to draw items from; stage two was an evaluation of the scales from the initial search; the third and final stage was the evaluation and possible modification of the items. A 204-item pool for the new scale was generated. This was reduced to a pool of 71 items after review by experts and non-experts assessing for face validity and if they agreed the items were measuring religious, spiritual, or paranormal belief, this was then analysed using inter-rater reliability showing a ‘fair agreement’ between reviewers. An Exploratory Factor Analysis was run on the 71 items to establish item redundancy and initial factor groupings in the proposed scale. A

44 item, five factor solution was selected. The factors were labelled in the following way: factor one was named 'mental and psychic phenomena' due to the items in the factor related to such things as ESP or mental telepathy. Factor two was labelled 'religious belief', with the items focussing mainly on religious belief and different aspects of God. The third factor was named 'psychokinesis', having items that related to concepts such as levitation or the movement of objects using the mind.

The fourth factor was named 'supernatural entities', with items relating to supernatural beings such as demons, angels or a supreme being. The fifth factor was named 'common paranormal perceptions', having items that relate to haunting or poltergeists. The aim of study two was to conduct a Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the BitSS developed in study one using a fresh sample of participants. The fit indices showed that the data were not a perfect match to the model. It was concluded that this was due to the model's complexity and the large sample size. Therefore, the model structure and the number of items were retained. The model was also correlated with three other measures of spirituality, religiosity, and paranormal belief. The BitSS scale highly correlated with the scale measuring paranormal belief, and moderately with the other two scales. The BitSS scale showed good test-retest reliability with a three-month follow-up study showing a high correlation.

The new scale successfully captures the nature of supernatural belief and provides a wide range of items. The clear delineation of religious and paranormal belief emerging from these factor analyses supports the Metaphysical Chauvinism theory (Beck & Miller, 2001) and concurs with previous research that distinguishes religious and paranormal believers. This further strengthens the proposition that religious belief should not be defined as a paranormal belief. The five factors of the new scale encompass the aspects of the supernatural well and are easy to interpret, by having a strong meaning based on theory, research and previous scales and factors. The new scale provides insight into how these three concepts of religious, spiritual and paranormal belief might fit together. While religious and paranormal belief show a clear divide, spiritual belief is spread amongst the factors. While the rPBS is a psychometrically sound scale the BitSS has more items covering fewer factors than the rPBS and arguably a clearer factor structure. The BitSS adds another useful tool for the measurement of these types of belief that can be used alongside the rPBS, ASGS and other measures to assess the personality and cognitive correlates of these types of belief.

**ANOMALISTIC PSYCHOLOGY, PARAPSYCHOLOGY,  
PSYCHOLOGY OF MAGIC AND  
PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION:  
AN INTEGRATION PROPOSAL TO DEAL WITH THE  
COMPLEXITY OF THE PARANORMAL**

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**ABSTRACT**

Anomalistic Psychology, Parapsychology, Psychology of Magic, and Psychology of Religion have different agendas and backgrounds. However, their objects of study have drastic connections. And the consequences must be considered. Through a historical, conceptual, and methodological discussion on the Anomalistic Psychology, Parapsychology, Psychology of Magic, and Psychology of Religion, we present an integration proposal. Anomalistic Psychology and Parapsychology study “paranormal” experiences and beliefs under specific perspectives and backgrounds. Psychology of Magic focus on psychological processes underlying magic tricks, such as memory, social influence, perception, cognitive biases etc. Psychology of Religion studies religious experiences, behaviors and beliefs. But the intersections between these areas are so many that it is possible to conclude that they study facets of the same topic. Parapsychology, Psychology of Religion and Anomalistic Psychology were unified in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century by the label “Psychical Research”.

However, after the dismemberment of Psychical Research in specific agendas and political/ideological interests throughout the twentieth century, researchers and literature of these areas tend to maintain a state of mutual alienation. Psychologists of religion, historically, tend to be at least sympathetic to the existence of transcendence. “Traditional” anomalistic psychologists, historically, tend to be against the existence of paranormal processes. Parapsychologists, historically, tend to be supportive of paranormal processes. Each of these tendencies creates assumptions and other biases that eventually result in studies that legitimize – possibly thanks to the expectation / experimenter effect – these same assumptions. The scenario is more alienating when we consider that they not rarely ignore the recent advances in Psychology of Magic about psychological, cultural and even biological processes that are present in many religious and paranormal experiences and beliefs. As a result, each area struggles against tough questions

without knowing that the other three have concrete or even decisive contributions to make, what impels such integration. Such a broader perspective of an inclusive Anomalistic Psychology, coupled with improved research techniques in each of the four fields, would allow a greater dialogue between phenomenological and ontological approaches that could lead the study of anomalous experiences a step beyond what we currently achieve. We exemplify discussing the subject of classic paranormal beliefs versus religious paranormal beliefs and data from two Brazilian religious groups that perform healings based on prestidigitation, misdirection and claims of extraterrestrial contact. At the end, we present some results of such an integrative proposal in the Brazilian academic community. Thus, we believe that the proposal of an inclusive Anomalistic Psychology has not only theoretical support, but a tempting practical success in terms of academic acceptance and productivity.

## **TRAINING ANOMALOUS COGNITION IN A MOTOR TASK WITH SUBLIMINAL AUDITORY FEEDBACK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to train anomalous cognition (AC) in a motor- automatism task with subliminal auditory feedback in 5 participants (Ps) selected on evidence of high state dissociation (reports of hand being moved by an outside force during the AC task) and trait dissociation (high scores on the Detachment subscale of the Dissociative Processes Scale) in a previous motor automatism experiment. The formal hypothesis was significantly higher AC scoring after training than before training by the 5 Ps both individually and collectively. The motor task is administered on a computer writing tablet on top of which is affixed a 4-inch grid conceptually divided into 16 1-in. squares which are conceptually divided into 4 quadrants of 4 squares each. One of the squares was randomly assigned as the target for each of the 60 trials in a run. The surface was covered by a Google map of barren terrain to support the theme of map dowsing with no lines indicating the squares. Ps were instructed to explore the grid by moving the computer pen over its surface until their intuition tells them to stop. After they stopped for 1 second their response was registered as the corresponding square. If they stopped on the target square they got a “square hit” ( $P = 1/16$ ). If they stopped on any square in the correct quadrant, including the target square, they got a “quadrant hit” ( $P = 1/4$ ). They then resumed moving the pen for the next trial. The hit totals were converted to  $z$ -scores to standardize them. The average of these two  $z$ 's represents “location  $z$ ”, the dependent variable. Ps attended 2 1-run “baseline” sessions at the beginning of their participation and 2 1-run “test” sessions at the end. In between, they completed 15-20 1-run training sessions. The procedure for these runs differed only in that after each trial P heard 1.5 seconds of brownian (similar to pink) noise. If the trial is a quadrant hit, the noise has superimposed

on it the spoken word “good”. If the trial is a square hit, the words “good good” are superimposed. A threshold test prior to training assured that the words were subliminal for all Ps. 1 of the 5 Ps (P5) significantly confirmed the hypothesis. There was suggestive evidence of AC in the baseline and/or test results of 4 of the 5 Ps and the five difference scores showed significant between-subjects variance. There was no evidence of learning in the training sessions, so the success of P5 cannot be attributed to learning.

According to the underlying theory, the conditions for learning were not met because Ps were overly attentive to the feedback sounds, often detecting between-trial variations in the sounds that threshold testing indicated were not actually present and misinterpreting these as indications of hitting. The significant effects should be considered tentative unless and until they are successfully replicated. Nonetheless, the large number of suggestive or significant findings in the baseline and tests sessions in individuals pre-selected for dissociative tendencies and dissociative responding in a similar task in the past encourages further research on the relationship of dissociation with psi in the laboratory. I am grateful to the Bial Foundation for their support of this research.

## **DO CHANGES OF THERMODYNAMIC ENTROPY AT A REMOTE SITE ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF ANOMALOUS COGNITION?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

To determine the degree to which changes of thermodynamic entropy affect the quality of anomalous cognition, we launched a three-year effort funded by the BIAL Foundation. Twenty-two San Francisco Bay Area sites were identified all of which were neutral regarding native changes of entropy. Three individuals independently fuzzy-set coded all sites against a predetermined universal set of elements, which demonstrated by cluster analysis that they fell cleanly into five orthogonal categories. Entropic changes at a remote site was accomplished by dispensing three liters of liquid nitrogen (LN) in approximately eight seconds into a picnic cooler containing 2,000, ½ inch diameter aluminium balls. Three well-calibrated participants contributed 24 sessions each that were randomly but counter-balanced for an entropic change at the stimulus site. Three experimenters (E1-3) divided the tasks for a single session—E1 tasked a participant (P), “Please access and describe the first thing you see when E1 removes the blindfold.” After the session E1 encoded the response into an automated system, which uploaded to the cloud for E3 and notified E2 who randomly chose a site and entropy condition (computer generated), waited a fixed time to obtain (or not) the LN; travelled to the site; upon leaving texted E1. E1 blindfolded P and drove to a predetermined spot at the site. E1 oriented P in a predetermined direction and removed the blindfold for feedback. Overall, the effect size for the observed distribution difference

between the figure of merit means for the LN pour and LN no-pour conditions was  $0.251 \pm 0.167$  leading to a  $z$ -score of 1.503 and an associated  $p$ -value of .066. Performance declined between the first and second half of the study for all three participants. The effect size for the first half was  $0.425 \pm 0.236$  leading to a  $z$ -score of 1.80 and a  $p$ -value = .036. The second half of the study produced an effect size for the mean differences of  $0.097 \pm 0.236$  leading to a  $z$ -score = 0.411 and a  $p$ -value of .340. The decline between first and second halves produced  $t(34) = 0.984$ ,  $p = .165$ , and the effect size for the decline was  $0.167 \pm 0.172$ . This report will discuss potential psychological reasons for the decline between the first and second half of the study.

## **EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF A CONTINGENT CASH-BASED REWARD ON THE PRECALL OF AROUSING IMAGES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Precall refers to the explicit recall of target material, such as words or images, where practice sessions occur *after* the recall test with the potential to influence *prior* recall performance. Though such a proposal has been called both provocative and controversial (see Cardeña, 2015) there is some evidence to support it, though it is inconsistent. For instance, Bem (2011) showed that practise on a sub-set of items was associated with higher recall for those items in a memory task *preceding* that preceded the practise. However, attempts by others to produce similar effects have met with no success (see e.g., Galak, LeBouf, Nelson, & Simmons, 2012). Here the aim was to elicit a precall effect using arousing images and examine whether such an effect would be mediated by a cash-based contingent reward. This idea is taken from an early model of psi put forward by Stanford (1974) which suggests such behaviour may emerge to serve the needs and/or motives of the individual. However, recent attempts to elicit a precall effect using a contingent reward have been unsuccessful (see Luke & Morin, 2014). Nevertheless, it is argued here that this lack of success may be due to weak or inappropriate rewards which were assumed to motivate the individuals in question. Hence, rather than assume a particular reward must motivate participants, an initial pilot study examined what type of reward would be considered as most optimal. An on-line questionnaire completed by 29 participants not taking part in the main precall study showed that a £10 cash reward was the most popular option. Hence, the current study examined the effect of offering a £10 cash reward contingent on precall performance.

Two confirmatory predictions were made: first, that post recall practise of images would lead to greater precall of those images compared to those not practised. Second, that a contingent reward of £10 would lead to greater levels of precall compared to no reward. This study was pre-registered with the Koestler Parapsychology Unit (ref#1026). A repeated measures design was used with

participants completing all aspects of the precall task individually in a quiet psychology lab. The task began with a short relaxation induction, followed by the random presentation of a series of 20 arousing images. After seeing the images participants were given a surprise recall task using the presented images. Following this, a random sub-set of the images was again presented to the participants, twice, to allow them to practice. Each participant's precall score represented the number of correctly recalled images that were *subsequently* repeated and their baseline score represented the number of correctly recalled images that were not repeated. Prior to analysis, data were checked to ensure parametric assumptions were met. This revealed a non-normal distribution and, as such, a non-parametric Wilcoxon (two-tailed) test was used. This showed that participant's precall scores were significantly higher than their baseline scores. However, the contingent reward had no effect on precall scores. That an anomalous effect was evident in the data could be indicative of a Type I error. Alternatively, such a pattern would be consistent with the positive findings of others who have also reported anomalous precognitive effects (Bem, 2011; Maier et al., 2014; Subbotsky, 2013). Furthermore, the effect in this instance was not based on providing feedback, which suggests that feedback regarding performance is not essential for precall to occur. Finally, a speculative possibility that may account for this effect, put forward by Taylor (2014), is that information transfer may be influenced by the phase synchrony of the brain states at the point of recall and the point of practise.

## **EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES UNDER PLACEBO GOD HELMET CONDITIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the psychology of exceptional experiences (ExE) in a placebo God helmet study, with a particular focus on presence experiences. Thirty-two strong skeptics and 35 believers in the paranormal were pre-selected by their scoring on the paranormal belief scale (PBS). They also completed the Anomalous Experiences Inventory experiences subscale and responded to a question about synesthesia. Each person took part in three study sessions; a morning baseline (no helmet/baseline) session, a morning sham helmet session, and an afternoon sham helmet session. During each session, participants relaxed in a Faraday chamber for 30 minutes with the instruction to observe and verbalize their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and imagery. Exit interviews explored subjective experiences. An inductive thematic analysis identified a coding scheme which was used to compare frequencies across study conditions and between believers and skeptics. Transcripts were blind-coded for 15 types of ExE. A series of chi square analyses found that believers have more ExE than skeptics. There were significantly more visual presences, flashes of

color and auditory hallucinations in the sham helmet sessions compared to the baseline condition. Results are discussed in terms of prior studies and their implications.

## **A TEST OF MORPHIC RESONANCE USING URDU WORDS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In 1981 Rupert Sheldrake proposed a theory which postulates the presence of morphic fields that influence, through resonance, both the form and behaviour of organisms. These fields change overtime and act as a collective memory for each species and enables individual organisms to produce behaviours, performed previously by at least one other member of the species, without the influence of either biological inheritance or direct observational learning. While Sheldrake reports several observations of this effect (Sheldrake, 1988) there is a paucity of experimental studies testing this theory. The experiments that have been conducted have primarily focussed on one of two approaches: new field tests that involve the creation of a new resonating effect and testing its influence on sequential test groups, and old field tests that focus on the resonating effect on part of an already established field and testing it in a population which has no familiarity with it. This research explores the old field of the Urdu language, which is unfamiliar to most Caucasian people living on the west coast of Canada.

The participants for this study consist of volunteer students from VIU who were enrolled in one of two psychology classes and given an incentive of a small course bonus mark for their participation. The stimuli consisted of six common words from the Urdu language and six fabricated non-words, grammatically designed to be similar to real words. These were selected and created by a native speaker of the Urdu language. All stimuli were of similar complexity. Booklets were created that contained ten randomly selected stimuli from the twelve originals, with a minimum of 4 words and non-words in each booklet. In the experiment participants were asked to copy each word from right to left (as it is written in Urdu) and to indicate whether or not they felt the stimulus they copied represented a word or a non-word. They were also asked to rate how confident they were in their answer on a scale of 0-5. Next, if it they believed the stimulus to be a word, they were asked to state what they thought it meant and to rate their confidence in their response. At the end of the booklet participants were asked to report how many languages they knew, and if they had recognized any of the stimuli.

## **SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE OF TELEKINETIC EFFECTS ON A SPINNING MOBILE – A SCIENTIFIC ATTEMPT TO DETECT AND STUDY TELEKINETIC EFFECTS EVEN IN A NON-CONFINED ENVIRONMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

For more than a century, there has been much debate around the use of Telekinesis-Psychokinesis (TK – at the LAPDC we use TK for Telekinesis, which will be discussed in the end of the introduction) to explain the rotating movement of light objects on an upright standing needle in the proximity of a hand. Thermally-induced aerodynamics effects have been considered as likely physical explanation factors.

Despite this controversy, many still upload videos claiming the phenomenon on the Internet. Most of the scientific studies performed were focused on whether or not the effects could be observed if some physical constraints were added in order to avoid the aerodynamics factor, or if the same results could be reproduced using some thermic or/and aerodynamic artefacts instead of a human presence. The first approach sets the risk of inhibiting a phenomenon about which little is known. The second has not yet shown clear reproducible experiences providing the same results than with human presence, except in very specific situation.

Our objective is to be able to detect and study telekinesis in confined and non-confined environment with scientific measurements. Our hypothesis is that there could be a way to separate telekinetic effects from aerodynamic effects, even in a non-confined environment, so avoiding the drawbacks of the first approach. This technique to approach anomalous perturbation could be described as: partial physical isolation of the target system, with the measurement system ensuring the control of the remaining known effects. This can be related to the two other techniques described in (May et al. 1995).

From the beginning, the LAPDC has been fostering a Tkist (subjects practicing telekinesis) volunteer team in order to do the experiments. From 2012 to 2016, we have been developing specific scientific methods, in order to study telekinesis effect on spinning mobile with or without confinement. More specifically, we developed a protocol starting with PIV (Particle Image Velocimetry) in order to measure the air-flow speeds around the mobile. Further research has driven us to create a set of processes around MATLAB, which we named Scan Flow Mobile. It has enabled us to construct one global model integrating air flow movements and mobile movements, and scrutinize it.

Using this, we were able to compare different experiments and conducted a thorough analysis of the interaction between the mobile and the air flow, and cause-and-effect relationships. A review of the “spinning mobiles” literature of the last century, either with the telekinesis hypothesis or

aerodynamic/thermic explanation, has been done. We also studied other motion potential causes, such as electrostatic forces, magnetism, vibrations and the radiation impacts. Then, as a pilot study, we conducted 8 experiments (10 results cases) in non-confined environments, with 3 set-up categories: one where the mobile motion was driven by generated air-flows (A), one in which a motor drive the mobile (M), and the last one where Tkist drive the mobile (T).

The ratio (mobile periphery air-flow speed / mobile speed) was used as a way to compare experiences between each other and between categories. With regard to this ratio, the category T and M experiments stayed below or equal to 0.5 while category A was really above 1. This separated clearly pure aerodynamic effects (A) from the evidence of telekinetic effects (T). One T experiment even presented a 0.13 ratio which means than the mobile speed was 7 times greater than the air-flow speed. The Tkist experiments were realized in different places, with different Tkists and different material set-ups with the same protocol.

A potential bias and errors analysis is presented, moving from the difference between fluid and particle velocity, to the mean speed evaluation for the air flows and the mobile, to the final ratio, and shows that the results above can't be affected significantly. Indeed, we evaluated the potential error at more or less 8.9% on the ratio air-flow speed/mobile speed, which is marginal against the ratios seen above.

So, in this pilot study, experiments showed evidence of telekinetic effects on a spinning mobile and a scientific approach to separate these telekinetic effects from the pure aerodynamic effects in a non-confined environment. In order to confirm these results, we will improve our protocols, and try to reproduce T experiments with significant ratios. We'll look also to improve the total measurement process documentation in order to give the possibility for other labs to reproduce these experiments. Beside this, we chose on purpose until now to use a kind of mobile not too much sensitive to air flows, so it was easier to develop our protocols. For example, its weight is 2.4g. It's quite heavier than light objects such as aluminium paper psi-wheels and Egely-Wheels (The Egely Wheel is marketed as an instrument to measure life energy, chi, or vitality (Egely, 2017)), whose weights are 0.1 to 0.2 g and 0.5 g respectively. We are studying these mobiles currently, trying to reproduce the same phenomenon using some thermic or/and aerodynamic artefacts instead of a human presence, and with PIV measurements.

## **IMPLICIT PSI IN A STIMULUS DETECTION TASK - CAN uPK AND PRECOGNITION AFFECT PERCEPTUAL PERFORMANCE**

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### **ABSTRACT – RESEARCH BRIEF**

Over the past years, it has become increasingly apparent that perception is not a passive process: how stimuli appear is not just a function of stimulus properties, but also of the memory, and expectancies of the observer. In an experiment testing the effects of stimulus randomization on these expectancy processes, we have reported an anomalous effect of apparent precognition. Here we show that there may be another anomalous effect in play in stimulus detection tasks, namely psychokinesis. In a simple stimulus detection experiment, we used quantum-random versus pseudo-random generated stimulus sequences. If pseudo-generated sequences contain implicit structure, we would expect better performance for these sequences. Contrary to this prediction, we found participants performed better and faster in the quantum-random generated sequences. We explain this result in terms of the observation theory-framework, which postulates that psi-effects are closely related to the radical subjective solution of the measurement problem in quantum mechanics. Our results can be explained by assuming a combination of PK and precognitive priming effects for quantum-random generated sequences. We describe a replication experiment to formally test this hypothesis.

## **THE SELFIE: A PRECOGNITION STUDY USING AN IMMERSIVE DISPLAY SYSTEM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In a previous research project, we presented a telepathy study which we hoped would be both psi-conducive and efficient in terms of data-collection; it involved coupling a multiple trial forced-choice protocol with participant optimization procedures involving immersive hardware and software. Overall results were not significant, though they did show significant variability, possibly suggesting a combination of psi hitting and psi missing.

The current exploratory study is broadly inspired by the previous one, but introduces several improvements in the optimization procedures, as well as a shift from a dyadic-subject approach, to a single-subject protocol focused on precognition. This shift was motivated in large part by the rather positive track record of recent precognition research – as witnessed by physiologically based presentiment studies, and by the reverse-causality social psychology studies recently introduced by Daryl Bem. We thus decided to opt for a single-subject precognition protocol, both because it is comparatively easier to implement than telepathy protocols, and because it seems promising in terms of replicability.

A second, more process-oriented objective for this study, was to better grasp the role of feedback in multiple-trial psi tasks. Both theoretical and psychological reasoning would suggest that trial-by-trial feedback should contribute to scoring, either by injecting outcome information into earlier choices (according to a retro-causal model), or by helping subjects to zero in on productive mental strategies as they proceed through an experimental session. On the other hand, as some subjects in our previous study indicated, it may be that trial-by-trial outcome information induces stressful, performance-oriented mindset, offsetting the learning gains that might come with feedback. Thus, as part of our objective of producing a multi-trial psi-conducive protocol, we sought to assess feedback vs. non-feedback scoring under motivationally equivalent conditions.

Finally, this study was also intended to provide us with an empirical effect-size estimate, which in turn would allow us to specify power requirements for future replications. A pre-set total of 3000 binary choice trials were collected from 82 subjects over a 7-week testing period, each subject contributing either 20 or 40 trials, in accordance with pre-set criteria. 26 of these subjects were known to be regular meditation practitioners, invited by one of us (PAB) who is affiliated with a local Buddhist center. All subjects were tested either by MV or PAB at the Institut Métopsyche in Paris, using a specially constructed immersive environment and audio-visual sequences used for the psi task. The task consisted of selecting and opening spherical image containers that emerged out of a hypnotic animated starfield. Following the subject's choice, a binary random decision would decide whether the subject would obtain a miss or a hit, and whether the hit-miss feedback would be shown. A hit resulted in the emergence of the portrait of an animal, or an interesting or famous personality staring directly at the subject and growing in size. Misses were associated with a noisy withdrawal of the sphere back into the starfield and no-feedback produced a simple fadeout of the sphere container.

The results for the 3000 trials were non-significant. The overall hit rate came in at null expectation (50.1%), and although feedback trials did have a higher hit rate than no-feedback trials (51% vs. 48.6%) the t-score for the difference was only 1.29 (one-tailed P-value=0.10). Nevertheless, these results, as well as several exploratory analyses, suggest directions for further study.

First, the difference between feedback and no-feedback hit rates indicates that a 0.05-level replication at 80% power could be achieved with only a modest increase in the number of trials. A positive replication would encourage the idea that feedback may be useful to subjects, provided it does not disrupt the “flow” state and induce a performance mindset.

Second, hit rates tended to increase over the course of a 20-trial series. A regression of trial-ordered hit rates found higher hit rates for later trials ( $P$ -value=0.04, two-tailed). In other words, subjects may have progressively found a mental strategy or a state that produced better scoring, which would accord with subject responses in a post-session questionnaire, where 89% agreed “scores would improve with continued training”.

Finally, the 26 Buddhist meditators had a group hit rate of 52.1% (one-tailed  $P$ -value=0.09) and the subgroup judged to be the most experienced had a hit rate of 54.7% (one-tailed  $P$ -value=.012). This finding contributes to the growing literature that suggests that experienced meditators are particularly good subjects for psi research. We are thus planning to follow up with our protocol this year, focusing more specifically on an experienced-mediator population.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Bial Foundation for its support of the Selfield project.

## **DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSES OF VARIOUS ANOMALOUS EXPERIENCES OF NURSES AND CARERS: PERSONALITY, PERCEPTUAL AND COGNITIVE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ANOMALOUS/PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES REPORTED BY NURSES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A number of anomalous/paranormal experiences (APE) appear to be reported by nurses (Barbato, Blunden, Reid, Irwin, & Rodriguez 1999, Fenwick, Lovelace, & Brayne 2007, O'Connor 2003) and doctors (see Osis & Haraldsson 1977, 1997) consisting of apparitions, “coincidences,” death-bed visions, and other anomalous phenomena, sometimes in relation to patients, and other times by nurses, carers and doctors themselves in hospital settings (Barret 1926, Kubler Ross 1971; Osis & Haraldsson 1997). Nursing provides a wide range of potential workplace stressors (potentially causing hallucinatory/imaginative experiences), as it is a profession requiring a high level of skill, teamwork in a variety of situations, provision of 24-hour delivery of care, and input of what is often referred to as emotional labour. The importance of empathy in the nursing context is related to a core of common aims and purposes, and there is general understanding that nurses’ empathic attitude is important for patients’ adherence to treatment. A capacity for absorption, by itself, may not be a sufficient trigger for paranormal/anomalous experiences. It could be postulated that people must also have a motivation or need for the experience of absorption, as well as a situation suitable for inducing workplace stressors and empathy with patients, such as a hospital setting.

The aim of this study was to determine the degree of occurrence of certain unusual perceptual experiences in hospital settings, so called Anomalous/Paranormal Experiences (APE), often related by nurses and carers. We hypothesized that: (H1) nurses who report APEs will tend to score

higher on work stress; (H2) higher on schizotypy proneness, (H3) higher on absorption, and (H4) higher on empathy than those who do not report such experiences. Three hundred and forty-four nurses were recruited from 36 hospitals and health care centers in Buenos Aires, Argentina, reporting a collective total of 235 experiencers (78% female and 22% male) and 109 non-experiencers (81% female and 18% male). The most common experiences are sense of presence and/or apparitions, hearing noises, voices or dialogues, crying or complaining, intuitions and ESP experiences and as listeners of experiences of their patients, such as near-death experiences, religious interventions, and many anomalous experiences in relation to children.

Inspired by accounts of nurses in our interviews and literature (see Fenwick, Lovelace, & Brayne 2007, 2010, Fenwick & Fenwick 2008, Osis & Haraldsson 1977, O'Connor 2003) a self-report which has 13 yes/no items was designed, including four additional scales: *Maslach Burnout Inventory*, *Tellegen Absorption Scale*, *Interpersonal Reactivity Index*, and *Oxford–Liverpool Inventory of Feelings and Experiences –Revised*.

Although H1 was not confirmed, however, experiencers scored higher on factor Depersonalization than non-experiencers. According to H2, nurses reporting APEs also tended to score higher on absorption, which was confirmed, proneness to schizotypy, which confirmed H3, and cognitive empathy and emotional comprehension, which also tended to score higher than non-experiencers. However, H4 was not confirmed. Additional results included a tendency to report APES in nurses with higher length of service (although was not related with age), and that the best predictor was absorption in experiencers compared with the non-experiencers group. Nurses who report APEs tended to score higher on work stress than non-experiencers, with depersonalization being one of the main differential traits. Nurses reporting these experiences also tended to report higher scores of empathy, with emphasis on cognitive and emotional comprehension, in relation to their patients, and in comparison with non-experiencers. Capacity for absorption appears to be only one of a constellation of related factors. It may be that cognitive style is more important than capacity or skill, as in the case of absorption, which refers to the extent to which a person can be so engrossed in a mental experience at a given moment that reality monitoring is temporarily inhibited. However, neither of these variables (absorption or hallucination proneness) was found to be related to work stress, although it could be argued that the psychological pressure of the working conditions of nurses triggers such anomalous perceptual experiences. Nor were there indicators of psychosis proneness found, even in the experiencers with hallucinatory experiences.

## **THE BÉLMEZ FACES - AN INVESTIGATION OF A SUPPOSEDLY STRONG CASE**

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### **ABSTRACT – RESEARCH BRIEF**

The so-called Bélmez faces attracted considerable attention in the public and the media, as well as in the mostly European parapsychological community, in the early 1970s. In 1971, phenomena of supposedly paranormal origin occurred in the Spanish village Bélmez de la Moraleda. Discolorations appeared on the concrete floor of the house's kitchen, which were interpreted as images of faces of paranormal origin. The events were strongly connected with the physical presence of the 52-year-old María Gómez who was living in that house. Several investigation commissions and individual researchers paid visits to the place and tried to solve the puzzling origin of the faces. Due to sensational press coverage, a lot of tourists visited the 'house of faces'. As a reaction to this, and in particular to a series of articles in the evening newspaper *Pueblo*, attempts of repression were made by the (provincial) government, among others, and the national press started a campaign against Bélmez, apparently based on fake news and false accusations by a journalist. Unfortunately, these fake news were taken over by the international press and had a quite considerable negative effect on the following development.

Relatively little is published on the Bélmez faces by scientists. One of the first extensive investigations of the case was conducted by Prof. Hans Bender (1907–1991), founder of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (IGPP) in Freiburg, together with the Spanish scholar interested in paranormal phenomena, Germán de Argumosa (1921–2007), who had informed himself about the phenomena. Between 1972 and 1973, Bender visited the location in Spain three times in order to get first-hand impressions of the phenomena as well as of the persons directly involved in the case. Furthermore, he conducted interviews and gave lectures on parapsychology in Jaén and Madrid on May 21 and 23, 1972. He made several methodological suggestions in order to get more convincing evidence for paranormal events, by means of a documentation made quite immune to fraud within someone's grasp. Thus, he suggested covering the whole kitchen floor with a plastic sheet and sealing it so that nobody was able to manipulate the floor in order to 'create' new faces by normal means. Several reasons can be found to explain such an enormous effort: In Bender's opinion, the case – at least in its initial phase – could become very important for parapsychology. In this respect, the specific nature of the phenomena played an important role in the sense that the appearances were not 'elusive' to the extent as is typically the case with RSPK phenomena. They seemed to have the character of permanent paranormal objects (PPOs). A further reason for addressing the faces of Bélmez was added in 1973: a German TV channel, with Bender as its scientific advisor, conceptualized a 6-episode series on parapsychological topics under the title *Psi* for which exciting documentary material, preferably

filmed under “live conditions”, should be collected under Bender’s supervision. Thus, parts of the on-site examinations took place in front of television cameras. It was also planned to get spectacular recordings connected with a replication of an experiment conducted about one year earlier: the opening of the sealed room, the removal of the floor coverings, and the verification if new faces had appeared under these controlled conditions.

However, the results did not meet the expectations, although some changes of the already existing faces could be detected, and one small face seemed to have disappeared in comparison with the photographs made before covering and sealing the floor. But given the very small changes of faces this observation cannot be taken as strong evidence because the quality of the photograph taken before sealing the floor was too bad to make a reliable assessment. Regarding the first experiment of this kind in October 1972, the results seemed to be of better quality but methodological shortcomings (premature unsealing of the floor without presence of a notary due to the occurrence of considerable amounts of water, failing of creating documentary photos of new developed faces due to faulty developer) reduced the evidence to eyewitness testimonies. Although Bender seemed personally impressed regarding the genuineness of the phenomena, he stated later in a telegram: “Technical obstacles prevented reaching intended highest level of documentary evidence”.

Given Bender’s reputation as an internationally renowned researcher, the public opinion (media) switched again in favor of the paranormal origin of the faces. The intention of my presentation was to give an impression of how Bender approached the investigation of spontaneous cases. It should demonstrate his personal motivation as a researcher as well as illustrate the somewhat complicated interplay between an alleged RSPK case in its public sphere, the social role of so-called skeptics, and of mass media looking for a ‘good story’. It is based on archival material mostly kept at the IGPP, including extensive correspondence between Bender and Argumosa, investigation reports, unpublished manuscripts of lectures, transcripts of telephone conversations, and newspaper articles. Considering these primary sources, several statements which can be found in books and articles dealing with Bélmez are based on secondary sources which must be dealt with great caution because they often perpetuated certain ‘myths’ and other ‘alternative facts’ without verification. At least, we are able to get a somewhat less biased picture. Far from being ‘solved’, the Bélmez case shows the ingredients of a typical RSPK case as well as typical reactions by scientific colleagues, skeptics, and the public.

**“LOGIC IS ONLY HALF THE EQUATION”: EXPLORING  
PSYCHEDELIC DRUG USAGE AND TRANSFORMATION OF  
IDENTITY, SPIRITUAL AWAKENING, THE TRANSCENDING  
OF ORDINARY STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND  
ENLIGHTENMENT EXPERIENCES FOLLOWING LSD  
CONSUMPTION**

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**ABSTRACT - RESEARCH BRIEF**

In 21<sup>st</sup> century academia, we are witnessing the re-emergence of scientific interest in psychedelic compounds despite the obvious challenges posed by ethics committees. This is otherwise known as the ‘psychedelic renaissance’ (Sessa, 2012). The experiences of taking psychedelic drugs (often referred to as taking a ‘trip’) may be difficult to articulate for a number of reasons that defy conventional scientific reasoning. Reports (often anecdotal) include anomalous accounts such as out of body experiences, intense hallucinations, increased sensuality to the immediate environment and other people, experiencing spiritual awakening, the death of the ego and brief glimpses of spiritual and ecological enlightenment resulting in changes in one’s ego structures and sense of self (Luke, 2012).

**CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SPONTANEOUS CASES OF PSI  
INCLUDED IN THE ALISTER HARDY RELIGIOUS  
EXPERIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE DATABASE**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we argue that research should be grounded in the experience of real people to ensure that findings have ecological validity and avoid the kind of artefacts that can result from experiments that derive from — and produce data that only really bear on the interpretation of — other similarly conducted experiments, giving a circularity that has no real-world point of contact. An important source of phenomena as they are experienced in the real world is case collection analysis. Unfortunately, this approach has fallen out of favour with researchers, and such data as

we have tends to be derived from earlier classic studies (e.g., Rhine, 1962a, 1962b; Sannwald, 1963; Schouten, 1981) or from collections of cases that are not subject to systematic analysis (e.g., Feather & Schmicker, 2005; Fenwick & Fenwick, 1997; Haraldsson, 2012; but see also Cook, Greyson & Stevenson, 1998; Lucadou & Wald, 2014). To address this shortcoming, in this study we proposed to conduct a content analysis of cases held in the archive of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC), which contains over 6,000 first-hand accounts from people across the world who have reported a spiritual or religious experience.

Initially each case was read in its entirety to determine whether it referred to any experience that could be described as parapsychological. Excluded cases involved variously: descriptions of personal philosophies or metaphysics; reflections on and analysis of (mainly Christian) scripture; biographical accounts of hardships for which religious faith had been a support; experiences of immanence or nature mysticism; subjective experiences of deep peace and serenity; visions of religious persons or beings, such as Jesus or the Virgin Mary; and cases where psychic phenomena were alluded to but not described in any detail. Our original intention was to review all 6,000+ cases in the database, but while some of the accounts were quite brief (from 50-150 words), many were very substantial (5,000-8,000 words) and took much longer than expected to read and appraise. It quickly became apparent that we could not review all cases in the time available, so we decided to divide the project into two phases: phase 1 would be restricted to the analysis of half of the cases and treated as an exploratory study, while phase 2 would consist of the remaining cases and would be treated as a confirmatory study to see if patterns identified in phase 1 could be replicated. To avoid selection bias (especially shifts in content or circumstances over time) we included in phase 1 cases 1-500, 1001-1500, 2001-2500, 3001-3500, 4001-4500, and 5001-5500. All cases were read initially by either CR or RL, and all selected cases were checked by the other researcher. Any disagreements were discussed and resolved, with 478 of 3,000 cases (16%) retained for further analysis.

A coding scheme was developed that included the main categories of phenomena and their variations: General ESP, Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Precognition, Ineffable foreboding, Déjà vu, Apparition experiences (in dreams, sense of presence, visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile), Deathbed experiences (lights, shadow /fog, interaction with invisibles, sudden lucidity, extrasensory knowledge), Near-death experiences (peace and wellbeing, separation from body, darkness/tunnels, seeing light, encounters with others), and Mediumship. We also coded the circumstances of the experiences (while quiet/restful, while wide awake, while alone, while with others) and details of the subject of the experience (spouse, relative). These were tested against a sample of 100 cases and adjustments made to reflect any ambiguities or omissions. Once the coding scheme was agreed it was applied to all cases. CR analysed RL's cases and vice versa. Cases were scored for the presence or absence of content categories.

Unfortunately, respondents usually gave only meagre descriptions of circumstances of events so that there were too few data points to look for covariates in any systematic way. However, it was still possible to look at the incidence and types of phenomena reported and to include details of exemplary cases. Of the 478 cases retained for coding, 296 (61.9%) included reference to

apparitional experiences. These were further coded according to the modality of the experience: Visual (64.9%), Auditory (41.2%), Sense of presence (23.0%), Tactile (19.3%), Dream (8.8%), and Olfactory (4.1%). Examples of cases of these types are presented for illustration. The second most commonly reported parapsychological phenomenon was extrasensory perception, with 227 cases (47.5%) including reference to ESP, which could be further subdivided: Telepathy (50.6%), Precognition (38.8%), 'Foreboding' (31.7%), General ESP (10.1%), and Clairvoyance (6.2%). Instances of extrasensory perception often involved some form of 'cry for help' relating to negative events. Some reported experiences did not include perceptual components but instead involved a more ineffable sense of 'foreboding'. More rarely respondents reported experiences of the clairvoyance type, usually involving the location of objects or places.

The RERC scheme did not include a near death experience category. In our analysis, we found 46 cases (9.6% of the total sample) that included features of the NDE. Reported features included: Encounters with other beings (50.0%), Separation from the body (45.7%), Told to return (39.1%), Peace and wellbeing (32.6%), Darkness / tunnel (26.1%), Extrasensory knowledge (13.0%), and Life review (4.3%). Another phenomenon type not included in the RERC classification involved out-of-body experiences, yet these were quite frequently reported, occurring in 72 cases (15.1%). Deathbed experiences were described in 23 cases (4.8% of the sample). Features described in those cases included Interaction with invisibles (50.0%), Lights (45.7%), Sudden lucidity (39.1%), and Shadow / fog (32.6%). Similarly, experiences with mediumship were quite common (48 cases, 10% of the sample), and were typically interpreted as providing evidence of survival of bodily death

Reflecting on the study design, we note that quantitative content analysis is limited by the data available. Krippendorff (2013, p. 36) defines content analysis as "a method for analysing textual material that was meant to be read and understood by people other than the analyst", and, as a consequence, the accounts may not be well suited to the analyst's needs. The letters sent to Alister Hardy and colleagues in response to appeals for information about experiences in their lives from which they have derived a sense of 'something other' are often rich in detail concerning the writer's life history or their reflections on their faith, but can be frustratingly cursory when describing incidents of interest to us. It would have been useful to have prompts or cues that could have encouraged respondents to report their parapsychological experiences more fully.

Content analysis also allows for the inclusion of more qualitative elements in recognition of the idiosyncratic and contextual aspects of individual cases. They also give an indication of the personal impact of experiences —often having profound, long-lasting effects (see, e.g., Cooper, Roe & Mitchell, 2015) — that are overlooked by more nomothetic approaches. There is a great deal of scope to conduct a more in-depth thematic analysis of the material collected during this project, and our intention is to interrogate this material more fully in the future.

We would like to thank the Perrott-Warrick Fund for their kind support of this project and the SPR Research Grants Committee for a grant to enable Rebecca Linnett to work on the study.

## **THE RELATION OF PSI AND ALTERATIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN GANZFELD AND HYPNOSIS CONTEXTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In a previous experiment with high (Highs) and low (Lows) hypnotizables, psi  $z$  scores (calculated by subtracting the mean score of all four ratings from the target score and then dividing that value by the SD for all four ratings) related significantly to percipients' belief of their success and their previous ostensible psi experiences. There were also moderate to strong correlations between  $z$  scores and experiencing an Altered State of Consciousness and other alterations of consciousness, but only among the Highs (Marcusson-Clavertz & Cardeña, 2011).

The current pre-registered study had a larger  $N$  with only Highs, compared in ganzfeld and hypnosis procedures. Participants ( $N = 35$ ) underwent two sessions of 10-minute induction and 10-minute reporting each, in counterbalanced order. One session used an automated ganzfeld procedure, the other a recorded relaxing hypnosis session. The authors served as "sender" and "experimenter" in different buildings. Participants filled out the Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory (PCI) at the beginning and end of the sessions, and gave a rating of 0-100 to 4 film clips (one of them the target), from which the psi  $z$  scores were derived.

Overall, participants did not score better than chance and there was no significant difference between hypnosis and ganzfeld. However, for the ganzfeld sessions  $z$  scores correlated significantly with the PCI Altered State shift scores (baseline – ganzfeld scores). PCI end of the session scores for attentional focus and low arousal during ganzfeld also correlated significantly with psi  $z$  scores. Although the overall psi hit rate was not significant, a positive relation between psi scoring and experiencing an Altered State in ganzfeld was replicated, and there was also exploratory support for the noise reduction hypothesis.

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## **SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES IN EPILEPSY: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper uses qualitative methodology to explore spiritual experiences in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy from a non-medical, non-judgemental perspective. Focus is placed on the meaning that these experiences have for the experient. Some individuals with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy may experience seizure events, otherwise known as auras. Aura is a specific term used in epileptology, identifying the experience and behaviour that an individual with epilepsy has just prior to the development of a full seizure. Some people experience auras as a warning sign that a seizure is imminent, although technically, they are regarded as part of a seizure. These auras have a phenomenology that is described by experients in terms that are mystical, religious, spiritual or transpersonal in nature. They are termed here Epileptiform Events (EFEs) as a more neutral term than the usual medical labels that imply certain aetiologies and pre-determined diagnostic criteria. The nature of these EFEs is of interest in the field of parapsychology, because they share features with other exceptional experiences and occur under similar circumstances, for example as the result of an altered state of consciousness. Some experients describe EFEs as being transformative, possessing a noetic quality. Individuals with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy rarely discuss EFEs with their physician as they fear judgement, medicalisation and pathologizing of their experiences.

The temporal lobe has been previously explored by parapsychologists because the descriptions that individuals with epilepsy have given of their EFEs and epilepsy-related experiences include parapsychological occurrences associated with the wider population of those without epilepsy, including: déjà-vu, sensed presence, out-of-body experiences, and mystical experiences. Links have been made between EFEs in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy and the activation of the temporal lobe using transcranial magnetic stimulation in non-epileptic populations resulting in a sensed presence. The resulting suggestion has been proposed that there is a continuum of lability of the Temporal Lobe which may hold interest to parapsychology, as a possible explanation of psi abilities and a potential area for the development of psi.

Religiosity and spirituality in epilepsy have a long history stretching back to the beginnings of writing, in Babylonian Akkadian cuneiform. EFEs have been extensively discussed in epileptology with respect to diagnostic criteria since the beginnings of neurology and psychiatry. In that context, they are given a strictly materialist explanation with no accommodation of their experiential phenomenology. The medical model attributes these experiences to delusional or hallucinatory events, regarding them as a form of ictal (epilepsy related) psychosis with its causation lying in epileptic symptomatology. The prudence of understanding these experiences in a strictly biomedical pathologizing manner such as this is questioned. A materialist understanding of these

spiritual experiences is problematized in the current study, which uses an autoethnographic narrative.

In this paper, the autoethnographic methodology employed follows the evocative narrative approach, evidenced by Ellis and Bochner (2000), Muncey (2010) and Short (2013). This requires the researcher to both engage with the process of data collection and present the analysed material using evocative narrative. Primacy in this methodology is given to the veracity of the experience evoked, and by doing so, the narrative gives voice to an experience which has previously been silenced. Autoethnography is regarded as a methodology that requires the researcher to be a vulnerable observer of the self, often exploring personally difficult experiences that lead to an epiphany. The researcher – as member of the group being studied – can present first-person data that is analysed and presented in an embodied, reflexive and non-linear manner. The resulting narrative can provide a deep and rich insight into the phenomenology of spiritual experiences in epilepsy, through the lens of the researcher's personal experience.

In this paper, the traditional case study format used by neurologists in appointments with patients is subverted by employing it to present autoethnographic data. Rather than details of personal and medical history, medication, seizure frequency and type, we present personal material resulting directly from EFEs. The researchers consider a period of almost three decades, starting with an initial diagnosis of epilepsy and subsequent re-engagement with medical procedures and diagnosis over this time. The evocative narrative autoethnographic approach uses poetry, prose, artefacts and photographs in combination with a critical discussion of the literature concerning epilepsy. This serves to bring the reader into a direct experience of EFEs. This may be something that is conceptually already known for the reader, but by presenting it in a different way, there is an intention to help to shed new light on the experience and deepen understanding of its noetic quality. The result is a narrative that comments on EFEs by presenting the relationship between the autobiographical, social and cultural.

Themes of stigma, shame, relationality and illness emerge from the narrative and are presented alongside an exploration of the phenomenon of a non-shared reality. The autoethnographic approach suggests that in gaining a deeper, more empathic response to EFEs, the reader is invited to participate in a transformation of the subject matter and, thus, become a co-participant of the research. The result is to understand EFEs as a valuable ability, rather than a pathologized symptom. We conclude by suggesting that experiences of EFEs may contribute in a fundamental way to understanding the human condition. The adaptability of the autoethnographic method demonstrates that it may prove valuable for use by parapsychologists and transpersonal psychologists who are interested in researching exceptional human experiences, because it provides data that would not be accessible using other data collection and analysis methods. Recommendations for future research may include understanding how widespread these experiences are and in-depth interviews with individuals who experience EFEs, to understand similarities and differences in phenomenology and the meaning that they may have outside a strictly medical understanding.

**TRANSFORMATIVE FEATURES OF THE PSYCHEDELIC  
DRUG EXPERIENCE: AN INTERPRETATIVE  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AYAHUASCA USERS  
IN BRITAIN**

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**ABSTRACT**

Psychedelic consciousness is linked with deeper awareness into one's psyche and connection to the transpersonal (Metzner, 1998). Recently, academia has witnessed the growth of psychedelic research (Sessa, 2012). Specifically, qualitative analyses into these states, including ayahuasca. Anecdotal reports of ayahuasca include profound transformations in one's psycho-spiritual nature (Shanon, 2002). Research has also been directed towards exploring the parapsychological nature of ayahuasca experiences. Topics of interest include; out-of-body experiences, telepathy, precognition and entity encounters (Luke, 2008), to name a few. Nevertheless, the data is sparse on the phenomenology and there is a shortage of face-to-face interviews on ayahuasca users from western civilisations (Luke, 2011). The aim of the present study was to examine the phenomenological accounts of ayahuasca users from Britain. Three participants (1 male, 2 females) completed semi-structured interviews. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis philosophy was used to interpret ayahuasca users' experiences. Research found evidence for 3 super-themes: psychotherapeutic healing, spiritual re-birth and materialistic society anti-spiritual. Research findings promote the future exploration of the therapeutic applications of ayahuasca and their parapsychological features. Additionally, there is an opportunity to explore the psycho-social features of ayahuasca discursively.

# **THE STAR GATE ARCHIVES: REPORTS OF THE US GOVERNMENT SPONSORED PSI PROGRAM – 1972–1995 AN OVERVIEW**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The year 1972 saw the beginnings of the SRI program in psi research under the stewardship of Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ. As a result of Army counterintelligence interest, what started as funding for a single research project by a government agency, went on to become the largest sustained research program in the history of psi research, spanning a period of 22 years, eventually closing in 1995. Best known by its last codename Star Gate, the program was funded by a variety of executive branches, agencies, and the military and intelligence communities of the US Government, for a total of \$19.443 M. The program focused on the application of, and investigation into psi phenomena—both informational, that is passively gathering information (precognition and real-time remote viewing) and causal (psychokinesis), that is, interacting with the physical world by mental means alone. About 11067 documents—approximately 82518 pages—related to this formerly classified program were declassified since 2000 and have been available for review by researchers and the general audience. In the professional psi literature, generally, the Star Gate program is sometimes passed off in a couple of sentences. Beginning 2012, we started the task of putting together the SRI/SAIC research effort, which have been recently released as *The Star Gate Archives: Reports of the US Government Sponsored Psi Program –1972-1995* (McFarland). It comprises four volumes titled:

Volume 1: Remote Viewing, 1972-1984 (2017)

Volume 2: Remote Viewing, 1985-1995 (2017)

Volume 3: Psychokinesis (2017)

Volume 4: Government Memorandums and Reports (release date to be determined)

In this article, we present an overview of the Star Gate program, focusing on what I have learned from the massive exercise of looking into these archives. Needless to add, this four-volume series is *the final word* on Star Gate, as it is (1) based entirely on the complete set of documents released, including some unclassified documents not available in the government released archives, (2) prepared under the scrutiny of Dr. Edwin May, who joined the SRI program in 1976, was the director of the program since late 1985, to its closure in 1995 at SAIC, (3) has the stamp of approval by Hal Puthoff and Russ Targ – the originators of the program, and some of the government remote viewers, and (4), the former Secretary of Defense, William S. Cohen has written a foreword for the series.

## **EXPLORING THE MODEL OF PRAGMATIC INFORMATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSIFICATION AND EXPLANATION OF PSI**

Bevis Beauvais  
*Independent Researcher*

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the Model of Pragmatic Information (MPI) and the consequences of its assumption of the non-transmission (NT) axiom and examines the explanation of psi phenomena in terms of *acausality* and the Jungian principle of *synchronicity*. It is proposed that the simple four-fold classification of Psi Related Experience (PRE) requires modification in order to distinguish conceptually between *spontaneous* and *induced* events. While the former are adequately explained by synchronicity, the latter necessitate the inclusion of *volition* as a key concept, which leads us to consider a mechanism of *reverse resonance* along the acausal pathway to preserve the utility of the NT axiom. It is further proposed that concepts of *universal* mind and *teleology* should be retained in our explanation of PREs in order to use the synchronicity principle in an integral way and allow the MPI to describe and speculate upon the full range of reported paranormal phenomena, including survival and re-incarnation but especially those involving intentional healing.

## **OPEN DATA IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY: INTRODUCING *PSI OPEN DATA***

Adrian Ryan  
*Independent Researcher*

### **ABSTRACT**

Driven by the explosion in usage of the internet and world wide web, the open access movement has been gaining momentum since the early 1990s. Initially focusing on removing access restrictions to articles in scholarly journals, the concept of openness has broadened to encompass data and code. Various organizations have set out statements in support of openness in science, encouraging open access to original scientific research results, and promoting a culture of openness and sharing of research data among research communities. The UK Government has stated that it is committed to ensuring that published publicly-funded research findings should be freely accessible.

The paper discusses the benefits of open data and also considers concerns that some researchers may have about the approach. Publishing strategies, copyright and database right considerations,

confidentiality, the preparation of data for publication and the citation of datasets are discussed. The second part of the paper presents *Psi Open Data*, an open data repository for storage of parapsychological and psychical research data. This project, undertaken by the Society for Psychical Research and funded by a legacy from Mr. Nigel Buckmaster, is intended for use by the international community. The repository is constructed using DKAN, an open source open data platform with a full suite of cataloging, publishing and visualization features. It allows administrator users to upload research datasets, and any visitor to search for and download datasets. Various aspects of the repository are described: data structures, metadata, data classification and retrieval, preview and download facilities.

The initiative to bring open data to parapsychology is an evolving process. The first step is bringing the open data repository into existence. Over time the community can consider how to incorporate data publication within research and publication practices, and how to encourage researchers to make full use of the facility. In the immediate future, I would encourage researchers who agree with the aims of the initiative to contribute data to the repository. Interested researchers should email me at: [adrian.ryan@greyheron1.plus.com](mailto:adrian.ryan@greyheron1.plus.com)

## **ABSTRACTS OF PANEL DISCUSSION**

### **A TRIBUTE TO GERD HÖVELMANN (1956-2017)**

Chaired by Renaud Evrard

Panellists: Eberhard Bauer, Peter Mulacz & Renaud Evrard

#### **GENERAL ABSTRACT**

The Parapsychological Association recently lost one of its Board Members and former Vice-President. Gerd Hövelmann had contributed to the field with many scholarly articles over a long career. His erudition will be missed as much as his human qualities. This panel discussion is an opportunity to review his contributions to the fields of parapsychology and anomalistics, and to share memories with people who did – and did not – have the opportunity to meet him.

### **GERD H. HÖVELMANN OR THE ‘AMICUS CURIAE’ OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY – A PERSONAL APPRECIATION**

Eberhard Bauer

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The untimely death of our friend and colleague Gerd H. Hövelmann on 5 February at the age of nearly 61 years is a major blow to parapsychology and anomalistics, especially in Germany. It means a great loss of his international visibility, connections and exchange, especially when it comes to the PA community. Back in 1978, Gerd had approached the IGPP in Freiburg, Germany, as an ambitious 22-year-old student of linguistics and philosophy at the University of Marburg. Within a few years, he had developed a wide-reaching network of personal contacts, mainly by correspondences, within the international community of physical research and parapsychology, which included not only well-known researchers like Hans Bender, John Beloff, Rhea White, and a lot of other colleagues, but also persons like James Randi and Paul Kurtz. Given the never-ending controversy connected with claims of the paranormal, Gerd adopted quite early on the pragmatic attitude of an ‘amicus curiae’, very much influenced by his great model, the American sociologist Marcello Truzzi. For Gerd, parapsychological data were primarily an intellectual and methodological challenge, not so much an ‘ideological’ one. In my presentation, I’ll try to describe the different facets of Gerd’s position.

## **GERD H. HÖVELMANN – SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS**

Peter Mulacz

*Austrian Society for Parapsychology, Vienna, Austria  
and Sigmund Freud University, Vienna, Austria*

### **ABSTRACT**

My first (then only literal, not personal) contact with Gerd Hövelmann dates back to 1976 when he, in a book review, praised the chapter I had authored, but criticized one aspect (on Popperian philosophy) in rather derogatory terms. Now, in hindsight, since he has passed I regret that we never discussed that issue face to face. For many years following, we met irregularly on various congresses, (e.g. the PA conventions) yet without much contact with one another. It was only during the past decade that this changed and eventually we became good friends. Still there were items on which we had different opinions – be it Piet Hein Hoeben’s Tenhaeff-bashing, be it the positioning of parapsychology vis-à-vis ‘anomalistics’ – yet we had arrived at a very friendly way of agreeing that we disagree on these points. I was very impressed of the historical research Gerd carried out within the field, particularly on Max Dessoir, the stunning details he found out, and I hope that this material will be published in full length. Continuing on the issue of historical matters in parapsychology, Gerd asked me for permission to reprint two book reviews (on v. Schrenck-Notzing) that I had published in the Newsletter of the Austrian Society for Parapsychology, in the *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik*, the journal of which he was the chief editor. Later I submitted to that journal an article on ‘burnt-in’ hands, a rare and possibly paranormal phenomenon occurring only within catholic Christian believers; Gerd replied that he had been longing for an article on this very specific phenomenon for years. He accepted my draft eagerly but wanted me to expand my article. He gave me some suggestions for analogous cases in literature or poetry to dig out, but I didn’t find the time, which is the reason that this article regrettably has not been published during his life time. Lately we had another interaction when our Berlin colleague Wilfried Kugel wrote an article on the “Vienna Circle” – actually a review of a book on it published on the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Vienna, and the accompanying exhibition on the “Vienna Circle” – so I decided to write a few amendments on that topic. Co-operation with Gerd on articles to be published in ‘his’ journal always went very smoothly. Besides his erudition as a scholar Gerd displayed a good sense of humor.

**FROM RESPONSIBLE SKEPTICISM TO REFLEXIVE  
ANOMALISTICS: A SELECTION OF QUOTES FROM  
GERD HÖVELMANN**

Renaud Evrard  
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*Nancy, France*

**ABSTRACT**

I never had the opportunity to meet the well-known sociologist Marcello Truzzi, but Gerd Hövelmann was the one who best enabled me to understand the importance of his approach. Are skeptics and parapsychologists really in competition, or can we be both at once? In this talk, I will select quotations from the epistemological works of Gerd Hövelmann in order to generate comments. From his stimulating paper “Seven recommendations for the future practice of parapsychology” (1983) in Truzzi’s *Zetetic Scholar* to the newly published *Legitimacy of Unbelief* (Collected Papers of Dutch skeptic Piet Hein Hoebens), through to his contributions of “Escape from Wonderland” (2009), “Manifesto for a reflexive UFO-research” (2013, with Anton & Schetsche), and to the German *Handbook of scientific anomalistics* (2015), etc., I will try to specify what epistemological attitude Gerd Hövelmann tried to promote in order to prepare the future of parapsychology and anomalistics.

## **ABSTRACTS OF POSTERS**

### **AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AFTER-DEATH COMMUNICATION IN THE BEREAVEMENT PROCESS OF PROFESSED SCEPTICS**

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*University of Northampton*  
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#### **ABSTRACT**

A heightened interest in research concerning after-death communication (ADC) has been recorded in recent years, which could be attributed to an increased recognition of the continuing bonds model of bereavement proposed by Klass, Silverman and Nickman (1996). Research to present date has shown that ADC is in fact, a wide-spread phenomenon (Rees, 1971; Klugman, 2006; Sanger, 2009). Such research has depicted a large spectrum of outcomes of ADCs in the bereavement process. These include providing comfort and reassurance to the bereaved that the deceased has not abandoned them (Rees, 1971; Parker, 2005; Daggett, 2005), improving the relationship with the deceased (Drewry, 2003; Beischel et al., 2015), promoting spiritual growth (Wright et al, 2014; Cooper, 2016a), and positive emotional drives (Cooper, 2016b). However, there is a lack of representation in previous literature of individuals that were sceptical of ADC and an ‘afterlife’ before their experiences. It is possible that because of a conflict between ADC and sceptics’ belief systems, ADC would have a more challenging impact on the bereavement process.

This paper/poster presents the findings of an interpretative phenomenological exploration of these issues. The research questions of interest were: (a) how sceptics interpret ADCs; (b) the meaning they attribute to them; and (c) their impact on the grieving process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 female students at the University of Northampton, between the ages of 19 and 35. These were conducted in a quiet room on the university campus with each interview lasting no more than an hour.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis resulted in the identification of 5 super-ordinate themes: (1) *Experiencing ADC through a sceptical lens*; (2) *Changes in belief systems*; (3) *The influence of ADC in bereavement*; (4) *A new way of living*; (5) *Resolving complicated relationships with the deceased*.

In summary, an inability to find conventional explanations for the ADC influenced participants to see it as evidence of an afterlife, while maintaining *some* level of scepticism. Furthermore, experiencing ADC challenged their sceptical beliefs and in doing so, promoted an exploration of spirituality. Participants discussed becoming more open to spiritual beliefs and phenomena, as well as having a more positive view of death after interpreting ADC as reassurance that death is a

gateway to another level of existence. Their experience also shaped a new view of the afterlife, which was seen as a realm of happiness and peace, and had a similar effect of decreasing death anxiety. In terms of how the ADC impacted on their bereavement process, comfort was taken from continuing bonds in offering support in times of need and knowing the deceased was at peace. ADC also helped in the acknowledgement of death and moving forward in life. However, while all participants reflected on the positive effects of ADC, some also conceptualised the experience as a reminder of the loss they had suffered, which is a lesser explored aspect of ADC literature and warrants further research.

In making sense of ADC experiences, sceptics tried to reach a common ground between two contradictory belief systems. While maintaining some of their previous views, the participants' developed a new view of spirituality, an afterlife, and death, which decreased their death anxiety and supported them in their grieving process. Most importantly, despite the experience being conflictual to their beliefs, participants found it helpful in reaching a healthy grief outcome and decreasing distress about their loss.

The findings may be found useful by practitioners in the field of bereavement by providing an insight into the complex dynamics of ADC and different belief systems.

## **SPONTANEOUS POST-DEATH PHENOMENA AND THEIR POSITIVE IMPACT ON EXPERIENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Following the death of a loved one, people may report unusual experiences that they interpret as evidence of the continuing existence of the deceased in some form. Such experiences can include: a 'sense of presence' of the dead (Steffen & Coyle, 2011); dreaming of the dead (Barrett, 1991-92); visual, auditory, and tactile apparitions; electrical disturbances; and movements of objects/psychokinetic phenomena (Cooper, Roe & Mitchell, 2015).

Spontaneous anomalous experiences are widely experienced by the bereaved, with up to sixty per cent of those who suffer a loss reporting them (Castelnovo et al., 2015). The potential therapeutic role of such experiences in bereavement achieved some prominence when Rees (1971) focused on the 'sense of presence' in his *British Medical Journal* paper. Given their frequency, it is important to ask what impact these phenomena have on the experiencers? While mental health professionals have concerns that such experiences might be associated with pathology, and media portrayals suggest that they are likely to be scary or harmful to experiencers, in fact, research has found that they can bring comfort and therapeutic gain to the majority of those who experience them (Cooper, 2016; Krippner, 2006).

This present study was intended to explore these experiences in much greater depth, focusing on how they might engender 'hope' (Snyder, 1994), as suggested by several previous researchers (e.g., Devers, 1997; Drewry, 2003; Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 1995). Using a mixed-method approach, a questionnaire battery was designed and distributed which included measures of personal beliefs and a hope scale (Nowotny, 1989). This was given to 50 people who *did* report anomalous experiences during bereavement (experients), and 50 who *did not* (control). Additionally, short answer questions were provided and a free response section for participants to write about their experiences (experiential group). Following this, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected experients based on their hope scores (N = 9).

In brief summary, quantitative findings demonstrated a significant difference in levels of hope between the bereaved who *do* report such experiences and those who *do not* ( $p = .04$ , two-tailed). Although hope decreased for the experients, this drop was not significant ( $p = .125$ ), and a significant drop in hope was found for those who *did not* report such experiences ( $p = .008$ ). This was also reflected in qualitative feedback from the short answer questions, where a significant shift was found in negative states of mind following loss to positive states of mind following the first reported anomalous experiences ( $p < .001$ ). Qualitative findings produced several themes from the results of a thematic analysis on written accounts of experiences, and an interpretative phenomenological analysis of interview feedback. Continued bonds with the deceased were expressed, personal beliefs being challenged by the experiences, therapeutic gains and coping with grief, and aspects of hope (to name a few).

Post-death experiences were reported by a wide variety of people, regardless of personal and religious beliefs in anomalous phenomena. Where experiences contradicted beliefs, personal transitions of 'outlook on life' were expressed. Anomalous experiences during bereavement present a natural aid to coping and recovery, facilitating the gap off loss. The findings of this study and related studies within clinical parapsychology must be understood and integrated into the work of relevant therapists and professionals – especially within thanatology, palliative care, and bereavement counselling – to support the bereaved with their exceptional encounters.

This study was supported by the Society for Psychical Research and Alex Tanous Foundation.

## **A PILOT STUDY OF FLOATATION TANKS AND SENSORY ISOLATION IN PRODUCING PSI CONDUCTIVE IMAGERY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The late John Lilly (1972, 1977) began employing floatation techniques in isolated environments in the 1950s, at the National Institute of Mental Health. This technique in more recent times has become known as Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy, or REST for short (Suedfeld, et al. 1990). The floatation – or REST – involves lying in water (usually naked) in a purpose-built tank which is filtered and regulated to body temperature. The individual is immersed in complete darkness, where Epsom salt has been diluted into the water to allow any person to float without effort. A single session normally lasts for a duration of about one hour of continual exposure to this environment. The use of this method has been found to have a number of psychotherapeutic benefits, including enhanced personal creativity, an enhanced sense of well-being, meditative qualities, decreased stress and anxiety, and improved physiological ailments – to name but a few (see Bood et al., 2005; Kjellgren, Lyden & Norlander, 2008). However, due to the types of imagery that people experience in the tanks (see Lilly & Gold, 2001), Lilly encouraged parapsychologists to use this technique in much the same way as the ganzfeld to induce psi. His thoughts on this matter were expressed during his guest speech at the dinner of the 1969 Parapsychological Association Annual Convention, held in New York City (Lilly, 1969).

It appears that few acted on Lilly's suggestion in employing floatation tanks, with some of the main reasons being due to the cost of the tanks and the time and effort it takes to maintain them (Schwartz, 2015, 5th September – *personal communication*). Even so, Rogo (1980) attempted a pilot study using the tanks following a similar protocol utilised within the ganzfeld studies of the time; an agent trying to send an image they were viewing to a person floating in the tank. Although Rogo's study did not produce findings suggestive of psi taking place, it did produce several methodological concerns regarding the use of the tanks (e.g. participants not having had experience in floatation tanks before taking part, and tank maintenance), which explains perhaps why no further studies employing the tanks were published within parapsychology.

This present study aims to: (a) review the single pilot study that was conducted (Rogo, 1980) while adding more rigorous and advanced methods, and (b) act on Lilly's (1969) recommendations, and also those of Tart (1975; 2015 3rd September – *personal communication*; also see Roe, 2009), in order to provide a fair evaluation of the use of the floatation tank method in facilitating a psi-conductive state. This pilot study employs the experimenters as sole participants, in order to examine the methods used and explore potential ethical considerations in greater depth before recruiting participants to engage in floatation sessions.

In this initial run, the sender (Saunders) begins watching a randomly selected clip from the Dalton series, a collection of 100 different video clips, each a minute in length, carefully sourced from cartoons, films and television shows. These videos are divided into 25 groups of four, organised to be distinct from one another in the content and emotionality of the clip. This pool was originally developed for autoganzfeld research at the University of Edinburgh and has been utilised in a range of ESP research studies (e.g. Dalton, Steinkamp & Sherwood, 1999; Dalton, et al. 2000; Saunders, 2014; Sherwood, Dalton, Stienkamp & Watt, 2001). While the clip is being watched, the receiver (Cooper) attempts to perceive the content of the clip through imagery witnessed while engaged in a floatation session. All of the receiver's impressions are written down following a floatation session and sealed in an envelope to be scored by an independent judge against the target pool watched by the sender. A total of 10-12 sessions are to be completed within this first study. This presentation reports on the initial aims and structure of the study, which is currently still in progress.

## **MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS AND DEATH DETECTION: A REPLICATION OF READING FACES THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A replication of two previous experiments by Parra and Argibay (2013a, b) was performed in the present study with ordinary people (non-psychics) using photographs of the faces of people. The aim was to use images of dead people and diseased people as targets, specifically, to determine if the participants scored differently above mean chance expectation (MCE) with the two kinds of stimulus. Fifty participants, having experienced ESP in general, took part. In the first experiment, using photographs of healthy and diseased persons, support is given for the claim that iconic representation through a mental procedure (psychometry) – *implying mental representation of the person target* – is psi conducive.

A significant difference on two person targets was found, and the total scores for the healthy/disease condition. Although there is no significant result under the living/dead condition, in the second experiment, however, males scored significantly higher than the females. This result corroborates the Parra and Argibay (2009a) findings in terms of the gender difference, where males scored higher as well. A few participants pointed out that there were different symbolizations for the dead target persons.

## **HOW DO RNGs DETECT PSYCHOKINESIS? THE PROPOSED CAW MODEL (COUPLING, ANALOG SIGNAL ANOMALY, AND WAVE-LIKE FIELD MODEL) AS A MECHANISM OF DETECTING PK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The author has been carrying out a 3-year measurement at a fixed place using field RNGs (Orion), in which he has found a characteristic curve of field consciousness. This finding suggested a possibility that  $Z$  and Converted  $Z$  (which is calculated from the accumulation of  $(Z^2-1)$  per second) are connected by a linear equation. This phenomenon required quantitative discussions on physical mechanisms of PK. In the present study, the author develops a theoretical model to explain how RNGs detect psychokinesis, based on a direct influence hypothesis.

Patterns of anomalous outputs of RNGs affected by PK can be categorized into three types; (A) output signals are clock signals such as 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, ...; (B) output signals consist of 0 only; and (C) output signals consist of 1 only. The author discusses a case that PK influences the analog circuit in a RNG directly. At first, original analog signals are generated by an analog circuit. The analog signals are converted to original digital signals. Next, the original signals are processed by XOR using a reference clock signal, and then RNGs output them as random numbers.

The author proposes ideas of possible physical mechanisms through considerations on previous various studies on poltergeists, macro PK, and ki. Type (A) pattern can be explained by an analog signal anomaly which is caused by PK. For the type (B) pattern, the original signals should be synchronized to the reference clock signal. The author introduced an idea, an electric coupling, as a mechanism which can cause synchronization between the analog and reference signals naturally. For the type (C) pattern, the original signals should be clock signals with a reverse phase of the reference clock signal. The author introduced another idea, a wave-like field, as a mechanism which causes synchronization with a reverse phase.

Anomalous outputs of RNGs can be explained using the CAW model in which the PK field is assumed to have properties of an electric coupling, an analog signal anomaly, and a wave-like field. Based on the CAW model, persons can cause an anomaly of outputs of RNGs relatively easily even if they never know details of the RNG circuits. Also, it is expected that persons can control outputs of RNGs by their PK if they change the way of generating PK, just as they are able to changes the pitch or loudness of their voice.

The probabilities of types (A), (B), and (C) patterns are defined as  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\gamma$  ( $1 \geq \alpha + \beta + \gamma \geq 0$ ). For them, lengths of bits per second are defined as  $m_A$ ,  $m_B$ , and  $m_C$ . The author derives equations of MCE  $Z$ -scores;  $Z$  (Stouffer's  $Z$ ), and  $Z^2$ ,  $Z^3$ ,  $Z^4$ ,  $Z^5$ , and  $Z^6$  per second for a typical condition that random numbers are generated at 200 bits/s. These equations can be applied for discussions of all

RNG experiments. Previous data of RNG experiments can be expected to be discussed again from a new viewpoint in the future.

## **WHAT ABOUT PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND ANOMALISTICS? RESULTS OF A WGFP AND GfA MEMBER SURVEY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Harvey Irwin, in 2014, published the results of an online survey of members of the Parapsychological Association concerning the views of parapsychologists about paranormal phenomena and parapsychological research. The current study is a conceptual replication with a German version of the questionnaire that is partly adapted to the special demands of the two particular survey groups, members of the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Parapsychologie (WGFP) [Scientific Society for the Advancement of Parapsychology] and the Gesellschaft für Anomalistik (GfA) [Society for Anomalistics].

The PA, which was established as an international academic professional association of parapsychologists, has relatively high entrance barriers for membership aspirants. The entrance barriers of the WGFP (established in 1981) are similarly high as well as the degree of scientific professionalism. The situation is different with the GfA. Its foundation in 1999 did not pursue the objective kind of an exclusive professional association, but to offer a platform for “an informed and respectful dialogue between proponents and opponents of controversial scientific claims and seemingly incompatible epistemic positions”. Everybody who likes to support this objective can become a member. Accordingly, the proportion of professional scientists is much lower than in the WGFP and PA.

A further significant difference consists in a greater heterogeneity of the main areas of interest because the focus of the GfA is not limited to the field of classical parapsychology but covers also topics such as ufology, cryptozoology, astrology, etc. While members of the WGFP and PA have a positive attitude towards parapsychology as an open-ended scientific project, and consider unconventional theories and explanations (i.e. consider the existence of psi possible), this is not necessarily the case with the members of the GfA. Although a strong interest in anomalistic issues can be assumed, the mere fact of the foundation by former members of the GWUP suggests that non-open-ended approaches such as the so-called anomalistic psychology get their place.

25 WGFP members and 57 GfA members took part in the survey. The results are compared between the groups as well as with the data of the survey conducted by Irwin. Despite many parallels, some remarkable differences were found.

The items concerning the evidence for the reality of psi, together with its specific facets, brought interesting results. With regard to the general assessment, the average of the GfA sample is lower (73%) than the WGFP (84%) and PA (78.9%) sample because some GfA respondents were extremely critical about the evidence. However, with regard to the indications of the assessment of evidence for specific facets of psi (clairvoyance, telepathy, precognition, psychokinesis), the WGFP respondents are slightly more critical on average than the respondents of GfA. Overall, this specific experimental evidence is much more conservatively assessed by the German groups than the (international, with a majority of American members,) PA respondents.

A salient difference between the PA sample and the two German samples concerns the survival hypothesis. The proportion of disagreeing indications to the statement *After the physical body dies some part of the person survives* is much lower with the PA sample (14%) than with the GfA (36.4%) and WGFP (44%) respondents.

In general, it became apparent that parapsychologists and interested persons in anomalistics do not form a homogenous group with regard to the assessment of the evidence and the opinions on research-specific issues. Thus, they are not credulous ‘sheeps’ who adopt, without thinking, every paranormal claim or ‘evidence’, but rather a group of individuals whose assessments often demonstrate a high degree of variance.

## **THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES TOWARDS INTEGRATING NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This poster exhibits a current study underway on the topic of how and why some near-death experiences (NDEs) are not successfully integrated by experiencers. An NDE is often a powerful and subjectively anomalous event that can permanently alter an individual’s beliefs, values, and the way in which he or she engages, operates, and moves within the world. As with any experience, it is one that needs to be integrated into the experiencers’ self-narrative or personal story for the individual to psychologically adjust and make sense of his experience. Individuals report both positive and negative NDEs. Typically, positive NDEs are integrated easily into the experiencer’s personal narrative and he or she is able to adjust mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and socially; however, there are some individuals, despite experiencing a positive NDE, who struggle to make sense of and adapt to the experience. Additionally, negative NDEs are commonly correlated with negative adjustment. This demographic of NDErs who may struggle to integrate their NDEs may experience anxiety or PTSD-like symptoms related to terrifying features of their NDEs (e.g, bleak

or even hellish dimensions), have trouble reconciling prior spiritual views with what they experienced during their NDE, and may be unable to relate to their friends/family due to existential or spiritual shifts that often occur after an NDE. Friends and family may also have a difficult time relating to the NDEr and accepting these changes.

This research study first utilizes questionnaires to elucidate themes of poor integration of NDEs, and to begin to elicit how/why poor integration manifests. One questionnaire will be oriented to NDErs themselves, and another will be oriented to close friends and family of NDErs. Secondly, eight NDErs and a close friend or family member of each NDEr will be chosen to participate in interviews/case studies which will be analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA in this instance will be used to carefully examine the long-term negative after-effects experienced by people who have NDEs, identify what exactly those negative after-effects are, and what factors impede the integration process. Furthermore, this research is undertaken with the goal to elucidate clinical and therapeutic applications counsellors and psychotherapists may use when working with clients struggling to integrate NDEs.

Thank you to the Parapsychological Association for funding this research through the PARE Grant.

## **EXPLORING THE PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL AND TRANSPERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE PSYCHEDELIC DRUG EXPERIENCE: A MIXED METHODS ANALYSIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Many scholars have argued the case for more research to be carried out on the ‘noetic’ elements of the ayahuasca experience (Kjellgren, Eriksson & Norlander, 2009; Trichter, Klimo & Krippner, 2009). Móró, Simon, Bárd and Rác (2011) believe these hallucinogenic drugs offer powerful spiritual transformations for users. Ayahuasca (yáge) is a plant hallucinogen traditionally consumed in tribal communities across Southern America. Pharmacologically, the plant medicine is typically brewed by combining *Banisteriopsis Caapi* (contains alkaloids, harmine, harmaline and tetrahydroharmine) and *Psychotria Viridis* (N, N-dimethyltryptamine) (Barbosa, Giglio & Dalgalarondo, 2005).

Ayahuasca experiences are similar to those reported by individuals who experience parapsychological/anomalous phenomena, such as precognition and telepathy, as well as psychokinesis (Luke, 2010). Ayahuasca experiences are also linked with purported psi phenomena such as mediumship. Anthropologist Kensing (1973) reported on a Peruvian ayahuasca retreat

whereby the ayahuascero told the researcher specific information on his deceased grandfather. This was an example of mediumship demonstrated in an environment where ayahuasca was consumed. Ayahuasca was referred to by many parapsychologists as “telepathine” for its alleged capability to allow users to read the minds of others in close proximity (Luke, 2011). In addition to telepathy, ayahuasca users report clairvoyance (both auditory and visual); precognition and a small section have reported being abducted by alien entities (Nelson, 2008). It is evident psychedelic drugs have great research potential, with potential applications for advancing theory in transpersonal psychology, parapsychology and clinical psychology.

This is evident because research has indicated hallucinogenic drug experiences are linked with a range of transpersonal, therapeutic and parapsychological phenomena (Luke, 2010; Lukoff, Zanger & Lu, 1990; Thomas et al., 2013). Nevertheless, recent research into these links is in its infancy. From 1960-2000 psychedelic research was universally banned from governments globally. Now however, after a loosening of political rigidity, researchers in the field are once again beginning to explore these links with psychedelics and its ties with these fields.

However, as Luke (2011) suggests, there is a shortage of qualitative data in this field. More so, there is a lack of qualitative data on ayahuasca users’ experiences from Western culture (seeking authentic experiences outside of the West). Thus, the aim of this proposed project is to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on hallucinogenic drug users. Specifically, a focus on ayahuasca users in Britain, as this does appear to be an area in need of further empirical investigation.

This research project is an extension of a masters dissertation that explored ayahuasca users’ motivations, data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Similarly, this project will focus on analysing qualitative data, however, the research team aims to include wider systematic analyses for the data. Data will be collected via one-to-one semi-structured/unstructured interviews both in person and through online social communication formats. It is anticipated we will develop a greater understanding of ayahuasca experiences within the wider systemic/postmodern world. Also, it is believed this project will build on prior transpersonal psychological and parapsychological theories on psychedelic drug usage. It is projected that the data collected will provide further evidence for the notion that psychedelic research requires a multidisciplinary approach. Also, it is anticipated that this project will provide evidence that each individual psychedelic ‘trip’ is qualitatively different to someone else’s.

# **INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE CORRELATES OF PSI PERFORMANCE IN FORCED-CHOICE PRECOGNITION EXPERIMENTS: A META-ANALYSIS (1945-2016)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research in parapsychology has not been particularly persuasive, in large part due to what many *assume to be* a lack of replication (Alcock, 2003; Hyman 2010; Galak, LeBoeuf, Nelson, & Simmons, 2012). To address these concerns and better understand which factors may be associated with stronger and more consistent effect sizes, all forced-choice precognition experiments analysing individual differences (e.g., personality traits) were aggregated to determine which factors might reliably predict psi performance. Overall, 56 studies published between 1945 and 2016, including 35 individual difference measures, were subject to meta-analysis.

A small but significant relationship was found between the following individual difference measures and psi performance: luck belief or the belief that luck is primarily controllable ( $r = .131$ ), belief in psi ( $r = .125$ ), perceptual defensiveness ( $r = .125$ ), openness to experience ( $r = .124$ ), extraversion ( $r = .080$ ), and time belief as dynamic ( $r = -.017$ ). It should be noted that with the number of meta-analyses conducted in this paper, there is an increased risk of family-wise error, so one or more of these significant findings may be the result of multiple analyses (e.g., represent a false positive). Retrospective meta-analyses also have several limitations, so it is not appropriate to make any definitive statements about the results without first conducting confirmatory studies. For example, retrospective meta-analyses are often affected by publication bias or the file-drawer effect, whereby only significant results are reported or published. Although parapsychological journals generally publish more non-significant results than most mainstream scientific journals (Mousseau, 2003), no field is entirely immune, especially when there may be tens or even hundreds of secondary analyses conducted (e.g., analyses of various individual difference measures). At the same time, there is no indication to argue strongly that publication bias is a problem when taking into account Egger's test results—all of which were non-significant—which should be reassuring for parapsychologists given Mousseau's (2003) findings.

Ultimately, it is hoped that this meta-analysis can be used as a springboard for future research, allowing the findings to be used in a productive way and perhaps aiding in the development of research programmes that are specific and structured. As Watt (2005) comments, "Parapsychologists need to be far more systematic in how they tackle these questions.... Systematic follow-up is an essential prerequisite for demonstrating a replicable effect" (p. 222). Given the particularly straightforward nature of forced-choice precognition experiments, a promising future avenue would be to explore these factors in confirmatory studies. It is hoped that

researchers can model their future experiments off these findings in conjunction with preregistration techniques, to ultimately create a more systematic and robust database.

## **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

### **WITHERING SKEPTICISM: INCLUSIVE CRITICISM, OR HACKNEYED MANTRAS AND EXTRAORDINARY STANDARDS?**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In his influential article, 'Rhetoric over substance: The impoverished state of skepticism', Charles Honorton (1993) provided an astute and damning response to critiques of parapsychology produced by the principal counter-advocates of the day, James Alcock, Ray Hyman, and James Randi, for a special issue of the Italian Skeptics' journal, *Scienza & Paranormale*. Rather than take issue with particular points these commentators had made, Honorton took a more holistic perspective that focused on the rhetorical strategies they had adopted, comparing them with previous objections to parapsychology so as to see how (or indeed if) those arguments had moved on to keep pace with developments in empirical work. This usefully allowed him to identify ways in which the skeptical position had shifted; for example, in no longer claiming that the results of the major lines of experimental psi research could be explained in terms of the null hypothesis. "This concession is important", he noted (p. 191), "because it shifts the focus of the debate from the *existence* of effects to their *interpretation*" (emphasis in original). He also drew attention to the exceptional situation in parapsychology in which most counter-advocates were not empirical researchers engaged in psi research, so that their counter-explanations tended to be evaluated on the basis of plausibility rather than on the basis of evidence derived from direct empirical tests. According to Honorton, this produced a cycle of criticism in response to new claims that begins with *statistical criticisms* intended to demonstrate that the claimed effects are not really significant, *methodological criticisms* that are intended to account for observed effects in terms of procedural flaws, and finally *speculative criticisms* based on a priori and ad hominem arguments. Ironically, in showing how this cycle could be applied to both the ESP card guessing studies of the 1930s to 1950s and also to the ganzfeld studies of the 1970s and 1980s, Honorton was able to demonstrate a stagnation in parapsychological criticism akin to the 'lack of cumulativeness' that has been regarded by counter-advocates as a principal weakness in the case for parapsychology.

It is now 25 years since Charles Honorton's untimely death, and in marking that anniversary it seems appropriate to review modern criticism of parapsychology to see to what extent his

characterisation of skepticism still holds true. During this period, parapsychology has witnessed quite a dramatic transformation in its preferred methodologies and the particular expressions of psi they elicit, and has benefited from the availability of more standardised approaches to making sense of accumulated evidence, such that one might expect to see similar advances in the nature and focus of skepticism. In testing this expectation I shall draw on a number of sources, but will rely especially on Krippner and Friedman's (2010) *Debating psychic experience*, Cardeña, Palmer and Marcusson-Clavertz's (2015) *Parapsychology: A handbook for the 21st Century*, and the controversy surrounding Bem's 'Feeling the future' publications.

**ABSTRACT OF INVITED ADDRESS**  
**[J.B. RHINE BANQUET ADDRESS]**

**INVISIBLE WORLD AND MODERN ASTROPHYSICS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The problem of the co-existence with the so-called ‘visible world’ of a non-visible one, inconceivable to human senses, was a point of disagreement and dispute between Theology, Philosophy and Exact Sciences. Here is discussed the evolution of this view from Pre-Socratic philosophers to Modern Astrophysics. Arguments that are important for theologians in order to follow the achievements of Modern Science are also given. This is particularly important for Antiretic-Objectionable Theology making an effort to confute the metaphysical views of the Christian Theology through ideas mainly based on the findings of the Exact Sciences.

**ABSTRACTS OF EXHIBITIONS AND LIVE  
PERFORMANCE**

**PYTHIA: AN ANCIENT MUSICAL INSTRUMENT EXHIBITION  
AND LIVE PERFORMANCE**

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Theodore Koumartzis<sup>2</sup> & George Saratsis<sup>2</sup>

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**ABSTRACT**

A rare ancient music instrument exhibition and live performance will be held in during the Presidential Reception in the Hypatia Mansion titled “Pythia”, after the artistic competition that took place during ancient times at Delphi. Both the exhibition and the live performance will be themed around the Greek god Pan, the one who – according to ancient Greek mythology - invented the art of precognition and taught it to Apollo (who then passed it over to the oracle Pythia).

During the first part of the live performance, the attendees will hear Delphic and Homeric hymns with recitation and accompanied by ancient lyre and kitharis. During the second part, modern and well-known musical pieces will be played, adapted for ancient music instruments. At the same time, a small exhibition will be held were the attendees will be able to see, touch, and play with instruments such as the lyre of Pan, the lyre of Apollo, the barbiton lyre of Sappho, the mysterious instrument of sambuca, the phorminx, the Kitharis of the Golden Age and other instruments.

## **THE GREEK HISTORY OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH: A PHOTO-EXHIBITION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A photo-exhibition about the history of Greek parapsychology, the Greek Society for Psychical Research (GSPR), the legendary figure of Dr. Angelos Tanagras, and the “telepathic network” between Athens, Vienna, London, Paris, Warsaw, New York, and etc. will be available for viewing throughout the events of the PA convention. The goal is to present the Greece of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when psychical research was widely accepted, Greek mediums were part of police investigations, parapsychology lectures were given at the National University of Athens, and field research was taking place all over the country. Furthermore, photographs from the very first international conferences in the field will be displayed, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference in Paris (1927), the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference in Athens (1930) and 5<sup>th</sup> Conference in Oslo (1935).

This exhibition will include rare photographs, sketches, news clips and authentic documents from Tanagras’ Archives in the Garrett Library of the Parapsychology Foundation, Greek newspapers, GSPR’s monthly magazine *Psychic Researches* (ελλ. Ψυχικά Έρευναι), and Tanagras’ literary publications.

**NOTES**

*Abstracts of Presented Papers*

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