

The Bulletin of the Parapsychological Association

Mindfield

Volume 13 Issue 1

Diversity in
parapsychology

13.1.2021

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Issue 1



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Mindfield Team

*by Annalisa Ventola, Renaud Evrard,
Nikolaos Koumartzis & Jacob W. Glazier*

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| Mindfield

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| BY ANNALISA VENTOLA,
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In the call for this issue of *Mindfield*, we attempted to acknowledge the largely North American and European make-up of our membership as perhaps limiting in some ways and asked some critical questions: Might unconscious biases, perhaps fueled by a dominant “Western” perspective, limit our scientific understanding of psi?

How can the field further support gender equality and those with disabilities? We invited anyone who found that their unique perspective should be better known to take the opportunity to share it with us.

We issued this call in 2019 - well before the global shutdowns spurred by the SARS-CoV-2 and also well before recent movements in the United States and elsewhere to protest forms of white supremacy and white violence on people of color and other marginalized groups. Partially as a result of these movements and the racial and economic disparities made all the more explicit by the pandemic, there has been an outcry in adjacent fields to parapsychology, most notably psychology, to critically examine ways white supremacy is perpetuated by scientific research and institutional gatekeeping. The

recent *Decolonizing Psychology Conference* organized and produced by Teachers College at Columbia University represents this more conscientious self-reflective turn.

Racial inequity and, more plainly, blatant white supremacy typified the dominate conversations on diversity and multiculturalism over the last year. However, gender inequality in the sciences also became even more relevant. Early in 2019 the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), of which the PA is an Affiliate, formed its Societies Consortium on Sexual Harassment in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine. This formation of this consortium was a response to the National Academies **report on Sexual Harassment of Women** - a call to action urging institutions to consider the impact of sexual harassment as equal to research misconduct in terms of its effect on the integrity of scien-

The challenge is for us to provide the mentoring and support to ensure that in 10-20 years that level of diversity will be found among the PA's professional membership and within its leadership.

tific research. Revelations of the sexual harassment experienced by women in the workplace and in academic settings have raised urgent questions about the specific impact of this discriminatory behavior on women and the extent to which it is limiting their careers. The recent documentary *Picture a Scientist* (watch it at <https://tinyurl.com/b4msa36f>) sheds even more light on these issues.

These recent movements have painted a rather dim picture, but we have reasons to be hopeful. One can find gender and ethnic diversity in the PA simply by looking at its student membership, which is almost half female, includes transgender and non-binary individuals, is racially diverse, and enjoys more representation from multiple countries outside of North America and Europe than other PA membership levels. The challenge is for us to provide the mentoring and support to ensure that in 10-20 years that

level of diversity will be found among the PA's professional membership and within its leadership.

The inclusion of diverse voices represents one of the greatest strengths of any scientific field. Not only does debate and dissent help shake up old and rigid ways of conceptualizing and investigating the world, but it also adds an element of 'true skepticism' to the scientific process in the sense of critically reflecting on the ways research is being conducted. By welcoming a conversation that provides a forum for underrepresented groups, parapsychology will be in a better position to see the way that one perspective or ideology has been favored at the expense of others.

Finally, this will be Annalisa Ventola's last issue as a co-editor of *Mindfield*. She was this publication's first layout editor for volumes 1-3 before engaging the talented Nikolaos Koumartzis as PA Art Director. She stepped into the role of Co-Editor when Etzel Cardeña stepped down in 2017, and now she has paved the way for *Mindfield's* incoming Co-Editor: Jacob W. Glazier. As Executive Director of the PA, Annalisa will continue to support this publication in an administrative capacity and is pleased to be bringing more talent into the PA's volunteer staff. Jake has a doctorate degree in Psychology: Consciousness and Society from the University of West Georgia, where he also teaches. His research interests are varied and intersectional, as evidenced by the

article he contributed to this issue, and we look forward to what his creativity and insight will bring to the bulletin.

Books Received

Shute, R. (2020). *Ultimate Reality: A Challenge to the Materialist Paradigm*. Romar Philosophical Publishing. Rodger Shute examines evolution, consciousness, and the possibility of an afterlife to address the big questions: Where do we come from? What are we? Where do we go?

Vernon, D. (2020). *Dark Cognition: Evidence for Psi and its Implications for Consciousness*. Routledge. David Vernon provides essential coverage of information and evidence for a variety of anomalous psi phenomena, calling for a paradigm shift in how we view consciousness: from seeing it as something solely reliant on the brain to something that is enigmatic, fundamental and all pervasive.

Wildman, W.J. & Stockly, K.J. (2021) *Spirit Tech: The Brave New World of Consciousness Hacking and Enlightenment Engineering*. New York: St. Martin's Press. The authors review brain-based technologies designed to trigger, enhance, accelerate, modify, or measure spiritual experience while discussing issues of authenticity, meaning, safety, and social responsibility.

Track the Trickster!

Some recent events in the parapsychological community worry me. A perennial institute of parapsychology collapses in a few months in the face of sudden political and ideological hostility. A leading researcher gets angry with his employers and emancipates himself at the risk of dragging his collaborators into a conflict of loyalty. Another recognized researcher turns out to have committed massive

fraud, refuses to recognize it, and then decries his treatment. Such horror stories can make everyone pessimistic (Hess, 1992).

We can also read these events as examples of the recurrent socio-anthropological pattern called “the Trickster” (Hansen, 2001), i.e., as reversals of privileged positions. According to George P. Hansen, the paranormal seems to have affinities with some social characteristics such as liminality, anti-structure, marginality, *communitas*, transgressiveness, reflexivity, and reversibility, but aversions to others such as centrality, structure, hierarchy, and economic power.

The subject of this special issue



| by *RENAUD EVRARD*
PA President

is diversity, which inherently involves recognizing marginalized voices. Marginality is type of liminality, and the liminal are often marginalized (Hansen, 2001). Within these pages, we are attempting to bring together topics which go beyond the mainstream. These are often supported by those who have low or no status because of their identity. And they teach us something of the paranormal, as it appears to feed on social groups with specific anti-structural characteristics (Evrard, 2010).

In the same way we may expect trickster effects in the upper level of mainstream parapsychology, we should expect similar effects with the lower level. We must learn from the margins:

As a field, parapsychology has historically been marginalized

[...] the paranormal seems to have affinities with some social characteristics such as liminality, anti-structure, marginality, *communitas*, transgressiveness, reflexivity, and reversibility

and that has hurt our progress. But there comes a time when it may be adaptive to realize that marginality can also be a gift. We have encountered a phenomenon that deserves study. We have qualified investigators with the tools to investigate it all along the continuum from conventional to paranormal. A cross-cultural research environment already exists that can illuminate the construction and interpretation of lived experience from local traditions to powerful global communities of belief. The work we do on both the underlying experience and its many contexts speaks to and from a wide list of mainstream science- and hu-

manities-based disciplines. It is time that we acknowledge there is something rich and powerful here—wherever the findings lead—and who better to carry the research to its fruition than those who are not afraid to operate outside the hidebound limits of mainstream science? (Beischel & Zingrone, 2015, p. 312)

Parapsychology should not make the same mistakes that mainstream research has made in marginalizing it. Cultural and social forces have a grip on what knowledge will be *consecrated* and what will be *marginalized* (Kail, 2008). We should identify these same biases as they apply to our field, and then address them, welcoming the foreigner, reaching out to the marginalized, and strengthening the expression of minority voices.

Of course, parapsychologists are always struggling to receive more legitimacy, asking for recognition from the elites. Paul Allison, from Cornell University, claimed in 1979 that they succeed at some level in reaching legitimacy. But he also observed (Allison, 1979, p. 288) the “true dilemma” of parapsychologists showing “an image of methodological innocence coupled with theoretical guilt.” The subversive process inherent to (experimental) parapsychology prompted David Hess to consider three different characteristics: *deviance*, violations of the accepted codes

ideals of scientific practice (such as fraud, corruption, or unprofessional experimental design and analysis); *marginality*, having an unimportant position in the status and funding hierarchies of science; and *heterodoxy*, anomalous claims that violate existing scientific perceptions about the world. He concluded:

Thus, a science such as parapsychology is heterodox, and many parapsychologists are marginalized, but in general its experimental designs are not deviant with respect to the standards articulated by other experimental psychologists. Likewise, defenders of scientific orthodoxies may engage in so-called “deviant” practices in order to debunk heterodox sciences or marginalized colleagues. Furthermore, a science may be heterodox even if many of its members do not occupy a marginalized position in the social structures and power hierarchies of contemporary science. (Hess, 1992)

According to Hansen (2011), integrating marginality as a property of the field of parapsychology is a key to understanding psi:

Simply put, parapsychology has failed to flourish as an institutional endeavor. It remains marginal, and after nearly 130 years of continuous effort, it lacks viable institutions that seek to di-

rectly engage the phenomena as an ongoing effort. In our culture, the moneys devoted to fictional portrayal of the paranormal in books, TV, and movies dwarf those allocated to research. The phenomena occurring today are marginalized in mainstream religion and neglected, or ridiculed, in science. These facts say something fundamental about the nature of the phenomena, and any comprehensive theory of the paranormal must explain them. (Hansen, 2011)

Parapsychology as a whole maintains a low status; though

The phenomena occurring today are marginalized in mainstream religion and neglected, or ridiculed, in science. These facts say something fundamental about the nature of the phenomena, and any comprehensive theory of the paranormal must explain them.

some researchers reach high positions, most practitioners attempting to produce paranormal/supernatural phenomena have been socially marginal for millennia. Hansen concluded that marginality and not centrality is a pervasive characteristic of the field of parapsychology. Is that a fatal flaw? As Storm (2003) concluded in his review of Hansen's book, as major components of trickster theory are testable, "what will really count for the scientifically trained researcher are the results of experimentation."

Like Hess (1992), sociologist Bertrand Méheust (1999) has shown that the process of rejecting parapsychology is rarely explicit. For every era, only a handful of scientists tackle the task of overtly struggling against what is considered pseudo-science. Instead, because of the ideology of science in Western culture, rejection happens through social phenomena: career management, discrimination, internalization of taboos, and so on. Everything contributes to reject the scientific approach to the paranormal.

My question consists in asking myself if, within our very community, we are not applying the same kinds of implicit rejection. After two issues on the boundary-work, opening up to diversity seems to me to be a good remedy in the face of all these doors which are in the process of being closed elsewhere.

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Innovation and Persistence – Our Global Majority Superpowers!

As a seven-year-old girl, I was already day-dreaming about being a scientist. I imagined walking around my lab, tweaking this foaming substance over here, dialing up something with an electrical current in it over there, and generally having a blast. I had the lab coat, the glasses, and oh yeah: the beard. I had this fantasy regularly, and thoroughly enjoyed it all through high school. I didn't even notice the beard and the fact that I was a man in that daydream until I thought back on it in college. That's when I realized what had gone wrong.

I have always been female and have had no desire to be male. But I have also always been a creative problem solver. As a child I was so sure I wanted to be a scientist

– and so sure that only men were scientists – that I apparently concocted a version of reality in which my future self was a scientist (yay!) and therefore male (what?). Only in college did it occur to me that this was my solution to a cultural problem. I recognized that the problem wasn't inside of me, but outside of me, in the way that gender and gender roles had been structured.

Working with both male and female scientists as I did my



| by *JULIA MOSSBRIDGE*

graduate and post-doctoral work, I learned a lot about how those in the global majority (women, indigenous people and people of color) have learned to negotiate and survive the social-cultural

power structures built largely by those in the global minority (men and white people). We have gained expertise in understanding how and why powerful people often feel that their power is justified by virtue of their always having had it. Those of us in the global majority have had to learn to work with, beneath, above, and around this power dynamic, and I believe that decades of getting things done despite the global anti-meritocracy working against us makes our brains different. I believe those not handed social-cultural power

It's not that men and white people can't solve these longstanding, complex problems. It's just likely that the reason these problems are longstanding and appear to be complex is that for the most part there is great homogeneity in the thinking styles of those who have been looking at them.

at birth solve problems differently – not better, just differently.

Here's an example from my own experience. During my post-doctoral years, a more experienced and higher-ranked male academic scientist asked me why most women don't seem to pursue physics, and those who do pursue it don't often solve the physics problems they are given in class quickly and easily. He even asked if maybe I thought there was something about women's brains that made them not cut out for physics. I was appalled that he believed I might have thought so, but I agreed with him that no question should be off limits. I shared with him what, to me, was an obvious possibility: Perhaps the reason physics hasn't advanced at a fundamental level for decades is that many women and people of color are interested in bigger and more difficult problems than the mundane "ball rolls down inclined plane" problems examined in introductory high school and college physics courses.

Physics and many other STEM disciplines have a recruiting problem. They recruit only those who find simple problems interesting, while the more complex problems like "what is time?" and "how does observation affect outcomes?" and "can understanding magnetism help me feel like I am valued in

society?" are kept in a closet and saved for those who get graduate degrees (and perhaps these questions are not even allowed for them). If this strategy continues to disengage women and people of color, how will we use our hard-won superpowers to help solve these longstanding problems?

Thinking back on that conversation reminds me of an interview with Lisa Piccirillo, who recently solved the Conway knot problem, a topology problem that had been unsolved for 50 years. It concerns a knot with 11 crossings, and the question is whether the knot is a slice of a higher-dimensional knot. When she first heard about the problem at a conference, she remembers thinking, "That's ridiculous. We should be able to do that" (Wolfson, 2020, subtitle). She then approached it as a homework problem: "I didn't allow myself to work on it during the day because I didn't consider it to be real math. I thought it was, like, my homework" (Klarreich, 2020, para. 2). She received a tenure-track post at MIT as a result of her historic solution.

It's not that men and white people can't solve these longstanding, complex problems. It's just likely that the reason these problems are longstanding and appear to be complex is that for the most part there is great

Although we in parapsychology pride ourselves on not going with the norm, the dominance of older, straight-passing, apparently cis-gendered white men at our meetings suggests we could do better.

homogeneity in the thinking styles of those who have been looking at them. And due to cultural bias, there can also be perfectly innocent misunderstandings about who is actually capable of solving them, so potential problem-solvers are actively discouraged.

For example, 87-year-old Dr. Myriam Sarachik was recently celebrated by the American Physical Society for her empirical research related to how electrons behave in solids. At the ceremony, she said, “I can’t even believe it, because I almost didn’t get into the field at all” (Chang, 2020, para. 9) After her family escaped a concentration camp in Germany and she had a promising early career

in the United States, one of her Columbia professors told her she didn’t want a research job – that she ought to teach. She told him she indeed wanted to do research, and eventually he acquiesced. She generously says of him, “He had this bias. We all have it, but he was willing to operate above it” (Chang, 2020, para. 19). Later in her life, Dr. Sarachik showed how insulators that do not conduct electricity could turn into metallic conductors – theorists still don’t know how this works, but they admit it does in fact happen. Remind you of parapsychology? Me too. She was a real empirical trailblazer, and she stuck with it. She identified willpower as another superpower at her awards ceremony when she said, “Women are no better and no worse at doing physics than men are,” she said. “They are, however, at least if they’re my age, more persistent. It’s tenacity. It’s the will not to be pushed out” (Chang, 2020, para. 65).

Like many readers, my situation is half-and-half. I’m a person who has sociocultural power (I’m a white, queer but straight-passing, cis-gendered person) but who also has less power than the global minority (I’m female). This has given me an understanding of both sides of the power coin. I’d like to point out that there are plenty

of white men who also share this half-and-half experience; growing up in poverty or being gay or transgender often instills a feeling of powerlessness, even though others may not be able to discern your story visually. There are as many human experiences as there are humans. But understanding how power works in communities, including our own, is essential for everyone – both those who have power and often don’t seem to know they have it, and those who don’t have power and almost always know they don’t. Healthy communities that solve problems arise from acknowledging what is true and being willing to share power.

This commentary is really a plea for the parapsychology community to work towards adopting two shifts that I believe will positively affect the future of our discipline. First, let’s use a “diversity in thought-and-experience” approach to leadership and team creation. Who thinks very differently from the norm and who has had experiences that forced them to overcome difficult odds? If you want to solve problems, that’s who you want as a leader, that’s who you want on your team, and that’s who you want to recruit to your discipline. Although we in parapsychology pride ourselves on not going with the norm, the

Innovative problem-solving and persistence may both be superpowers of those who have not been born into power, and these superpowers are available to anyone who takes us seriously.

dominance of older, straight-passing, apparently cis-gendered white men at our meetings suggests we could do better.

Second, for those of us who have social-cultural power, let's practice shifting the locus of that power. If you are white and you are asked to be on a high-status committee, what if you suggested a person of color? If you are a man and you are asked to lead, what if you suggested a woman instead? These acts shift the locus of social-cultural power from you to others. At the same time, they provide you with a kind of power that cannot be taken away: generosity of spirit.

Innovative problem-solving and persistence may both be superpowers of those who have not been born into power, and these superpowers are available to anyone who takes us seriously. We get things done, because we have had to solve the basic problem of needing to survive and thrive in an environment that not only does not represent us, but sometimes actively works against us. We will solve bigger, more compelling problems when diversity of thought-and-experience and the sharing of power are considered essential components of the creative problem-solving process in our field.

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colleagues
interested in
learning more

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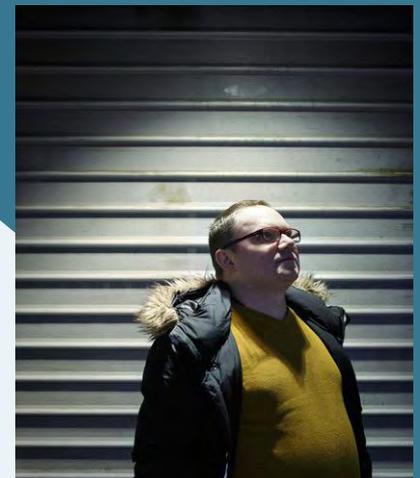
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Three Pioneers of Anomalous Studies in Japan

In a lecture he gave in 1979, Claude Lévi-Strauss (2011) talked about Japanese culture as “the other side of the Moon,” already calling for exploring this “hidden side.” Things are (slowly?) starting to change: Bryan W. Van Norden (2017) recently published an important book called *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto*. In a very provocative fashion, Van Norden argues that most philosophy departments in the world are in fact only Western philosophy departments since they utterly fail to teach other kinds of philosophies, including Asian and African, but also feminist and others. Ironically, even philosophy departments in Japan usually fail to teach Japanese philosophy, since the corpus has been defined by Kant, Hegel, and others as only Western philosophy. In *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, Heisig et al. (2011) proposed enlarging the definition of philosophy in order

to include pre-modern Japanese scholars like Kūkai, Dōgen, and so many other amazing thinkers. By calling for these additional voices, these authors point toward structural racism in the academic world. Structural racism is different from individual racism, as Peggy McIntosh (1989) explained in her influential article *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*: even if we, as individual, are not racists, we unwillingly take part in a system that is racist. Thus, not teaching Asian thinkers in universities is part of



| by JEAN-MICHEL AB-RASSART

the problem.

In the spirit of Van Norden’s multicultural manifesto, I’d like to briefly present here three early

Japanese anomalous researchers who deserve to be better known by academics who are not Japanese scholars: Yakumo Koizumi (1850-1904), Inoue Enryō (1858-1919), and Tomokichi Fukurai (1869-1952). Lafcadio Hearn was born in Ireland but moved to Japan in 1890. Once there, he got married and adopted the Japanese nationality the same year under the name Yakumo Koizumi (Cott, 1990). In a similar way to the Brothers Grimm in Germany, he played a pivotal role in the study of *yōkai*

(Japanese fairy creatures) and *yūrei* (Japanese ghosts). His most famous work is *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*, in which he collected folktales. Japanese children still know those stories today. In the tale *Mujina* for example, a traveller has a close encounter of the third kind with several *Noppera-bō*, supernatural creatures that can pass for human except for having no faces. One way to understand what *yōkai* are is to consider that, in the Shinto framework, they are *kami* (Japanese gods or spirits) that are not worshipped at a shrine. The seminal work of Lafcadio Hearn was the beginning of folkloristic studies in Japan. *Yōkai* are still culturally relevant in Japan today, with mangas like *GeGeGe no Kitarō*, movies like *Pom Poko*, and video games like *Yo-kai Watch*.

Inoue Enryō was a famous Japanese philosopher (Heisig, J. W., Kasukis, T. P., & Maraldo, J. C., 2011, pp. 619-630). He founded Toyo University and was nicknamed *Yōkai Hakase* (Mystery Professor) by the public. I translated *yōkai* above as Japanese fairy creatures, but this is the current meaning of the word; during Enryō's time, *yōkai*'s meaning was more akin to Fortean phenomena. On top of his

philosophical interests (linked to reforming Buddhism), he studied anomalous phenomena. He even advocated for the creation of *yōkai* studies, a discipline that would study anomalous phenomena (Enryō, 2016; Miura, 2014). For that goal, he established a list of topics that should be studied in that new discipline. He also investigated the origin of *Kokkuri-san*, a Japanese spiritualist board game similar to *Ouija*, but instead of trying to talk to the dead, participants attempt to contact a *yōkai* called *Kokkuri* (Enryō, 1887). Though today *Kokkuri-san* is practiced with something very similar to a *Ouija* board but with Japanese hiragana instead of letters and the drawing of a torii at the top, it is not the device that Enryō (2016) describes in his article; he talks about a small table made with some basic DIY. His hypothesis was that *Kokkuri-san* was invented by Japanese people in contact with foreigners who tried to recreate the table-turning of American spiritualism. It thus seems that the *Kokkuri-san* device changed from that small table to a board game during the 20th-century. Inoue Enryō tried to explain Fortean phenomena with a reductionist hypothesis and was what we would call a skeptic today.

His hypothesis was that Kokkuri-san was invented by Japanese people in contact with foreigners who tried to recreate the table-turning of American spiritualism. It thus seems that the Kokkuri-san device changed from that small table to a board game during the 20th century.

Tomokichi Fukurai is the forefather of parapsychology in the Land of the Rising Sun. He was an associate professor at Tokyo Imperial University until he was forced out in 1913 after becoming involved with psychical research.

If Lafcadio Hearn marks the beginning of folkloristic studies in Japan, Tomokichi Fukurai is the forefather of parapsychology in the Land of the Rising Sun. He was an associate professor at Tokyo Imperial University until he was forced out in 1913 after becoming involved with psychical research. He studied several mediums, the most famous ones being Chizuko Mifune and Ikuko Nagao, and especially thoughtography, the claimed ability to burn images from one's mind onto surfaces such as photographic

film by psychic means, a topic in which he is a precursor. His most famous work is *Clairvoyance and thoughtography* (Fukurai, 1931). According to Takasuna (2012), the *Fukurai affair*, as it is sometimes called, was taboo for decades in academia and was not documented in textbooks on the history of Japanese psychology prior to the late 1990s.

I choose to briefly talk about those three thinkers because I think they represent three main styles of investigations into anomalies that we still find today in academia: folkloristic studies (Lafcadio Hearn), anomalistic psychology (Inoue Enryō), and parapsychology (Tomokichi Fukurai). If it is always interesting to see how the paranormal is treated in other cultures and it's worth comparing yōkai to Western fairy creatures. I find it especially fascinating to think that Inoue Enryō had the idea of yōkai studies before Charles Fort wrote *The Book of the Damned*, and well before Western academia created anomalistic psychology at the beginning of the 1980s. Though not perfect from a methodological point of view, the work done by Tomokichi Fukurai on thoughtography is seminal in our field.

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Extra-Sensory Perception: Reality Turned Myth in Westernscience

When the term ESP, in its abbreviated form, was introduced by Duke University psychologist J. B. Rhine in the 1930's, it was certainly with the best of intentions, namely to bring respectability to the psi phenomenon. At the time there were no other explanations known to Westernscience, though other cultures such as China and India have recognized it since ancient times. But the unfortunate unintended outcome has been to turn reality into myth. It can be argued that the term ESP has done more harm than good to

the advancement of knowledge in relation to psi in more than one way, in particular with respect to phenomena like telepathy, telekinisis, clairvoyance, and others.

The myth behind the understanding of ESP in Western science is that humans only have five senses, and that the human mindbody is constituted of only the physical senses. But the reality is that the human mindbody has a sixth sense, namely the *mind sense*. In fact, this is not the sixth sense, but the very first. The Buddhadhamma ("Teachings of the Buddha," distinct from the



| by VEN. BHIKKHU
MIHITA, *Extra-Sensory
Perception Bared*

diverse religious practices in its name (Mihita, 2019; Sugunasi-

ri, 2011)) teaches how a living mindbody is made up of the Four Great Elements (water, heat, air, and earth), space (nostrils, ears, etc.), and Viññāṇa, consciousness or mind. What constitutes death in Buddhian teachings is the parting of company of consciousness from the Four Great Elements. Thus, having no mind means one is not alive; under the current model of extrasensory perception, then, all humans have to be considered dead!

Who continues the myth of mind being not part of a human mindbody? Primarily those in the discipline of physics. The ESP label offered academic respectability to the notion that anything that is not physical was “extra,” thus allowing physicists to retain their claimed respectability of an exclusive physicality. Respecters of psi came to be satisfied, since they were now allowed a booth in the field of science next to physics, thus giving them a sense of respectability. But it didn’t take much time for the academy to get cracking. In 1938, the psychologist **Joseph Jastrow** wrote that “much of the evidence for extrasensory perception collected by Rhine and other parapsychologists was anecdotal, biased, dubious

and the result of ‘faulty observation and familiar human frailties’” (Extrasensory Perception, 2021, March 28).

But the label ESP is also a misnomer. It suggests that phenomena like telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance, etc., have nothing to do with senses, but are extra, outside of it, much like extracurricular activities in an educational setting. The label ESP also creates a cognitive dissonance for those on the sidelines, such as scholars not in the disciplines of parapsychology, psychology, or physics, as well as the educated public in general, because the label plays a game of a double helix. On the one hand, it allows for a continuation of the myth – call it scientific error – of an exclusive physicality. But on the other, it allows for a sense not visible to the naked eye of the physicist. In no position to question, they take the safe stance of continuing to use the label complacently. These then are among the ways the label ESP has done more harm than good.

Since the time of Rhine there has been evidence in the Westernscientific literature that argues for and establishes the reality of psi. Telepathy (literally “feeling from a distance”), for

example, points to the reality that the distant communication is not only between human beings (Sheldrake, 2013). Sheldrake gives the example of a horse owner leaving the farm on business, only to rush back on intuition and be told that, from the time he left, the horse had been neighing and refusing any food, although all what the owner saw upon his return was his calm and quiet horse. The skeptic will write off any such example as being mere coincidence. This is no explanation, but simply a rewording. Sometimes, the terms “chance” and “accidental” are used. But General Systems Theory (Macy, 1991) shows that nothing in a system happens by chance or accident, and that everything is conditioned. Consider, for example, the most natural of actions, breathing. Short of oxygen, one breathes in; the lungs filled, the carbon dioxide is breathed out. Is this by chance or accident, or conditionality?

Be it between humans or animals, telepathy is a form of communication. It follows the normal communicative process: sender, medium, message, and receiver, under the right conditions. A telepathic communication, human or

other, can be said to be a biological exercise of the mind, human nature being based in biology (Goldberg, 1992). The same could be said of other psi phenomena, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, or psychokinesis.

Unconscious Biases?

Does this continued use of the label ESP, and failure to recognize the reality of the mind sense and a continuing insistence of an ex-

While the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries opened a space for them, it was not enough to dislodge the myth of the exclusivity of physicality, and instead enhanced it. Contemporary Westernscience has advanced on the basis of the predominance of physics as the basic paradigm.

clusive physicality, constitute an unconscious Eurocentric bias? In an earlier era, it was a *religio-centrism* that stood in the way of Galileo and Darwin. While the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries opened a space for them, it was not enough to dislodge the myth of the exclusivity of physicality, and instead enhanced it. Contemporary Westernscience has advanced on the basis of the predominance of physics as the basic paradigm. And having made its mark, it may be unwilling to lose world dominance. The self-perceived intellectualism of “left-brain” thinking is perhaps fueled by patriarchy, an “extreme logos attitude of the Masculine” (Shepherd, 1993, 267), and hierarchy (Shepherd, 1993, 124-125). Of course, it is not that every single individual western scientist or western scholar is consciously Eurocentric; it is simply a matter of going along with the system. Thus we may consider this a systemic Eurocentrism, paralleling systemic racism.

A further refinement is what may be called *Euro-casteism*. This draws upon an East Indian social model. Everyone in the land, of the same ethnicity, shared the belief in a creator god Brahman. But this very source came to be used to build a social hierarchy, with the Brahmin caste claiming to be

superior over all others, on the basis that they alone were born of the mouth of Brahman. Others, though inferior to the Brahmins because they were born of the other parts of the Brahma body, were tolerated as well. But at the lowest ranking were the Untouchables, because they were not born of Brahma. In our situation, Western physicists, psychologists, parapsychologists, and others, broadly speaking, share a common socio-academic Eurocentrism. But the physicalists alone, speaking the exclusive language of physics, are symbolically born of the mouth of the God of Physics. The parapsychologists, by contrast, speak in a different tongue, an *extra-sensory* perception. Hence they are clearly the outcasts, the untouchables. This then is the Euro-casteism.

Scientific Understanding of Psi Limited?

How do Eurocentrism and Euro-casteism limit our scientific understanding of psi? For one thing, they force the psi community to continue to pay attention to earning credibility, focusing on methodology and small differences in experimental results in the pursuit of statistical significance. To focus on justifying one’s aca-

democratic existence clearly limits one from exploring wider and richer territory and resources. They also divert the attention of the academy from questioning the original assumptions under which the cover-up label came to be made up. Has the exclusive physicalist establishment been asked the obvious question as to which of the five physical senses Freud is pointing to when he talks about the id, ego, and superego? Taking René Descartes' "cogito, ergo sum" – I think therefore I am – in which of the five physical senses lies the thinking? Is it in the eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body? When a zygote results from the fertilization process at conception, which of the five physical senses are behind the fertilization process?

It was over three decades ago that psychologists Ken Wilbur, Jack Engler, and Daniel P. Brown published *Transformations of Consciousness* (1986). The concept of "mind-body medicine" was recognized by Dr. Herbert Benson of Harvard University (Herbert Benson, 2020, November 13). And Capra's *Tao of Physics* (1975), and *The Conscious Universe: Part and Whole in Modern Physical Theory* by Kafatos and Nadeau (1990) take us past the door of physics into a conscious universe. Mindful meditation is now a meme in North America, with health prac-

tioners, educators, corporate bodies, police, and even the army practicing it. More recent are the neuroscientists who have come to discover how doing nothing but being mindful of the process of breathing makes parts of the brain light up, while the five physical senses are naturally put to sleep. Even the very title of my own book, *You're What You Sense* (Sugunasiri, 2001) dispels the myth of the "extra-sensory."

How can the field further support becoming cross-disciplinary?

While writing this piece, I had not begun with any intent to bring in Buddhianscience, but that happens to be precisely the direction that has taken me. We have already seen the Buddha's characterization of a sentient being in terms of the Four Great Elements, space, and consciousness. In another characterization from this tradition, a sentient being is nothing but a *pentaggregate*, comprising the aggregates of form, sensation, perception, forces, and consciousness. In the Abhidhamma (Metaphysics), it is explained how a stimulus received by the senses, including the mind sense,

When it comes to the parapsychology of the mind, the scope of psi, or what may be called "action ultra-potential" in the canon of the Buddha's teachings is much greater. It is, however, worth mentioning that such skills are not encouraged by the Buddha [...]

goes through 17 "mind moments" before ending up as consciousness (Bodhi, 1999), generating an atom (Jayasuriya, 1963). Then there is my own publication, *Triune Brain: Map of the Mind through the Eyes of Buddhianscience and Western science*, (Sugunasiri, 2018; Triune Mind, Triune Brain, 2020, September 6). Thus, in the Buddhadhamma, mind is no "extra," but at the very core, indeed the forerunner (Easwaran, 1987, verse 1), it being behind not only each of the five physical senses, but the mind-sense itself, too. When it comes to the parapsychology of the mind, the scope of psi, or what may be called "action ultra-poten-

tial” in the canon of the Buddha’s teachings is much greater (Davids, 1979). It is, however, worth mentioning that such skills are not encouraged by the Buddha, and are indeed deplored, given that they have no necessary relationship with spirituality and may be used for base personal gains.

Paradigmatic Change

It may now be the time to question the long-standing label ESP. A living human being needs to be seen as a mindbody, not just the five senses. Doing so immediately pushes the label ESP to the dustbin of history, just as happened to Newtonian physics upon the arrival on Einstein. Mind now comes to earn its legitimate place, and we can now see the psi phenomena for what they are, a natural potential in the mind. They are, however, *ultra*, as in ultra-violet rays (from Latin, meaning beyond), and the specific phenomena of psi can be said to be forms of *Mind-Sensory Ultra-Perception* (MSUP). MSUP may be defined as potential skill rooted in biology, resident within the mindbody of each and every sentient being, but deployable only by those with the capacity to cultivate them under the right conditions. By way of analogy, running is a natural body

skill rooted in biology. Anybody, including a child, can run, but it is not everybody that can run the 100 meters under 10 seconds. Such a realistic understanding gives respectability to the psi phenomena. This could result in the rise of the quality of sensory perception (not extra-sensory anymore) by the wider community, even world-wide.

The recent publication *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena* by Dean Radin (2009) could certainly elevate the phenomena in academic circles. But there is a role as well to be played by the parapsychologists themselves, and that is to explore the psi phenomena, through actual human and animal case studies, and stop relying exclusively on experimental evidence. How, for example, can one disappear and reappear, as was done by Madame Blavatsky under the very eyes of Col. Olcott, in her Philadelphia home, as documented in Olcott’s personal diary? The Indian guru Sai Baba is said to be able to create a golden necklace out of nothing. What are the MSUP at work in such cases? It was noted above how mindful meditation puts the five physical senses to sleep. Would trying it help parapsychologists to understand, experience, and explain such phenomena?

A living human being needs to be seen as a mindbody, not just the five senses. Doing so immediately pushes the label ESP to the dustbin of history, just as happened to Newtonian physics upon the arrival on Einstein. Mind now comes to earn its legitimate place, and we can now see the psi phenomena for what they are, a natural potential in the mind.

There is a role for the Parapsychological Association as well, committed as it is to upholding and promoting the truth, and that is to usher in a paradigmatic change by making a formal declaration:

1. There are six senses in a sentient being, including animals.
2. While five of them are physi-

cal, the other is the mind.

3. Mind is the forerunner, it being the basis for all six senses, including the mind itself.
4. Extra-Sensory Perception is a myth and will no longer hold a position of respect.
5. Psi phenomena are biologically based and hence are to be labelled *Mind-Sensory Ultra Perception* (MSUP for short).

In closing, then, understanding the reality of the mind would allow scientists, Western or Eastern, to contribute towards helping humanity both understand itself and render the world a happier place, with less conflict and peace, as the mind is behind both. May we then invite Thomas Kuhn, author of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1996), to watch the unfolding spectacle and record for history of the next paradigmatic shift in the field of parapsychology, from cognitive dissonance and cognitive arrogance, to cognitive reticence and finally cognitive assonance. Max Wertheimer who “criticized the current educational emphasis on traditional logic” and “devoted himself to problems of psychology and social ethics” (Britannica, 2021, April 11) would be smiling from ear to ear!

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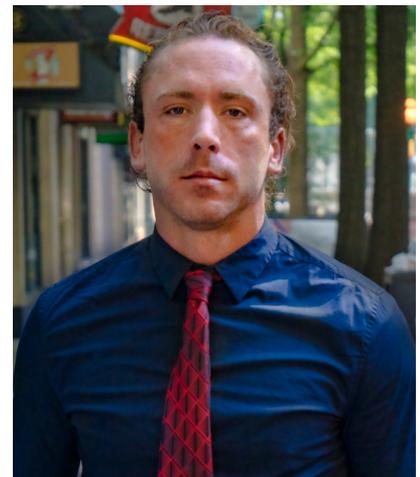
Trickster Theory: Feminism, Animism, and Post-Colonialism

...

One who starts a fight,
then stands aside
Old man at the crossroads
One who recompenses good
With ill and ill with good
Do not undo me
Do not change my 'yes' to 'no'
Do not change my 'no' to 'yes'
jealous man.

[Chemche, 2013]

This incantation, stemming from the West African Yoruba religious traditions, features the sly and paradoxical nature of a deity that typically goes by the name Eshu (Èṣù). This particular Orisha, a general term for a god, creates mischief and trouble perhaps for the sake of teaching a lesson – or, on bad days, simply for the pleasure of witnessing the chaos that ensues. Eshu inhabits the border between different worlds and realms, being the messenger between the divine and the mortal, guarding the di-



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lectic between affirmation and negation. Eshu fits nicely with other, similar archetypal char-

acters that are found around the world in different cultures and indigenous folklore. This archetype is the trickster (Babcock-Abrahams, 1975; Hyde, 2012; Radin, 1956).

Within parapsychology, George P. Hansen (2001) should be given credit for properly inaugurating an analysis of what the trickster brings to bear on the study of psi, notably in his important book *The Trickster and the Paranormal*. James Kennedy (2003, 2016) has also done crucial work examining the capricious nature of psi, how this variable seems to frustrate or even elude experimental replication. Yet, I have attempted, on different occasions, to offer a theoretical treatment of how we can understand the relationship between psi and the trickster (Glazier, 2016, 2019). This I have broadly referred to as trickster theory.

The historical trajectory of parapsychology largely favored a specific way of both doing and understanding science. Codified in the Duke Laboratory by J. B. Rhine, this approach uses methods taken from psychology such as statistical analyses, double blind studies, and experimental or quasi-experimental designs in order to assess the empirical validity of the paranormal phenomena

that seem to defy normal explanatory models. What constitutes the paranormal is, of course, arbitrated by these very models that work to police truth as discovered through these specific scientific means. Hansen (2001) points to CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), which is now known as the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, as a pertinent institutional example. Generally, however, most of these policing attempts are less insidious than this example, and more historically contingent, such as parapsychology trying to make itself seem more scientific, more respectable as a discipline and overall field of study.

The degree to which this has been achieved is, no doubt, contentious. Cardeña's (2018) recent publication on the experimental evidence for psi in the flagship journal of the American Psychological Association is a recent, productive development. In the past, Irvin Child (1985), who was the chair of the Department of Psychology at Yale, likewise published important research on the relationship between ESP and dreams in the same journal. This point is raised in order to demonstrate how historically parapsychology research was more widely conducted and given credence at reputable institutions of higher

education. Today, psi research is not nearly as prevalent as it was in the past, leading detractors such as Reber and Alcock (2019) to unabashedly claim that after over a century of trying to prove that psi exists, parapsychology has failed and, as such, so has its disciplinary endeavor.

Certainly, the causal mechanism that Reber and Alcock (2019, p. 393) suggest parapsychologists have failed to substantiate speaks to the field's seeming inability to codify itself around an agreed upon way in which the world works – or, put differently, an approach or method on how to study, in a systematic way, the paranormal. What's more, this failure, as the authors go on to argue, means that even the strange effects of quantum mechanics such as entanglement and “spooky action at a distance” cannot be applied to psi processes. Given this perspective, the principles of these phenomena do not account for retrocausality as in the case of precognition, to give just one example. This lack of theoretical fidelity creates an impasse for parapsychology inasmuch as the field must be willing to explore new models by which to map the existence of psi and the paranormal. By leaving

the certain ideals of physicalism and experimentalism behind, and indeed even the need to engage in polemics with their proponents, parapsychology may be able to open up a new horizon of investigation and research. This, of course, highlights the recent trend in the field to embrace more qualitative (Kruth, 2015), anthropological, and ethnographic (Caswell, Hunter, & Tessaro, 2014) methodologies as just as effective, if not more so, than the traditional scientific approach.

Within this opening the trickster appears, granting us a strange, agential kind of understanding of the world. This is a version of the world that is philosophically allied with animism as opposed to determinism and reductionism. It is here that we can escape a heritage in the West that Jacques Derrida (1978) referred to as *phallogocentrism*, the privileging of speech over writing, masculinity over femininity. In fact, the trickster's seeming ability to blur or invert a plenitude of these binaries at the same time, or morph freely from one opposite to the other, conveys something about the very mutability of truth itself. As a consequence, envisioning the paranormal through this framework likewise requires research practices that are adaptable and flexible in order to keep up with this kind of processuality.

Derrida offers us a sustained critique of Western practices like science and technology from within this very tradition itself, how these institutions contain an antagonistic logic that exposes all sorts of covert power effects. In other words, for the institutions to continue to function, they must necessarily keep these subjugating moves hidden. Outside of a Eurocentric perspective, scholars in post-colonial studies, such as Dussel (2012), have utilized strategies from the Global South to subvert and resist the ideological force wrought on the world by globalization. These include reclaiming indigenous practices, establishing intercultural dialogue, and decolonizing traditional and ancestral symbols. What both deconstruction and post-colonial studies have in common are powerful conceptual tools to examine the function of ideology and power; with specific regard to parapsychology, these critical perspectives suggest that the field is also guilty of passing on certain Western values and ways of examining the world.

These values are varied and would depend on the line of the critical inquiry that one would want to pursue, but generally, I suggest three arguments. First, facts derived from the laboratory are created through a complex network of interactions that are

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then often not recognized by those doing the research. Second, this complex network is built on a heritage that is grounded in specific subjugating effects. And third, moving away from privileging the laboratory can create a space for other methods for discovering truth that may be more ethical with regard, specifically, to ecology and subjectivity.

Take for example what Bruno Latour (2011) calls the experimental *factish*. While recognizing a sort of objectivity held by facts, those coming out of legendary science for example, Latour nonetheless argues that when compared to fetishes that contain so-called mystical powers, the modern scientist remains blind to the way the laboratory factish is also fabricated – blind in the sense of failing to see the sociological and anthropological influencing effects contained therein. By following Latour on this lead, parapsychologists could open up a line of inquiry that would not only be critical on principled and theoretical grounds of the way science has traditionally ostracized the discipline, but also more methodologically develop a new space for investigating the very “paranormality” of psi itself. Why is psi considered paranormal in the first place? One could argue this is largely due to it challenging the way normal science operates.

Michel Foucault (2018) likewise develops a more historically grounded critique in the way that institutional power, found in places like the laboratory, university, and other academic organs, has privileged a specific understanding of objectivity. In this regard, the paradigm taken most for granted by mainstream scientists, to borrow a term used by Thomas Kuhn (1970), necessarily renders anomalous a phenomenon that parapsychologists have been calling psi.

Why, then, is parapsychology still trying to replicate the apparatuses and methodologies of physicalism and experimentation? Presumably to establish the reality of psi (Cardeña, 2018), even though this “reality” is continually challenged by skeptics and other scientists (Reber & Alcock, 2019). Yet, parapsychology might better be able to make sense out of paranormality through an animistic frame. The specific kind of animism that I have in mind is captured nicely by the feminist scholar Donna Haraway (1991) when she writes,

Nature emerges from this exercise as ‘coyote’. This potent trickster can show us that historically specific human relations with ‘nature’ must somehow... be imagined as genuinely social and actively relational;

and yet the partners remain utterly inhomogeneous. (p. 3)

The figure of coyote helps demonstrate the elusive and wily nature of the world, an agential understanding of nature in which psi whispers the phrase that Kennedy (2016) parodies, “I am here, but you will not control me” (p. 2). This stubbornness calls for a shift in understanding. As parapsychologists, we can no longer see nature in its particulars, as surgeons operating on a patient. Even this analogy necessarily fails since it already contains the very Western iconography that falls under the umbrella of phallogocentrism and with it a specific situation and context that imparts an imperializing paradigm. Rhea White (1994) has likewise called for more of a critical and feminist approach in parapsychology, lamenting the field’s historical rootedness in stagnant research procedures and even lack of conceptual creativity. Interrogating it this way, how can we envision nature as more relational and contextual, away from enclosures like that hospital or laboratory? What would it be like to approach the world from a different scientific perspective that examines phenomena in their indigeneity, as co-constructed in some ways?

In the Goshute tribe, there is an old tale about coyote losing

his eyes. This anecdote is sometimes given the title *coyote the eye juggler* and can help us “see” different perspectives and why it isn’t always wise to do the same things we see others doing. A short version of this story goes something like this:

A long time ago there were some snowbirds, who had a trick. They sat in a piñon tree, took out their eyes, and threw them over the tree. Then they called their eyes, and the eyes came back into their heads. Coyote came along and watched the birds. He took out his eyes and threw them upwards, but they stuck in a tree limb. The eyes did not fall back again and Coyote had to walk around blind. He felt around and found some piñon pitch and put this into his eyes. That is why Coyote has yellow eyes today. (*Coyote Loses His Eyes*, 2018, para. 1)

If we don’t want to go blind as parapsychologists, we would do well to heed the parable’s lesson: just because legendary science looks at the world a certain way doesn’t mean it would be prudent to follow suit. Indeed, the folly is precisely in not allowing psi to lead the way and, instead, trying to control a variable that a century of experimental research has failed to legitimate.

To end where we began, with

the West African Yoruba religion and its avatar Eshu, we can see the threat that these narratives pose to the Western story of the world. Namely, not only do these localized and geographically rare cultures contain alternative figures with which to think about nature, their indigeneity upsets and unsettles a colonialist tradition that all too often fails to reflect on its own values and axioms. They also offer up archetypes or patterns that help to liberate an animistic sense of world. More precisely, the trickster mimics, sometimes antagonistically, the strange and elusive way psi seems to show itself.

I want to end this manifesto on trickster theory in the tradition of speculation and storytelling. Just as anecdotes evolve and change over time and are never exhausted, the following postulates shore up a foundation that may be more literary than it is theoretical.

The Speculative Postulates of Trickster Theory

1. Psi has a wily, guileful kind of agency.
2. The sign “animism” denotes the strange, uncanny nature of the world that necessarily frustrates neat attempts at

If we don’t want to go blind as parapsychologists, we would do well to heed the parable’s lesson: just because legendary science looks at the world a certain way doesn’t mean it would be prudent to follow suit.

- understanding and ordering.
3. The value of liminality straddles but does not suture different binaries.
4. Sanctioned, institutionalized ways of science block the free play of psi.
5. Pluralist and multifaceted research methodologies reveal various facets of the anomalous.
6. Non-normative sexuality and sexual practices unlock access to the paranormal.
7. Gender fluidity represents the protean nature of psi.
8. Indigeneity is more flush with paranormality.

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They also offer up archetypes or patterns that help to liberate an animistic sense of world. More precisely, the trickster mimics, sometimes antagonistically, the strange and elusive way psi seems to show itself.

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Glossolalia

and Out-of-Body Experiences

A Brief Review of some Anomalous Experiences

This article provides a short review of certain anomalous experiences, in particular glossolalia and out-of-body experiences, which are frequently experienced not only by the psychologically pathological, but also by healthy individuals. Research suggests that these experiences may have a transformative and transcendent nature and may be linked to positive psychological well-being. They have similar characteristics, and thus may have similar or common causes, and may be analyzed and understood similarly. They all belong to a broader category of altered states of consciousness which are generally considered pathological in a biomedical

framework, but which some studies suggest may be better viewed as spiritual or religious experiences.

Glossolalia

Glossolalia, defined as the gift of speaking in an unknown languages, has been around since Biblical times: “He who speaks tongues builds himself...” (1Cor 14:4); “For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God.” (1Cor 14:2). It is mostly practiced in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. The phenomenon of glossolalia remains elusive



| by *JULIA SELLERS*

and poorly understood by contemporary science. Hypotheses that attempt to explain glossolalia as simply pathological, or the result of hypnosis, are inadequate (Hine, 1969). The first neuroimaging study of glossolalia was conducted by Newberg et al. (2006). In this study, single-photon emission

Glossolalia could hypothetically be considered similar to prayer or contemplation, since both are highly contemplative spiritual states characterized by a reduction of response to external stimuli.

computed tomography (SPECT) imaging was used to observe subjects' brains as they practiced glossolalia. Brain activity decreased in the anterior regions, areas responsible for cognitive

processes such as perception and retention, as well as emotional perception, morality, empathy, and control of the self. Conversely, brain activity increased in the thalamus. The researchers did not conclude which specific brain regions played a leading role during glossolalia.

A separate study (Beauregard & Paquette, 2006) found that, during prayers and contemplations, Carmelite nuns showed increased activity in the same regions where glossolalia was associated with decreased activity. Both the orbitofrontal as well as the frontal cortex of the brain were activated during prayer. Among other things, the orbitofrontal cortex plays a role in cognitive decision-making processes. Interestingly, this may suggest that the nuns retained the ability to engage in thinking-related cognitive processes, despite being in a heightened state of relaxation with decreased sensory perception typical for praying and contemplation.

Glossolalia could hypothetically be considered similar to prayer or contemplation, since both are highly contemplative spiritual states characterized by a reduction of response to external stimuli. When sufficiently intense, they can even be considered mystical or religious experiences of anomalous perception. So it

is interesting that the Newberg et al. (2006) and Beauregard and Paquette (2006) reported opposite changes in anterior brain activity during these potentially similar activities. The challenging and conflicting results of these studies show the need for further research in this area.

Persinger (1984) found interesting temporal lobe EEG activity in two case studies of glossolalia and transcendental meditation. In one case, a ten second burst of delta wave activity was observed in the subject during transcendental meditation. In the second case, spiking activity was observed in another subject as they practiced glossolalia. Both subjects were healthy individuals with no prior history of pathology. Persinger concluded that mystical and religious experiences, including glossolalia, occur naturally, are associated with unusual temporal lobe activity, and are transient in nature.

Kavan (2004) compared the presentation and prevalence of altered states of consciousness among Christian glossolalists versus meditators belonging to a New Zealand based yoga group. The majority of glossolalists experienced altered states primarily during baptism in the Holy Spirit as opposed to during glossolalia itself. Interestingly, the medita-

tors experienced altered states of consciousness during meditations more often than the glossolalists did during their practice of glossolalia. Spanos et al. (1979) found that glossolalia may display some traits of a dissociative state of consciousness, similar to a trance, with reduced awareness of the self. This may be due to altered activity in the frontal and parietal lobes, regions associated with proprioception (awareness of the body) and self-perception.

Out-of-body experiences (OBEs)

OBEs may occur spontaneously or may be triggered by an outside stimulus. They are associated with a range of experiences such as near-death-experiences (NDEs), hypnosis, trance, transcendental meditation, contemplation, prayer, cardiac arrests, extreme exercise, and life-threatening situations (Moody, 1975; Twemlow et al., 1982; Greyson, 1983; Parnia & Fenwick, 2002; Greyson, 2007; Nelson et al., 2007; Braithwaite, 2008; Greyson, 2014; Tart, 1998). Some characteristics of OBEs, such as sensations of body distortion, can be induced using virtual reality (Blanke et al., 2002). OBEs are also associated with pathological conditions such as epilepsy, ictal autoscopic seizures, and

migraines (Heydrich et al., 2011; Hoepner et al., 2013; Podoll & Robinson, 1999), as well as drug use and anesthesia (Blanke & Mohr, 2005; Lopez et al., 2006). Naturally occurring OBEs may be different from OBEs resulting from artificial electrical induction in various brain regions (Holden et al., 2006).

Similar phenomena occur during glossolalia and OBEs. For exam-

OBEs may occur spontaneously or may be triggered by an outside stimulus. They are associated with a range of experiences such as near-death-experiences (NDEs), hypnosis, trance, transcendental meditation, contemplation, prayer, cardiac arrests, extreme exercise, and life-threatening situations

ple, one subject reported having no control over his language abilities during glossolalia (Newberg et al., 2006). Similarly, an otherwise psychologically healthy adult reported severe difficulties with both oral and written fluency in English, his mother tongue, while experiencing OBEs (Sellers, 2019). Both may thus involve altered activity in the language centers of the brain. The latter subject was totally unable to speak during his OBEs, being overwhelmed by feelings of ineffability. The phenomenon of ineffability is common during spiritual transformative experiences (STEs), non-ordinary transcendent experiences (NOTEs), exceptional human experiences (EHEs), extreme mental states, peak experiences, and experiences of the so-called unitive consciousness. Bennet-Hunter (2015) posited that ineffability should be considered divine, and noted that ineffability has generally been ignored by philosophers, despite being frequent in the experiences of Christian mystics.

The glossolalist also felt as though some unidentifiable force had taken him over, influencing his thoughts and actions and leaving him with a lack of control over himself (Newberg et al., 2006). This is interestingly similar to descriptions reported by individuals who experience OBEs. Some reported feeling as though their

Practising glossolalia has been linked to psychological well-being. A study on 1,000 members of the British Evangelical Group found that up to 80% of group members practicing glossolalia enjoyed greater emotional stability and showed fewer signs of neurosis.

OBEs were directed by some force causing them to lose control of their physical bodies and their selves (Sellers, 2019). Other subjects reported feeling that a force literally pushed them out of their bodies and dragged them to different times and places, often of unearthly origin (Sellers, 2015).

The experience of self was studied by Heydrich et al. (2010), who identified basic elements playing a key role in creating and sustaining bodily self-consciousness. The most important elements are self-identification, first-person perspective, and self-location.

Interestingly, manipulation of the sense of self-location, which is linked to self-identification, may trigger OBEs (Ionta et al., 2011). Similarly, the lack of control over the self reported by the subject during his practice of glossolalia (Newberg et al., 2006), may be linked to a decreased sense of self-identification, which is also linked to OBEs. Could the lack of control of self, as well as the diminished sense of self-identification experienced in both glossolalia as well as OBEs, be caused by breaking the oneness and co-existence existing between the consciousness and the physical body? Lenggenhager et al. (2007) developed a similar hypothesis during experiments aimed at producing out-of-body sensations in people using virtual reality.

Blanke et al. (2002) described a patient with epilepsy whose out-of-body-like experience was induced by electrical stimulation of the right angular gyrus. This patient experienced vestibular sensations outside of their control, such as hovering above their body or an abrupt sinking, and other experiences similar to OBEs. The patient's OBE-like sensations were short-lived, and potentially caused by electrical stimulation of the temporo-parietal junction (TPJ), located in the right hemisphere of the brain. OBE may result from a loss of

low-level sensory processing and an abnormal increase in high-level self-processing at the TPJ (Bunning & Blanke, 2005)

Glossolalia, OBEs and psychological well-being

Practising glossolalia has been linked to psychological well-being. A study on 1,000 members of the British Evangelical Group found that up to 80% of group members practicing glossolalia enjoyed greater emotional stability and showed fewer signs of neurosis (Francis & Robbins, 2003). And in a study of Apostolic Pentecostals (Lynn et al., 2011), those who attended Mass on Sunday and reported practicing glossolalia showed reduced cortisol levels the day after. Lowered cortisol levels are associated with greater psychological stability and reduced stress. Glossolalia can arise out of a deep and meaningful spiritual practice and participating in glossolalia may play a vital role in changing the direction participant's lives (Pattison, 1968).

Similarly, OBEs can have transformative and transcendent potential and can produce a positive effect on the experiencer. De Foe (2012) suggested that OBEs are transformative experiences that can have a significant impact on the individual's well-being, and

encouraged those who experience OBEs to talk about them openly in therapeutic settings. Twemlow (1989) similarly argued that OBEs should not be considered pathological or even especially unusual, and suggested transpersonal therapists consider OBEs as transformative experiences holding potential of spiritual transcendence. Schenk (2006), in his study, examined the potentially healing nature of OBEs. He suggested techniques to artificially trigger OBEs in order to fully utilize their healing potential. Similarly, peak experiences have been linked to states of high integration, triggering coherent brain functioning and producing states of inner harmony, happiness, and ease of functioning (Harung, 2012). Such experiences reduce anxiety and are associated with lack of fear, which may indicate that peak experiences affect the amygdala.

Pathology or psycho-spiritual problem?

The characteristics of glossolalia, OBEs, and meditation-induced anomalous mystical or religious experiences may resemble those of psychosis. OBEs and other anomalous experiences such as glossolalia, and even obsession (which at its higher level manifests as possession) may be

diagnosed as psychosis or other pathology unless the cultural background of the individuals experiencing them is taken into consideration (Keri, 2017). Interestingly, some OBEs report symptoms similar to depersonalization, derealization, or dissociation during their experiences (Sellers, 2019). One frequent OBE, otherwise psychologically healthy, reported aphasia, agnosia, and alexia during their experiences (Sellers, 2017). Aphasia, agnosia, and apraxia has also been reported during instances of auto-scopy, including OBEs, within the pathological population (Blanke et al., 2004). However, experiencing OBEs does not necessarily imply psychosis. A review of 22 case studies of so-called extreme mental states occurring during different kinds of meditation found that some individuals' experiences were interpreted as psychiatric symptoms, while others were seen as spiritual emergencies, depending on whether they were interpreted in a biomedical or alternative framework (Kaselionyte & Gumley, 2019).

Conclusion

Anomalous human experiences such as glossolalia, OBEs, and other mystical and religious experiences may have similar phenomenology, semiology, and etiology.

While EEG, imaging, and other neuroscientific studies have identified brain areas that may be involved, what specifically is happening in the brain during these anomalous experiences is not well understood by contemporary science.

Though commonly seen as pathological in a traditional biomedical or psychological framework, they are common in some cultural and religious traditions, have transformative and transcendent elements, and can have beneficial effects on the experiencers' lives. While EEG, imaging, and other neuroscientific studies have identified brain areas that may be involved, what specifically is happening in the brain during these anomalous experiences is not well understood by contemporary science.

The Role of Clinical Parapsychology

in Supporting People who have Reported Exceptional Experiences

At the heart of psychology is supporting people who experience mental challenges.

This article explores the role of clinical parapsychology in helping people who have reported exceptional experiences. The term clinical parapsychology was first accredited to Bendit in 1948 (Tremmel, 2014). As with psychology, central to clinical parapsychology is professionals supporting people who suffer negative consequences from exceptional experiences (Kramer et. al., 2012). This article seeks to examine how specific exceptional experiences affect individuals

in specific ways, as opposed to looking at them as a collective phenomenon. I discuss five types of exceptional experiences and their effects upon a person: Out of Body Experiences, Near Death Experiences, perceiving the deceased, precognition, and poltergeists. In this paper, I discuss the prevalence rates of each exceptional experience, the effect of these experiences (either positive or negative), and how effective support services are in dealing with these experiences. Finally, we review the implications for clinical psychology.



| by IAN ANDREW WEBB

Out of Body Experiences (OBE)

An OBE is an experience in which a person perceives the world from a location outside of the

Most OBEs are experienced when the individual feels physically relaxed and mentally calm. After the OBE took place, there were some common reactions such as increased interest in psychic phenomena (78%), talking about the experience (71%), and feeling one's life was changed (55%); over 50% wanted to experience an OBE again.

physical body (Alvarado, 1989). The prevalence rate is estimated to be around 12% of the general population (Blackmore, 1984). The majority of OBEs (70%) have some visual content (Terhune, 2009) and are reported to be

more vivid than a dream (Twemlow, et al., 1982). There are both neurological and psychological associations with OBEs. There are higher frequencies of OBE reports in people who are more likely to have somatoform dissociation, self-consciousness, lower confidence in the physical self, and temporal lobe instability (Murray and Fox, 2005; Braithwaite, et al., 2010). All are suggestive of OBEs being explained in the framework of science, and thus support should be available in mainstream psychology.

There are two areas where we can monitor the impact on the person, before and after the experience. Most OBEs are experienced when the individual feels physically relaxed and mentally calm (Twemlow et al., 1982). After the OBE took place, there were some common reactions such as increased interest in psychic phenomena (78%), talking about the experience (71%), and feeling one's life was changed (55%); over 50% wanted to experience an OBE again (Twemlow et al., 1982). Most people who report an OBE don't need any professional support. Even when a person needs help, the evidence-based counselling interventions around OBEs are minimal (DeFoe, 2012). There could be a role for profes-

sionals in supporting the person to make sense of the experience and normalize the experience with knowledge of the area. But we are a long way from having a successful support system for helping people who experience negative consequences of OBEs.

Near Death Experiences (NDE)

Since the 1960s, due to progress in emergency medicine, more people are surviving cardiac arrest, and the prevalence rate of NDEs in hospitals ranged from 9% to 33% (Greyson, 2003; Parnia et al., 2014). An estimated ten standard features are documented in NDEs, such as a feeling of floating outside of the body and seeing what was happening (Moody, 1974). NDEs are experienced across all cultures and aren't affected by medical intervention (van Lommel et al., 2001). There isn't an accepted theory behind NDEs (Seigel, 1980; Blackmore, 1996).

The impact of NDEs can be both positive and negative (Irwin & Bramwell, 1988). People who have an NDE might have some protection against the post-traumatic stress disorder that is sometimes experienced with cardiac arrest (Parnia, et al., 2007). In a population of people attempting suicide,

those who experience an NDE are less likely to commit suicide in the future (Greyson, 1981). Among people who have a negative experience, there are two reasons why people get distressed by an NDEs: the experience itself, and the society's reaction to NDEs. There is a role for professionals who may come across people with these experiences to enable the individual to make sense of the experiences and reduce any negative consequences. The potential role of clinical parapsychology is to teach mainstream professionals to support those who experience NDE.

Seeing the Deceased

There are two types of cases involving people reporting encountering the dead. The first occurs in the last few weeks of a person's life, when there is an increase in dreams and visions of deceased people (Kerr et al., 2014). These cases don't appear to cause much distress. The more commonly reported cases in paranormal literature are haunting experiences. It's been estimated that around a third of people have reported an incident of having contact with the deceased of this type (Haraldsson & Houtkooper, 1991). During interviews with widows about

alleged contact with the dead, three common themes emerged: being observed (a person feels like someone is watching them), hearing voices, and seeing dead relatives or friends (Bennett & Bennet 2000). After-death communications can provide comfort, reassurance, and consolation, whilst negative emotions may be due to a lack of understanding (Beischel, 2019).

When supporting a person, a natural role for professionals is to give assurances that these

When supporting a person, a natural role for professionals is to give assurances that these experiences are not unusual, and numerous theories exist to explain them. Thus, the professional can guide the person through normalizing and understanding their experiences.

experiences are not unusual, and numerous theories exist to explain them. Thus, the professional can guide the person through normalizing and understanding their experiences. However, this isn't current practice, and more work is needed to equip professionals with the tools to deal with these experiences (Cooper et al., 2015). An emerging support framework within clinical parapsychology is mediumship therapy. There is some scientific evidence for mediumship in scientific trials (Beischel & Schwartz, 2007; Beischel et al., 2015). However, considerable work is needed before mediumship therapy can be rolled out. The first issue is finding enough mediums to operate to an agreed-upon standard and figuring out how this would be done. The second is that there are no systematic studies that have been conducted into mediumship therapy (Beischel, 2014). This could become a focus of clinical parapsychology research.

Precognition

Precognition is the ability to predict something before it happens. Para (2013) estimated the prevalence of precognitive dreams as 21.7% in the general population.

A role for the psychologist is supporting people who are struggling with these distressing precognitive experiences, and parapsychologists could assist in this. However, there is no evidence in the literature to suggest that mainstream psychologists are aware of these phenomena.

The majority of dreams were about trivial matters (51.6%), followed by serious events (21.6%), and death (26.8%). Precognitive dreams are often clearer than usual dreams and more emotionally intense, suggesting that they are different than regular dreams. There is some support for precognition in self-report cases and

experimental results (Rauscher & Targ, 2001; Mossbridge & Radin, 2018). The specific circumstances of the precognitive dream can cause distress to people. Hastings (1983) reported a typical case involving such distress:

She had dreamed of a dead body being washed up on a beach. She went to an evening party the next day at a house on the beach. There was suddenly a commotion outside the house, and people found a body that had washed up on the beach, just as in her dream. She was frightened and asked the counsellor if she had caused the death.

Therefore, a role for the psychologist is supporting people who are struggling with these distressing precognitive experiences, and parapsychologists could assist in this. However, there is no evidence in the literature to suggest that mainstream psychologists are aware of these phenomena.

Poltergeists / PK

Genuine poltergeist cases are rare but have been documented throughout time and across different cultures (Gauld & Cornell,

1979; Roll, 2004). There is considerable evidence within the poltergeist field that it involves a central person with specific psychological and neurological profiles, such as temporal lobe abnormalities and high suppressed aggression levels (Roll, 2004).

There is evidence of support existing in the paranormal literature.

Two cases illustrate the typical poltergeist experience. The first case we discuss is Roll et al. (2012), involving a woman causing poltergeist phenomena when stressed. The phenomena were verified by independent witnesses who reported interferences with both mechanical and electronic equipment. The poltergeist phenomena were unwelcomed by the central individual. Professionals helped her by creating a paper wheel that she could focus on. When she became distressed and focused her attention on the wheel, it would spin; as a result, unwanted poltergeist activity was reduced.

The second case we describe is a boy who produced unwelcome electronic interference in a range of electrical equipment (Kruth & Joines, 2016). Overall, 31 electronic interferences were recorded, including a smoke alarm sounding when there were no sign of smoke, a laptop that stopped working,

a television changing channel unexpectedly, a toaster heating up when nobody was around, and a hotel key card that demagnetized in the central person's hand. The researchers used a method of relaxation with the boy in an attempt to reduce the symptoms. The electronic poltergeist activity stopped after three months.

These two cases highlight a role for people with clinical parapsychology knowledge in reducing the effects of poltergeist interference. In both cases, these experiences were unwelcome, and with successful support, the symptoms were stopped. The professional's role should be to offer poltergeist activity victims support and use known coping mechanisms to reduce or stop the phenomena.

Implications

Most people who undergo exceptional experiences have a positive experience and report no long-term impact (Steffen et al., 2017). However, some people could use support in dealing with exceptional experiences (Montanelli & Parra, 2008). It's estimated that 9% of people indicated that their experiences have been scary, with no positive value (Kennedy & Kanthamani, 1995). Numerous clients who have experienced

exceptional experiences have come forward to support counseling services (Kramer et al., 2012). There are two ways exceptional experiences can cause distress: the experience itself (and attempts to make sense of it), and society's reaction to their experience, such as occurs when disclosing information (Roxburgh & Evenden, 2016). Early disclosure is beneficial to physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being and individual transformation (Palmer & Braud, 2002).

It seems natural that when people want support for the experience,

There are two ways exceptional experiences can cause distress: the experience itself (and attempts to make sense of it), and society's reaction to their experience, such as occurs when disclosing information.

they should receive it from professionals with knowledge of the area. Hasting's (1983) seven suggestions for how counsellors deal with exceptional experience still feels relevant:

Then these steps can be followed as they seem appropriate:

- 1.) Ask the person to describe the experience or events.
- 2.) Listen fully and carefully, without judging.
- 3.) Reassure the person that the experience is not "crazy" or "insane," if this can be appropriately said.
- 4.) Identify or label the type of event.
- 5.) Give information about the event—what is known about this kind of situation or process.
- 6.) Where possible, develop reality tests to discover if the event is genuine psi or if there are non-psi or if there are non-psi or if there are non-psi alternative explanations.
- 7.) Address the psychological reactions that result from the experience, or the emotional disturbances that contribute to it, whether the phenomena are parapsychological in nature or not.

A review of training suggests that this support isn't available (Roxburgh & Evenden's, 2016). The researchers suggested that when people come forward for

help with exceptional experiences in counselling they felt their experience was “brushed under the carpet.” Even more concerning was that some clients felt unable to speak to their counselors about their experiences. Part of the issue is a lack of training around exceptional experiences (Roxburgh & Evenden, 2016).

This raises the question of the impact of clinical parapsychology on mainstream psychology. We have seen some work in poltergeist activity be of direct benefit. However, there isn't support available for many of common experiences should the person need such support. Therefore, clinical parapsychology role offer guidance to professionals who may come across exceptional experiences, and support for the minority who may suffer negative consequences from the experiences.

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Relevant

Articles Relevant to Parapsychology in Journals of Various Fields (XXXIII)

For this installment of our bibliography, we were again able to collect a large number of titles that might be of interest to students of the paranormal and related fields. We present 158 articles from 117 different mainstream journals. Fourteen journals provided multiple articles of relevance.

We would like to draw special attention to *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 11-12 (November/December 2020), which covers a noteworthy symposium on near-death experiences, and to *Consciousness and Cognition*, Vol. 83 (August 2020), which contains several most interesting articles on lucid dreaming.

We appreciate and gratefully acknowledge the bibliographic input from our colleague Annalisa Ventola. Members are requested to forward titles of relevant articles to mauricevanluijtelaar4@outlook.com or evrardrenaud@gmail.com

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