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Letter from the Editors

Welcome to Vol. 1, No. 2 of the Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology (JEEP). In “A Profound Synchronicity? The Problem of Higher Meaning within Personal and Subjective Experience” by R.J. Vigoda, a personal synchronistic experience is researched as a source of evidence within the study of paranormal and mystical phenomena. Rachel E. Evenden, Callum E. Cooper, and Graham Mitchell explore how “sought” experiences such as mediumship can be an positive and healing experiences for the bereaved in, “A Counseling Approach to Mediumship: Adaptive Outcomes of Grief following an Exceptional Experience.” Next, Alejandro Parra and Juan Manuel Corbetta examine the effectiveness of humanistic group therapy regarding the effects of paranormal/anomalous experiences upon people’s lives in “Group Therapy for Anomalous/Paranormal Experiences: Post-effect Preliminary Examination of the Humanistic Approach.” The question of what discipline or sub-discipline do exceptional experiences fall is discussed in Renaud Evrard’s article, “What Should Psychology Do with Exceptional Experiences?”

Beginning the personal accounts section, Clement Jewitt discusses a few of his experiences in “Exceptional Personal Experiences: Timewarps?” Flavio Amaral then discusses a personal OBE in “My First Out-of-Body Experience,” which is followed by examples of experiences and therapeutic interventions in Peter Mark Adams’ “Healing Interventions Involving Deceased Persons.” The letters to the editors section is introduced with Jean-Michel Abrassart’s “Should We Ground Parapsychology in Existential Phenomenology?” which is a response to Jacob Glazier’s article “Toward a Grounding of Parapsychology in Phenomenology: Psi as a Function of Sorge” Jean-Michel’s article is responded by Jacob Glazier in “The Bone in Our Throat: Heidegger and Nazism.” Francois Pierre Mathijssen then responds to Abrassart’s article, “Paranormal Phenomena: Should Psychology Really Go beyond the Ontological Debate?” in his letter to the editors, “The Study of the Paranormal in Psychology: An Ontological or Epistemological.” JEEP’s first poetry and music submissions are brought to you by Chris Bell in “Matador on Mesa Street,” which is followed by a book review written by me, of Callum Cooper’s book *Telephone Calls from the Dead*. This edition of JEEP is ended with a news section which showcases the journal’s presented poster at the 56th annual Parapsychological Association convention.

I hope you enjoy the second publication of JEEP and that you look forward to Vol. 2, No. 1 which is set to be released on June 1, 2014.

-Erika A. Pratte



A Profound Synchronicity?

The Problem of Higher Meaning within Personal and Subjective Experience

R. J. Vigoda



ABSTRACT

The study of transcendent phenomena frequently relies on the use of the personal and subjective experiences of individual informants. A recent personal synchronistic episode serves as the impetus to reevaluate the viability of such experience as a source of evidence within our study of exceptional/paranormal and mystical/spiritual phenomena. Questions of personal credibility are traditionally the greatest concern when assessing the veracity of individual experience. However, it's the meanings we assign such events that likely breed the greater apprehension and frequently taint otherwise credible reports. Mystical/spiritual interpretations are particularly problematic. By examining the terms and reasoning often employed to determine the meaning of transcendent experience we may be better placed to accurately assess the authenticity of these episodes. Through the process we may better determine if individual experience is capable of any epistemic or ontological value.

I recently experienced a powerful synchronicity that forced me to confront two of the major problems associated with the study of transcendent phenomena: veracity and meaning. For some time I've found myself intellectually amenable to the notion of an ultimate consciousness underlying existence. Unfortunately, despite many years of concerted study I've never had a personal experience I felt unambiguously verified this conviction. Not that I haven't had some intriguing occurrences suggesting the presence of a higher consciousness (including a classic Near Death Experience.) The problem was none of these episodes completely sidestepped what I felt to be all possible avenues of conventional explanation. Long have I envied those of rational mind who boast of some personal synchronicity, encounter, revelation, epiphany or mystical episode so self evident as to move them from faith to certainty. I've frequently wondered what it would take for me to be similarly persuaded. Regrettably, having been raised a rigid materialist I had to admit this would be a tall order. Not even miracles of biblical proportion would suffice. Burning bushes or parted waters appearing at the moment I begged for a sign would never pass the test. In such circumstances I'd undoubtedly find myself musing over spontaneous combustion or atypical tidal patterns. No, I've long concluded and repeatedly noted nothing less than a literal written message slapped right before my eyes could eliminate all doubt. And then it happened.

I often spend Saturday mornings with a rabbi discussing mystical and occultist principles. A brilliant Kabbalist, the rabbi is also very accommodating of my empirical proclivities. This particular day we were discussing my all consuming obsession: how to recognize what he calls God and I refer to as ultimate consciousness. He noted, "All is literally God. As such, he can be found everywhere and within everything. One only needs a deep awareness of this reality." Reverting to my area of specialty, I suggested such deep awareness be akin to what the Eastern traditions refer to as "mindfulness." He readily agreed and we continued the discussion using my preferred choice of term. After two hours of conversation the take away was clear: the key to realizing God is mindful perception. When mindful of the presence of God, God is readily revealed. Thoroughly absorbed in this concept of mindfulness I began my long drive home. Aggressively weaving through four lanes of heavy traffic for ten miles (I'm by nature a very impatient driver) I approached a stoplight. Just before slowing I was suddenly seized with the highly counterintuitive feeling that the far right lane may be faster off the light. Barely glancing over my shoulder I recklessly shot from the far left of the road across two lanes of cars and shuddered to a stop behind a white SUV. After meekly gesturing in apology to those drivers I'd rudely cut off I turned my attention forward. And there it was right in front of me. The license plate of the SUV contained no num-



bers but just one word: MINDFUL.

Thoroughly astounded, I slowly began reflecting on what just occurred. Of the hierarchy of synchronicities I'd studied this seemed more incredible than Jung's famed golden scarab incident (Jung, 1969.) The number of precisely coordinated events needed to occur in exactly the right sequence within all possibilities of time for me to encounter this meaningful, single word statement seemed astounding. That moments earlier this word had been specifically identified and reinforced as the entree for recognizing an order of higher consciousness seemed too coincidental to be random. I realized this event may have fulfilled my long established and oft repeated measure of proof required to confirm the reality of an ultimate consciousness; at the precise moment I asked about the existence of such an entity I'd have a written response slapped right in my face. I was overwhelmed with the conviction a higher awareness was revealing its existence through an intentional demonstration of meaningful connection.

In the throes of my excitement I quickly thought about how and with whom I might share this revelation. Truth be told, when it comes to matters of ultimate consciousness I've always been a rather pitiful backbencher. For years my contribution to the discussion was limited to crunching the experiences and theories of others. Now things had changed. At last I had an experience of my own to bring to the table. However, within moments my enthusiasm gave way to trepidation. I quickly flashed to other stories I'd heard about those who'd seen or heard a "sign." I wondered how other rational, discriminating minds would process my tale. Would I humiliatingly be consigned to the ranks of those who'd heard the "Truth" within the sputtering of a Greyhound bus as it pulled off I-10 outside Chipley, Florida or glimpsed the face of God on the side of a Frosted Flake, the knot of a tree or in an oil slick? The possibility of relentless ridicule suggested quiet circumspection may be the best response. This episode was rapidly forcing me to address one of the greatest problems confronting our understanding of transcendent phenomena: the nature and meaning of personal or subjective experiences.

Studying the realm of exceptional/paranormal or mystical/spiritual issues has always been complicated by our strong reliance on personal and sub-

jective experiences. Let's face it, personal experience as evidence of metaphysical phenomena is a tough sell. How do we persuade others, or even ourselves, of the reality of things beyond normal perception? What constitutes proof of something reason or intuition tells us may be possible but eludes objective verification? Can inner experience ever be credibly employed as evidence of the unseen? Such questions have rightfully dogged the pursuit of higher knowledge since the dawn of our curiosity. Obviously many areas of study deal with problems of credibility. However, such issues are particularly relevant when addressing those personal or subjective events frequently offered in evidence for the existence of exceptional/paranormal or mystical/spiritual phenomena. We're all predisposed to a wealth of genuine and potentially revelatory sensations, experiences, intuitions and feelings. Of these, many relate to higher and more profound existential issues that delve to the essence of our being. Unfortunately, the canon of material science demands anything within the scope of experience lying beyond the empirical belongs at best to the realm of the unknowable or at worst the unreal. But even should we hurdle the credibility problem of personal evidence as it relates to the greater issues of existence a more daunting challenge awaits: how accurately have we assessed the meaning of our experience?

Soon after my profound incident old habits began kicking in. My strong preconditioning to deny the unseen regardless of how evident it's effects is formidable. A few days later I was again searching for ways to ground this episode within more materially explainable circumstances. I began the arduous attempt of gauging the odds of any particular vehicle being at one particular location at any particular moment. Only when completely entangled within a knot of equations factoring the number of cars within the tri-county area against the number of miles of road, the estimated average miles per vehicular trip against the number of seconds within the day did I realize to what lengths I was reaching to negate the obvious. It was then a more perplexing possibility dawned. Perhaps my difficulty in accepting this event was driven by a more insidious fear. Contrary to my stated intentions, maybe deep within the recesses of my psyche I didn't want to find evidence of any higher consciousness. To do so would demand a radical change in existential perspective I might have trouble accommodating. Though many be-



lieve the desire for meaning and purpose within our lives makes us all too eager to accept the notion of a higher consciousness I suspect the opposite is more likely the case; people tend to deny the possibility of transcendent influences because it's easier to endure existential uncertainty than brook the presence of an actual unknown. Personal demons notwithstanding, this episode effectively demonstrates the two headed quandary of studying transcendent events; veracity of evidence and accuracy of meaning.

Perceptions beyond our shared material reality pose special problems. We must trust and accept the descriptions and interpretations of such experiences from human sources whose litany of possible mistakes and motivations is virtually endless. Predictably, the greatest source of distrust lies within the community of material scientists. However, even psychologists are often quick to marginalize and pathologize the insights drawn from lucid dreams, meditation, out of body experiences, hallucinations and other sources of subjective awareness (Beyer, 2013.) Curiously, anomalous events experienced by many people simultaneously frequently fare little better (Cunningham, 2011; Fontana, 2005.) Rarely can such evidence be corralled and shuffled off for isolated scientific testing and objective evaluation. Even on those rare occasions when the exceptional strays into the material world and is snared in the nets of our instrumentation (cameras, audio recorders, sensors, etc.) the tendency to reach for explanations more consistent with our traditional sensibilities and knowledge can go far beyond the realm of reasonable skepticism. Often certain perceptions or objective events rationally crying for unconventional interpretation are quickly reinterpreted and recast into familiar patterns of explanation or consigned to the realm of coincidence. This reluctance is not confined to rigid researchers and august institutions. Frequently it's the subjects of such anomalous experiences themselves who strive to convince themselves of their own delusion or the insignificance of events. As my experience suggests, on certain issues we're much more comfortable not knowing to the extent of our capabilities. We prefer the security of the familiar regardless of how deafening the shouts of the unusual. As Winston Churchill poignantly noted, "Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue."

Historically, this trouble of accepting the reality of the unseen is almost exclusively a condition of modern technological societies. Most of the planets traditional cultures have little problem sanctioning the existence and influence of transcendent forces (Eliade, 1964; Geertz, 1973.) To their sensibilities the physical world coexists with a wide variety of exceptional and mystical entities with which we perpetually interrelate. Any material concerns aside, most reports of encounters with the supernatural are readily accommodated. In such cultures metaphysical forces are considered active agents within the events of physical life. They are endowed with an oversized influence in all elements of daily existence including matters of individual health, family prosperity, agricultural success, intercommunity relations and all issues of the soul and spirit (Eliade, 1964; Harner, 1990; Kalweit, 1987.) Such widespread acceptance by traditional peoples of the supernatural and easy attribution of its powers within the physical realm has been a longstanding irritant to many modern researchers who frequently find themselves unable to reconcile this behavior with their own paradigm. As the anthropologist Edith Turner noted,

Mainline anthropologists have studiedly ignored the central matter of this kind of information-central in the peoples own view- and only used the material as if it were metaphor or symbol, not reality, commenting that such and such "metaphor" is congruent with the function, structure or psychological mindset of the society. Clearly this is a laudable effort as far as it goes. But the neglect of the central material savors of our own *bête noire*, intellectual imperialism. (Turner, 1993, p. 10.)

All aspirations to the contrary, we products of the modern age don't live in very spiritually nurturing circumstances. The cultural entrenchment of a scientific paradigm based on the existence of enduring sensible objects only considers physical phenomena as admissible evidence. This limitation is further compounded by the propensity to force most instances of the unusual into existing structures of understanding. Such rigidity, warranted or not, begs certain critical questions: can any phenomena existing outside the realm of empirical perception ever be considered substantive or influential? Is it possible to make any progress towards understanding the higher issues of existence given our



compunction for excluding evidence solely the product of unverifiable human experience or that deviates from current understanding? Can there ever be any epistemic or ontological value in personal or subjective experience?

The initial problem associated with the assessment of subjective or anecdotal experience is obviously one of credibility. How much trust can we place in the integrity of any informant? Is their perception of events clear and evident? Do they possess the necessary detachment to critically evaluate the authenticity of their own impressions? How precisely do they communicate what they experience? And of greatest importance, how astute is their determination of the meaning or implications of what they experience? This last question is where the bar really rises. Let's revisit my synchronicity. Few may have questioned the authenticity of this experience had I presented it as an interesting coincidence. However, once I endowed this episode with any higher or grander ontological meaning the credibility of the event became subject to a much different and more stringent degree of scrutiny. Unusual events happen all the time. It's when transcendent meanings are attached that problems sprout within our own minds and those of others. I believe we will find meaning to be far more problematic than veracity.

None would deny the reality or significance of subjective experience. Feelings and intuitions play a vital role within all our lives. However, what are we to make of impressions or experiences outside the realm of custom, routine and habit that seem to point to possible issues of metaphysical phenomena or a higher/spiritual order? What do such experiences prove or demonstrate? Gaining any type of transcendent insight is what those in our field live for. Unfortunately, too often confusion regarding the meaning of our experience irreparably taints the credibility of its occurrence. The terms unknown, exceptional/paranormal and mystical/spiritual may seem a mere matter of semantics for many grappling with the significance of an anomalous experience. However, within the field of transpersonal studies these are crucial distinctions; distinctions often more important in determining the admissibility of any experience than those of witness credibility.

The critical question is to what does our anomalous experience relate? Commonly such claims

fall into one of two categories: unknown aspects of reality (exceptional/paranormal) or evidence of ultimate consciousness or intention (mystical/spiritual.) Exceptional/paranormal events such as psi phenomena, astral projection, ghosts/spirits and extraterrestrial creatures are frequently the focus of anomalous experiences. Should such phenomena be authentic they currently reside outside the realm of conventional scientific understanding. However, this doesn't preclude them from eventually being understood through scientific means. As entities or events within time and space their very existence demands and accommodates some type of physical explanation.

Similar to the exceptional/paranormal, if there is a mystical/spiritual dimension to existence it too remains beyond the realm of the empirical. As conventionally conceived, mystical/spiritual concerns relate to the presence of an ultimate and active level of consciousness possessed of an intelligent, intentional creative capacity. Such a consciousness has been referred to in names both theistic and descriptive: the ultimate, essential consciousness, the absolute, the ground, the One, God, Godhead, Brahmin and countless other nom de voyage to numerous to note. The essence of any such entities currently eludes scientific understanding. However, though science may one day decipher the physical manifestations and processes produced by any such entity it likely could no more understand its intention and meaning than that of a geranium. Any insights of meaning (to the extent they're available) could only emerge from sources beyond the material that may likely elude our understanding. Revelations of the mystical/spiritual are of an entirely different order than those of the exceptional/paranormal; the latter are experienced phenomena, the former is the recognition of deliberate, conscious intention.

The distinctions between the exceptional/paranormal and the mystical/spiritual are clear. However, too often the credibility of our experience is demeaned through an inability to accurately differentiate between these two descriptive categories. To illustrate: many discriminating and credible people claim to have seen or experienced the presence of ghosts, spirits, angels or other apparitions. Assuming such episodes to be accurately reported what meaning could they hold? We may plausibly assert such occurrences suggest the pres-



ence of an ethereal component to life beyond the physical, a level of consciousness enduring beyond the grave, the possibility of multiple levels of existence, the reality of a quality many term “soul,” a basis for reincarnation or dozens of other possibilities. What would not be suggested from any such event would be the presence of an ultimate consciousness or “grand scheme.” All of the above suggested possibilities in themselves would merely be qualities attendant with the nature of physical existence. The very presence of any such anomalous events within the material world demands they be treated as phenomena of the material world. This is not to suggest the impossibility of an ultimate consciousness directing such phenomenon but rather such an ultimate presence is unnecessary towards explaining their material existence. Any suggesting spectral activities in and of themselves to be inherently evident of any ultimate consciousness or order are arguing far beyond evidence and reason. What we have in this example is clearly an exceptional/paranormal event, not a mystical/spiritual one.

And what of my own “mindful” sign of higher consciousness? Given my awareness of the circumstances leading up to this event my first inclination was to opt for a mystical/spiritual label. However, after further reflection I’m no longer sure. While convinced this episode to be the result of a process of active consciousness rather than coincidence it still lacked clear indication of what specific consciousness was responsible. Could any of the qualities within such theorized thought fields as the etheric, morphogenic, Akashic or zero point have the ability to account for such an event? Could powers within my own unconscious desires in some way have “attracted” or “steered” such a synchronicity? Could I have “manufactured” such a reality as the philosophers of various “idealist” schools suggest? Even if this event were the result of an external higher force of consciousness how would I know such a level of consciousness was not a normal (though unknown) byproduct of the way reality functions? In other words, any such forces of higher consciousness need not necessarily be divine or ultimate in nature. In the final analysis it would seem the most I can speculate is I believe I was privy to a demonstration of the interconnected and unified nature of a conscious reality within existence. Make no mistake; to me this is no small insight. However, much to the chagrin of the rabbi who believes this

a clear sign from God, to label this a mystical/spiritual event would be colossal leap of reason.

Under such parameters what would it take for any experience to be labeled mystical/spiritual? Are such interpretations indeed possible? Obviously, any entity or process within existence (no matter how exceptional or suggestive) can’t of itself be evidence of the mystical as its very being is indicative of a material component. Any psi phenomena, spirits, angels, reincarnations, heavens, hells, voices from the sky or any supernatural force are simply different functional aspects and qualities of existence. Even such higher orders as an intrinsic universal interconnectedness or incredible design wouldn’t reveal an ultimate consciousness. Though greatly interesting and illuminating all could very well be symptomatic of the routine manner in which existence operates. The only way ultimate consciousness can be appended or defined is by the discerning of intention. Specific phenomena must be determined the result of an underlying deliberate purpose. Any event failing to clearly demonstrate such a quality can’t be persuasively taken as indication of any mystical/spiritual entity. Those enamored by the profundity of any specific anomalous experience best realize this necessary aspect of intelligence and taper their conclusions accordingly.

Where do such rigid requirements of an ultimate consciousness leave us? Such constrictions do nothing to exclude the possibility that higher intention is indeed possible, maybe even likely. It seems part of our essential psychology senses our existence to have a larger meaning within a premeditated grand scheme. However, I’m stymied as to how (subjectively or otherwise) this could ever be persuasively confirmed. It seems the nature of our being and constitution conspires against such clarity. Perhaps the Vedantists and Taoists (among many others) are correct when they speak of the unknowability of the ultimate. This high burden of proof for one particular conclusion doesn’t mean any are justified in categorically dismissing the reality of all anomalous subjective experience. Errors in interpretation are not of themselves errors of perception. Any responsible inquiry demands all evidence be assessed on a case by case basis independent of any attendant meaning. As we’ve seen, the severity of the scientific paradigm has not been the only obstacle to admitting



the personal or subjective. Skepticism thrives within the ungrounded interpretations frequently attached to such experiences. In truth I suspect most people harbor an innate sympathy to revelatory experiences. The authenticities each of us associate with our own subjective impressions predispose many to accept the possibility of truth within the anomalous experiences of others. Pointing out the problems of asserting the existence of an ultimate consciousness is not a plea to ignore our intuitions or convictions of such a possibility. I only wish to remind others to closely examine such intuitions so otherwise valuable experiential contributions to our ontological understanding are less easily compromised.

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We are currently accepting submissions for the summer 2014 edition of JEEP. Some of the submissions we are looking for include research manuscripts, personal accounts, creative writing, artwork, videos, book reviews, news, letters to the editors, and upcoming events.

JEEP is dedicated to the exploration of exceptional experiences, such as survival after death, out-of-body experiences, extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, poltergeists, mediumship, and hauntings. Also included are cryptids, abduction scenarios, possession, psychic healing and synchronicity.

Send your submission
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A Counseling Approach to Mediumship: Adaptive outcomes of Grief following an Exceptional Experience

Rachel E. Evenden, Callum E. Cooper, and Graham Mitchell



ABSTRACT

In the last few decades there has been much corroborative research suggesting that exceptional experiences (EEs) during bereavement lead to improved coping and a healthy recovery from a negative emotional state (e.g., Devers, 1997; Drewry, 2003; Parker, 2005). Aside from ‘spontaneous’ exceptional experiences and their impact on the bereaved (Cooper, 2013), ‘sought’ experiences such as mediumship can be an equally rewarding and positive experience for the bereaved. Few links have been explored regarding the counseling nature of mediumship with regards to bereaved individuals, and therefore this paper addresses such issues using a counseling approach and qualitative design. Results suggest that those who experience mediumistic counseling produced a high sense of agency, resulting in adaptive coping. Additionally, the findings suggest that areas of counseling, clinical studies and positive psychology would benefit from forming links with the findings of parapsychological research, with regards to the bereaved and their experiences.

Introduction

Bereavement is a life crisis which can be detrimental to the individual’s level of physical and psychological well-being, and is also known as a grief response (Parkes, 1972). These somatic responses are often sustained for long periods of time, but are dependent on the degree to which the loss has impacted upon the individual. Naturally, this can vary from person to person depending on the individual circumstances and the nature of the loss – such as through gradual illness or sudden death (Dyregrov, 2003; Schulz, 1978; Wimpenny, 2007).

It is common for bereaved individuals to develop an on-going inner relationship with the deceased which within a counseling context is termed as a *continuing bond* (Field, 2006). The continuing bond can be facilitated in various ways from inclusion of the deceased in daily life, vivid dreams, and a sense of presence, all of which have been found to provide a supportive resource for the bereaved individual (e.g., Barrett, 1991-92; Steffan & Coyle, 2011). Within a counseling context this bond can be perceived as an on-going process of reflection regarding the loss. This has been found to be necessary and therapeutic within the healing process (Parkes, 1972).

In recent years, some researchers have argued that a continuing bond with the dead is an abnor-

mality in behavior, resulting in unhealthy outcomes which prevent closure from being fully achieved (Stroebe, Abakoumkin, Stobebe, & Schut, 2012). The continuing connection between the bereaved and the deceased can be argued as a symptom of unresolved grief or maladaptive coping in that it prevents the individual from moving forward following the loss (Field, 2006). The discrepancies within the research indicate much deliberation as to whether a continued bond with the deceased has a positive or negative effect on a persons’ ability to adapt post-death and beyond the bereavement phase. In a review by Stroebe and Schut (2005), they found inconclusive evidence as to whether a continuing bond with the deceased should be continued or relinquished. Such disparities within the research would benefit from further exploration in order to distinguish whether this bond helps or hinders adjustment of the grief process.

The therapeutic aspects of such continued bonds can be explored further by looking closely at specific forms of exceptional experiences (EEs) suggestive of survival beyond death, i.e. apparitions, a sense of presence and poltergeist type phenomena, to name but a few (see Cooper, 2013). One particular phenomenon which bridges the gap perfectly between issues of counseling and bereavement would be mediumship. Mediums can be defined as “[I]ndividuals through whose agency or through whose organisms there are ostensibly received communications from deceased human beings



or other supposed disembodied or remote entities.” (Gauld, 2005, p. 215).

Therefore, with mediumship, we can examine the notion of continued bonds with the dead from a counseling perspective with regards to the bereaved who actively *seek* a psychic reading (as a form of counseling) to re-establish a connection with loved ones who have passed on. On such a personal one-to-one level, between the sitter/bereaved and the medium, the positive and negative health outcomes of such experiences can be explored suitably through counseling sessions with the bereaved to understand any transitions which took place for them due to the EE (i.e., the sitting with the medium and alleged connection with the dead). Attending psychic demonstrations has now become a somewhat acceptable – or less controversial – activity in recent years with media exploitation of psychic phenomena and its frequent occurrence in daily lives. From a research point of view, this makes seeking participants an easier task due to the wide popularity of attending psychic readings.

Research conducted by Walter (2008) involved interviewing large numbers of bereavement counselors in order to observe the level of interest from clients wishing to seek mediumship following loss. The findings indicated only a small minority of those individuals suffering from bereavement will actively seek the support of a spiritual medium. This may be due to a number of reservations surrounding the nature of the connection (i.e., fear of talking to the alleged dead, or social stigma). Nevertheless, past research has found that working with mediums to be a therapeutic experience for those involved and/or practicing as a medium in therapy (Schwimmer, 1988). It also helps those involved to personally reduce any social stigma attached to the process, especially when disclosing such EEs within a professional setting. In recent years, parapsychology has promoted multidisciplinary approaches to the investigation of exceptional experiences, particularly through counseling methods (e.g., Kramer, Bauer & Hövelmann, 2012). In many cases, people may feel embarrassed to mention any form of EEs following a traumatic event, feeling that their friends or counselors may ridicule them, or consider them mentally unstable for having such experiences (i.e., seeing apparitions of the dead, feeling a sense of presence, poltergeist type

activity, and so on).

Hastings (1983) argued for a counseling approach to parapsychological experiences, to help the bereaved or otherwise to understand the experiences or assist the percipient to cope with their reactions to the event. Applying counseling to EEs assists the participants in creating a state of balance, integration, and helps form a personal judgment relating to their apparent or genuine parapsychological experiences. Either way, interpretation occurs in regards to their personal needs and demands at the time of the experience and counselling process. With bereavement, resolution of separation anxiety is the subjective goal. And, therefore, personal confirmation of a continued bond is helpful for recovery, especially in cases where an EE is sought after by the percipient (in this case – mediumship).

Aims and Rationale

In the case of mediumship, the medium acts as an unofficial counselor to the bereaved and helps establish a direct link/bond with the dead for those who seek such counseling. This preliminary study aims to explore to what extent mediumship – as a form of counseling – assists the bereaved in coping with grief and facilitates adaptive outcomes. Additionally, this paper aims to expand the counselor’s perception and knowledge of alternative approaches to bereavement, such as mediumship, which may prove beneficial in grief work.

Methodology

Participants and Design

Due to the nature of the study, purposive sampling was used to gain participants against a close set of criteria using participants that had experienced similar circumstances surrounding bereavement. Participants were aged 18+ and had all experienced bereavement within the last five years; specifically the loss of an immediate family member, spouse or partner. In addition, all participants (N=3) had experienced visiting a medium during their grief period and all believed they had made contact with their loved one via this experience with the medium.

A qualitative approach was adopted in order to explore adaptive outcomes of grief following a



specific EE (i.e., mediumistic readings) by examining participants' unique experiences of bereavement. Semi-structured interviews were used to achieve a multifaceted perspective, and each interview was treated as a case study. The questions were as open as possible to avoid directing the participants' responses towards the research aim, while also being ethically sound and non-invasive to avoid discomfort for the participants. They were initially asked to express the circumstances surrounding the bereavement and any other associated factors that contributed to the loss. The list of topics to be discussed was intended not to be exhaustive and, as a result, elaboration on other areas was encouraged. The interview questions were structured to have a logical progression through the experience of losing a loved one in order to support the transcription and analysis process regarding thoughts surrounding loss, coping mechanisms, and outcomes following the experience. The semi-structured questions were formulated beginning with a few general open questions in order to build a rapport with the participants and opening up further discussion. The schedules were developed with the intention of the total interview duration being 90 minutes long. The questions were based on topics regarding: 1) loss and bereavement, 2) experience of mediumship. Prompts and probing questions were prepared in advance to gain a more thorough perspective and developed answer.

Procedure

A qualitative approach was applied to expand upon, and further support the theoretical research into continuing bonds within bereavement work. This study explored discords which reflect adaptive outcomes of participants' experiences with mediumship following a loss. Therefore, a thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was adopted. The transcripts were read multiple times, until familiarity with the content was achieved. Codes were devised from each section of data, explaining the key meanings described. The codes were then arranged into similar categories and these were identified as themes and sub-themes. Themes were reviewed to ensure they appropriately considered the research aims and reflected the content of the data. A thematic map was produced exemplifying the themes and sub-themes and codes. The themes were refined, condensed, defined and la-

belled in order to achieve a comprehensive analysis of the content. Underlying issues and hidden meanings were identified, and considered in relation to the theoretical literature. Some stages of the analysis process were repeated several times until the analysis was completed.

Upon ethical approval, participants were sent a copy of the participant information sheet and consent form. Prior to the interview, participants were informed that the study would require talking about a recent bereavement. A copy of the interview schedule was provided and participants were asked to consider carefully if they would be willing to take part. The rationale behind the study was verbally explained to each participant and they were given a chance to withdraw from the interview at any point up until the end of the interview. Since the content of the material was of a sensitive nature all data was anonymized to protect the identification of the participants. During the interview, a loose script was used to direct the interview. Deviation from this schedule was encouraged to gain further understanding of the participants' experiences allowing for an in-depth analysis to be conducted. The transcriptions were stored on a memory stick, which was available only to the researcher. Participants were given a written de-briefing sheet and an opportunity to ask questions.

Due to the nature of the study, participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences in some detail, which could have given rise to some distressing memories and/or emotions. Set criteria regarding the nature of the loss were considered for the participant selection. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) guidelines were adhered to in order to ensure safe practice within a counseling context, and the same principles were implemented throughout the study. All attempts were made to reduce the risk of any serious psychological distress to participants during the interviews. Selected participants were those who showed an open willingness to 'tell their story'. Participant anonymity was assured, by changing all names/places mentioned in the interview during transcription, ensuring no personal reference to them is made throughout the study. Upon completion of the transcripts, the audio interviews were erased from the audio device and transcriptions were stored on a memory stick, which only the researcher has access to.



Analysis and Results

Theme 1: Grief Processes Theme

The first theme constructed was termed ‘grief processes’ and appeared to be the most prominent and important process for the participants in the recovery of bereavement. This served two purposes: firstly it aided in moving on and finding closure from the loss experienced, and secondly it helped in the development of a continued bond between the participants and their deceased loved ones. This grief process represented a shift in agency from being absorbed in the symptoms, cognitions and emotions displayed. Loss of control, loss of connection and regrets at how the relationship ended or what might have been all appeared to facilitate a process of searching for answers coded as the ‘unknown’.

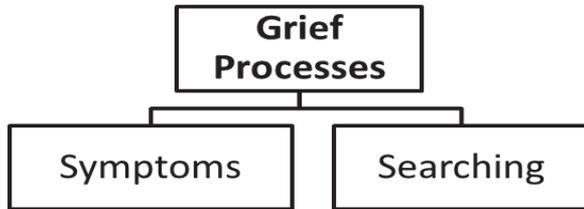


Figure 1: Grief processes theme

In a brief summary of these findings, several symptoms of grief were reported ranging from, mixed emotions, frustration, anger, sadness and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The symptoms were also interpreted as emotional processes since an inability to understand the loss and the impact of the grief symptoms appeared to affect cognitive functioning causing a state of overwhelming feelings of helplessness.

Theme 2: ‘Needs Met’ Theme

The ‘needs met’ theme was derived from a need to move on through a continued bond between the individual with the deceased, which represented the importance of meeting basic human needs in a relationship. When these needs were met, participants were able to move on and form adaptive coping mechanisms after experiencing a loss.

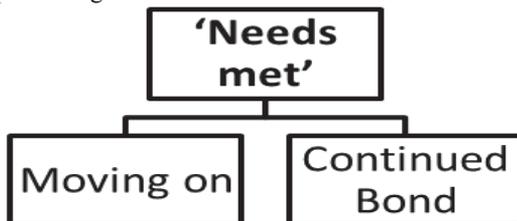


Figure 2: Needs met theme

A prominent finding within the data was the importance of keeping the deceased’s memory alive, which may act as coping tool in order to gain acceptance of the loss without eradicating the existence of the person from their memory. For example, Amy stated that being able to discuss her daughter with friends was an important component in keeping her daughter’s memory alive. One of the most significant aspects within this theme was the concept of ‘goodbye’ representing the acceptance of the loss and a sense of closure. The perceived connection with the deceased appears to allow the bereaved to meet those needs previously unmet. Once those needs have been met, a sense of relief, comfort and peace enables the individual grounds to begin to move forward with their life and learn and grow from the experience.

James was able to come to terms with the way in which Lucy died in order to find a sense of peace with her death. Shortly after his first experience with mediumship, James recalled a vivid dream which he perceived as a sign or some kind of message from his deceased granddad urging him to move away from Lucy. The dream appeared to facilitate the continued bond between James and Lucy in the form of an unconscious message. The dream was coded as a process of moving on. James felt the need to gain contact with Lucy a second time as he had been concerned that seeing a medium six weeks post her death may have been too soon since his grief at that time was so raw. He also felt the experience had not made a huge difference to how he had been feeling regarding Lucy’s death. James decided to seek mediumship a second time since his initial connection with Lucy appeared to have little effect on his ability to heal. This time around he was able to gain a sense of validation from his perception that Lucy was still around in some way. Significant messages from the deceased reportedly enabled insight and a sense of perspective to be achieved.

All three participants found their experiences with mediumship strengthened their existing belief in the afterlife enabling them to gain peace and comfort that their loved ones were safe, which enabled them to begin moving forward with their lives living alongside the loss. James found his experiences with mediumship overall to be extremely therapeutic. Interestingly, rather



than hold the medium responsible for this shift in self, he perceived Lucy (the deceased) to have enabled him to find peace. This indicates a distinct perceived connection between the mourner and the deceased in enhancing the recovery of bereaved individuals (Drewry, 2003).

Below is a summary of the personal outcomes reported to have occurred by participants in their own psychological and spiritual development following an experience of mediumship during a period of bereavement:

	Duration of Bereavement	Outcome
James	6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • therapeutic experience psychically healing • relationships became enhanced following the mediumship
Amy	12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gained reassurance of a continued bond • reduced PTSD
Rosie	14 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal validation of a continued bond

Theme 3: Growth Theme

The sub-themes, finding agency and character strengths were placed together to form the third theme, growth, since the two are closely inter-linked to personal growth.

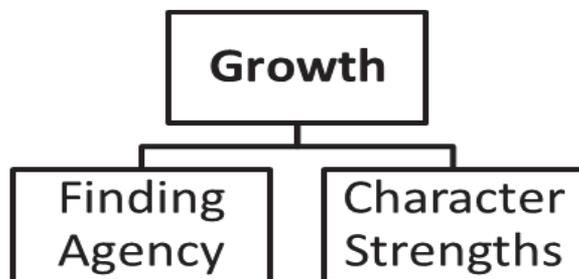


Figure 3: Growth theme

Rosie displayed behaviors which were coded as practical coping within the finding agency sub-theme. James reflected on how losing a loved one, who he had built a close bond with, enabled him to see positive elements in the friendship that he had built with Lucy realizing that relationships do not have to be

meaningless and superficial. James displayed optimism in demonstrating a new found perspective on the types of relationships he would like to have in the future displaying optimism for new opportunities. ‘Realising for oneself’, ‘positive reframing’ and ‘new opportunities’ were prominent codes in terms of positive growth. Rosie displayed other ways of finding agency by which reminders of her father-in-law’s passing enabled her to cope. Perspective and acceptance were interpreted as forms of agency since Rosie was able to celebrate during times which could be painful reminders of the loss. Rosie was able to seek positives and lean on her existing beliefs to positively reframe the situation. In addition, the *hope* that her loved one is still with her in some way was evidenced as a positive construct which enables faith to be restored.

Rosie was able to learn from her experience and in that process was able to make some positive changes to her life, demonstrating positive aspects as a result of adversity. Symptoms of grief, specifically the anger she experienced was reduced and she was able to give up smoking (a previous maladaptive coping response). Amy displayed an ability to actively find pathways which would enable her to cope better and adopt a more positive outlook, stating that her experience with mediumship helped reduce her symptoms of PTSD. Mediumship appeared to act as a source of motivation which facilitates hope in times of adversity displaying a high level of resilience despite associated trauma related symptoms post-bereavement. Mediumship served as a reflective process for James, which enabled him to gain insight and self-awareness in acknowledging his own capacity for resilience, thereby enhancing a sense of agency. The ability to find agency has appeared to aid in the development of character strengths. James’s ability to adopt a more positive attitude involved two key features; gratitude in feeling blessed to have had the time he did with Lucy as well as the overall change in his perspective, which was found to be transformative.

The role of mediumship enabled Rosie to seek acceptance, move forward from the loss and start to feel more positive about the future illustrating the character strengths of hope, gratitude and optimism. Rosie’s acceptance of the loss appeared to heighten optimism and aid her ability to cope post-bereavement illustrating an ability to learn from experiences, a key



feature of wisdom and post-traumatic growth. This is similar to the effect reported by Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2006) and Taylor (2012). In both of these reports, positive transformation was reported following periods of intense distress.

Theme 4: Relationship Theme

The relationship theme was devised from two sub-themes which identify the negative and positive facets within relationship.

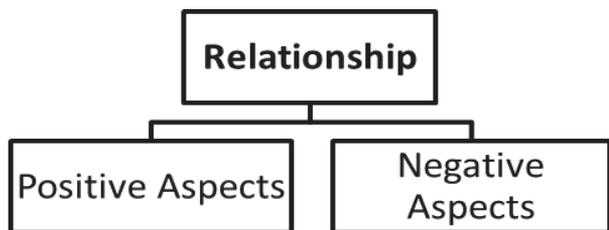


Figure 4: The relationship theme

What appeared to heighten the sense of loss for all three participants was the loss of the bond among close interpersonal relationships. Strong support networks were found to have a positive effect on the participants' ability to cope during their loss. Participants reported feeling grateful for the support of close friends post-bereavement. Appreciation for those remaining relationships appeared to be a key factor in positive reframing. Gratitude, appreciation and feeling blessed were coded as positive aspects within relationships and can also be perceived as character strengths. Courage and bravery are key strengths in moving forward in the development of resilience and post-traumatic growth.

All three participants noted several negative aspects following their losses in terms of the loss of the bond and/or connection they had with their loved one. Amy was the only participant to state her experience with mediumship made her feel worse before she felt better as she struggled to accept the loss of her daughter. Following the initial event, she was able to reflect on her experience with mediumship and her own perceived contact with her daughter stating it was a positive and special thing to have occurred. This enabled her to come to terms with her situation even though the bond between a mother and child can be one of the strongest. The loss of this connection may have largely contributed to Amy's inability to accept the loss initially thereby highlighting the importance of the loss of con-

nection/bond following bereavement. These difficulties exemplify the loss of bond which can cause the bereaved to feel as though they have lost a part of themselves. This negative aspect goes hand-in-hand with loss and may explain the *need* for a continuation of the connection they once had with the deceased.

Discussion

In this preliminary study, it has been demonstrated how certain character strengths enhance resilience in the ability to bounce back from adverse circumstances. The key to achieving this seems to lie in: the importance of having needs met whether that is via a continued bond or positive relationships, the ability to find agency in order to foster hope, or the knowledge to put these to use. Hope of there being some form of continuation beyond death and the bereaved embracing this emotion also seemed to be experienced by all participants which relates well to previous thoughts and findings (Cooper, 2013; Devers, 1997; Drewry, 2003).

Mediumship has been demonstrated as a positive tool for some in facilitating a continued bond with the deceased in order to meet previously unmet needs. Once those needs have been met, confusion is reduced which enables the bereaved individual to experience a reflective period which facilitates personal growth, transformation and wisdom. Improved relationships, hope for the future and adaptive coping are installed which seemingly arise from a new-found perspective, connectedness and validation of self in order for the individual to live alongside the loss. The perceived connection between the bereaved and the deceased was found to be of great significance to participants. This level of verification that the medium was able to offer seems to provide a mechanism which proved successful in meeting un-met needs, reducing symptoms of grief and facilitating positive, adaptive coping. The findings support mediumship as a mechanism for adaptive grief outcomes adding to existing research, which has also found mediumship to be a helpful resource in aiding grief symptoms (e.g., Parker, 2005; Steffen & Coyle, 2011).

This study has illustrated how qualitative research can draw on the complex theory within bereavement work, counseling and existing research within positive psychology to demonstrate useful alternative approaches to parapsychological issues. In regards to



the limitations within this study, the thematic analysis approach adopted allows the research to support the data as opposed to the data fitting the research area. Further exploration using a grounded theory approach may allow for a more detailed analysis and theory building.

To conclude, there is much opportunity to take this research further and in greater depth. From the initial results, however, we have further supported the therapeutic nature of having an EE following bereavement whereby a connection with the dead is assumed by the participant. We have reviewed corroborative research which suggests that such experiences are highly beneficial to the bereaved and to recovery. It has also demonstrated the interconnection between thanatological and counseling health care and positive psychological approaches to parapsychological issues thusly showing the subtle diversity and applicability of parapsychology among these disciplines and in everyday human issues.

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Group Therapy for Anomalous/Paranormal Experiences: Post-effect Preliminary Examination of the Humanistic Approach

Alejandro Parra, Juan Manuel Corbetta



ABSTRACT

There is a large amount of research in the professional literature that supports the effectiveness of humanistic group therapy. Although group therapy has focused on experiences such as near-death experiences (NDEs), apparitions, and families victimized by poltergeist-type episodes, emotional reactions to paranormal experiences have seldom been explored. The aims of this exploratory study were (a) to explore the utility of using humanistic group therapy to address the effects of paranormal/anomalous experiences upon people's lives and (b) to explore a research model of how humanistic group therapy might help clients make positive behavioral and attitudinal changes regarding their anomalous/paranormal experiences. The sample included twenty participants, in the age range 22–71 years old (Mean = 45.65; SD = 12.52), of whom 65% (N=13) were female and 35% (N=7) were male. Participants were seeking information about anomalous/paranormal experiences they had had or were currently experiencing. The participants took part in weekly two hour group sessions. They were asked to answer a self-administered questionnaire of seven questions prior to their entry into a group. At the end, another questionnaire of nine closed questions and an open one was administered. The dynamics of the groups usually included three stages: Emotional support, cognitive support and group-closing with interpretation of their experiences. Participants reported that the group experience helped them to satisfy their experiences emotionally ($p = .001$), helped them to have a healthier comprehension of the experiences ($p = .001$), helped them to find a rational comprehension of the experiences ($p = .008$). Participants also reported being listened to, included and backed up by the fellow group members ($p = .019$) and by the therapists ($p = .017$) on completion of the group activity. We hope we have demonstrated that humanistic therapy groups can be used to help clients with a variety of disorders to cope with them more effectively and to deal more functionally with their paranormal/anomalous experiences.

Introduction

A humanistic approach to therapeutic change naturally lends itself to working with people who deal with paranormal/anomalous experiences. This approach has always emphasized the strengthening of relational bonds, the creation of interpersonal empathy, and connection with one's own emotional experience and with other close relations. Humanistic therapists have focused on the fact that personal growth and empowerment occur in relationships with other close relations. They have viewed those relationships as more than the sum of their parts, as having a life of their own. This perspective is consonant with the systemic viewpoint that has formed the basis of so much of couple and family therapy. Humanistic practices exemplify the notion that people are formed and transformed by their relationships with others (see Cain and Seeman, 2002).

Humanistic therapists reject invariant pro-

cedures uniformly applied and allow clients to teach them about their (the clients') idiosyncratic experience. However, the position taken here is that it is still possible to stipulate interventions and empirically examine how these interventions affect clients' relationships (Parra, 2012).

There is a large amount of research in the professional literature that supports the effectiveness of humanistic group therapy (Beck, 1974; Beck, Dugo, Eng and Lewis, 1986; Braaten, 1989; Rogers, 1970; Yalom, 1995). The therapy theory applied here emphasizes a humanistic approach to group therapy, more specifically humanistic-existential group therapy. These approaches also stress the importance of self-awareness in therapy because it is assumed that people who are self-aware can make better choices. For example, person-centered, Gestalt, and existential therapies all emphasize the idea that people are capable of acting in responsible and caring ways in interpersonal relation-



ships.

An unstructured group therapy has stages that promote the psychological growth of its members (based on Rogers's approach; see Rogers, 1970). These stages occur naturally as the members emphasize certain themes that often emerge from the group process, such as dealing with anger or developing trusting relationships. Such themes are related to the kinds of interpersonal learning experiences within the group that can be internalized and eventually generalized to more caring and responsible relationships outside the group. One of the advantages of group therapy as compared with individual therapy is that the members have the opportunity to learn about interpersonal relationships by actually experiencing these relationships with one another in the group; for instance, emotional and cognitive reactions have been observed among individuals seeking help as a result of a paranormal experience.

Group therapy has focused on experiences, such as near death experiences (Furn, 1987), apparitions (Harary, 1993), and families victimized by poltergeist-type episodes (Rogo, 1974, 1982; Snoyman, 1985). The recent development of this practice and the few individual therapies applied to these experiences, still lack consensus (Belz, 2009; and McMahon, 1993; Kramer, Bauer, Hövelmann, 2012). For example, Regina Hoffman (1995) interviewed 50 NDErs in her qualitative study. Near death experiencers underwent an initial varying degree of shock or surprise, followed by a need for validation of the experience. In the first stage, NDErs began to notice the effects of their experiences on their daily lives. In the next stage, active exploration, experiencers investigated the philosophical, spiritual, and psychological implications of their experiences. Finally, they reached the integration stage, where they were increasingly able to take hold of and apply their experiences to their lives in a holistic way. Hoffman asserted that mental health care providers must be prepared to assist clients in their struggles and successes during any or all of these stages.

Gómez Montanelli and Parra (2004) conducted research to record reactions to disturbing psi experiences. Thirty-two subjects participated in weekly sessions involving humanistic therapy in seven groups. The activity involved three stages: (a) emotional support, (b) cognitive and emotional support, and (c) group

-closing. Over three-quarters of the sample reported fear—in different forms—to be the predominant emotion; wonder, perplexity, well-being and anxiety were also reported. The authors concluded that humanistic group therapy can be effective with people who have distressing experiences, such as those involving paranormal phenomena, and so it may be an appropriate method for the further parapsychological exploration of many paranormal experiences.

The aims of this exploratory study were (a) to explore the utility of using humanistic group therapy to address the effects of paranormal/anomalous experiences upon people's lives and (b) to explore a research model of how humanistic group therapy might help clients make positive behavioral and attitudinal changes with respect to their anomalous/paranormal experiences. The main aim of these groups was to share their experiences, to reflect on them, and to exchange knowledge among the group and with the therapists. The following study was intended to extend the first study (Gómez Montanelli and Parra, 2004).

Methods

Participants

Adults who had had anomalous/paranormal experiences were recruited by an announcement placed on the Internet (www.alipsi.com.ar) at the Instituto de Psicología Paranormal in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Altogether, 41 participants were recruited, the sample was thus reduced to twenty (48.78%). Twenty participants in the age range 22–71 years (mean = 45.65; SD = 12.52), of whom 65% (N = 13) were female and 35% (N = 7), male. Sixty per cent had high school as their highest educational level, professionals (bachelors and higher degrees, 25% and 58%, respectively). Members included people who were seeking information about anomalous/paranormal experiences they had had or were currently experiencing.

An appropriate informed consent to the therapy procedure using language reasonably understandable for the participants was signed. The content of informed consent included: that the person (1) had the capacity to consent, (2) had been informed of all significant information concerning the procedure, (3) had freely and without undue influence expressed consent, and that (4) consent had been appropriately documented



(Barden, 2001; Beahrs & Gutheil, 2001).

Data Collection

(Note that this exploratory tool is not meant to be a serious clinical device, and no claims are made as to its validity or reliability.)

Data were collected from a self-administered questionnaire of nine close questions and an open one. Members were asked to rate seven items of the questionnaire prior to their entry into a group and at termination such as, (1) emotional satisfaction of my experiences, (2) healthy comprehension of my experiences, (3) rational comprehension of my experiences, (4) integration of the anomalous/paranormal experience(s) into my life, (5) to be listened to, included and backed up by my fellow group members, and (6) to be listened to, included and backed up by the therapist (item response 0= none, 1= low, 2= moderate, 3= high, and 4= very high; see Table 1). Two additional items included:

(1) *Reactions prior to their entry*: negative ones such as “fear of the unknown,” “to lose my mind,” “to die,” “to be unable to control the experience,” “not to be understood by others,” “astonishment,” “distress,” “anguish,” or positive ones, such as “well-being,” “contentment,” or “sensation of not being able to understand what happened to me” (item response yes/no).

(2) *Reactions at termination*: “no benefit,” “feel better emotionally,” “feel better in my interpersonal relations,” “act better at the work place,” “contribute to personal and/or spiritual development,” “find a new meaning to the experiences,” “find a new meaning to my life” (item response yes/no).

Additional open-ended subjective questions also allowed the participants to express freely their expectations prior to their entry into a therapy group.

Procedure

All those recruited by the media were required to attend at least one talk prior to their entry into a group. Both authors explained the aims of the group activity. Over a period of five months, a group was led by two trained therapists, who assumed a non-expert role which respected the participants’ anomalous/paranormal experiences (experiences which were not

necessarily distressing or disturbing). Participants took part in weekly two hour group sessions. Participation in this group was voluntary, and material discussed in the group was confidential. The second author (JMC) also made an audio recording of the verbalization of each member’s experience.

Based on the humanistic approach to group therapy (Page & Berkow, 1994; Rogers, 1970), the dynamics of the groups usually included three stages: (1) Emotional support, (2) Cognitive support, and (3) group-closing and interpretation:

(1) *Emotional support*. The task of the facilitator of a humanistic therapy group was to create a safe environment and an appropriate atmosphere for the participants to feel free to explore their perceptions and attitudes and to reveal things about their experiences that are not always socially or culturally acceptable. While a participant spoke about his personal experience, the rest of the members, and the therapists, asked for more details about the anomalous/paranormal experience. This showed how the therapist and the members could interconnect in group therapy in a way that helped each member to deal constructively with personal and interpersonal issues.

For example, the following experience is a combination of a visual illusion/hallucination, and may have premonitory content (Parra, 2003, p. 114):

Carlos B., age 50: “My younger sister had a friend who lived in the province of Buenos Aires, whom we went to visit. She was a 10-year-old girl who played the harp. When we were in her house, suddenly, while she was playing, she looked all wet. Her face had transformed into a purple or violet color. This image surprised me. I closed my eyes, and when I opened them, I saw the violet colour again, and this time, the water had come to my feet. I thought this came as a consequence of being tired that day, or as an effect of the music. But it didn’t stop troubling me. Ten days later, found out that the girl had drowned in a swimming pool.

This is a second apparitional experience combined with a beneficiary premonitory message (Parra, 2003, p. 121):

Héctor M., age 48: “My cousin Mirtha and I were very close and we had a strong emotional bond. She died in a car accident when she was very young. A



year after her death, when I was 28, I was walking along the street about to cross the avenue. I was reading, distracted, absorbed in my book, and when I was about to cross, Mirtha appeared in front of me. It was her whole body, surrounded by a tender, glittering light, dressed in the clothes she had worn at her funeral, her hair styled just like I remembered from the day she died. Her countenance was serene and she transmitted a profound peace. The apparition lasted approximately a few seconds. She stretched out her hand, telling me to halt. I looked at her in surprise, and I stopped. Suddenly, a passerby, at two meters' distance from me, crossed the avenue and was brutally hit by a car that passed rapidly on my left. I was stunned, without words, for had I not been held up by Mirtha's figure, I would have probably been the one hit by the car. I think that her appearance was the form she chose to definitely bid farewell to me."

(2) *Cognitive support.* Transcripts of the sessions deal primarily with the anomalous/paranormal experiences discussed by the participants. Once a member is able to self-disclose in a group, the therapists often stimulate other members to do the same. JMC read out the narrative of the experience that had already been shared, and all kinds of mistakes, omissions and distortions, which may have been the consequence of bad recording, were corrected. Further details of the experience or the participant's emotional reactions could be requested by other members or the therapists. Each of the participants gave their opinion with respect to what they believed had happened.

(3) *Group Closing.* The members shared 1–9 experiences each. Further reading on the topics concerned, provided that the person showed interest in obtaining more information, could be recommended. Finally, the participants undertook their own cognitive processing of the information they had just heard.

Results

Table 1: PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES REPORTED BY GROUP PARTICIPANTS (N = 20)

<i>Paranormal/anomalous Experiences</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
1. Telepathy in wakefulness	17 (85.0)
2. Spirit contact	16 (81.0)
3. Paranormal experiences in dreams	16 (76.2)
4. Spontaneous healing (as a healer)	16 (76.2)
5. Out-of-the-body experiences	14 (66.7)
6. Mystical experience	13 (61.9)
7. Spontaneous PK	12 (57.1)
8. Haunting (or apparitions sighting)	12 (57.1)
9. Spirit possession	9 (42.9)
10. Lights/energies (aura) perception	9 (42.9)
11. Near-death experiences	3 (14.3)

Table 2: COGNITIVE/EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO THE PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES (N = 41)*

<i>In the past, when I had a paranormal experience, my emotional response(s) was/were:</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
1. Amazement	29 (70.7%)
2. Perplexity, feeling that I could not understand what had happened to me	13 (31.7%)
3. Fear of death	10 (24.4%)
4. Anguish	8 (19.5%)
5. Fear of losing my reason	7 (17.1%)
6. Fear of the unknown	5 (12.2%)
7. Fear that others would not understand me	5 (12.2%)
8. Fear that I could not control the experience	3 (7.3)
9. Negation	2 (4.9%)



* Members could mark more than one option.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is a non-parametric statistical hypothesis test used when comparing two related samples on a single sample to assess whether their population mean ranks differ. We used a Wilcoxon test to analyze the mean pre-group and Mean post-group activity, being 1 (lowest satisfaction) to 5 (highest satisfaction).

Table 3: EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE EXPECTATIONS PRIOR TO THEIR ENTRY AND ON COMPLETION OF THE GROUP ACTIVITY (N= 20)

<i>Items*</i>	<i>Mean</i>		<i>Wilcoxon's Z</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>pre-group (SD)</i>	<i>post-group (SD)</i>		
1. Group helped me to satisfy my experiences emotionally.	2.70 (.73)	3.30 (.57)	3.20	.001
2. Group helped me to have a healthier comprehension of my experiences.	2.65 (.67)	3.20 (.61)	3.31	.001
3. Group helped me to find a rational comprehension of my experiences.	2.37 (.59)	2.85 (.74)	2.67	.008
4. Group helped me to integrate the anomalous/ paranormal experience (s) into my life.	2.74 (.93)	2.80 (.89)	.44	.655
5. I was listened to, included and backed up by my fellow group mem-	2.85 (.58)	3.37 (.76)	2.35	.019
6. I was listened to, included and backed up by the	3.30 (.57)	3.45 (.60)	1.00	.017
7. Emotionally unpleasant score	2.32 (1.41)	2.50 (1.54)	.48	.631

- Likert scale: Being 1 (lowest satisfaction) to 5 (highest satisfaction).



Discussion

The aims of this study were to explore the utility of using humanistic group therapy to address the effects of paranormal/anomalous experiences upon people's lives and to research models of how humanistic group therapy might help clients make positive behavioral and attitudinal changes with respect to their anomalous/paranormal experiences. Our questionnaire defines our clinical performance, and delineates the main emotional and cognitive changes of the members of the therapy groups towards their anomalous/paranormal experiences or to psi in general. The main reactions were amazement (70.7%) and perplexity (31.7%). Negative reactions included fear of death (24.4%), anguish (19.5%), fear of losing my reason (17.1%), fear of the unknown (12.2%) and fear that others would not understand me (12.2%).

Psi experiences could also represent a healthy response to hostile and alienating surroundings. For instance, Irwin (1989) included an item about feelings immediately after the experience: 18% reported being happy or cheerful, 25% felt anxiety, 5% depression, and the remaining 52% manifested wonder, curiosity and perplexity. However, anomalous/paranormal experiences and psi events may also often have a positive impact on the life of the person concerned. They can be indicators of a continuous process of personal growth and a greater feeling of harmony with the world, with other persons, and with their own potential.

Although the differences were small, the data reported here reveal a greater degree of satisfaction of the group members. Participants reported having been helped to be satisfied emotionally at the termination of the group activity (Mean pre-group= 2.65, Mean post-group= 3.20, $p = .001$); participants believed the group helped them to have a healthier comprehension of the experiences (Mean pre-group= 2.70, Mean post-group= 3.30, $p = .001$), helped them to find a rational comprehension of the experiences (Mean pre-group= 2.37, Mean post-group= 2.85, $p = .008$). Participants also reported being listened to, included and backed up by the fellow group members (Mean pre-group= 2.85, Mean post-group= 3.37, $p = .019$) and by the therapists (Mean pre-group= 3.30, Mean post-group= 3.45, $p = .017$). The emotionally unpleasant rating of the group participants (0–9) was initially 2.32. By the end of the

program it had increased to 2.50, but the score was not significant.

Many participants expressed the opinion that the group activity contributed to their feeling better in their interpersonal relationships; their finding of a new meaning to their lives and their existential or spiritual development. An unstructured group therapy has stages that promote the psychological growth of its members (based on Rogers's approach; see Rogers, 1970). Such themes are related to the kinds of interpersonal learning experiences within the group that can be internalized and eventually generalized to more caring and responsible relationships outside the group. However, the study of the effect on only one group is problematic, because it's difficult to control the intra-groups effects vs. group therapy effects. One of the advantages of group therapy as compared with individual therapy is that the members have the opportunity to learn about interpersonal relationships by actually experiencing these relationships with one another in the group; for instance, reaction patterns have been observed among individuals seeking help as a result of a paranormal experience (see Braaten, 1989; Yalom, 1995).

Humanistic group therapy can be effective with people who have serious, distressing experiences (Truax, Carkhuff & Kodman, 1965). We hope we have demonstrated that humanistic therapy groups can be used to help clients with a variety of disorders to develop more effectively and to deal more functionally with their paranormal/anomalous experiences. Unfortunately, humanistic group therapy is an under-utilized approach in today's managed care environment, where therapists feel they need to demonstrate their effectiveness in concrete and observable ways.

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What Should Psychology Do with Exceptional Experiences?

Renaud Evrard



The notion of “exceptional experiences” (ExE, or also known as EE) is very young (see Evrard, 2013b), thus there still needs to be discussion about its epistemological statute. Should ExE be a classical topic for psychology, or only for a specific sub-discipline called “anomalous psychology” or “exceptional psychology”? Should ExE be assimilated into “paranormal phenomena” which is studied by “parapsychology”?

Jean-Michel Abrassart (2013) gave one description of the relationship between psychology and parapsychology, noting the unfortunate tendency to separate the study of ExE from the experimental test of (or the ontological debate on) paranormal phenomena. But it is such a fundamental epistemological step, for instance when Rhea White coined the notion of ExE (Evrard, 2013b), that requires a better understanding of this area between psychology and parapsychology. I will explore this issue through a discussion of the historical connection between abnormal and anomalous psychology; then an analysis of the relationship between anomalous psychology and the psi hypothesis. After that, I comment on Abrassart (2013)’s proposal of researcher’s transparency regarding their own beliefs on what they studies. Finally, I make a counter-proposal for the future of the psychology of ExE.

Abnormal and Anomalous Psychology

Foremost, although the area of “anomalous psychology” looks new, psychological approaches to paranormal experiences and beliefs are as old as psychology. From general psychological approach born in the nineteenth century, we can derivate an “universalist” approach (mainly through experimental methods and psychophysiology, see Wundt, Fechner, etc.) and an “elitist” approach. This latter promotes the study of singular cases, as conceptualized in France by Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893). “What interests him is the exceptional, the ‘salient exemplar’, that makes phe-

nomena more visible, rather than the pathological that discovers mechanisms which are unobservable in the normal man” (Carroy, Ohayon & Plas, 2006, p. 36). Psychology became science when using instruments “in the most ‘singular or extreme cases’ which, because they magnify the phenomena, provide the psychologist an equivalent of what is the microscope or the telescope to the natural scientist” (Carroy, Ohayon & Plas, 2006, p. 35).

Although this first incarnation of “exceptional psychology” is not pathological *per se*, it will soon be derivated in a pathological way (Charcot, Janet, Ribot, etc.). But another trend will keep Taine’s original approach: abnormal psychology. For instance, the American physician Morton Prince (1854-1929), founder and editor of the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (now split into the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* and the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*), was an admirer and a propagator of the work of Janet without his psychopathological reductionism on topics like dissociation and multiple personalities.

In fact, Prince was much involved in another trend: studies of non-pathological dissociation, and what it shows us about cognitive functions and the complexity of the self. His work is more in line with that of Myers, James or Richet than with Janet’s. The inclusion of parapsychological data is still very present, especially in *The Nature of Mind and Human Automatism* (Prince, 1885). His considerations led him to become a pioneer of the psychodynamic approach in the United States while spreading some enthusiasm for the higher level of the psyche (see Taylor, 1928; Hale, 1971).

Theodore Flournoy (1900), Joseph Jastrow (1900, 1935), and Thomas Walker Mitchell (1922) were other examples of abnormal psychologists who discussed parapsychological data in a comprehensive study of altered consciousness. William McDougall,



famous in the history of parapsychology for his support to J.B. and L.E. Rhine at the Duke University Parapsychology laboratory (for a more complete picture, see Asprem, 2010), has also wrote treatises on abnormal psychology. He suggests to subdivide abnormal psychology into two branches: on the one side, the psychology of definitely pathological and morbid conditions; and on the other, the psychology of unusual or abnormal conditions which cannot be classified as morbid (McDougall, 1912, p. 194). In this second group, McDougall (1912, p. 212) places:

- The subconscious operations that are similar to those of normal thinking;
- The supernormal events in the areas of intellect and character, which may produce genius, religious conversion or mystical experiences;
- The supernormal influence of the mind over the body;
- The supernormal communication process from mind to mind.

It is such a division that may have been the source of divisions of American psychology, giving way to humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology, and even a source of confusion within parapsychology with McDougall's reference to a study of mind to mind communication.

Another way to describe subdivisions of abnormal psychology is to refer to reductionist and anti-reductionist approaches. Psychologists like Jastrow (1900) claimed that the mission of psychology is to bring back these seemingly anomalous phenomena in the context of normal mental life by demonstrating that they were mistakes, results of poor logical reasoning or faulty observations, all related to psychological predispositions. The reductionist approach helped psychologists to impose their profession as being of public and scientific utility (see examples in Germany by Sommer, 2012; Wolfram, 2006). Jastrow and others developed a sub-discipline of psychology devoted to deception and the influence of beliefs (Coon, 1992, p. 149). They did not rely exclusively on the psychopathologization of the occult and even contributed to scholarship in general psychology.

Decades later, “anomalous psychology” was re-invented as the psychological study of beliefs in paranormal and anomalous experiences which keeps parapsychological explanations at a distance. For example, Christopher French, who established the Anomalous Psychology Research Unit at Goldsmiths College in London, once defined anomalous psychology as:

Th[e] area of study [which] attempts to explain paranormal and related beliefs and ostensibly paranormal experiences in terms of known (or knowable) psychological and physical factors. It is directed at understanding bizarre experiences that many people have, without assuming that there is anything paranormal involved. (French, 2001, p. 356).

Various books enabled a revived interest in anomalous psychology since the 1980s, the most important being *Varieties of Anomalous Experiences: Examining the Scientific Evidence* published by the American Psychological Association in 2000 (now in its 2nd revised edition; see Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000, pp. 6-9 for a brief history of anomalous psychology). With regard to the “scientific evidence”, parapsychology's part was very minimal (only one chapter on psi-related experiences), but the general attitude of the book was not strongly reductionist. Rather, one might think that a common ground was found between advocates and counter-advocates of the reductionist approach of the anomalous. Maybe abnormal psychology of the paranormal have matured enough to become a field with its own epistemology and methodology. Psi is just one of the many factors under scrutiny. But it is worth to remember that anomalous/abnormal psychology has always been included in the psi debate, and that parapsychologists were important contributors to this area, although generally as advocates of the non-reductionist approach.

Is Anomalous Psychology the Best Way to Study ExE?

In his article, Abrassart (2013) quoted François Mathijssen (2009) who calls for a psychological study of ExE that should not seek to prove or disprove paranormal phenomena as such. Abrassart (2013, p. 18) criticized this proposition that is “not really moving beyond the ontological debate, but instead standing somewhat safely aside from it.” One may ask: is it really an issue?



By criticizing the epistemological foundations of anomalistic psychology, Abrassart seems to deny its right of citizenship and its old particular place in psychology. Anomalistic psychology precisely uses the psi hypothesis as one potential hypothesis, a peripheral but not an absent one. The psi hypothesis does not always lend itself to systematic examination, but this can be done through the context – the ecological congruence of the investigation. For example, Nicola Holt's doctoral thesis (2007) was an investigation of the relationship between creativity measures and anomalous experiences, with a specially designed free-response ESP task for creative people using a Personal Digital Assistant, which recorded audio impressions and written notes and drawings by allowing participants to guess the target at any time of the day and anywhere they happen to be located (so-called “take home” ESP procedures).

There are several journals and conferences where psychologists regularly present works which assess both psychological and parapsychological hypotheses: such as the Parapsychological Association, Society for Psychical Research, Society for Scientific Exploration, the Interamericana's Psi Meeting, etc. Thus, there are forums where both approaches are discussed. In parapsychology, the focus is on the psi hypothesis; in anomalistic psychology, psi hypothesis is only peripheral; and often psi and psychological hypotheses are coupled.

The problem pointed by Abrassart would be to separate strictly psi hypothesis from anomalistic psychology, with the risk of making psi a blind spot and therefore losing the ontological debate. This is a trend that had been pointed by several authors (i.e. Hansen, 2001; Delanoy, 2009). Wellington Zangari, who has a tenured position and a research unit in anomalistic psychology at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and his colleague Fatima Regina Machado (2011), recently called for an “inclusive anomalistic psychology” because they feel that academic anomalistic psychology (and psychology of religion) may monopolize the field of ExE, by stifling the non-reductionist approach. Actually, “psi” is not a transcendental or supernatural hypothesis that scientists can only exclude. Indeed, parapsychology is the experimental science of psi phenomena, but, currently, few people around the world are able

to devote all of their time to provoke anomalous phenomena under controlled conditions. It is obvious that it is easier to work on spontaneous ExEs that nobody can deny, and which are less likely to disturb the thought habits of scholars. But it's only a trend and there are many counter-examples of the rehabilitation of psi hypotheses in anomalistic psychology (Luke, 2011).

Involuntarily, Abrassart (2013, p. 21) presents a good example of the reductionist drift of anomalistic psychology: sleep paralysis. Although the psychophysiological model of sleep paralysis is worthy to be investigated, it is quite unfair to generalize such an explanation to all case of nocturnal ExE without proper empirical studies. For example, the hypothesis of sleep paralysis is commonly applied to abductions experiences. But most of the studies are based on retrospective questionnaires or interviews assessing susceptibility to sleep paralysis among people who had abductions experiences (i.e., French et al., 2008). We still need empirical developments, as for example in situ observations of sleep troubles among people who claim to have repetitive abductions experiences. Only evidence and not explanatory power of prosaic assumptions will allow to totally eliminate the heterodox hypotheses. Therefore, researchers need to stay cautious about the generalizability of prosaic assumptions (i.e., Appelle, Lynn, & Newman, 2000), contrary to some popular discourse, which applies easy explanations without examination.

Abrassart's article may be understood as another call for an inclusive anomalistic psychology. But it might be worth considering that parapsychology and anomalistic psychology are independent on the epistemological level. It would be naïve to ignore over a century of history and sociology of these sciences. If anomalistic psychology is the same as parapsychology, they would have merged long ago. However, we observed the contrary as evidenced by the low life expectancy and the transience within the institutions which tried to promote both at the same time. For example, the Institut Général Psychologique was founded in 1900 in France to study the paranormal with two figureheads: Charles Richet and Pierre Janet; but, with Richet being more parapsychological and Janet being more anomalistic psychological, a schism happened quickly (Brower, 2010). If there is a risk of imbalance between the legitimization of anomalistic psychology compared to that of



parapsychology, there is no easy solution to reconcile them.

The situation seemed to change in 1985 when Robert Morris took the Koestler chair of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburg, training a new generation of scholars (Carr, 2008). Although he used to be a successful laboratory parapsychologist, Morris then promoted a very balanced approach of ExEs, giving the same importance to the study of psi and non-psi hypotheses. One of his successors, Caroline Watt (2005) highlighted how parapsychology contributes to general psychology even though the evidence for psi processes are still controversial. But, partly due to academic pressure and “institutionalization” (Hansen, 2011), this approach benefited anomalistic psychology mostly and parapsychology the least.

In sum, the study of ExE has been fragmented. Rhea White already introduced this distinction between *experience* and *evidence*, which is also valid for the clinical practice with ExE (see Evrard, 2013b). But it seems better to support all different approaches than to urge them to merge together in a somewhat epistemological confusion. Anomalistic psychology should not become parapsychology, as long as parapsychology has means to exist. We may argue for their *complementarity* but not for their *assimilation*.

Assessing Researcher's Beliefs

In another part of his article, Abrassart (2013, p. 21) proposed that researchers engaged in ExE studies disclaim their own beliefs about alleged paranormal phenomena. He claimed that some psi-proponents hide themselves behind the cautious statements of anomalistic psychology, not giving their true opinion on the state of the psi ontological debate - only for strategic purposes. Although this may be the case for some, because of the stigmatization that weighs on any scholar endorsing heterodox positions, it is technically a foundational position in anomalistic psychology. A researcher may well consider that spontaneous ExEs are best explained by psychological hypotheses, but that the phenomena produced in parapsychological laboratories defy conventional explanation. Or the reverse, there is need to hide because the two are independent. The fact that people who live through ExEs seek explanations of their experiences in the field of parapsychology (among others), which does not mean that all researchers affirm

this link. Some anomalistic psychologists do not conduct parapsychological research themselves and do not possess a good knowledge of the literature, so it is better if they do not express their beliefs on psi (the opposite is rarely true.) Abrassart's call for transparency (“stating one's own beliefs about the subject one is studying”, p. 22) is confusing for many reasons:

- First, we do not see this in any other field (unfortunately!). However, we know that experimenter effects happen in many fields.
- Second, beliefs regarding the paranormal are very complex. Researchers generally show a mix of beliefs and unbeliefs in various aspects of the paranormal, and their beliefs are far from static (Schriever, 1998). The assessment of these beliefs cannot be reduced to a “does psi exist?” item.
- Third, some parapsychological researchers have already asked for transparency, especially because of psi experimenter effects. Their attitudes towards psi, among many other personality traits, are assessed in many studies (for a review, see Smith, 2003). The attitude towards psi is also assessed (as a “bias”) in a recent review of some parapsychological experiments (Galak, LeBoeuf, Nelson, Simmons, 2012).
- Fourth, there is strong asymmetry in this transparency. A heterodox belief will be more detrimental than an orthodox one, without helping to determine which one is based on the best evidence. There are heavy stakes in terms of research reception and career. Both sociology of science and scientific rigor encourage a clear separation between personal conviction and evidence-based deductions. (For a discussion of personal conviction and certitudes in parapsychology, see Richet, 1899; Courtier, 1929; von Lucadou, 2001).
- Fifth, both anomalistic psychologists and parapsychologists encourage a neutral examination of the evidence. For example, Bem (2011a) designed many protocols in order to facilitate their replication by other researchers, whatever their *a priori* beliefs are. Abrassart's proposal will strengthen dichotomies that are not epistemologically relevant.

It is very paradoxical that Abrassart made such a proposal when he has never participated himself



to any parapsychological experiments (for example, a replication of a successful experimental paradigm), as the vast majority of activists skeptics.

In truth, experimental parapsychology is a very hard challenge. The experimenter need to master experimental methodology and statistical analysis, but people also expect from the experimenter some theoretical contributions to lower the level of heterodoxy of the data (see for instance, Bem, 2011b). Academic institutions implicitly or explicitly support reductionist interpretations of parapsychological data - sometimes by applying anomalistic psychology to the researchers themselves. They are described as steadfast believers that will do anything to create propaganda, even frauds and data-massage. With more transparency, heterodox ideas may create more harm and anomalistic psychology would be misused as a provider of arguments against scientific exploration as in its early days (Wolffram, 2006).

A Counterproposal

This article attempted to bring some clarity about some epistemological issues that complicate the study of ExE. This is quite normal for a field that remains largely unexplored and for a new journal in search of identity.

First, I briefly gave anomalistic psychology a historical exploration, showing that it was part of general psychology (as parapsychology was) before slowly emerging as a specific sub-discipline.

Second, I used a definition of anomalistic psychology that presents it as the study of ExE and paranormal beliefs guided by known or knowable psychological hypotheses including assumptions that may be similar to what is still hidden under the umbrella-term "psi". Anomalistic psychology may be differentiated from parapsychology, which focused on the experimental study of paranormal phenomena - i.e. on the ontological debate of psi evidence. Both can be viewed as complementary.

Third, I discussed Abrassart's proposal of researchers' transparency. Although it has some relevance inside the experimental setting, it may be pernicious when promoting a dichotomous approach to ExE based on extra-scientific arguments.

Our counterproposal is rather that JEEP should become a *journal of anomalistic psychology*. In fact, such a journal is still lacking. There are many parapsychological, skeptical or mainstream journals that publish contributions to anomalistic psychology, but none are solely devoted to this sub-discipline and its neutral exploration. To generate its exceptional identity, JEEP should also focus on clinical practice with ExE, which is the application of anomalistic psychology in the clinical field but with some differences in the epistemological framework (Evrard, 2013a, 2012). It seems better to define JEEP's orientation through this aim than through its focus on some methodologies (phenomenological and qualitative approaches, which do not really know how to interact with current experimental approaches) or any advocate/counteradvocate approach.

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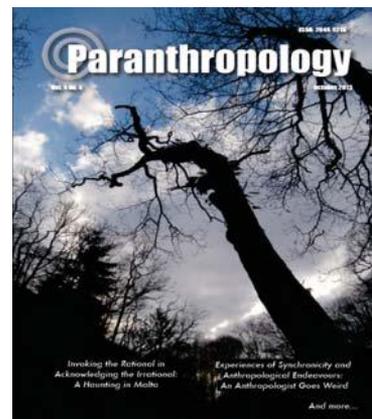
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Biography

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Exceptional Personal Experiences: Timewarps?

Clement Jewitt



The experiences described here took place in England during the last 50 years, except for the last reported, which is a memory from childhood. They seem to be thematically linked, and it is tempting to put a thoroughly esoteric construction on them. However any such exercise will always remain subjective—except for the fourth experience recounted here, which I shared with someone else. The term “exceptional” in the title refers obliquely to the prevailing reductive materialist paradigm. I leave it to the reader to make of it all what s/he will.

Cathedral Crypt

Around 1960 I lived in Canterbury for a few years while studying architecture. When not attempting to sample the reputed 365 pubs in the town, my exploratory walks almost always ended up at the cathedral. The place drew me, magnetically.

Near the end of my time there I was in the (liturgical) East crypt late one afternoon. The two crypts are divided by large columns of masonry with infilled walling which marks the centre of the curved east end of the original Norman building. Access between the two crypts is via the side aisles, which curve inwards at the join, preventing clear view through. The aisles of both crypts are lit from small windows at ground level. A ditch had been dug outside to accommodate this. However the mass of masonry between the two leaves the internal spaces there rather dim.

That afternoon there were one or two other people in the crypts when I arrived, but soon I found myself alone. The light appeared to be fading, and the distant sounds of other visitors’ footsteps and speech coming through from the west crypt faded away. I do not recall exactly the date of this, but if it was not winter time, it was certainly out of the main tourist season. Possibly, clouds were gathering, reducing the light, or a winter’s twilight was beginning. I turned round from contemplating the east end, and looked into the shad-

owed west end, perhaps made temporarily darker by the contrast with the light from the windows, now at my back. Such electric light as was there was dim in the way that domestic lighting is in daylight. I no longer noticed these lights.

On the infill wall between the two massive columns I now faced was a stone balcony, appearing to emerge from the curve of one column (standing proud of the infill wall), traverse the wall, and disappear into the curve of the other. As I looked at this in the gloom, I saw a shadowy figure, apparently in a monk’s cowl, walk along the balcony and into the left hand column. I was familiar with the local tradition about a ghost in the crypt, so although startled, I was also rather pleased. So I had seen the ghost! Shortly after that I left Canterbury, my time there completed.

As things turned out, I did not return until some twenty years later, when I had leisure to revisit the cathedral. Of course I went to the locale of that old event. The light was different, visibly and audibly there were people about, and there was no balcony between the massive columns. Instead an ancient iron window frame occupied the space, though without an actual glazing, merely as it were decorating the otherwise blank wall. There were no signs whatever of any recent reconstruction. This was shocking.

Checking the cathedral construction history might have thrown some light on this, I felt. But the cathedral library was closed that day.

In a more recent year while visiting Canterbury I had some spare time, and so once more I went to the crypt. More shock. Here was a third version of the material construction around the two massive columns. This time it was possible to see through a kind of traceried window between the columns to the west crypt, from the east crypt. Again no sign of recent reconstruction. I hope I remember this correctly, as I took no notes at the time. Why not? Perhaps because the



weirdness of all these changes was beginning to challenge my grip on consensual reality. However, on that day the cathedral library *was* open, where I was able to ascertain that what I had just seen matched photographic evidence. I found nothing, though, relating to my previous visions, if that's what they were.

Norman Church

Some years after the second revisit to the cathedral crypt an Oxford friend inquired whether I had seen Iffley church, which is rather unusual, she said. I had not, so we went there, on a fine summer's day under a clear blue sky.

The church is approached via a gate from the road at the north-east corner, a path leading from there along the north side of the church. As we walked along there I gave the building only cursory glances, as we were engrossed in conversation. But I noted that the church was quite small, and had few windows.

Owing to the conversation I hardly noticed that she was leading me beyond the west end off the path (which naturally turned towards the west door) onto grass. Then we turned, the conversation was forgotten, and I gasped. The west elevation is magnificent: pure Romanesque. We could have been in Provence. I don't believe there is anything else like it in England.

After contemplating this treasure for a while I indicated a wish to go inside. My friend preferred to enjoy the sunshine, so I went alone. All was as I would expect of a Norman/Romanesque church. A dim interior, particularly as there was no window in the south nave wall. Later recollection suggests that at this point I was enveloped in silence, and was not aware of my own movements as I went slowly down the nave towards the crossing, above which was the short tower. I stopped under the arch at that end of the nave. It was darker here, very gloomy, and I saw a couple of figures cross silently from one transept to the other. They paid no attention to me. Were they in cassocks? Or monks gowns? Memory, and the gloom, paint them rather hazily.

Yes, an unusual church indeed! I was necessarily silent on our return journey, and my friend respected that.

A year later I was conversing with my fa-

ther. Apparently he had not seen Iffley church. So I took him, repeating the slight subterfuge my friend had effected by leading him on to the grass the better to obtain a view of the west elevation when we turned. It was again a bright summer's day.

He was duly impressed, but not overwhelmed as I had been. And he did wish to go in. Inside, the nave was full of light, there being a large 13th or 14th century window in the south wall. Next to that a Victorian organ hung on the wall, and someone was manning the bookstall near the entrance. And the usual pews, which I also did not recall from my previous visit. The crossing seemed adequately lit, partly with electric lights.

Another shock.

Thatched Cottage

On another summers day a few years later I was walking up a steep lane near Stow-on-the-Wold with a friend, again conversing, only this time I was balancing attention to the words with a growing feeling of at-oneness with the lovely countryside: farmland, yes, but sufficient in the way of uncut hedges, fallow fields and patches of woodland to offset the agricultural control. And the very shape of the land in that district providing with its roundedness something of an archetypal containment, womb-like.

So, keeping my end of the conversation alive was becoming increasingly difficult: soon I would have to duck out, or relinquish my feeling state. As we passed the corner of a field, I spotted through the high unkempt hedge the corner of a thatched roof, rather in need of repair, and a chimney. Odd, no gate or other gap in the hedge. Then we passed on, up the hill. Further up there was a five barred gate. We decided to eat our lunch in the field.

This was at the other end of the same hedge, and there was a deep dip at the lower end, presumably hiding the cottage I expected to be there. I went down to see. There were a couple of ancient fruit trees there, but no sign whatsoever of any cottage: only scrubby grass and thistles. Naturally I checked distances inside and outside the hedge ("come and eat," called my friend, not understanding what was happening). Yes, that *was* where I had seen the corner of roof.



By this time the events in Canterbury and Iffley were readily available as mysterious memories. Thus I was not so amazed this time, and could focus on the happening immediately afterwards. At the moment of glimpsing the thatched roof, I could recall, my friend's voice had seemed rather faint, as if in the distance, and the light had momentarily seemed to be less bright. Were there clouds? I don't recall any of sufficient opaqueness, and the light effect was only momentary. Did I imagine this?

Shadow in the Night Sky

So far, these reports have involved only myself, but this experience was shared by another.

In the early 1990s, staying at the same friend's house, after a particularly hot July day we sat outside awaiting the coming of night's coolness, which was a long time coming, so we were still there quite late in the evening, after dark. That was a particularly clear night, and we began to enjoy the brilliance of the, I think moonless, night sky, with an unusual number of stars visible.

My friend's house is sixty to eighty yards off one of the roads entering Witney, behind another, larger house which has a main road frontage. Not being one of the busiest roads entering the town, the noise from occasional traffic was quite tolerable and not visually disturbing as the house in front blocked all but brief glimpses of passing vehicles. And there were no noisy garden parties in progress within our circle of sensing. So it was quite quiet for us, and we could plainly hear the sound of passing aircraft at high altitudes, and occasional engine noises from RAF Brize Norton a few miles away. Even at high altitudes we could make out the aircraft lights.

At a certain moment, or maybe it crept up unawares, there was total silence, an utter stillness, and in the sky we saw something inexplicable.

Or rather, we did not see it, because whatever it was totally black, or without any reflective surface, and could only be discerned by the absence of stars. A plain clear cut rectangle, probably in *sectio aurea* proportions, about the apparent size of an outstretched hand, moved in a straight line across the field of stars, apparently at about the speed of a narrow boat passing by as you stand on the tow-path. There were no

lights, flashing or not, and not the slightest sound from the phenomenon or the road or distant Brize Norton or the gardens around. My friend and I were able to agree on all this during the time we could see the thing. It continued on its way until it went behind the roof at our backs. I believe we were too amazed to think of going round the house to view it further.

It was later suggested by one to whom I told this story that there was a scene I could have unconsciously recalled from the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* in which the protagonist spots the unlit spaceship by the absence of stars within its profile. I did not, and do not still, recall that scene consciously, but I remembered that the *2001* spaceship was far from a plain rectangle in shape, being basically a dumbbell shape: a long narrow centre portion with two globular much wider ends, and this idea does not explain how my friend also saw the shadow in the sky. I mentioned this comment to her, and she said that she had never seen the film.

Ancient Sword

This experience is circumspectly reported in order to protect a person and a place, so authenticity may be easily doubted. I include it because its effect on me was very powerful, and the act of writing it down helped memory to be precise.

However, in early 2013 I learned that a number of tourist guides have included the venue of this experience in their tours, which means quite a lot of people have been there. However, I am still not noting the place, for certain reasons.

I was privileged to be shown an ancient two handed sword, with a bent over tip, kept in a trunk of similar date, and was invited to lift out the weapon. I did so, and held it up speculatively as I imagined its ancient owner would have done when ready to use it. As I did this an overwhelming feeling enveloped me, difficult to describe. A species of vertigo seemed to be part of it, which I can only relate to the signature opening of the *Dr. Who* TV series of some years ago, showing a clear spiral form down which the figure of the doctor was falling, whirling as he went. That is how it felt. Feeling distinctly unsteady, I quickly put the sword back in the trunk. The unwelcome feeling instantly stopped.

I have since many times wondered what



would have happened had I held on...

Whale Skeleton

When I was a small boy my family habitually holidayed in Folkestone, where my mother's family lived after the 2nd World War. If the visit was in high summer we would go to the shingle beaches to the west of the harbour wall (from where at that time cross-channel steamers plied trade—so a substantial wall stretched out to deep enough water). This was to avoid the overcrowded east beach, which is sandy.

On one such visit I wandered away by myself, towards the harbour wall, where the beach was somewhat mucky from oil slicks, tar and other spillages from maritime activity. I think it must have been at low tide. Not another soul was to be seen: I doubt anyone went down there much. What drew me there I cannot now say, but I am certain my parents and sister did not notice me wandering out of sight. I suspect I was not much more than five or six years old.

My memoried sense of what feeling state I was in during this little adventure suggests an enjoyed freedom (from parental authority) spiced with a sense of danger—it was (is?) a desolate place.

Down there, with the harbour wall looming facelessly (the steamers docked on the other side) I came across the skeleton of a whale, as hindsight recognizes it. I was able to walk beneath huge rib arches, marvelling at this wonder. Was this not the ribs of an upturned boat, some will ask? Memory says that the ribs curved round circularly, the lower parts beneath the surface of the beach. And do I recall huge knobby spine bones, or is this imaginative hindsight? There is reason in my personal history to suppose an early development of careful observation. Memory also suggests an unboatlike sloping away at one end which would accord with whale anatomy.

As a young man, re-visiting the Folkestone west beach, I went down by the harbour wall to check my childhood memory. Almost needless to say, there was no whale skeleton evident. I am able to say that walking down into that desolate place was to enter an arena of psychic tension and fear. At the time I could only register uncomfortable feelings: the interpretation is much more recent. I offer no explanation.

I went round the harbour area, seeking older fishermen, and asked if there was any memory of a beached whale; apparently not. Then I made enquiries in the Folkestone library, to no avail, and back in London checked through an index of beachings on British shores which used to be compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and predecessors beginning (as I now recall) in the middle of the 19thC. No report of a whale at Folkestone.

I am not at all certain what to make of this one: but it is certainly a vivid memory.

However, in May 2011 a friend told me he had had a dream wherein he was his current middle age, and I was a small boy, and we explored a whale skeleton. Whoo! What happened there? I had never told him the story. His description correlated with mine, but not exactly since my memory has no adult in it, and he did not mention a harbour wall. Does that explain why I never found any evidence for the whale skeleton? For it occurred to me that the event may not have been even in England, but could possibly be somewhere else as well as sometime else: not sure where that uninvited thought came from. Did faulty memory, or hindsight expectation, throw in the harbour wall?

As far as I can now discern, with all due regard for the vagaries of memory and human propensities for inexact, or at least variable, perception, I believe that there may be commonalities within at least the first four events described above: the last two are somewhat more problematical in that, with regard to the sword, the overwhelming vertiginous effect would have blanked out any other aspect(s) experienced, and with regard to the whale skeleton, that memory is so old that I am even more uncertain that memory is not contaminated with imagination than with the other reported incidents - except, there was my friend's dream . . .

1. An absence or at least reduction in perceived sound. This is true of all four, though I could still hear my friend's voice at the spotting of the cottage, albeit faint. During the sword incident, the person showing me was not speaking, and we were in a room far from other people or street noise.
2. A dimming of the ambient light, which could of course, be attributed to various natural causes. "Dimming" is not quite right: more a change in



some other quality for which I cannot find appropriate words, perhaps as if not the light but my vision dimmed. Or maybe like the quality of dream. This phenomenon was not perceived in the Witney event, but then it was dark anyway: inconclusive therefore.

3. An apparent absence of colour vision. I did not mention that above, because it has only just occurred to me as I write. The stonework of the Canterbury crypt and the Norman church are of course not imbued with strong colour, and it was night time in Witney. Near Stow we were in strong sunlight, but it is at least possible that at the moment of odd perception the colours I recall are those supplied by imagination or memory. I cannot say anything about my vision during the sword and whale incidents, except that the situations share the absence of strong colour: the room of the sword was bare of anything else but the trunk, with plain walls; similarly the stony beach, albeit somewhat tarred, darkish harbour wall and (am I right?) deteriorating white bones do not exhibit strong colour. This is speculative, though it may be relevant that my dreams are colourless, and I have difficulty generally in remembering colours. I can see them perfectly well however.
4. I think it is more than fair to say that I was in some kind of altered state on each occasion, brought on by differing circumstances. Indeed if there is any substance in these claims, I must have been. This might well be the necessary pre-condition for 1-3 above.

These matters have not been of such importance to me as to cause me to create opportunities for investigation. To a large extent I am content to simply acknowledge experiences, leaving mysteries not central to my main concerns to remain mysterious—part of the richness in life’s tapestry. My principal (Jungian) character orientation is Sensing, with Intuition therefore in the shadow position. Maybe as I grow older I’m integrating the parts of the quaternion better, which may have a bearing on these matters, with the Canterbury and whale experiences unusual precursors: or maybe I have been party to many such strange events, being generally unconscious of most. I speculate that that applies to many people.

There have been and are increasingly in my life other kinds of “exceptional” happenings, in particular small “messages” suggesting what is about to happen, which bus will turn up when I go out for example, or thinking of a friend who then telephones, and I understand such events to be very common. But those outlined above seem to fit into a meaningful group. I have been told, and my reading confirms, that there are correlations or parallels between my experiences and other reports. I am aware of some myself, including C.G. Jung's Ravenna vision reported in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, a story in a volume of 2nd WW reminiscences of London, whose title and author details I have long lost, and of course the famous events at Versailles a century ago, shared by two “respectable” (as used to be the preferred description aimed at prescribing verisimilitude) English ladies.

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My First Out-of-Body Experience

Flavio Amaral



In this article I will describe my first out-of-body experience (OBE), which I also consider my first exceptional human experience (EHE), as in Rhea White's studies (1994). In the analysis I will make special reference to Suzanne Brown's *The Exceptional Human Experience Process: A Preliminary Model with Exploratory Map* (2000). This choice is not result of purely theoretical interest. That article raised in me the curiosity to revisit that striking event of 1998, in the search of further knowledge about myself. It raised my curiosity by stimulating a new and different look at it, therefore modifying my present experience of that OBE, as the ingredient that once added to the formula cannot be removed.

Brown's work inspired new meanings to the "original" experience, something I want to explore here. The "object" of this study is not suitable to traditional methods of natural sciences. I have no way to "dissect" the experience and compare it to a theoretical framework, because what I mostly know about the experience is through my own introspection, already "biased" by the framework. This is why I do not intend to "validate" or "discuss" Brown's model here; this is far from my reach.

So I leave aside ideals and purposes more suitable to positive sciences and accept to be exploring a field where theory modifies practice, subject-researcher transforms the object researched, and introspection takes an essential role as a tool of analysis. Those "issues" that would "adulterate" a traditional study are inseparable elements in what I here try to understand. So, instead of changing the object of study, I chose to accept that problem and go ahead, trying to be aware of its complexities. Brown's model has helped me finding (or giving) new meanings to that phenomena known as out-of-body experience.

My first "paranormal" experience happened at the age of 18, in January 1998. Until then, "transcendence" or "spirituality" were not part of my daily life. My parents have always encouraged their

children to rely in their freedom of thought, without dogmatic convictions, neither religious nor materialistic. But "supernatural" matters did not use to be common topics in our conversations.

My dad had been divorced for four years, was retired and his three kids were already adults. He was looking for studies to help him find new meanings to life, and in that search he showed me the theme of out-of-body experience, in an approach that I considered reasonable, without appeal to exaggerate persuasion or magic explanations. I spared a day to read the book he lent me, *Projections of the Consciousness* (Vieira, 1997). At night, after reading it, I had the experience upon falling asleep.

It is normal to dream with things one has experienced the day before. This is what happened to me. I had oniric images and ideas about the topics I just read, during the hypnagogic state. But instead of falling into deep sleep I woke up, feeling an intense vibration in my whole body and the sensation of being pulled up towards the ceiling, by a sort of antigravitational force. I tried not to offer resistance. I wanted the experience. I did not feel my arms, or rather, I felt them without the sense of touch or weight. My "non physical head" offered some resistance to "dettaching from the body" and, at the smallest attempt to "taking off", it produced a strong low-frequency noise. The most surprising feeling, however, was in the legs, which clearly seemed to be pulled up, one after the other, making a 45-degree angle with the ground. At that moment I felt both my physical legs lying on the bed and my "non physical legs" floating in a kind of trendelenburg position. Gradually the non corporeal sensations ceased and I felt my physical body again, lying in bed normally. The whole event might have taken 1 or 2 minutes.

I was completely awoken and absorbed by the experience, feeling very well and excited. I could not deny I had just been through something new and highly motivating. During that first month I had some 3 or 4 similar experiences, which just reinforced my desire for more.



We can find in that episode elements described by Brown in her Stage 1 (The initiating event/experience). I experienced something that dismantled my previous view of the world. I was facing a new “fact” upon which I believe to have applied due critical judgement, even though I cannot deny that I also preferred that new world view as opposed to the notion of life as an entire product of biology and culture. But what if I was just going crazy? Well, if that was the case, I certainly wished more of that crazyness.

The lack of previous ideas or criteria about the topic gave me less room to fit that experience into well known explanations. I could not simply “defend myself” from it by using my traditional preconceptions of the world, and I actually did not want to. Why would I want my previous status quo? I believe this favored the evolution of Stage 1 to Stage 2 (Search for reconciliation).

That experience was strange to my social context. Sometimes it raised curiosity, sometimes perplexity, sometimes rejection. So I soon learned to be discreet with regards to my new thoughts. There was no use to become an exotic person in my community or in society at all.

In the following months, books became my main companions to get involved with paranormal matters. Several circumstances converged to stimulate me getting closer to the group whose book initiated me into the extracorporeal experience. My father, one of the few people with whom I discussed those matters, also followed that path. He lent me books and introduced me to people. The approach of that school pleased me a lot. Students were invited to question, to doubt and not to accept dogmas or absolute truths. They were challenged to search knowledge through critical judgement, logic, reasoning, without recurring to mystical or magical explanations.

Thanks to that involvement I had a whole new world unfolded in front of me. Out-of-body experience was just one among several topics related to the development of extrasensorial abilities, and this development was only one part of the personal development as a whole. It was as though by discovering what a flower is I had been presented to a whole garden. From my private acceptance of an event I expanded my interests towards an entire new vision of the world, of what

is Universe, life, knowledge, science, ethics and society.

Coincidentally at that stage of “reconciliation” with my experience, I was going through a period of personal transformation in general. Due to a student exchange program in the previous year, I was distant from old friends. High school period was finished and I had one year ahead to study for university entrance exams, but I was confident I could pass without great difficulty. I had also been a year away from my classical guitar studies, an activity I used to be very devoted to, but no longer considered as a professional career. Therefore 1998 was a year of little pressure and few demands that would link me to what my life used to be. Largely I could start a “new life”, and it was along that year that I fed the idea of having, in the new “psychic” social circle, the core place of reference to start that chapter of life.

In 1999 I joined the volunteer work of that institution, becoming even closer to the group. I was in peace with being different, and grateful for being able to embrace that difference even more intensely than many colleagues, who were restricted by social, family or professional demands. Inside the group I could be proud of my whole self. I became part of a circle which was open to explore a new way of experiencing the world. The troubles of talking about those topics in the “outside society” was no longer a major concern because I had a new society with whom I could discuss.

Brown’s Stage 3 (Between two worlds) is where this dissonance between old and new positions takes place more intensely. That dissonance seemed to be processed during that period of my life. Until then, the question was about a world view that could embrace the supernatural experience. But from then on, the question had much to do with the formation of a personal identity. Who was I? Where did I belong to? What should I do?

So far this journey looked like to be following a direction of “potentiation” as in Brown’s parameters, but something paradoxical also became present. I could notice my personal growth in regards to extrasensorial capacities as well as other abilities, cognitive, introspective, cultural and so on. On the other hand, experiences similar to that first OBE had nearly ceased. If in the first weeks they happened often, from then on they happened as often as twice a year or less. The mat-



ter was confusing, but very normal according to the group. Theoretically, our “spiritual guides” gave some help in the beginning, but afterwards let the apprentice develop the ability by him/herself. It was a way to encourage the student’s autonomy. The explanation made sense, and I really felt like my first experiences were provoked by external agents, not much by my own will as by my passivity.

The problem of the lack of out-of-body experiences seemed resolved. It was a matter of persistence. With dedicated training and practice I would be able to develop that ability. However, today, when I look upon those ideas and compare it to Brown’s third stage, I am compelled to think through it again, and check if maybe I have missed some detail.

I was integrating findings to my new view of the world and of myself. I looked at the out-of-body experience as an ability to be developed. But by thinking that, had I not given the OBE a new meaning that was not part of the events I experienced? Those first OBEs (and also the next ones) were not exactly the result of training or effort. On the contrary, they came in times of life change and enthusiasm with incredible possibilities never considered before. They had not to do with an “ambition to have supernatural powers”, but from a spirit of awe and openness to a universe that may exist beyond our usual notions and senses.

I now question myself about something that, then, I took for granted. Personal accounts and stories about OBEs no longer surprised me. I remember how my first readings excited me. However, after having learned the “explanations” and being acquainted with its “mechanisms” and “concepts”, I went through some kind of “disenchantment” about the topic. Maybe by accepting the possibility, EFC related issues no longer capture my amusement. Paranormal lost its status among the unknown. Even works that carry teachings and messages, more than just stories, however interesting, lost their power of provoking in me that strong curiosity and anxiety that made my state of mind in the first experiences. It seems that, from then on, experiences could be understood through cognition, without the need of intermediation from the sensory perceptions.

Being in peace with the idea of “being different”, I adopted a new view of the world and a new way of life. So, I do not think I had then “integrated”

what was new to what was a previous part of my life. On the contrary, I substituted one for the other (even though things cannot be reduced to either-or explanations and simplifications). In that period I was “leaving behind” a world (or “the” world?) to experience a new self, more than “diving into” that world or “adding” something to it. I cannot say, however, if there was a plausible alternative within my reach. Perhaps as in the spawning of fishes or migration of birds, displacements are a necessary part of growing.

I made that institutional circle my first community. There I spent most of my evenings and weekends, there I learned all sorts of stuff related to team work, there I wrote papers for discussions, there I had more serious relationships and later, my first marriage. If I never had great professional ambitions, then I took the situation to its utmost. I used my free time after school for volunteer work. My mother did not hide her concern. Her 20-year old son took advantage of not needing to look for a job during his university studies. It was a reason of concern somehow mixed with some admiration. I was becoming more mature in other ways. I soon became a teacher, conference speaker, author of articles and interviews. I acquired a reasonable culture and self-confidence in several areas of the social work we were exposed to. How would we know if I was better there than in a part-time job as trainee at some business office, for example?

As soon as I got my degree in Economics, I packed up my things and moved to the City of Iguassu, about 600 miles away, also away from large urban areas, where they built the headquarters of that group I got involved. I was so “detached” from my “old ego” that I did not even go to my graduation ceremony. I gave away almost all my college books to my institution’s library. I knew I could always get back there to read them, but it was like if my previous academic studies did not have much relevance to my future. The city was not promising professionally speaking. I started from zero, in that spirit of adventure, making little money in free-lance jobs such as teaching English. For three years this was how I paid my bills, in an unconcerned and perhaps careless way. But I was confident and therefore happy. My life was heading towards a direction of growing fulfillment.

I identify in that period what Brown de-



scribes as a transition between Stages 2 and 3. The “search of meaning” had evolved to a “search of self”. And I was searching for the self-made man ideal, which was rather important to us. That meant, to me, to build my career from my own means, without dependencies related to old bonds. In 2007, by an apparent stroke of luck, I managed to get into a highly improbable job in that town, as the assistant in the representation of a small European financial company. Needless to say this served as one more “confirmation” that I was “in the right path”. From then on, thanks to the fixed job, I had more space in my mind to devote to intellectual production, the “self-researches” so much praised by that community. I decided to write a book.

I was “pregnant” of ideas (as we use to say) but I gradually noticed that the initiative was not welcome by some people. In 2011, they managed to stop the editorial work in process at the institution. I already had the means and resources to publish it by myself, and so I did. I was the “mother” who would sacrifice anything not to abort her own baby. But that resulted in my summary expulsion of that community. From then on I would be challenged to review my own concepts about everything.

I spent about 18 months searching for new meanings to my new condition. The “spiritual transcendence” related topics were still my favorite. On the other hand, it did not make sense to keep working in the same way. I had developed a critical view of what I was and of the lines of thought I used to follow. I began to develop a much stronger sympathy for autobiographical knowledge. More than ever I was interested in my past. If until now I walked through a “progressive” path, getting away from the past, now the past was the main source where I could find knowledge about myself.

If I used to look at a photograph of my youth and feel embarrassment, thinking about “how immature I was”, from that moment on that past captured a different attention in me. I wanted to remember what went on in that mind, so I could understand how things used to make different sense. Who was I? It was as though I had something to learn with “someone” I used to consider more immature. Similarly, I began to see family in a different way. Until then, they represent a period of my life when I was the son, therefore dependent, and not a grown up adult. Now they were a

kind of source where I could find my origins. Even unintentionally I started to analyze in them my own roots. I became more interested to revisit my mother land.

This “revisiting” was not only moved by an “archeological” curiosity. I also had a new concept of friendship. I used to believe I was surrounded by friends but suddenly I felt like a disposable piece in an impersonal institution. That was a shock. I had built a life in a so privileged environment, where it was possible to develop a personal sense of transcendence, and now what seemed to be a path of autonomy and realization showed its opposite face. I was a hostage of my superiors’ decisions, and there was nothing for me to take upon leaving. Not even my friends, which some leaders even announced I did not have. It is in the absence that the value of friendship proved its importance, and in the family I knew I could count with people who would not turn their back at me.

The trajectory of my life so far had been motivated by the sense of independence, which reflected not only in my social relationships but also in love and in my professional life. Volunteer work represented being capable of working on something independently. This possibly makes more sense to Brazilian culture, where labor has been long related to slavery, as opposed to other nations traditionally brought up with values of emancipation through work. So volunteer work meant “I do not depend on anybody’s payment to do what I like”. But this notion was also being transformed in me. Even though I was well employed, with a good salary and good quality of life, I did not have the ambition to stay in that profession much longer. I was looking for business opportunities in other areas when, some day, “out of the blue”, I started wanting to make my job out of my favorite work (something that felt so obvious). I wanted to become a professional in the field of mind studies, not only seen in its biopsychological aspect but, specially, in the parapsychological and transcendental sense.

It is curious how something’s meaning changes completely from time to time. If, before, I could not subject paranormality to a source of income in order to study it independently, now my motivation was to put this topic in the center of my professional ambition, to achieve a wholehearted dedication.

This is how I perceived myself integrating



several elements of my own being with the previously called “outside world”. What used to be a “centrifugal” movement away from the past, the origins, family, work, “conventional” society, “conventional” science, was now turning back to a “centripetal” direction.

My challenge to integrate paranormality to life is also a challenge to integrate it with science. At that point I became interested in other scientific fields that used to be overlooked by my previous paradigmatic glasses. This is how I became acquainted with phenomenology and EHE studies, among others. Interestingly to note that my old “paradigm” seemed to be so much “superior” and now seems so restricted. This itself makes another huge study. Life outside old walls was much more intelligent than I used to think.

As I said, Brown’s model motivated me to go back to the roots of my first EHE. Fifteen years ago my astonishment with the “supernatural” opened the door to an extrasensorial experience. That was the beginning of a long story where I left “wordly matters” in second place, in favor to “paranormal” or “spiritual” matters. And now I took the opposite direction, and things of this “physical world” again astonished me. I thus make a critical question to my own ambitions: what kind of paradigmatic or extraordinary experience do I need now, if any? Out of this body and of this world, or into them? Is transcendence between physical and extraphysical a two-way road?

From a paradigm that praised reason as a kind of redemption and despised emotions as a demonstration of weakness, now I wanted to understand life in all its forms and manifestations. What reason formerly called “imperfections” I now tried to understand as human need, as opposed to my old preconceptions of what is ideal to need. I was curious about religion and what it could teach about the roots of our knowledge. I admired art, because I now recognized that life is a sensory experience before being a cognitive understanding. I was motivated to practice freedom in a new level, more compatible with worldly things, more dialoguing and less exclusive. I was more sympathetic with things at which I would normally adopt a critical attitude. I wanted to find, in understanding the “different other”, something that could transcend my own understanding of things, and discover what I first ignored.

From Now On, What To Do And What To Expect?

I find myself in a redefinition of my sense of self, of being among the world and among others. From those two variables I might find elements that should add new meanings to the EHE analyzed here. I feel tempted to compare these expectations with Brown’s next two Stages, where the search focus is on a higher self and a universal self. After having renounced my “old ego” I now return to it in a (hopefully) “higher” level. After having renounced the “old world”, I also go back to it in a “more universal” sense. From the result of these movements, its successes and disappointments, its encouragement and regressions, that I may find what I will become.

I must make an observation here. I do not intend to stimulate an understanding of Brown’s stages as though they would represent “developmental” or “evolutionary” steps towards transcendence, creating in the EHE experiencer or the reader in general the desire to “climb up” stairs in this model. I see it as an analytical framework only, not necessarily linear or progressivist. We live in a culture permeated by developmental values, but I see each life moment as carrying, from within, the elements for self realization and happiness, or emptiness and unhappiness. I no longer see time as a climbing stair, but as a succession of contexts that can be recognized and lived, each one, in full, if we can.

Going further into the introspection I now feel the need to revisit those other out-of-body experiences of mine. As I mentioned, there were some 3 or 4 of them right at the beginning. Perhaps the differences between them can help me deriving further meanings and conclusions. And then, I must get back to all the other OBEs which I experienced during other contexts. These cannot be called my initial experiences, but are part of my experience as an OBEr. Could there be something in them that I have not yet satisfactory understood?

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Healing Interventions Involving Deceased Persons

Peter Mark Adams



Haunting - the connection of “deceased persons” with locations, objects or persons intimately related with their earthly incarnation - and in particular, with the manner of their death - are not simple, unitary phenomena. The conventionalized notion of “haunting” fails to capture the purposeful, intersubjective nature of the interactions between ourselves and deceased persons especially in healing contexts. Such phenomena cannot be understood solely in terms of their external (extensional) manifestations - temperature fluctuations, electromagnetic anomalies and so on. Such interventions are profoundly intensional patterns of activity. By “intension,” as distinct from “intention,” I refer to the cluster of concepts around our ideas of agency: deciding, intending, acting and so on - all of which give rise to meaning and, with that, ethical significance. This is a quite different order of understanding and being (ontology) than the world of measured activity. It is one that cannot be reduced to physical (extensional) description. Classifying hauntings solely in terms of their external manifestation leaves this essential dimension, their real significance, untouched.

One context in which the variety of interventions of deceased persons into the lives of the living is most pronounced is that of healing. It is the business of the healer to be aware of the intentional and ethical dimensions of phenomena in order to be able to formulate an appropriate response. In particular, energy based healing appears to provide a suitable foundation for such interactions to take place. We can better understand this phenomenon by distinguishing between different manifestations or “types” of intervention involving deceased persons in healing contexts. This will exclude the more usual type of haunting known as “residual” hauntings. I propose that in a healing context the various types of intervention fall into one of four basic types: disoriented, petitionary, intercessory and protective, though there may well be others (for example, vengeful). Rather than theorize about these issues there follows four accounts that exemplify a range of

interactions obtaining between deceased persons and healers.

Disoriented Interventions with the Deceased

Disoriented interventions are caused by deceased persons who are either unaware or uncomprehending of the fact that they have died. This can be due to their having experienced a sudden or unexpected death.

“I had noticed a certain executive at work – we had a ‘nodding’ acquaintance – though what drew my attention to her I’m really not sure. We finally met thru a common friend and realized we had much in common with shared interests in spirituality, meditation and healing. Shortly after the big earthquake in Haiti, she approached me and asked if I wanted to help the people affected by it. I answered that of course I would. She then explained that she was a part of a larger group and that the nature of the help they provided was to assist people who had died unexpectedly and were still lingering, lost, on the Earth plane to make their transition. The help that was envisaged involved projecting myself onto the astral plane, gathering together those lost between the planes and bringing them to a certain place where their transition could take place.

That night, during my regular meditation, I intended to project to that dimension to help those in need. I found myself in a zone which was not of this Earth. There was a lack of light – it was an unearthly greenish-gray color – but I could still see. First I saw an old man. He was crying and looked scared and confused. His eyes were red from crying. He didn’t know where he was or what had happened to him. He was sitting on the rubble next to a fire. Crying, he asked me where everyone else was. I told him that he was safe. I asked him to wait there for me to come back and that I would bring help. At this stage I had no clue what else to say. As I continued looking for others, I saw another old man, holding the hand of a 5-6 year old boy.



It was his grandson. I knew they were both dead but the old man was still trying to rescue his grandson. My heart sank for them. I told him that he should wait until I came back. Next I saw an old lady. She was still under the rubble (in fact this was how she perceived her situation). I helped her remove the rubble. I felt that her lungs had collapsed. I helped her to sit up, brushed the dust from her clothes and did Reiki to her lungs until she felt better. I asked her to wait for me until I came back.

The next morning, the first thing I did was to share my experiences with my friend. At this point I wasn't even sure if I was making this up. I certainly didn't know how to help those people. She reassured me that my experience was valid and asked me to go back. She told me to do everything to convince them (if necessary to put a Red Cross vest on) to come with me. She then asked me to take them along a path to a park across from a large Library building. She told me that this is where the Akashic records are kept. Once there, she asked me to invite the relatives and loved ones of those people to come and assist them to transition to the other side. I felt extremely nervous about attempting all of this. I didn't know if it would work or if I could really help them, but I had no choice but to try.

That night I returned to the same plane. It wasn't hard to find them. I told them I had good news and that I would take them to where they would be reunited with their families. It wasn't hard to convince them. I visualized the path and found myself across from the Library building. Their loved ones came one by one and led them away to the Library. The next day when I awoke I felt exhausted; I was completely drained and felt very sad. I still wasn't sure if all of this had been a real experience or not. I again shared my experience with my friend and she said that she had seen me outside the library but that I wasn't ready to see her and the other helpers who had gathered there. She explained that they use different methods to convince people to make their transition, including creating an elevator of light or a bridge. She confirmed that I would feel exhausted since I was operating on a plane for which I was not energetically prepared and had fully exposed

myself to their emotions. It took me a couple days to regain my energy, but it had been really worth it."

Petitionary Interventions with the Deceased

Petitionary hauntings can arise as a result of a deceased person bearing an unfulfilled sense of personal responsibility for resolving some issue. The haunting may involve attempting to contact close friends or relatives who can resolve their unfinished business as the following case demonstrates.

"I was working on a client's personal issues using energy psychology when all of a sudden I felt something like energy come through me. I experienced a profound sense of sadness that made me feel like crying. Internally I heard the word 'inheritance'. I asked the client whether there was a problem with an inheritance and she immediately replied that there was. I had a sense of a person and asked her if this problem was related to a man. Again she replied that it was. I next sensed that there was an unfinished business relating to this inheritance and that the man was saying to my client "please, you must take over". My client said that she had immediately understood the significance of this exchange. She explained that her uncle had been a prominent lawyer who had helped bring her up. He was like a second father to her and they trusted each other implicitly. Since he was a respected figure, the family had entrusted their title deeds to him in order to ensure a fair distribution of the lands. Unfortunately he had died suddenly and unexpectedly before he could fulfill this responsibility. When the family asked for the title deeds his widow could find no trace of them. With that the matter had remained unresolved for years. Despite the urging of the deceased uncle, my client's first response was that she was afraid to take on such a difficult task."

Petitionary hauntings can also arise due to a deceased person's sense of injustice. Examples include, having their innocence recognized for a crime that they were accused of but which they did not commit or having someone who stole from them or was responsible for their death recognized as having done so. These hauntings often subside once the issues that concerned the deceased are addressed to their satisfaction.



Intercessory Interventions with the Deceased

Intercessory hauntings arise as a result of a deceased person bearing a sense of personal responsibility for protecting or helping some person, usually a close relative. These hauntings also subside once the issues that concern the deceased have been addressed.

“I was working with a client whose husband had died after a long and happy marriage. She had been unable to come to terms with his death and was overwhelmed by her grief. As we sat together a mental image came to me. It was of a man doing the washing-up at a kitchen sink, strong feelings of sadness and the message “I don’t want you to do this”. I asked the client what significance, if any, this image and message had for her. She immediately answered that throughout their long marriage her husband had always insisted on doing the washing up and never let her do it. Since his death she had kept herself continuously busy in the kitchen washing everything up and trying to connect with him. She understood that she had to give this up and that he would be happier if she got on with her life. The image and the message helped her to clear her grief using the energy psychology techniques.”

What was so significant in this session was that a piece of obscure, highly personal but extremely precise information, the single piece of information necessary to trigger the healing process, occurred spontaneously to the healer at just the right time. Amongst experienced healers this happens quite frequently and forms an integral part of their expertise.

Protective Interventions with the Deceased

This form of haunting is akin to the intercessory case but involves the deceased person attaching themselves to a living human whom they seek to influence. They are therefore more usually encountered in the context of entity/spirit attachment therapy.

“I am now 51 years old. Two major life-long problems could have darkened my life forever. Because I chose transformation and healing, it has turned into a totally different journey. When I was a small child there was a period, starting from the age of 2 or 3 years old until I was 10, during which I was sexually abused by my uncle. Later, at 15 or 16 years of age I started drinking to tend the wounds inflicted by this abuse. This

turned into a big alcohol problem. About 2000 I started to seek healing for both of these problems. I was able to get help through the use of energy psychology techniques combined with Alcoholics Anonymous. I made good progress but the alcoholism was difficult to manage and required a lot of self-discipline. During this journey I was introduced to Regression Therapy. I feel that my healing experience contains such valuable insights that I want to share them with you.

During a session with my regression therapist, after I had entered a trance, my therapist detected the presence of a spirit/entity attachment in my energy field. She was able to determine when it first attached itself to me. During my first experience of sexual abuse I had ‘escaped’ out of my body to get away from the pain of what was happening to me. The entity had attached itself to me at that time. Up until the regression session, for well over 40 years, I had had no idea that I had such an attachment. Nor would I have believed in the possibility of such a thing had I been told about it. My therapist was able to enter into a dialogue with the entity and an interesting story emerged. The spirit/entity had been an alcoholic and a prostitute who had lived in France. She had had a daughter. When her daughter was 3 years old, she herself had been murdered. Because of her sense of responsibility for her daughter she was unable to make her transition and had remained by her daughter’s side throughout her life until her daughter died.

When I experienced my first sexual abuse and left my body, I was the same age as her daughter was when she had been murdered. As we noted earlier, it was during this experience that she attached herself to my energy field. The therapist later explained to me that every time these cases appeared there is always a positive intention behind the attachment. In this case the entity was trying to help me to cope with my emotional pain in the only way that she knew how, by using alcohol. After all, she had been an alcoholic herself. It then dawned on me that this helped to explain why I had been stealing alcohol from home and always looked for alcohol wherever I went. The therapist convinced the entity to leave my energy field and to seek healing and find peace by making her transition.

When I opened my eyes I was amazed by what had happened. Because of the method used I remem-



bered everything. Nothing had been imposed on me. That night I went to a dinner. I drank a little of the wine that was offered me but found that I couldn't even finish the glass! This was a first for me! Many addictions can be healed through regression therapy. Addiction can be a multi-layered problem, so people need to be patient. Not every case of addiction is associated with entity/spirit attachment. Six months have now passed since this healing. I have not had to make an effort not to drink alcohol. I would rate my need for alcohol as about zero."

Accounts like these challenge us on many different levels. The very notion of "deceased person" is itself highly problematic since it presupposes a model of consciousness quite at variance with both conventional and mainstream scientific understanding. Like the evidence from near death experiences and past lives, such cases strongly imply the continuity of some degree of conscious awareness, sense of responsibility and ethical judgment beyond death. From this perspective death is merely a transitional state that involves the dissolution, over time, of the relative personality and its energetic supports in favor of a higher level identity for which different cultures and belief systems provide a variety of names but little concrete understanding. The Dalai Lama once described "that which continues" as "the subtle continuity of being." Despite the vagueness surrounding the metaphysics of death, and the sense of unreality associated with the postmortem or intermediate worlds, what is unquestioned is our ability to undertake profound healing on these extended planes of existence - healing that positively assists the living when conventional methods have failed.

The alert healer needs to remain open to the voices and wishes of the deceased. In the context of healing this communication is always a positive contribution to the healing process. It may also allow for an unexpected reunion with the deceased that re-affirms their love and concern across the borders of death. Such interventions can be a major factor in facilitating the healing and closure, for the living as well as the dead, of years of pain, separation and loss.

Biography

Peter Mark Adams is a BA Hons. Philosophy graduate with a special research interest in altered states of consciousness, epistemology and the philosophy of science. Peter is a professional energy worker and healer specializing in Rebirthing breathwork, energy psychology and mindfulness meditation. Peter is the author of "Altered States / Parallel Worlds," a book length essay to coincide with appearances at the Brain to Consciousness Conference, Istanbul, May 2011. A case of possession, "Lord of the Flies: the phenomenology of a possession," was published in the international peer reviewed *Paranthropology*, Vol. 4, No. 3. Peter has just finished a new book *The Healing Field: Energy, Consciousness and Transformation* dealing with the broad range of anomalous experiences that occur during energy based healing. This book will be available winter, 2013. Peter's other writings are available at:

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Should We Ground Parapsychology in Existential Phenomenology?

Jean-Michel Abrassart



ABSTRACT

In his article “Toward a Grounding of Parapsychology in Phenomenology: Psi as a Function of Sorge,” Glazier (2013) argues for grounding parapsychology in Heideggerian phenomenology, also called in the philosophical literature existential phenomenology. I'd like to argue here that because Heideggerian phenomenology is highly controversial in philosophy, parapsychologists should be at least cautious about grounding parapsychology in it.

In his article “Toward a Grounding of Parapsychology in Phenomenology: Psi as a Function of Sorge” (published in the very first issue of the *Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology*), Glazier (2013) argues in favor of grounding parapsychology in existential phenomenology. He states that “psi reveals itself ontologically as a function of *sorge*” and that parapsychology should move away from experimental parapsychology “toward a phenomenologically informed human science approach.” For someone like me who has both formal training in the field of psychology and in the field of philosophy, his article made for a very interesting read. Nevertheless, I disagree with the position he is advocating. As I will explain, I think that because Heideggerian phenomenology is highly controversial in philosophy, it would be strategically a bad move for parapsychology to ground itself in it. It would be grounding a controversial field (parapsychology) in a controversial philosophical current (Heideggerian phenomenology). There are various philosophical currents in which parapsychology could be meaningfully grounded, thus parapsychologists should think carefully before grounding it in existential phenomenology.

There is absolutely no doubt that Heidegger (1889 - 1976) is a very influential philosopher and arguably his book *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/1996) can be considered one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century. That being said, he is also a very controversial figure because he joined the Nazi Party in 1933 and remained a member until its dismantling at the end of World War II. Worse than that, he never publicly apologized nor expressed regret after the end of the war. The controversy exploded in the philosophical literature with the publication of Fa-

rias's book *Heidegger and Nazism* (Farias, 1989) and still continues to this day. For example, the BBC released in 1999 a three-part documentary television series called *Human, All Too Human* (directed by Chu, Morgan and Wardle). The second episode of this TV series focuses heavily on Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi Party. More recently, this controversy came back to the forefront in France with the publication of Faye's book : *Heidegger, l'introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie : autour des séminaires inédits de 1933-1935* (Faye, 2005). Faye's conclusion is quite harsh : he states (Faye, 2005, p. 690) that Heidegger's work shouldn't be left in philosophy libraries and needs to be shelved with other Nazi thinkers.

My own interest in philosophy focuses on Japanese philosophy, including the Kyoto School (Abrassart, 2005 ; Davis, 2010 ; Heisig, 2001 ; Stevens, 2000) that was founded around 1913 by Nishida (1885 – 1962). There is a very similar controversy about Kyoto School's support to the war effort and the ultranationalist movement before and during World War II (see for example Heisig, 1995 ; Parkes, 2010). Heidegger's philosophy was very influential in Japan at the time and several philosophers from the Kyoto School traveled to Germany to follow his lectures. But contrary to Heidegger, some members of the Kyoto School publicly apologized and expressed regret after the end of the war.

To put it simply, there are two main positions in the literature about this controversy. The first one states that Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi Party is akin to an accident and does not bear any significance when it comes to evaluating his philosophy. The other one states that, to the contrary, Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi Party was not an accident and



that his philosophy is somehow Nazi in nature. I find it myself difficult to believe that Heidegger's political involvement doesn't have any connection whatsoever with his philosophy. Let's not forget that we are talking here about one of the most brilliant philosopher of his generation. If it is sometimes possible (especially in the hard sciences) to practice science in a way that is completely disconnected from one's worldview, including one's political worldview, I don't think it is possible for philosophy.

It should be noted that this controversy may be more important in Europe than in the United States, especially in France where those issues are very sensitive for historical reasons. Moreover, even in Europe someone can study existential phenomenology during his undergraduate curriculum in psychology or in philosophy and hear very little about this topic. Some teachers will just briefly mention that there is a controversy and then move on like it doesn't really matter, especially if the teacher in question is an Heideggerian phenomenology proponent. There is also, I fear, an unfortunate tendency to downplay this kind of controversies in the academia, especially at the undergraduate level. As I explained above, I myself became aware of this controversy because of my deep interest for the Kyoto School of philosophy.

I fully acknowledge that this remark doesn't go very deep into Glazier's discussion of psi as a function of *sorge*. I just think that readers of the *Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology* should be made aware of this controversy and I would be interested to know what Glazier thinks about it, especially how it should impact his proposal to ground parapsychology in existential phenomenology. I agree with him that parapsychology is currently in a state of a Kuhnian crisis. It is typical for a discipline in a state of a Kuhnian crisis to engage in heavy philosophical debates to try to solve the crisis. That being said, I don't agree with him that parapsychology should move away from experimental parapsychology. Experimental parapsychology can (and should) coexist in parapsychology alongside other ways of doing science. Assuming that psi does exist in the objective world, it is possible that existential phenomenology could give us some insight into psi functioning. However, even if it could, maybe the ideological price would be too heavy to pay.

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Biography

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The Bone in Our Throat: Heidegger and Nazism

Jacob W. Glazier



In Abrassart's (2013) piece critiquing my appropriation of Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein in light of what has now become the much fetichized "psi" question, he brings to the fore a century long polemic regarding Martin Heidegger, the person, being in cahoots with the Nazis during World War II. Indeed, this historical fact cannot be disputed; namely, that Heidegger joined the Nazi party after having been elected the Rector of the University of Freiburg in 1933 (for more, Sluga, 1993). His subsequent resignation of the Rectorship the following year has been seen by some as a rejection by Heidegger of Nazi ideology even though, as Abrassart (2013) rightly states, he - for whatever reason - never publically apologized for his initial enthusiasm for the National Socialist movement.

My aim with the present discussion is not to resolve this debate as there has been a proliferation of scholarship regarding it (cf. Cooper, 1996); nor is it to offer a defense of Heidegger and his affiliation with Nazism, which, I want to go on record as saying, is categorically reprehensible. There seems to be certain questions driving the Heidegger-Nazi debate, which can be articulated as follows: Is Heidegger's Nazism hopelessly intertwined with his project? Is there something redeemable in his thought? If so, what might that be?

Žižek (2007) answers these questions, in a provocatively titled article, by making the case that a kernel of Fascism was inherent in Heidegger's thought from the very beginning; it was only allowed to flourish in the grounds of National Socialism. Consequently, the Heideggerian canon as such is imbued with this inclination toward imperialism and thusly must be read in this way. However, there are scholars, most notably in the United States, Hubert Dreyfus (Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2005), who defend Heidegger's thought as valuable.

I think that even Žižek would agree that Heidegger was attempting to gasp something that was more primordial than the visions offered to us by materialistic science and capitalism - two progressively in-

sidious bedfellows. It is in this very sense that I (Glazier, 2013) wrote "Toward a Grounding of Parapsychology in Phenomenology: Psi as a Function of Sorge" for I still believe that exceptional psychology has the potential to say something *meaningful* in regard to the everyday, lived world of the individuals who are having these experiences.

In contradistinction to my previous article in JEEP (Glazier, 2013), though, perhaps it is time to abandon the now too-catheted "psi" question since, I would argue, psi seems to be parapsychology's invariable 'bone in the throat' - the very "mechanism" or "process" that thwarts all attempts at rendering it statically meaningful such that experimentation will eventually deliver replicable and reliable results. That is why exceptional psychology needs to '*return to the meaning itself!*' - to the very process of signification that makes the "psi" question, and any question for that matter, intelligible in the first place.

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The Study of the Paranormal in Psychology: An Ontological or Epistemological

Francois Pierre Mathijsen



The exchange of arguments within the scientific community is useful if it contributes to a better understanding of reality and if it takes place in a context of respect for sound professional ethics. Now, in an article published in this journal (Abrassart, 2013), Jean-Michel Abrassart uses one of my articles (“Empirical Research and Paranormal Beliefs: Going Beyond the Epistemological Debate in Favour of the Individual” [Mathijsen, 2009]) as a starting point for what he terms a “critical examination,” but with significant misconceptions and misrepresentations of some of my ideas. For this reason, it is important to set certain things straight.

One basic rule in critical analysis is to apply sound and informed judgment. However, it seems that Abrassart gets the concepts he is analyzing mixed up. The doctoral student introduces his article as follows; “In a recent article, Mathijsen (2009) argues that in the study of alleged paranormal phenomena psychology should move beyond the *ontological* debate” (Abrassart, 2013, p. 18). He repeats this concept of the “ontological debate” no less than seven times in his article. However, in the article he analyzes there is no question of an *ontological* debate (this word only appears once, when I make use of a definition of paranormal beliefs by Lindeman and Aarnio [2006]). On the contrary, I do refer to the sterile nature of an *epistemological* debate (Mathijsen, 2009, p. 319 et 329). Moreover this term can be found in the title of my article. Here, either there is a lack of understanding of the two concepts at play, which would seriously compromise Mr. Abrassart’s argument, or he is intentionally attributing ideas to me that I have never expressed, which goes against the most basic principles of good science. In both cases, what is at hand is a significant misunderstanding which is detrimental.

The same thing applies when Abrassart twists my ideas in writing that, “Mathijsen (2009) compares the study of paranormal phenomena in psycholo-

gy to the field of psychology of religion, arguing that they are somewhat similar” (Abrassart, 2013, p. 20). I will not dwell on the reductive use of “somewhat similar” in the comparison to the study of religion within psychology, but again, (intentionally or not) Mr. Abrassart confuses things by referring to the “study of paranormal *phenomena*” while in my article I position myself in the field of “research into paranormal *beliefs*” (Mathijsen, 2009, p. 329, § 2.)” This is what, in my opinion, gives rise to the paradigmatic incompatibility of the world of science and that of faith (Mathijsen, 2009 p. 329). Again, these distinctions could be found in the title, and this confusion is detrimental.

Finally, I am perplexed when Abrassart states, “The fundamental question I want to ask in this article is: is the paranormal falling outside of psychology’s paradigmatic field?” (p. 20) while the entirety of the article that he is critiquing presents an overview of the empirical literature of the past ten years concerning the study of paranormal beliefs in mainstream psychology (Mathijsen, 2009, pp. 319 et 320); something which in no uncertain terms shows that the study of these categories of belief or personal experiences already has a place in psychology (i.e., to serve as predictors for certain types of psychosocial, cognitive, behavioral and pathological personalities), even if the epistemological debate rightfully remains.

By way of clarification, I will cite the key points of my thoughts on this subject as laid out in the commentary to the 2009 article: “The paranormal, whether in the form of beliefs or experiences, seems to have a particular system of knowledge, with specific laws and limits. However, to study a system which has its own rationality and logic from the viewpoint of another system of knowledge can only lead to an epistemological impasse. The arguments put forward by sceptics of paranormal beliefs (PB) on one hand, and by supporters of PB on the other, are the products of the epistemological context in which they find themselves.



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While the epistemological debate may lead to an impasse in the study of the paranormal in psychology, the ontological debate is not, in my opinion, the domain of the psychological sciences, as the essence or nature of paranormal phenomena cannot be established at this time with the knowledge we currently possess. Nevertheless, there are people who do experience or suffer from anomalous or paranormal experiences, and what they tell us about them already provides us with sufficient material for research and to enable us to pro-

vide assistance; within human sciences more broadly and in the field of psychology in particular.

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A Matador on Mesa Street

Christopher Bell



Hear the music inspired by the poem to the left or at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIkJWdZgoXQ>

<i>In the rain</i>	<i>From red to green</i>
<i>In desert sun</i>	<i>He'd transform</i>
<i>In those places</i>	<i>First paper man</i>
<i>We come from</i>	<i>Then matador!</i>
<i>There reside</i>	<i>As steel bulls</i>
<i>Memories</i>	<i>Charged by</i>
<i>Not as serene</i>	<i>He'd impale</i>
<i>As once they seemed</i>	<i>Their hides</i>
<i>I'll tell you</i>	<i>Sighs and</i>
<i>One of mine</i>	<i>Bullseyes</i>
<i>Been with me</i>	<i>At the high noon</i>
<i>For sometime</i>	<i>Divide</i>
<i>A paper man</i>	<i>Downtown</i>
<i>On Mesa Street</i>	<i>Frenzy</i>
<i>Who'd sell the news</i>	<i>Fevered</i>
<i>Not too discrete</i>	<i>Envy</i>
<i>He would wade</i>	<i>Fairlane's</i>
<i>Through traffic lanes</i>	<i>Benzene</i>
<i>Waiting for</i>	<i>Spun his cape</i>
<i>The light to change</i>	<i>Around</i>



<i>Rear view finds</i>	<i>Matadors</i>
<i>Stop me</i>	<i>Are regal men</i>
<i>On a</i>	<i>In Spanish lore</i>
<i>Dime</i>	<i>And some legends</i>
<i>Scenes from</i>	<i>Cars did stall</i>
<i>Dreams</i>	<i>He did bait</i>
<i>Reach out</i>	<i>Us tenderly</i>
<i>All the time</i>	<i>On Mesa Street</i>
<i>Sunday'd come</i>	<i>Con una capa / With a cape</i>
<i>We'd be late</i>	<i>De noticias / Of news</i>
<i>A Matador</i>	<i>Un moderno torero / A modern matador</i>
<i>On pavement'd wait</i>	<i>Que no podía sentir más / That could not feel anymore</i>
<i>Pulled on up</i>	<i>In those moments</i>
<i>Starboard side</i>	<i>Where time stands still</i>
<i>Languishing</i>	<i>The future speaks to us</i>
<i>In oil dried</i>	<i>At will</i>
<i>A mess of hair</i>	<i>The task at hand</i>
<i>And scattered scrolls</i>	<i>Our daily bread</i>
<i>Of newspapers</i>	<i>Is to remember</i>
<i>That he'd rolled</i>	<i>What's been said</i>
<i>He spotted me</i>	<i>As we charge</i>
<i>In the backseat</i>	<i>Him by</i>
<i>And stood upon</i>	<i>He'll impale</i>
<i>Two hooved feet!</i>	<i>Our hides</i>
<i>Gingerly,</i>	<i>Sighs and</i>
<i>Since he was old</i>	<i>Bullseyes</i>
<i>El Paso Times</i>	<i>At the high noon</i>
<i>Is what he sold</i>	<i>Divide</i>



Downtown

Frenzy

We the

Many

Fevered

Envy

Spin his cape

Around

In the rain

In desert sun

In those places

We come from

There reside

Memories

Or are they dreams

For us to read?

Biography

Chris Bell is currently a doctoral student in psychology: consciousness and society at the University of West Georgia. He studies humanistic psychology, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis.

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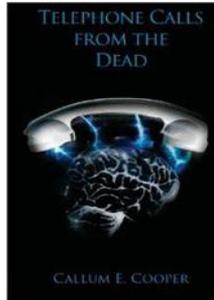




Book Review

Telephone Calls from the Dead

Erika A. Pratte



Title: Telephone Calls from the Dead

Author: Callum E. Cooper

ISBN: 978-0-9571074-1-0

Publisher: Tricorn Books

Price: £8.95/\$18.00

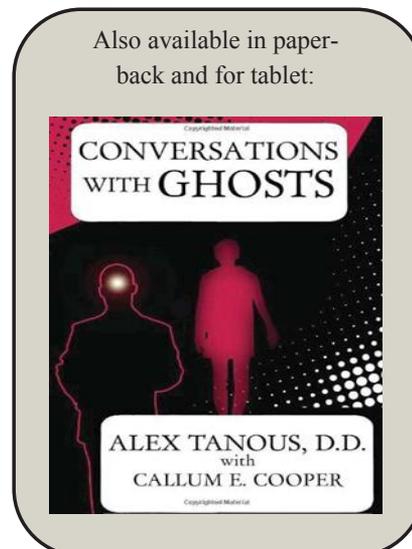
In 1979, D. Scott Rogo and Raymond Bayless wrote a groundbreaking book entitled, *Phone Calls from the Dead*. The book centered upon their qualitative research regarding alleged communication from the dead via telephone; it was well received by the media yet not so much by the scientific community as their research was regarded as too anecdotal and directed towards the “layman.” However, the accessibility of *Phone Calls* has indubitably spurred forth the interest of communication from the dead by non-researchers and researchers alike. *Telephone Calls from the Dead* by Callum E. Cooper is evidence of this.

Cooper’s book, like Rogo and Bayless’, is accessible to the layman but also informative to the researcher; it uses Rogo and Bayless’ findings as a foundation from which to renew and extend research regarding communication with the dead via telephone. Cooper examines anomalous calls, distributing them into five categories, of which three actually involve calls from the dead. These categories are “answer” (where a living person calls and speaks with a person who they do not know is presently deceased), “simple,” and “prolonged.” “Mixed” calls are those that have aspects of both “simple” and “prolonged.” “Intention” calls involve a living person who intends to call someone but then doesn’t, but later finds out that that someone still received a call from him or her. Cooper also elucidates on anomalous voicemails and quickly mentions text messages and emails, although the former are rare and much harder to confirm as paranormal or not due to the mechanics of them.

Cooper provides examples and possible explanations of the different types of calls which range from paranormal to non-paranormal. Non-paranormal explanations include hallucinations, hoaxes, technical mishaps, etc. Paranormal explanations are also not limited to communication with the deceased, but are also attributed to psychokinesis, clairvoyance, and telepathy. Theories of phone call mechanics are elucidated as well as the psychology of the phone calls.

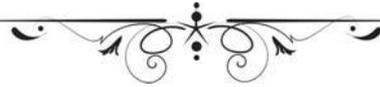
The book provides a well-rounded introduction to the many aspects at play regarding communication with the dead via telephone, or at the very least, the possibility thereof. *Telephone Calls from the Dead* will peak one’s interest in pursuing further study of anomalous phone calls, whether it is personal or academic. Academics may like more elucidation on methodology and analysis of Cooper’s research but they will find a long list of references they may use to satisfy this desire. Readers will also find that having read Rogo and Bayless’ *Phone Calls from the Dead* is not necessary to understand Cooper’s book, but they will most likely find the desire to do so afterward. Overall, *Telephone Calls from the Dead* revitalizes both public interest and academic research in the field of telephonic communication with the dead.

Also available in paperback and for tablet:





JEEP News



The photo on the right was taken at the 56th Parapsychological Association annual convention in Viterbo, Italy held August 8 - 11th, 2013.

The JEEP editorial team presented a poster (below) session on the launch of the journal, which detailed its theoretical grounding as well as its contribution to scholarship surrounding exceptional experiences.

You can find published abstracts of presented papers as well as other information on the conference and membership on the Parapsychological Association's website: <http://www.parapsych.org>



Photos taken by Jacob Glazier





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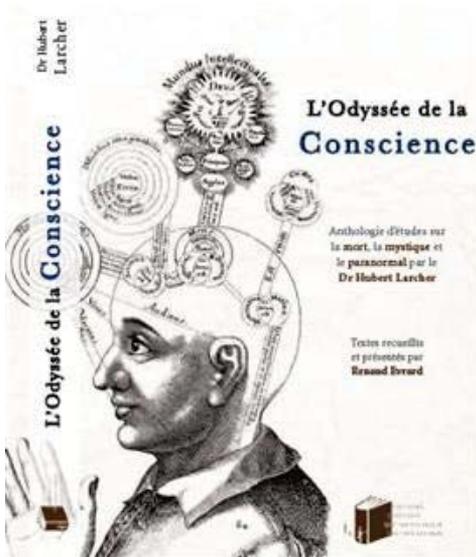
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