

# Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology

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## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Vol. 3, No. 2 of the *Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology* (JEEP), Winter 2015. This is a unique issue in that it is our first dedicated to the creative side of exceptional experiences. JEEP always has personal accounts and creative pieces in its pages, but this particular publication is almost exclusively creative pieces or articles related to creative pieces (see Wim Kramer's article "Beyond the Veil: A Short Introduction to 1900 – 1940 Mediumistic Art from the Netherlands.")

Creativity is an often overlooked aspect of the human experience, even when it comes to healing and integrating our experiences that shatter our sense of self. To have had an exceptional experience can be very marginalizing and confounding, but creating pieces of art based off of an exceptional experience can offer a deeper connection to one's experience, and frame a new way of looking at it. On the other hand, it can also bring on a more instinctive drive to dive deeper into one's own unknown mind. As Carl Jung said, "Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. To perform this difficult office it is sometimes necessary for him to sacrifice happiness and everything that makes life worth living for the ordinary human being."

In this edition we have five personal accounts, a series of photographs inspired by exceptional experiences, an article on mediumistically received artwork via a medium from the Netherlands, an article from Renaud Evrard and Michael Tremmel continuing their discussion on definitions of parapsychology, exceptional experiences, and anomalous psychology, a few book reviews and a new section, "From the Vaults," which portrays interviews or articles that were published not too recently, shall we say.

**Next JEEP will focus on clinical and therapeutic approaches to exceptional experiences. We will still, of course, be taking the usual array of general personal accounts, artwork, music, creative writing, book reviews, and letters to the editor, but emphasis on those that include therapeutic or clinical aspects will be given priority.**

I hope you enjoy this publication of JEEP.

Best,

Erika A. Pratte  
Editor

## Submission Deadline for Summer 2016 is April 1

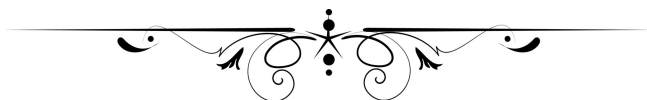
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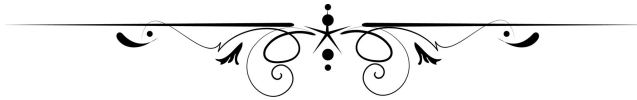


# Personal Accounts



## A Tale of Conversion: My Mystical Experience

Lindsey Owens



I was 21 years old and in my third year of undergraduate studies when I had a few experiences that caused me to ponder the “real.” At this time in my life, I was a “good trained poodle” as one of my graduate school professors later put it. I had fallen into, and very strongly accepted, the quite common philosophy of scientism or materialistic reductionism that is so prevalent in the academic world. Due to this philosophy on life, I was also an atheist and quite judgmental of everyone who subscribed to any religion. I was sad that there were people in the world who could not grasp reality; reality for me at that time being that we were born and would die completely alone and with no special purpose, consequence, or meaning. We had come from nothing, would die into nothing, and there was nothing else for any of us other than that knowledge. I was not upset by this philosophy for it seemed the most logical at the time. I was always a person that had to experience something for myself in order to “believe” it to be possible. While on spring break that year with my stepmom in Florida, I saw some ladies walking onto the beach with pamphlets in their hands. I just had that feeling they had religious intent. My first thought being, “Oh, jeez, I hope they don’t come over here with that nonsense.”

Sure enough they walked up to us and asked, “Do you ladies know Jesus?”

My stepmom, being a Christian fundamentalist, replies quite quickly, “Oh, yes!” with a smile on her face.

They all look at me. I did not want to be mean or rude, but I certainly didn’t want the next hour held up by psychobabble, so I said, “I know the story, but I’m figuring things out for myself, thank you.”

They walked off. My stepmom leans over and says, “God is trying to reach you.”

I thought quite sarcastically, “Oh yes, to save my soul.” After this encounter, I did ponder a few things. One, I noticed that those ladies, and a significant number of religious people in fact, appeared to be quite happy. I started to think that even though it may be misguided, perhaps it would be interesting for psychology to study this particular phenomenon; for example, longevity in regards to religion and spirituality, perceived quality of life, depression rates, etc. I also began to realize that I really didn’t *know* if I was correct regarding my philosophy, just that it seemed the most plausible. When I made that realization, I made the conscious effort to shift toward a more agnostic view. If there was a God, surely I could find the answer! I shifted more agnostic during this time and became what William James refers to as pragmatic. Can I look upon and hold information without judgement? I spent the next few weeks looking everywhere on the Internet for different stories and experiences, facts and figures, anything that I felt would give me a glimpse into the knowledge I was seeking. After about three weeks with no substantial evidence, I was growing weary. One night, I hit a breaking point. I could feel the emotions rising within me. I felt angry and irritated. I was making a hell of an effort; could this “God” not meet me halfway at all? I was done.

Finally I cried out, “Okay! Do you or do you not exist?”

Almost immediately, I had an old memory bubble up from deep within the well of my being. It was something I had known but had long since lost in the depths of long-term memory. What came to mind was a book I had owned when I was a child and a specific chapter that had been my favorite. My favorite chapter in that book was about a young girl’s near-death experience (NDE). “Oh, yes,” I thought, “if I want to know what happens when we die, why not start by reviewing the experiences of people who had actually done it!”

At this point my researching was unrelenting; any spare moment I had was dedicated to this endeavor. I shortly found Dr. Jeffrey Long’s NDE database and proceeded to read hundreds of NDEs. I was analyzing the data as I read through them while also taking note of how profound the experiences appeared to be. Just by attempting to be objective about the “real” rather than just assuming I knew the truth, I found myself becoming more pragmatic. I could sit with these experiences while suspending judgment. Whether or not I could confirm they were real didn’t matter; these individuals who were experiencing this phenomenon certainly



thought so. A few of them were quite touching, and I would find myself in tears on a number of occasions. One night while reading an exceptional NDE, I had been deeply touched to the point where I knew a catharsis was imminent. I was sitting in front of my computer, and I began to move my hands toward my face because I was really about to let it flow. I can see my hands halfway to my face when it happens. All of a sudden, I was not where I had been. It was as if my purest form of consciousness had been instantly transported to the very center of the universe, or “all that is.” I was suspended there in space staring at this extremely large rotating column of stars. I didn’t appear to have a body, or if I did, I didn’t notice it. It felt like just my consciousness alone was there. Everything seemed so clear, and it felt like a much more lucid experience than I have ever experienced in my life. As I am staring at this rotating column of stars, I can feel a message. It wasn’t words but feelings that definitely had a specific meaning. It was as if I was receiving information, but not in a state where I could actively process it like I normally experience. The message I was receiving was, “You are that. That is you. Everyone is that.” I was being informed that I was so much more than what I had ever dreamed possible. I was a tiny, but very significant, part of the entire cosmos. A spark of light, just like everyone else, and those sparks are actually connected and form an even larger whole. The whole is quite intelligent also. This system had purpose, meaning, and continuity. *I* had purpose, meaning, and continuity; we all do. And just like that I was back. The next visual I had was me back in front of the computer with my hands still halfway to my face. There was a brief moment where I had to pick up the pieces of my existence.

I actually was saying to myself, “Ok, I’m a human being...on planet Earth. My name is Lindsey Owens, and I am a junior at Georgia Southern University.”

I quickly remembered my age, family, and past experiences, but for a moment, these were gone. I was looking at my hands still trying to make their way to my face. I went in to complete the catharsis now with a new kind of fervor. I became aware that I was crying for two reasons simultaneously: I was crying tears of sadness on the one hand because, “Oh, God, I have been wrong this whole time about the real.” And I was crying tears of joy on the other hand because, “Oh, thank God, I have been wrong about the real!” I could feel so clearly that I was weeping because a part of me was certainly dying, but also a part of me was being born. I was certainly aware that my entire foundation for my perspective on life had just crumbled, and I was left to rebuild in the rubble. The whole “born again” phenomenon made a lot of sense now. I was born into an entirely new way of being. I had a brand new philosophy on life, and subsequently a new view on myself, others, and the world. I will never forget this experience, and I feel it is quite rare. I came back from this experience with a little more tolerance for other people’s religions, but I myself still do not subscribe to any of them. I was, however, no longer an atheist, and I took and still take great pleasure in being in relation to my own personal flavor of spirituality. Prior to this experience, I always thought there were only two categories individuals could fall into regarding ideas about whether there was something greater that existed beyond the self: Believers and Non-Believers. Now, I feel there are at least three categories: Believers, Non-Believers, and Knowers.

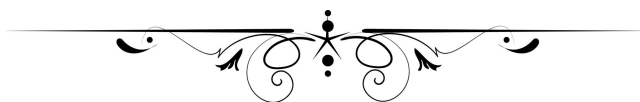
After this experience occurred, I was no longer an agnostic but a knower (I don’t consider myself a believer). I needed to see, and I was allowed to see. In a matter of seconds I was no longer depressed or anxious, I could feel again very deeply (I didn’t even know I had numbed my capacity to feel until it was restored), and I knew that every day was a beautiful adventure full of wonder and awe. I integrated this new information into every part of my life. The only parts of me that did not shift in that experience were my ethics and morals.

### Biography

Lindsey Owens is currently attending Teachers College, Columbia University for a master’s degree in clinical psychology with a concentration in spirituality and mind/body practices. She possesses a master’s degree in psychology with an emphasis in humanistic and transpersonal orientations from the University of West Georgia. Her research interests are centered on the phenomenological inquiry of various types of mystical experiences and their effects. She hopes to enter a doctoral program after graduation.



Lester F. Lomax



This report follows the report on the dream that activated my many replicated experiences of precognitive remote viewing of target vehicles on freeways that would be at designated target areas, up ahead on freeways where the onramp enters the freeway. The name of that earlier article is, “Dream about the Green Van” in the *Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology*, Winter 2014. The ability inducted by the dream may have generalized to the Library Angel research method.

An example of a very serious portrayal of a Library Angel (LA) event is in the TV movie *Wallenberg: A Hero's Story*, about the saving of many Jews from the holocaust by the Swedish humanitarian Raoul Wallenberg (starring Richard Chamberlain). After the concentration camps were in the hands of the allies, a man walks up to one of many stacks of books that were taken from the victims, and picks up the top book, and finds that it was his sister's favorite book, with her name written in it.

An example of “the angel at work” in an LA event is quoted in Combs & Holland (1996, page 21), first reported by Koestler in *The Challenge of Chance*. Koestler reported that Dame Rebecca West, while researching a specific episode, wrote that, “After hours of search I went along the lines of shelves to an assistant librarian... I put my hand on one volume and took it out and carelessly looked at it, and it was not only the right volume, but I had opened it to the right page,” (Hardy, Harvie, & Koestler, 1974). The early workers nicknamed the phenomenon the “Library Angel.” It was found to be useful in all research methods, including searches on the Internet.

The characteristic that is missing in these types of anecdotal Library Angel events that is a prominent characteristic in my routinely using the LA as a research method, is that visual attentional captures were not involved or were overlooked. In the LA events that I have experienced for many years, all of which answered specific questions about complex scientific problems, the book seemed to “glow,” or, at least, attract my visual attention. It felt as though the peripheral vision spotted the book, then it relayed that find to the focal vision apparatus, causing it to jerk away from the ongoing focus onto the book on a shelf.

I did perform a pilot study on using my automatic visual attention on features in the environmental surround to determine hits on hidden ESP cards. I got nine hits in a row, in open ended trials. One trial took over nine months before the visual capture occurred. One must work at the pace of the phenomena to replicate results (Lomax, 1988).

I found that using the scientific method helped to temper and encourage me in the face of the constant noticeable paranormal activity. An inference is that this report shorn of its scientific nomenclature would be problematic rather than a helpful contribution.

Visual attentional captures have been studied and reported in the parapsychological and psychological literature. If you are interested in approaching the phenomena in one of several different ways, the existing literature could be helpful (Bressan, Kramer & Germani, 2008). The investigator's approach, with record keeping, and with a practiced observing of the self in the world, may be the best way to gain an understanding of how it works.

The relevancy of the standard Library Angel events is that they were invariably helpful in developing an understanding for many years. In the first LA event, I was worried about all of the “psychic” events that I was experiencing. I went to the local library to get a book on the subject. When I walked in, a reference book attracted my focal visual attention. I pulled the book down, allowed it to open, then pointed a finger into the book, and looked at the word “contractor.” That word was in a list of professions and occupations that persons of a certain type of “psychological type” tend to have. I had just gotten my contractor's license. I was impressed with the coincidence. I studied typologies for a year (Lomax, 1979). (Caution: don't yell after the experience!).

After I studied that subject for a year, I tried another LA event. That LA event was on Dr. Ei-

senbud's book (1967, figure 118), with a Serious thoughtograph with images of my friend and me in it. That event started my forty year use of the Research Angel in an attempt to understand how we could have our images show up in a Polaroid camera from over a thousand miles away, on the same day. Later, I found thoughtographical images of myself and others at identifiable and identified sites from ten years in the past and over twenty years in the future, from the time that the images showed up in Polaroid film. That bizarre finding did complicate the problem, but I stayed on it for all these years (Lomax, 2014).

The serendipitous or synchronicity type of experiences tend to occur when I am typing a report with the TV on for background noise. When I typed a word, sometimes, about every overly large paragraph, I would hear the same word, usually a noun, spoken on the TV. That happened so often that I would use those strange coincidences to guide my writing. Without the coincidental correspondences of similarity between the spoken words and the written words, I would take extra care and carefully analyze the ongoing words to make sure that they were appropriate.

The inference is that some of us sane folks are aware of the paranormal activity, and make use of it in the service of gaining knowledge about how the world works in order to help to provide the human part of helping the world. So far, this sharing of tacit knowledge sounds like the adventures of a mythical personage who experiences a series of lucky meaningful paranormal events when he tries to understand how and why those events keep on occurring. Even though my duties were approached through myth, the imaged person's first person narrative seems best.

The next step in the Library Angel process, after retrieving the book from the library shelf, was to allow the book to open or to stick my thumb nail in between the pages as randomly as possible, then open the book and allow my visual focus to be attracted onto one word (usually a noun). This second step of the process was always informative, if the first step of visual attentional capture was noticeably "strong."

The two examples shared above indicate that emotions and memorable events of great import are involved in LAs. This aspect may be why I would focus on a problem for many months, before I would get prompted to go to a local university library and walk around waiting for a visual attentional capture on one book. The agonizing over not being able to converge several seemingly disparate ideas into one explanation may have elicited the LA event, in my case.

I did avoid studying and memorizing all of the literature to increase the need to know by other means. When I chose to study the effect of mirrors on levels of self awareness for one full year at a local university I then experienced a type of reversed order LA event, and then I found the data in Dr. Eisenbud's 1967 book (pp. 337) after learning its true value, and it broke the code on how thoughtography works.

I consider all of my approaches to be based merely on using the paranormal to recursively and incrementally build up an understanding of the paranormal. The relevancy of the standard Library Angel events is that they were invariably helpful in developing an understanding, for many years. The LAs, including my co-operation, were invariably classifiable as "replications" of the paranormal.

An aside is that I was unable to fully appreciate the concept of pure acausal synchronicities, in that I tracked far too many causal connections to events in the world, with insider's knowledge about what was really going on, rather than merely witnessing the end product, which seems to miraculously occur. The overall process is still miraculous and supernatural, and it does appear to be completely synchronistical to the naïve observer, on occasion. The finding was that we are all may be steeped in an active observant and corrective invisible recording and influencing wave domain.

There is a feeling of the domain's complicity and purpose that is palpable when tracking temporal events across the world (Lomax, 2014). The simple purpose was found to be the minimalistic control of extractions of informationalized (named) negentropy from people and places in the world that is used to combine with records of unexpected events and mismatched actual and expected events, to make the ongoing recording of events appear to be as expected as possible.

Mismatched events cause harm to the place in the future. That place is protected from harm by errors made in all other places. It happens automatically. Wars and earthquakes are "functionally equivalent." The daily bad and good news reports are epiphenomena of this underlying reality. Apparently, the start of ethical ideas and the developments of machines used in the future need to be on schedule in their past time line to avoid harming the future. This claim is based on using a proprietary holographical code that mimics the re-

cording domain, to track theodical events back to causes.

The “comparator” of actual with expected events seems to control for matched events, at all cost, accounting for much of the random appearing theodicy in our world. A thoughtograph of the way that the world works is not just a pretty picture.

We need not be scared of reality. If we understand the basics of how it works, and help each other to keep developments on schedule, we can work with the domain, not against it, in order to reduce or even eventually eliminate the corrective extractions. In a way, our place eventually becomes the place in the future that controls all other places. Doing unexpected things to make a name for your self attacks that place in the future. The entire universe protects that place from all earlier places. With the recent advances in Time Symmetry Quantum Mechanics, my conceptualized idea made sense.

A caution is that the Library Angel may manifest in all endeavors in which scholarly and curiosity driven searches are made. The researcher with a good memory full of details, with the support of the search function on the internet, may be the physical epitome of the Library Angel. For the rest of us, relying on help from the so-called Library Angel can help find the answer or the most nearly perfect reference at just the right time. The caution is that it sometimes took many months of agonizing over a problem for the Library Angel to prompt me to go to a library. Sometimes, that was long after the time that the paper was due. Patience is required for replications to occur. The Library Angel works at it's own pace.

My dream, experienced back in 1975, did embolden my resolve to use remote viewing on freeways and, then, to use the Library Angel to find answers to questions in books in libraries, then, recently on the Internet. I have determined that it is appropriate to share my experiences at this time. The references to my work mentioned throughout this paper are available from the author. E-mailed copies are free. The sane human mind is able to safely adventure in the problematic domain, with some guidance and knowledge gained from the older generations. May you have happy dreams and helpful synchronicities!

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Lester Lomax wants to leave a record of his many years of experiences with the paranormal so to help others understand and deal with their experiences. For JEEP readers and for scientists, he hopes his experientialist's sharing of tacit knowledge may be his most useful contribution. At 76 years old, he is mostly involved in worrying about his 8 beautiful grandchildren.

A large, stylized graphic of a human head profile in silhouette, facing left. The interior of the head is filled with a dense, chaotic pattern of small, dark blue and black shapes, resembling a flock of birds or a complex neural network. The background of the entire page is a light, textured pattern of similar bird-like shapes.

# Accessing the Exceptional

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An Integration of the 59th Annual Convention of the  
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## An Awakening

Rex Finfgeld



On August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011, I had a near death experience and as a result I experienced a dramatic transformation! I carried many personal burdens from my past I just couldn't let go. This is whole experience could have gone one of two ways for me: one that left me in a deep state and of anger, resentment, and depression or one that gave me the ability to reinvent myself and my life. Because of this NDE event, I was able to let go of all of the hurt, anger, and negativity and essentially start all over again. Most importantly, I feel I am, for the first time, truly "waking up." I had always carried an undercurrent of anger within me. Now, I have a genuine and sincere love of life. My mind and the way I think have changed dramatically. I have new realizations quite regularly and seeing a slow evolution of my life in a completely new direction. This feels like a whole new level of growth and learning. I see more clearly now than ever. I can make sense of and able to visualize many scientific and spiritual subjects in way like I never imagined, some of which I am sharing in this article. I am now reinventing just about every part of myself and my life. I now live my life with love, purpose, and making dreams come true!

On April 10<sup>th</sup> of 2011, I literally fell out of a tree. I am a long time martial artist and instructor and climbing has been a hobby and source of cross training. I often climbed rocks, mountain sides, and yes trees. I was in a tree in a park in Northglenn, CO, just north of Denver, after an early morning training session with my teacher, Grand Master Willem de Thouars, and fellow instructors the day I fell. Two branches broke under me and I fell unobstructed hitting head first on to a concrete bike path. The police report estimates the fall at twenty-six feet. There were two teenage girls who just happened to see me fall. If not for them, I would have died on that path due to a badly punctured lung. The girls immediately called the authorities where I was rushed to the hospital. I spent a month in the hospital, was in a coma for five days, and broke twenty bones. I went through two years of surgeries and therapy to get back to health. I feel I am still healing now. When I was first brought into the hospital I had massive bleeding on the brain in three places with little activity. I also contracted pneumonia, had a heart rate of over 150 beats per minute (where it stayed for about a week), and a badly punctured lung. I was subsequently placed on a mechanical lung for several days. My lung kept filling with blood causing me to stop breathing. I went into respiratory crash many times and needed to be resuscitated during that time. While I don't believe I flat-lined, I was near death. It was initially doubtful I would survive. The thought at the time was even if I did survive my quality of life would likely be compromised both mentally and physically. Not only did I survive but I exceeded virtually every medical expectation with my recovery.

While in the coma I had a profound life changing vision! This was the single most clear, profound, influential moment of my life! I distinctly remember feeling like I was in a space where every possible aspect of existence existed all at once. Space/ time were irrelevant. Though I was unconscious for days, it felt like a moment. On the one hand this moment had a distinct simplicity to it but at the same time was infinitely deep and complex. While in that unconscious state I knew I was verge of death but I also felt I wasn't going to die. I knew it wasn't my time. I felt that I was being given or shown something that I was to share with as many people as possible. This "place," for lack of a better word, I was in was essentially an ultra-brilliant dream but as the ultimate reality. Everything felt incredibly real, crisp, and vibrant. It was more real to me even than the reality of sitting here writing this article, for example. I had no concept of my body or physical senses. What I "saw" was actually felt. I felt light, divinity, life, intelligence and especially love with absolute unfettered clarity. The light was more than just light. I feel I saw and am still seeing a reflection of myself as the whole of the universal mind. I saw the whole of reality as a reflection of this source mind. Within it are the contents of every aspect of the universe in all dimension, space/ time, possibility and probability. It was me, but with a sense of being as or one with this universal mind or source, that of God. With that, I did also feel the presence of loved ones who had passed. This experience with the source of existence and all that is, is something we all share and is inherent the nature of our own existence. There is a Mayan expression, "In Lak'ech" which basi-



cally translates in to “I am you, you are me.” From this experience I have a true sense of this expression of complete connectivity not only to each other but to the Earth and the Universe. I’ve never had an experience so pure with such profound ramifications. As a friend put it, “I stared in to the face of God.” In a way, I feel I got a glimpse of God and what is beyond this life. With this experience, I can see that, “There is life... Then there IS life!”

It has been suggested that our physical universe is an illusion but, to me, I can now see it is quite real. That’s because it is all part of the ultimate experience. It’s a reflection of that divine mind experiencing on a universal scale. The divine consciousness also experiences through all of us. This whole reality we are experiencing are the bits and pieces of Divinity experiencing itself through us and our experience as we experience Divinity. That means we are God as God is us united and one in spite of the illusion that we are separate and alone. This grand macrocosm is all the reflection of the source conscious mind or rather the imagination of God. If God knows all and essentially is the all it stands to reason that God is the experience of the all!

It’s amazing how there are times when something seemingly devastating can prove to be among the best things that can happen to a person. On the one hand I used to have a great memory. But now I do have issues with memory and with headaches. My directional sense is all but gone. But somehow other parts of my brain emerged. So many things make sense to me now that didn’t before and even feels like its second nature. I feel both blessed and grateful for such a profound, life altering experience! Although having said that, I don’t ever want to do it again! Lol Plus now I have a newfound purpose for my life that involves helping to spread the love, show all of the ways we are connected, and planting the seeds of positive change in the world! I know how cheesy that sounds but I actually genuinely mean it!

### **Biography**

Rex is an instructor in the martial art of Kun Tao Silat who in 2011 had a near death experience from a 26 foot fall. He is writing a book to be released in the spring of next year called "My Experiment with Gravity". He currently does talks on various subjects that are the result of his NDE as well as energy healing/ clearing, intuitive readings and consultations. Find out more at [www.VisionofLight111.com](http://www.VisionofLight111.com).

## **2nd Afterlife Explorers Conference**

**Melbourne, Australia**

**January 29 — January 31, 2016**

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## The Voidal Dichotomy

A. Ramsés D'León Macías



“I have been wandering this path for a while. With the flow of the seasons I’ve been taught to respect all living beings; it doesn’t matter if it is big or small, or if it can swim or crawl. Everyone and everything is a conscious manifestation of the universe experiencing itself, and if I’m not in danger, or its actions aren’t depriving me of life, why should I stop its heartbeat? Why should I destroy what nature creates? Why should I interfere with the transcendental evolution of a being? And then these fucking mosquitoes come to annoy us,” I ended my speech slapping a gnat as it was landing on my shoulder.

“Seriously? You have an existential crisis over a mosquito?” she asked.

“It’s not by mosquitoes per se, and it’s not an existential crisis... It’s the fact that we disgust, fear and despise certain lifeforms, and no matter how much we learn we can’t surpass it. It annoys me how much hate we have towards every being that was a menace in the past and the loathing to anything that disrupts our everyday comfort, such as bugs.

Humans have reached a point in which it’s pretty unlikely to be attacked by a shark or get a disease from a fly. We’ve even reached a point in which we can decide to not be carnivore anymore! But still, in our daily routine it’s insanely tough to live up to the ideal of ‘loving being’, trying to maintain harmony with everything and everyone every day,” I said with disappointment.

Not getting a response, I turned to see her.

She had her eyes lost in the vast sky, away, as if she had not heard a word I’ve said. I felt a bit offended as I opened my mind to her. But she always took her time to answer, it didn’t matter if it were minutes, days or even weeks...

“I think the problem is that you’ve not lived what you preach. Love is an instant, a feel, a flow. It can’t be analyzed and put in motion as a premeditated action. You will not be in harmony with other beings trying to understand how to love them. If you can, you will just do,” she told me with complete determination in her eyes; as if she had lived something that marked that statement within her as an irrefutable truth.

But even with such conviction, she was just talking nonsense. I’ve been long enough a seeker of truth to know what I was talking about and how learning lead to understanding the ways of the universe; it shouldn’t be just as simple as “feel” and “flow.” That’s just repeating the gibberish New Age propaganda that our century was filled with.

“I don’t know,” I continued. “They will probably just send me a sign or something...”

“It’s getting late, I should probably be heading home. Don’t overthink it. It will unfold before you at its time,” she concluded.

“I hope so.”

And we parted opposite ways.

I woke up to a high pitch sound and a shocking reality. “Waking up” is more a linguistic commodity, as I realized my consciousness was not in the place of my physical body. It had happened some times before, though it was rarely a familiar procedure; sometimes a guided process through floating to the roof and occasionally taking consciousness in other place. The validity of the subjective experience resided in the lucidity of the phenomena, as it wasn’t a dream, but I was surely not awake.

After the world stopped shaking and the sound went away, it was hard to tell if I was seeing something. It seemed I was just flashed from my sleeping darkness to a white explosion, but after a while, I realized it was just the natural color of that plane; an empty space of brightness, a white void.

The next thing I felt was the absence of feeling. I could still be aware of my essence, my perception of body; I could touch my hands and feel the pressure of my fingers in my palm, but I didn’t sense resistance from the external. There wasn’t a floor to be pulled at, nor a breeze blowing nor a sound to be heard in the dis-

tance; I was just floating in the snowed nothingness. As there was naught but me, a quick sensation of vertigo kicked in. My perception of up and down were absent, and as nothing or nobody was there to be compared with, I began to lose the sense of size; I was a colossal and minuscule being at the same time. The meaning and experience of time began to diffuse; nothing to measure the course of events, nothing was happening but me, just there, floating, existing, being.

I was surprised the initial shock didn't wake up my physical body. Trying to be pragmatic with my new reality, I tried to take a deep breath and close my eyes; though it was just a memory of a relaxation process because there was nothing to breathe, and I still saw all white even though my mind told me I had closed my eyes.

It was just a second, or maybe an eternity, but in the absence of sensations I began to sense freedom. There was nothing surrounding me, affecting me, disturbing me. Only a white void was in my mind; no perceptions, memories or drives to pull my attention away from my "now." If happiness needs a constant positive stimulus from a similar essence to maintain a state of mind that keeps pointing to a goal; peace was experiencing that liberty: the absence of everything but the individual perception of itself, only awareness of the "I," the perfect manifestation of egoism.

"Why am I here?" I began to question myself. "If I've just went nuts there's nothing to it. If I'm dead I hope some of my after-life beliefs manifest eventually... But if this is a lesson, being just here must not be the reason of it; what's more to it than there is to it?"

I opened my eyes and let them wander all over the light, searching a clue or hint for the reason of my new existential paradigm. As an answer to my questions, and disrupting the stopping of time, I saw a black point right beneath my left knee. It was small as a pen dot, but completely visible in the white void. I can't say if I began to be attracted to it by gravity, or if there was an invisible rope descending me towards it; but the peace I've achieved was soon gone and gave access to curiosity and intrigue.

I felt like a fly being pulled to the light, though it was darkness where I was heading. The blackness began to grow gradually at an exponential rate. Dizzily, as if the shadows noted my staring and returned a smirk, the small dot grew into a black pit covering my field of view.

I tried through will to force a halt and pause my incessant descending; soon, I realized I couldn't stop it. Curiosity became uncertainty and intrigue became fright as the white void gave its way to the dark abyss.

As the dimension turned into a half-black half-white realm, a sound arose from the pit. The noise came slow with a maddening chord; and though it could be heard, I began to sense it in my feet, rumbling. It began to increase its volume and size, becoming my surrounding, swallowing me whole. Shocked, I waited for the climax of the roar, but the growth seemed to never end. While my mind engraved the sound in the depth of my soul, I realized something viscous was lurking at my destination.

My reality was a polar dichotomy. A white nothing and a black something. Peace on one side and fear on the other. Me, floating in the middle, powerless to change my fate and forced to cross the threshold. Desperation kicked in as I tried to stay in the light, hoping for a helping hand, desiring a miraculous intervention that saved me from the unknown... But I was alone, trembling in terror.

The light faded from that plane. The roaming kept rising. The sound slipped through my body, leaving with a piece of my essence as it continued its way to the void. Fortunate are the ones to stumble in the limited shores of their minds, careless of the depths of other realities, never venturing farther than their systems established them to reach. That godless realm began to crawl through my eyes, through my skin. My identity borders began to fade as the darkness made its way.

I forced myself to stay with me. Possessed by spasms, teared away by the fangs of horror I held to my last drop of bravery. Compelled to deal with my fate, my vision began to habituate to the dark realm; I recovered the perception of size, and I was minuscule. Just as an ant compared to Earth, the entity before me reached no horizon and was becoming bigger with every second that passed.

Stunned by the vision, as if lighting had stroked me, I forced my will to analyze the situation. The continuity of the one in front of me was astonishing, but I began to see its external particularities as it moved within itself. It was not an individual being; it was a collective one formed by millions of worms that were as big as a child.

They seemed pale in contrast with the black abyss and moved erratically in a lethargic but continuous



pace. They had no eyes; instead, in the middle of their faces stood out a rounded mouth with some little but visible teeth.

As the first maggot was within arm's reach, the fear of the unknown turned into disgust and revulsion. There was a whole bug-made planet in front of me and there was no way to turn away from it. While I got used to the sound, I waited fearful and obnoxious of the first contact. As I didn't know how these worms would react at my presence, I wondered if their fury could be as swift and threatening as their rumble.

My feet finally landed in it, and no aggressive response was to be found. Though I was standing on one of them, they continue their erratic movement all over their kindred; some disappeared into the vastness of the floor and other emerged from it. Soon I was overwhelmed by the sensation of warmth. I'd just realized how freezing the emptiness was, having nothing or no one by your side. Their constantly movement produced an atmosphere of cozy heat.

Wrinkled and fat, they resembled a bug version of pugs. A slight grin was drawn on my face. They surely seemed harmless and the patterns of their chaotic movement was kind of beautiful to see; they all knew their place though no one knew its way.

I couldn't continue to appreciate the landscape because I began to be swallowed by the maggot-made floor. I tried to stand my ground but their bodies were slippery, and though I attempted to lean in one of them for regaining balance, they disappeared in the ground as fast as I changed my support. Assimilating me as one of their own, as part of their constantly moving system, I was driven to the bottom of their world.

As I was engulfed and surrounded by them, I tried to hold my breath, but before long I remembered I wasn't breathing at all; and as hard as I tried to go back to the surface, I was probably just swimming in circles, or more presumably, in chaos. I stood still hoping that the tide of worms eventually lead me to the surface, though I remembered the brutal cold of the nothingness and flinched.

I recalled that this voyage begun with somewhat similar sensations. As they moved a lot, I lost my spatial location. There was movement but every action led to the same consequence and as I didn't rose to the surface again, I began to lose the perception of time. Size didn't matter as well, for the extent to which the planet reached was beyond my comprehension. Nonetheless, this time there was a radical change; I felt. I felt their warmth, their heat. I felt hugged by a colossal being, sheltered by the collective effort of them all. It wasn't trying to segregate me, to encapsulate me, I was just one of them. My individual boundaries began to fade. I wasn't a part of it; same as them all, I was it.

I sensed the collective actions of us, always moving. Generating heat to keep the lives of all of us stable. I sensed the discomfort of the ones reaching the surface, the cruel cold taking away their life-warmth. The joy of being buried again within the protection of our brothers and sisters in the inside of the whole. And deep within our roaring movement, a beat. A soft but constant beat. I listened to it as if it were miles away, but at the same time, just next to my ears. Our whole planet-being moved in chaos but produced a steady rhythm which dictated the pace of all of us. It was a heartbeat of love. Everyone was being and letting to be. No imposition of what to do or where to go. Just rejoicing of being together by the collective effort of maintaining a constant warmth. That was our only task, our only mission; simple as it was, it had its aligid moments trying not to freeze, but most of the time it was just swimming within us all, at a stable rate, with cozy heat.

As I regain my individual Self I realized I was smiling. In the white void I found peace, but now I had found happiness. Being in the place I needed to be, more than I've ever been before. A gear within a structure that pursued the same goal as me. A system to which hatred was a stranger, and no one was more important than the other. As I let go my individuality again, being one with them all, I felt at home.

A minute and an eternity passed again, and a sensation broke my individual stasis. Interrupting my enduring slumber, I felt a contraction in my leg. Then two contractions. Suddenly, as I wondered what was happening, a pulling force was taking me away.

I was only me again, alien to the whole as I was being drawn towards the surface, unable to reach their oneness once more. I felt astounded and saddened; I didn't wanted to leave my brothers and sisters. My happiness was with them, at the reach of my hands, and I was incapable of stopping my retraction. Feeling my withdrawal, they tried uselessly to surround me, attempting to keep me with them, as I tried pointlessly to hold up. Their voice, the incessant rumble produced by their movement roared in agony, the whole was screaming for the one that was leaving them; and while they howled for me to stay, I was torn apart by not being able to con-





nect with them, to tell them that I was trying, that it was not my doing, that I just wanted to be one with them again. As I understood my lack of power to communicate or to halt me retrieving, I fretted, ached and grieved. I cried.

As the merciless cold touched my back I panicked, striving to return to them; and while it began to engulf my body I twisted in pain. One of them tried to keep up with me and for the first time I felt their sharp teeth, as he hold up to my toe. One last time I felt being more than I; and I felt my little fellow's fear of the unknown, his uncertainty of leaving the whole trying to retain me and his pain enduring more cold that he ever had felt. Finally, I saw him as the "one" he was and not the "it" I feared long ago. I reached to hug him and felt him freezing, he was dying. I needed to let him go.

I saw him reaching ground, embraced by his brethren, recovering his precious warmth and nostalgia took over me. I mourned for their company, for their heat, for their beat, for their love.

My essence began to accept its new place, away from them, and the shivering and the sensation of cold stopped. I found myself pulled to the light, with my raging soul screaming in despair. By then, I didn't recalled my human life, my memories or my experiences. All that was long whipped away by a journey where I found where I belonged, where I was happy, where I lived with love.

When I concluded my ascension to the center of the voidal dichotomy the force stopped. I tried once to move towards the black abyss to no avail. I was exhausted.

I was only me again and I began to recall what had happened, trying to understand the purpose of all this. Like a *deja vu*, I remembered long ago asking the same question: "Why am I here?"

All of it came back as an explosion; the colors, the aromas, the memories of the life I lived before this death. I remembered being human. My family, my friends, my work and my passion. I remembered an afternoon, long ago, having a conversation with her. I remembered waking up in the nothingness.

Waking up, I heard whispers in the distance. I began to feel the sun in my face. I recalled being asleep and realized that I was going to wake up soon. As I felt my own heartbeat and a great force pulling me out of that plane I hurried to synthesize my journey; the peace, the wondering, the fear, the loathing, the acceptance, the happiness, the love, the suffering.

I woke up agitated in my bed, with a warm tear still on my chin and bite marks on my toe.

"... It was just peace and relaxation until the darkness appeared, you know? Like floating like a feather in the light. Then the darkness engulfed half of the reality in a blink of an eye! And from the bottom of it rose a roaring sound; well, more like a rumble... Like a bass playing too loud or something like that. I admit the noise totally freaked me out, but I just wished I've had the power to reach the end of the abyss, to know what lurked beneath the bright realm. I know there was something producing the sound, but what can I do with a stupid invisible wall in the middle of space? How the hell am I to do with that? And also, there is a feeling of nostalgia that I can't shake off... As if I've missed something behind that wall... That kinds of sums it, so, what do you think?" I asked.

"Seems like you visited hell and mad peace with the devil," she said smiling as I ended my story.

"Don't mock me. It has been a while since I was pulled away, and trying to put the abstraction of the emotions into words is anything but easy. Besides, I don't recall everything right now. It just feels as an important lesson, you know? And sharing it will surely bring some of the memories back. There is also the bite around my toe, I think that has something to do with all of this," I told her with my arms crossed. I didn't have a problem being sincere with my visions, but sharing them with others tended to result in weird looks or condescending smiles. Moreover, I just knew that the sound in the darkness wasn't a scary thing... I tried to recall it and felt... Melancholy... Longing...

"I'm not mocking you. Even though exceptional experiences tend to happen in an individual reality, the changes in a person's psyche are tangible in the collective one. It doesn't matter if it was a lucid dream, an OBE or you were high as a kite; as I understood, it was true to you, and that's what matters," she ended. I was glad to have told her. We differed in many aspects, in many theories, but respect was always present in our chats. In the end, the problem with explaining that something "really" happened is the perspective of what "reality" means to each person.

"So, if it was a lesson, what did you learned?" she asked.

“Being honest, I don’t know... It’s not like I’ve understood something, and now I’m aware of a method or procedure to deal with certain problem. I didn’t gain knowledge, I lived something; a long experience that seemed to endure many lifetimes, but I can harshly recall. Telling how that changed me is hard to say right now... I’ll synthesize it eventually.”

I lost my sight in the fields before us. We used to sit there for the view; an exquisite diversity of plants, bushes and trees. Our city in the left horizon with its people and our problems, far away. A bee stood in one of the sunflowers and took my attention. Such an extraordinary being; working so hard, focused on the survival of their hive and even so, unknowingly, helping spread nature with their pollination, helping to feed humans. The thought ringed a bell and a warm feeling raised in my chest.

“Isn’t it rude of us to treat our symbiotic partners as scum? After all, they’re also a conscious manifestation of the universe,” I said as I turned myself to share my new line of thought, but she had her eyes lost in the vast sky, as if she had not heard a word I’ve said. I reached out for the infinite above and got lost with her in the big blue, as a swarm of monarchs flew by.

### Biography

A. Ramsés D'León Macías has a B.S. in psychology with his dissertation regarding transliminality. He has done a pair of university research studies on macro-psychokinesis and is an eager enthusiast of exceptional experiences and psychic phenomena. He's the editor of several educational art books and is planning to found the first parapsychological laboratory in Mexico City.



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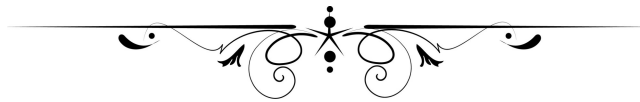
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## The Mystery and the Desert

Sean Hinton



Traveling over the mountain pass from the coast plains the environment increasingly turns from the known to the unknowns of the desert. Descending into the desert basin, I sense the feel of the world that changes in unknowable ways which are therefore hard to define. What is apparent is the temperature is warmer the air dryer and the earth barren. As I surveyed the desert plain it was a reptilian world with coyotes, nice, and rabbits the only mammals except man foolish enough to explore and venture habituating this realm. It is not a hostile place but one alien to sense and the sensibilities of life. It seems inconceivable that rodents and rabbits could survive with no water and only the dry bushes that dot the landscape for food and shelter. Yet the air is clean, dry and so rarified that it's possible to see for miles objects no bigger than a gas can on the horizon. Such a landscape changes perspective and sensitizes one to the openness and vastness of life. There is mystery in such places and it peels the layers of the psyche, as if opening the eyes to something that is forever now, here, and more. Filled with a kind of awe and fierce energy that hold the earth in a quiet stillness the desert vibrates in stillness. In the distance a car goes down the highway and then stillness again. It was a reminder that most travelers cross the barren floor of the desert, but few make it a destination.

For the small band of adventurers I came with it was a destination and a point of departure, to experience the power of the canyon and the water spirit hidden deep in the desert floor. The group had in its fold a college teacher, film makers, writers, musicians and marketing managers from high tech companies, bankers, and those of various other walks in life. All of us were arriving from varied points and assembling to walk into the arroyo. Some talked and ate food. I was not in the mood for either. This arroyo was filled with the powers of a being or beings that existed here millennia before humans arrive. Such talk was common among this group assembling in the desert. Talk of powers of the earth and powerful inorganic beings that can become allies and teachers. The arroyo would make it possible to enter into an agreement with these beings. We had set our intention as we waited for the darkness to descend over us. We would enter into the canyon shortly and make our presence known.

Such speculation of power and entities was both appealing on a curious rational level and on a romantic level it filled one with mystery and imagined realms. The mind raced with the possible interactions of man, earth and entities in relationship forgotten in the present materialistic *weltanschauung* of contemporary American life. I felt the fanciful and the skeptical in me fight each other for supremacy. Why was I here, I asked in my mind. I must have lost my mind, at least my rational mind to have entered into such an undertaking. Doubt filled me and I felt alone. Although I recognized many of the faces I didn't feel I truly knew any of the people here. They were comrades in an enterprise bent on being part of the mystery of this place. An enterprise I had now had doubts about.

It was the desert itself that was filling me with feelings of aloneness and fear, or perhaps anxiousness from the descending darkness and the foreboding world I was being immersed in. Either way the discomfort was filling me with despair. I wanted certainty and a knowing about what is real in the mystery of our world. Two versions of the possible were at war, the rational world as solid real and the real of the mystery. In the split of the world into matter and spirit what was ontologically supreme has always been a question of opposing beliefs. So perhaps the reason for my being in this place is to find the answer for myself and stop the warring battle that allows no certainty of intellect. There is madness in being human. The ego wants to know and the soul wants to experience the unknowable. Coyote and rabbit are happy without speculations and suppositions but not so for man. So the fear and mostly our aloneness, is the lot of our species. Again the thought why I am here, filled me with hesitation.

The sun having now descended below the horizon offered a soft light without the burning heat. Like a platoon on patrol our band moved up the dry sandy river bed, as I left my hesitations behind. For better or



not; I'm going on this march and by fiat committed to our enterprise. The river bed was a wide flat area that told of the fierce and abundant waters that have traveled over it. The desert experiences rain by proxy. The mountains to the west force the moisture out of approaching storms stealing the waters before it can reach the desert. An abundance of water then rushes onto the desert floor in flash floods that creates these dry river beds before this flood of water starts sinking into the earth. On a purely rational level there are powerful geologic and atmospheric forces in this portion of the desert. But these are not the forces we came to witness.

This band is a loosely knit group of people seeking both knowledge and power. It is the later that predominately brings us to this place. Our leader a teacher of esoteric and shamanic practices leads the patrol up into the now dark arroyo. We are silent and continue to move further into the mountains somewhat anxious about the rattlesnakes that are abundant in the river bed. The mountains rise from the desert is not in a gradual way but straight up like a primeval fortress. Looking up the walls forming the canyon in the semi-darkness are rough and raw formations not smoothed by water, but sharp and murderous with ledges and spears of rock. I feel the mountain walls rising higher and I feel they are devouring my sense of perspective. In the dark the mountain moves up towards the sky as if alive and able to stretch upward at will, there power is palpable. The band suddenly stops in unison. There is no directions given we just stopped. The teacher says there are lines that cross over the universe and in this place there are lines of abundant energy and power. He explains that he will use these to make available to us the powers of this canyon. It's an intriguing proposition. I'm not sure what this even means or implies. I am here as an observer. And so the minutes or hours go by. Time feels like we are here for a very long time but it could be tens of minutes. We have no watches or cell phone only the millions of stars overhead in the now pure black background on the sky.

So far I'm not impressed by this dramatic monologue and feel alone. I feel I am the lone sceptic. Why am I so skeptical of these others who seem so convinced? My skepticism annoys me and I'm filled with anxiety of being here with perhaps fools and dreamers willing to be taken in by this person's poetic version of the universe.

Casually he point into the sky. Talking about the planets and noting which are easily seen in the heavens. I follow his finger to Jupiter, and with a slight movement of his finger he says, "see there is Jupiter, jumping Jupiter" and the planet jumps up and down in the sky. Jupiter jumped not once but bounced like a ball a couple of times. Long enough to note it was the only planet doing this motion. This so shocked me that I had no way to put what happened in perspective. It didn't fit anything in my rational training. There was no question what I saw, yet as my mind raced to explain this nothing would come. My mind just stopped and jumped into another state. From that moment on I was in a very different state. Our teacher flew back up into the sky maybe twenty feet and as he raised his arms and a wind so strong came out of nowhere blowing sand and dust in a fiery. Blowing with a fierce strength the wind make it impossible for me to keep my eyes open and try to watch the strange play in this desert theater of the arroyo. I really don't remember much that followed, just the wind blowing in a fiery and images of shadowy creatures moving in the dark black desert. Later the wind stopped as suddenly as it began. Everyone was silent.

Hour must have passed. Toward the approach of dawn the band started moving down the canyon and the point of our disbanding into various directions. It was quiet and no one spoke. I remember the sound of our feet in the sand. I was not walking in a usual manger but floating above the sand as if skiing cross country style on powder. The long walk seemed effortless and took very little time. At least it seemed that way. But time was not possible to judge in my state.

I got into my car and drove to my camping spot. A state camping ground with only a two other people camping. I struggled to sleep and when at last I did fall sleep the dreams were numerous and bright. I had bright colorful dreams. The colors were so vivid and sharp they taxed the mind and nervous system. I woke with my head throbbing and surveyed the desert. It was bright, the sky was bright. Colors of intense Technicolor hues and high color saturation filled my eyes and made the desert an incredible realm. My body had an energy that was not physical in the normal sense. It was a mental energy of excitation and acute perceptions. Even with dark sunglasses the bright colorful hues seemed more than I could bear.

I packed my gear and drove to a small town in the mountains. This old mining town was now a destination for people to leave the affluent suburbs on the coast behind and eat at the many cafes that cater to these weekend tourist. I joined the tourist and ate a large breakfast. It all looked so normal sitting and eating break-



fast, but I was still very much in a different state. It took almost a week to feel my normal self. I was shaken by the desert experience and how it physically altered my state of being. For days the hyper-sensitivity and acute awareness was a constant reminder that something had happened. I thought a lot about the experience. Was it hypnotic suggestion or the encounter with the powers of a place in the desert? Well no suggestion was given that I know about for the things I experienced, nor any substances taken or given. The continuing feelings of being so altered also did not match the hypnotic thesis. I pondered this very little these days. It was and truly will remain an exceptional experience shrouded in mystery and in the desert night for which to this day I have no explanations.

### Biography

Dr. Hinton is a professional consultant, in private practice, author, researcher, and educator. He studied depth psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute, and received a Ph.D. in transpersonal psychology from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA. he also received a MBA from the Graziadio School of Business and Management Pepperdine University Malibu, California. He currently teaches in the graduate school of psychology at Capella University, and consults with leadership and organizational teams for several the Silicon Valley corporations in California. Sean (John) Hinton has researched extraordinary experience that related to the phenomena of the numinous as well as imaginal realms and the subconscious.

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## Imagine Not, to Be

Pablo Sierra



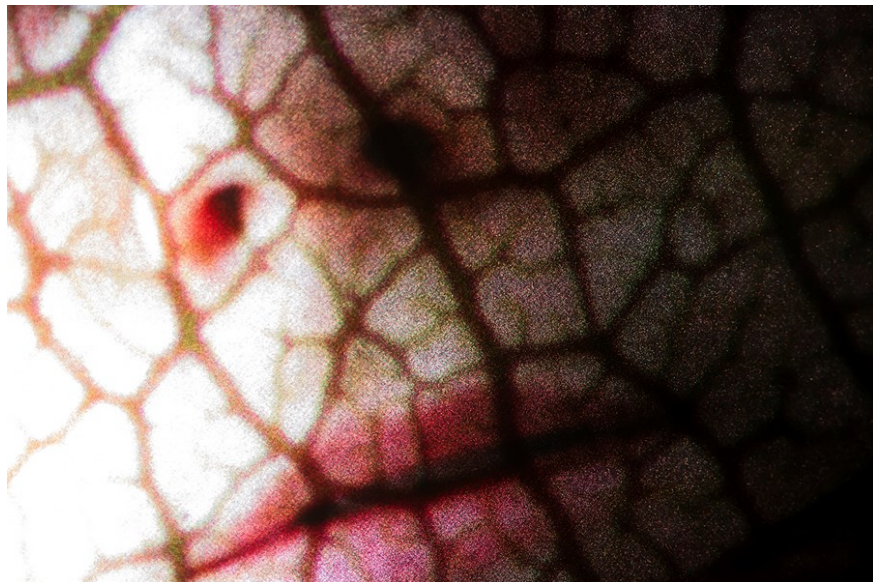
I am primarily interested in consciousness; I portray that realm which is not part of the palpable world, but not separate from it either. By photographing projections of intangible digital photographs onto a combination of tangible negatives and chomes, I am able to evoke the ethereal and luminescent realm of consciousness, without digitally manipulating the photographs. A reality inspired by certain models both in Eastern concepts of consciousness, and their modern physics counterparts where both matter and consciousness are just a ripple in a common underlying field.

I am interested in slowing down the process of creating and observing images today. To take a pause and start an inner dialogue; question certain meanings that we overlook in our routine. I ultimately understand consciousness as a matrix of meaning: trying to understand the world by assigning different significance and values to life's experiences. Through my work I question my consciousness and extend an invitation to bring certain ideas that go unnoticed in the everyday life, back to the conscious mind.



Untitled (Work in progress), 2015

### Imagine Not, to Be

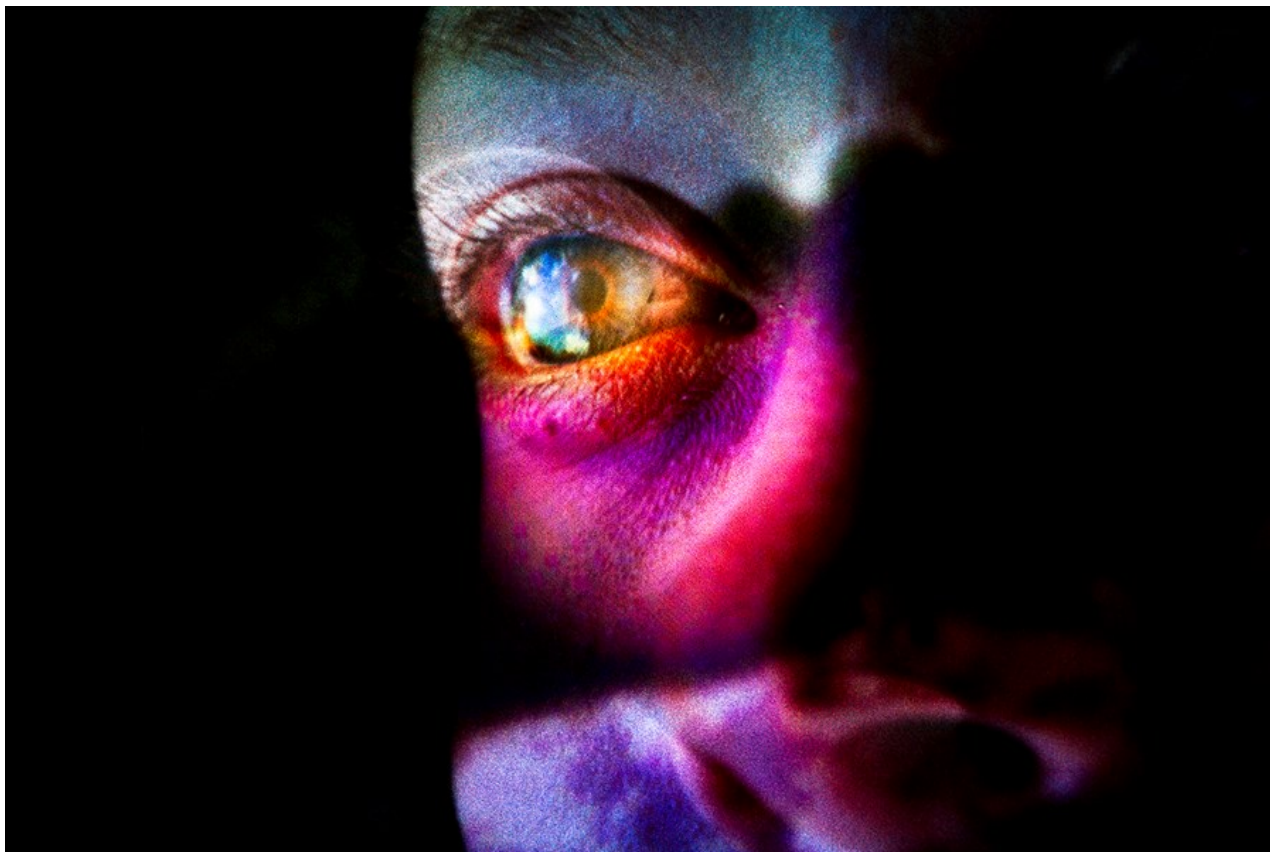


The Return, 2014

The project *Imagine not, to be* begins as an inner conflict with my own beliefs about death, which leads me to discover that instead of my beliefs, it was my conditionings governing my consciousness. Looking for my own answers about what death means to me, and therefore what life means to me, I transformed my perspective and the way I understand them.

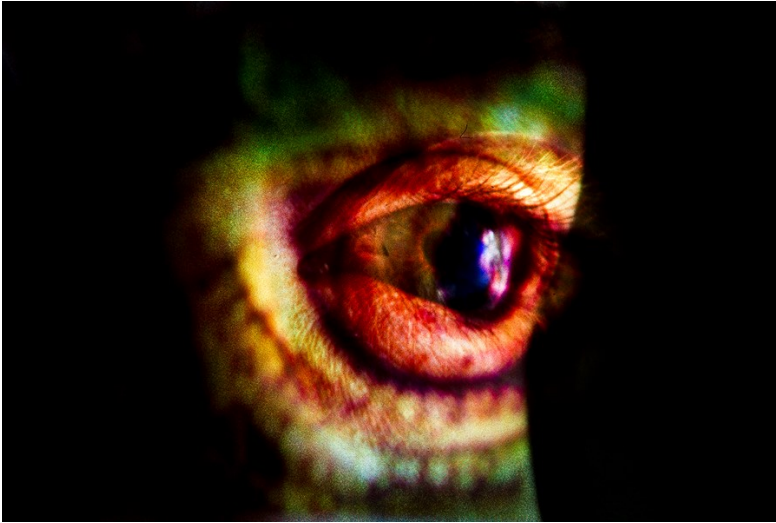
In this series, I unfold this inner change and present death and life coexisting; not as opposite forces necessarily but as opposite poles within the same substance; a serpent that bites it's own tail, a perpetual ying yang. While I found my answers through actively researching and questioning my own beliefs, this

body of work has no intention of presenting my answers as much as my questions and the paradoxes I encountered.

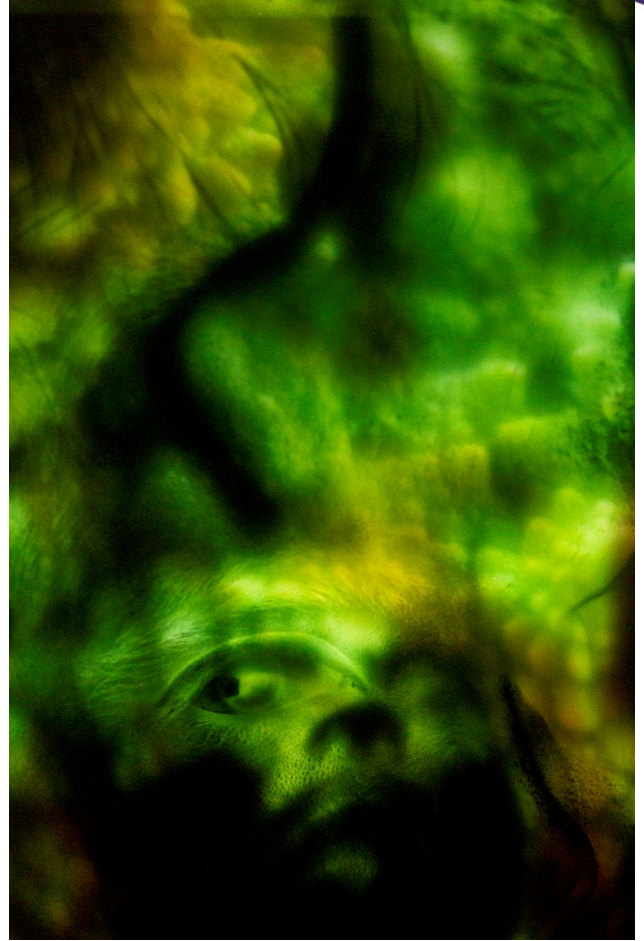


To Wake Up in Death, 2014





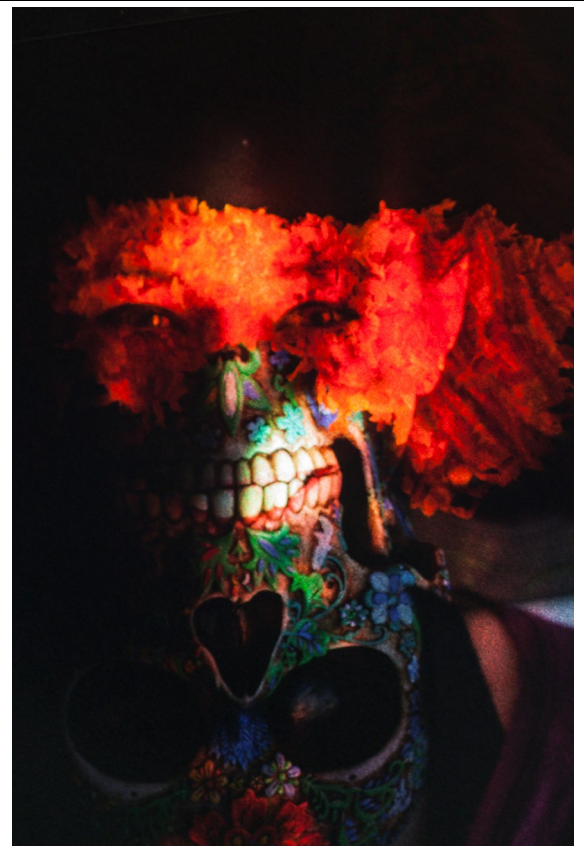
To Wake Up in Life, 2014



To Wake Up in Light, 2014

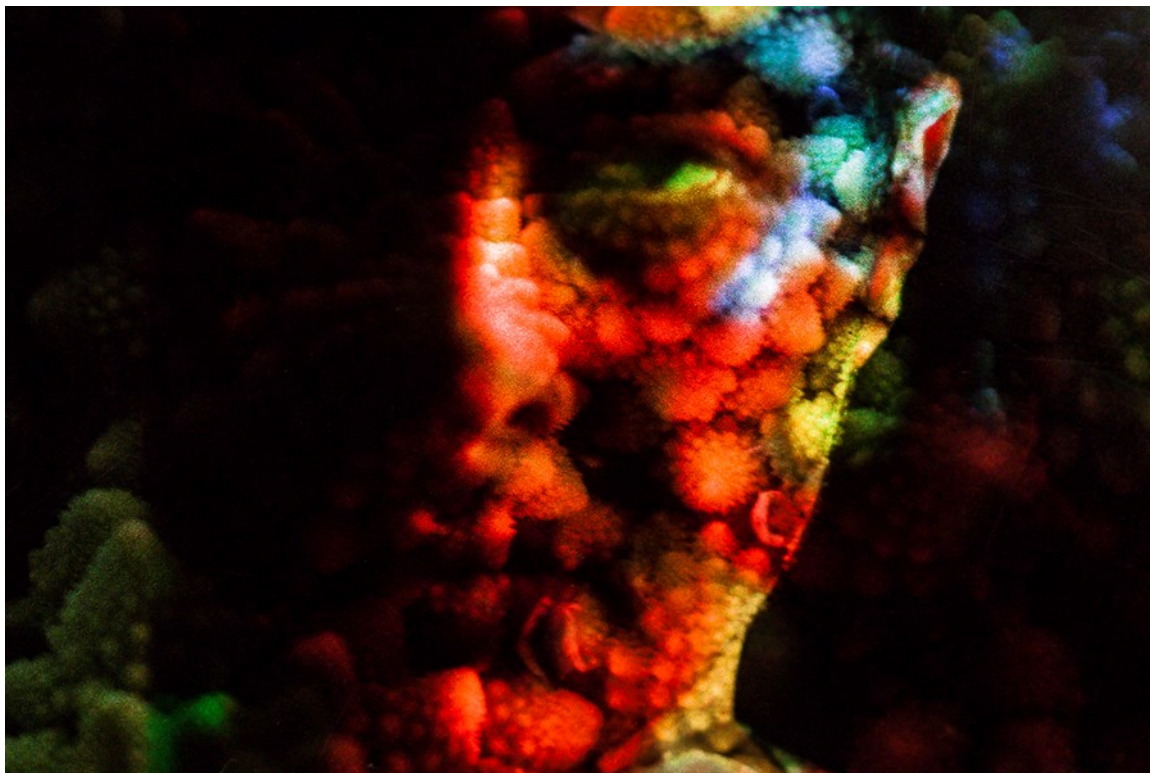


Evanescence (Self portrait), 2015

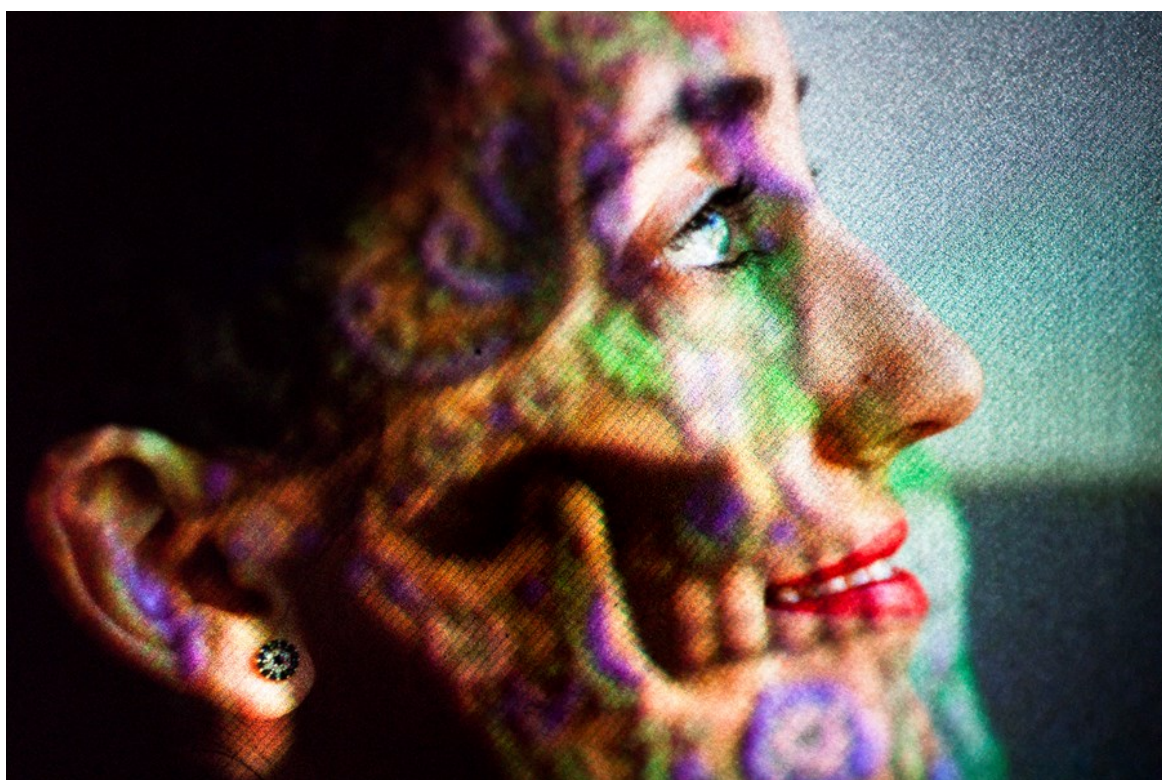


Ouroboros, 2015





The Ancestral Self, 2015



The Catrina Inside Of Me, 2015





Mama Cocha, 2015

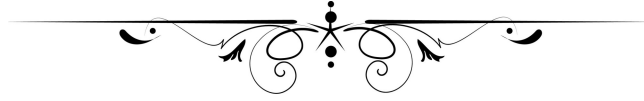
### Biography

Pablo Sierra is a photographer based in New York City. The photographs are visual explorations of his Consciousness, the inner self; a *Matrix of Meaning* that makes sense of the world with every experience we have. His photographic process manually combines digital images like projections with analog photographs like negatives. The result are images that invoke the ethereal and the supernatural. A place where the tangible and the intangible meet. Through these images Sierra engages in an inner dialogue, and invites the observer into his mind. [www.sierra.photo](http://www.sierra.photo)



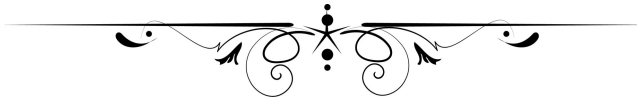
Permanence (Self portrait), 2015

## Peer Reviewed Articles



# **Beyond the Veil: A Short Introduction to 1900 – 1940 Mediumistic Art from the Netherlands**

Wim Kramer



## **Abstract**

In the process of collecting and preserving Dutch parapsychological and spiritualistic archival materials, we encountered several original art paintings and drawings from the 1930s. This triggered a serious interest in the origins, the mediumistic artist and the artistic quality of these works. In 2013 we started a preliminary study on these art paintings and drawings. This article presents a first impression on Dutch mediumistic art between 1900 – 1940 with a focus on the art drawings made by the, now forgotten, Dutch medium Mr. J.H. Verwaal.

## **Introduction**

Ever since the rise of the spiritualistic movement in the late 19th century, there have been expressions of mediumistic art like paintings, drawings, sculptures, texts, and music. These artworks were produced by mediums who claim to receive their messages from “beyond the veil,” not in words (e.g., somnambulism, direct voice) or the typical physical phenomena (e.g., ouija board, automatic writing, trumpet voices, apparitions, ectoplasm), but by the involuntary automatic movements of their hand producing a piece of art. Often the medium is in an another state of consciousness (trance) while producing the art. In general, the medium reports afterwards to have no memories at all about what they produced during the trance state. Unfortunately, unlike the written reports of séances and audio-recordings of vocal expressions made during trance, not much of the trance art objects have survived the ravages of time.

During the course of the long running project “Preserving the History of Dutch Parapsychology” (PHCP), in which we collect and archive historical documents on Dutch spiritualism and parapsychology, we incidentally came across interesting historical artifacts. In the old days these were either used as communication devices (e.g., trumpets, ghost-lights, planchettes, slates) or produced (e.g., art paintings, drawings, sculptures) at séances in the inter war years in Holland.

Over the years we obtained an interesting collection of original art paintings and pastel drawings from the 1930s produced by Dutch mediums. Throughout the 20th century these mediumistic art expressions were highly valued by members of the spiritualistic movement as they considered it to be “proof beyond all doubt” of the reality of the “world beyond the veil.” Art historians, museums, and private art collectors considered this kind of sculpture, painting, and drawing in general as “childish,” of poor quality and having no artistic value at all. However we recently notice that this negative point of view is slowly changing towards a more open and serious interest in these kind of art expressions. Out of curiosity we started in 2013 preliminary research on the background of the art paintings and drawings in our collection.

## **History**

Not much documentation about the origins of mediumistic art in Holland can be found. The reason is that most documents and archive materials of the spiritualistic movement, Spiritist societies and séances held in Holland dating from before WW2 are lost forever. By the end of 1941 the German Occupation forces in Holland banned all esoteric movements, including Spiritism. All societies and interest groups were at once strictly forbidden by law and all kinds of documents, books, journals, and artifacts dealing with occultism in general were declared of an unfriendly nature to the German ideology. The Germans immediately started to actively remove all books, journals, and documents from all university libraries and all belongings and build-



ings of “occult groups” were confiscated. The confiscated materials were partly destroyed right away but most of it was sent over to Germany and stored. Being caught in possession of a spiritualistic publication or participating in an occult activity was a serious criminal offense and could send anyone directly to certain death in one of the concentration camps.

Our research on mediumistic art in Holland is mainly based on short remarks and short articles found in Dutch spiritualistic journals between 1897 and 1955. The oldest reports we found were not about Dutch but German medium-artists. The 1902 volume of the Dutch spiritual magazine *Het Toekomstig Leven* (HTL; *The Future Live*) mentions the work of the German mediumistic artist Gabriel von Max. In the 1909 volume of HTL the German Mrs. Wilhelmina Assmann was introduced. In October of that year her mediumistic art paintings were on display in Holland at two exhibitions in Utrecht and The Hague. Mrs. Assmann was inspired by the spirits of deceased persons who continued to live on another planet and liked to show to us how beautiful the world is over there.

In the 1919 volume of a magazine for psychic healers we found an advertisement for an exhibition in Amsterdam from December 22, 1918 to January 21, 1919. At this exhibition, paintings and sculptures originating from “involuntary expressions” and “trance art” were shown that were made by artists, children, psychiatric patients, and “primitive cultures.” Unfortunately no further information is published about the works on display nor about the artists involved.

From the 1920s onwards, more and more Dutch spiritualistic mediums were expressing their “messages for the world beyond the veil” in paintings or sculptures at (sometimes public) séances: an example is Mrs. J.C. Calkoen (1866 -1944). In the 1920s and ‘30s she was a well-known and respected medium, an active propagandist of spiritualism, author of spiritualistic novels and a mediumistic art painter. Unfortunately it is unknown what happened to them. Only two vague, low quality pictures in the HTL magazine are all that thus far discovered remain of her paintings. The pictures show some of her paintings hanging on a wall at the spiritualistic art exhibition held in 1931 in The Hague. One of these pictures clearly resembles the work of the Dutch art painter Jan Toorop (1858 - 1928). Mrs. Calkoen mentions in an article that Jan Toorop, next to some others, is the primary deceased art painter that continues to produce his art paintings by using her as the medium.

In our collection we have several interesting artifacts including pencil drawings and a view small paintings that once belonged to the so called Spiritualistic



Mediumistic drawing by the medium Mrs. Wilhelmine Assmann. Picture published in the 1909 volume of HTL. According to the medium, this drawing shows how the world looks like on the planet where our beloved deceased are living. After publication there was much demand for reprints. These were made available by the publisher of HTL for 30 cents with a stiff carton back, so they

Museum. This museum was founded in 1935 by Mr. D. Heijnis from Haarlem. In reality this museum was nothing more or less than a traveling show of artifacts. The intention of Mr. Heijnis was to show to the general public the reality of spiritualism by organizing small exhibitions throughout the country. Unfortunately the majority of these drawing and paintings are not signed nor dated. However, between 1935 and 1941 Mr. Heijnis published two dozen short articles in which he explained the importance for the case of spiritualism of several of the artifacts and drawings in his museum. By pure luck some of these artifacts and drawings survived time and are now secured in our collection.

By far the most famous Dutch mediumistic art painter in Holland during the pre WW2 years was Mr.

H.C. Mansveld (1874-1957). He mediumistically received his first painting in 1920. His breakthrough, also in Holland, came in 1925 thanks to his participation in an exhibition at Hugo Gratz in Berlin, Germany. At this exhibition his mediumistic paintings sold very well and he became more or less famous overnight all over Europe.

We have some original paintings of Mansveld in our collection. The technical high standard of his works impressed the people in those days and convinced them that it was actually the work of various famous deceased Dutch art painters like Jacob Maris (1837 – 1899). Although his work was valued highly within the Spiritist community during his life time, today, as seen from an artistic point of view, it is considered to be less impressive. Noteworthy are the spiritualists sculptures made by the end of the 1930s by the two brothers Jaap and Wim Gmelig Meijling from Haarlem. Next to their art paintings, they became quite famous with their paraffin sculptures within the spiritualists society. Their artwork was shown at various exhibitions and they even made a film about their work. On the Internet, some examples of their art works can be found.

### J.H. Verwaal (1889 - ?)



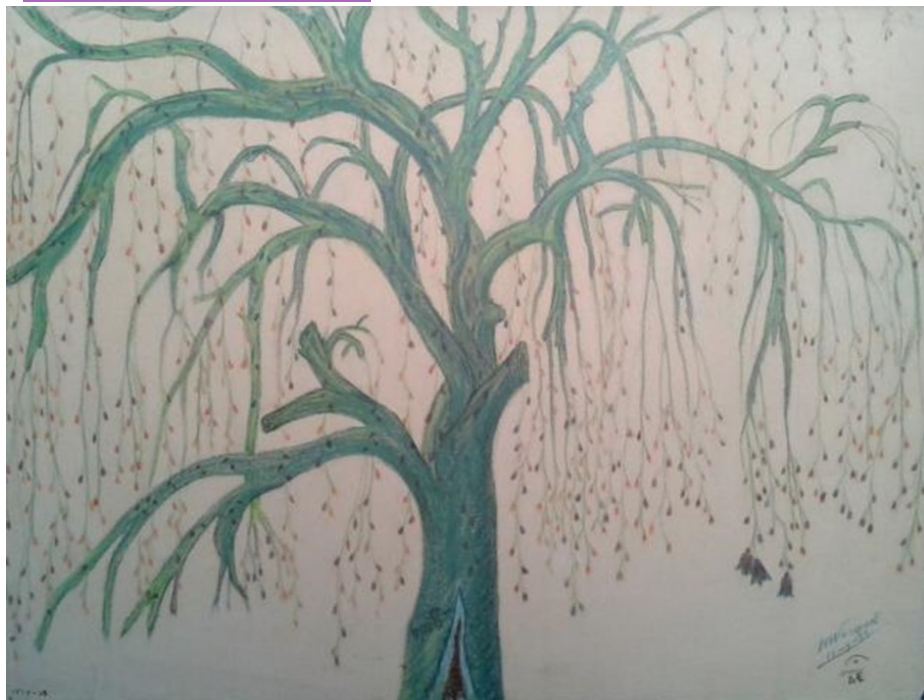
Mr. J.H. Verwaal, 1940

In our collection we have 35 original drawings signed by Dutch Medium Mr. J.H. Verwaal dated between April 1933 – July 1939. We know that the Utrecht Chapter of the Dutch Spiritualistic Society “Harmonia” has at least one drawing by this medium artist Verwaal on display on the wall in their meeting room.

Since some of the drawings by Verwaal have an interesting artistic touch, we like to present here some examples of his works from our collection. The first shows a tree in which prominently three fruits are hanging on the lower branches on the right hand side. On the lower right hand corner, the drawing it is dated April 15, 1933, signed J.H. Verwaal and there is a small scribbling that looks like an eye and the letters (initials?) A E. In the 1938 volume of *Spiritische Bladen* (*Spiritualistic Magazine*, SB), the pre-war magazine for members of the Spiritistic society “Harmonia,” we found the story behind this drawing.

At Friday night, April 7, 1933, while sleeping in bed next to his wife, Verwaal had the following experience: he felt how his astral body moved in a

horizontal position through the room. In his sleep he was wondering what was going on but instead acting on his first spontaneous response to resist, he decided to go along and see what would happen. Suddenly he found himself in a beautiful landscape and met a young boy of about 16 years old. He assumed him to be his deceased younger brother. This feeling gave him peace of mind. There was also an older man present who turned out to be his control spirit. Both took him by the hand and all together they wandered around. A little further away he noted a third spirit, a little old man who rubbed in his hands and was clearly thinking about something. They joined and all together they wandered around for



Mediumistic received pastel drawing by J.H. Verwaal, 15 April, 1933, 60 X 40 cm.



some time to have a look around in the landscape. Then he passed over a small path onto a wide, colorful mountain. The young spirit took him around the waste and told Verwaal in a friendly voice not to have any fear.

The landscape was exceptional, fresh in morning colors and transparent. The three spirits brought Verwaal to a tree and told him that he was free to pick some fruit of the tree. He looked intensely at the tree and chose three purple fruits from it. He put these three fruits in his pocket. The spirits complimented him with his choice of fruits that were called “love for mankind,” “brotherhood,” and “sympathy.” After a short discussion between the two older spirits, the control spirit told Verwaal that he was chosen to become a medium and to pass on messages to the earth by drawings. The smaller, old spirit called himself Paratti; he also told the control spirit to instruct Verwaal on the exact kind of pencils, paper, and paint he must use for his mediumistic work. After that both spirits escorted him back to earth and soon Verwaal woke up and found himself in his bed-

room.



“With Christ through the Crucifix to God,” mediumistically received pastel drawing by J.H. Verwaal, 9 – 10 April, 1933.

55 X 25 cm.

The next day (Saturday) Verwaal bought all the materials as he was instructed by his control spirit. That night he was guided by a spirit called “Beta” and completed his first mediumistically received pastel drawing “With Christ through the Crucifix to God.”

It turned out that the original of this pastel drawing is now in our collection. In the lower right hand corner of this drawing it is signed, “Beta.” On the backside of the paper, it is written - Mediumistically received by the medium Verwaal in the night April 9 to 10 between midnight and two a.m. Completed between 8 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. (Note: Sunday evening). Present while completing this drawing were Mr. and Mrs. Van Putten, A.C. Kruikers(?), Mrs. B(?), M.J. Verwaal, Joh. Versteeg, J. Baren, T. Verwaal – Buitendijk.” This last mentioned person is the wife of the medium Verwaal. The listing shows that eight people witnessed the completion of the first mediumistic drawing by Verwaal.

It turned out that Verwaal must have been very productive because in the January 1934 issue of SB we found a very short note mentioning a three day exhibition of 40 of Verwaal’s drawings during Christmas 1933. The author, Mr. J. Kakebeeke, a prominent member of Harmonia in those days, is under the impression of Verwaal and characterizes him to be “a simple and sympathetic medium and also a very gifted psychic healer that uses coarse sandpaper for his drawings.”

### Procedure

Dr. V.D. Hoogt published an article in the 1938 volume of HTL in which he describes the process of

how the drawings are received by Verwaal. Before starting the séance Verwaal makes sure that all materials needed for receiving a mediumistic drawing are arranged and on standby. During the séance, Verwaal is in trance and afterwards, he does not remember anything that happened during the process of mediumistically receiving the drawings. Often, the mediumistic drawings are made with other people present in the room observing Verwaal in trance while making a drawing. During the trance state his eyes are blindly staring without any impression, he mumbles in French, Italian, and other languages that he does not master in normal waking state. Verwaal never learned to master any other languages than Dutch. Once in trance he presses all the colored pieces of chalk against his forehead and returns the ones he does not need on the table, putting the pieces of chalk he needs on the edge of his easel. Then he sharpens the tips of the chosen pieces of chalk, like an art painter would do with his different kinds of pencils, and works, apparently without any plan for fifteen minutes up to two hours in a row. After completion the drawing is signed with the name of the spirit (in this case Beta) and Verwaal's control spirit will very quickly dictate through the medium Verwaal (by direct voice) what every single detail in the drawing means within in the context of the sphere of the earth. The witnesses hastily try to write down this explanation.

The process of returning back to his normal state of consciousness is very intense for Verwaal. During this time, Dr. v.d. Hoogt writes, Verwaal very intensively experiences himself to be in another reality. His body is shaking heavily, his eyes see everything vibrating in the earthly sphere and he would say something like, "How beautiful."

This process takes about seven minutes in total. Afterwards the medium and witnesses sign and date the mediumistically received image on the back of the drawing. We noted that many of the pastel drawings of Verwaal in our collection are not on regular art paper but on sandpaper.

### Biography

Jan Huibregt (J.H.) Verwaal was born on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1989 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. In his 1940 article "How my Mediumship Developed," he mentions that he had a six year older sister and that his parents did not have much time to look after him. So, as a boy he kept his emotional feelings hidden for the outside world. At school he was a "dreamer," living in a fantasy world, and found it difficult to focus on the teacher in the classroom and his homework. In his article, Verwaal describes a few examples of psychic experiences from his boyhood and at school. He was trained as an electrician and was employed by the Community Electrical Department. Once he experienced a 500 Volt shock, that, to his surprise, did not harm him at all. Another psychic experience he mentions happened when he and a coworker were cycling next to each other along the road on the way to their daily jobs at the local electricity plant. While they were talking to each other, and thus not paying attention to the road, Verwaal suddenly felt a warm hand firmly pushing him at the left side of his neck. The effect was that he fell over his coworker and they both fell down from their bikes. At that same moment a train was passing through, just five feet from them. They had not noticed that they arrived at a railroad crossing and that the station master had forgotten to let the gates down. The psychic hand out of nowhere had literally saved both of their lives. Verwaal writes that it would take several more years before he had to choose between his job or being a fulltime medium.

At 24 he married on August, 20, 1913 in Rotterdam with the 25 year old Ms. Teuntje Buitendijk. They lived in Dordrecht, a town near Rotterdam, had a daughter called Maartje and a son called Co. On August 21, 1935 bad luck hit the family. Verwaal and his wife were riding on their motorcycle in Rotterdam when all of a sudden the front wheel got stuck in the tram rails. The fell down and very unluckily his wife's head smashed on the pavement. She was in a critical condition and brought over to a hospital where she died two days later. We found a short note written on the back of one of his drawings suggesting that in 1936 he is married for a second time. Also it is known that he was an active charter member of the Dordrecht chapter of "Harmonia." This is all we are able to find out of the life of Mr. Verwaal.





Mediumistically received by J.H. Verwaal. Dated November 20, 1933. Description on the back. "1848 Spiritualism reaches the earth." Chalk drawing, 55 X 37 cm, received from the Spirit of Jan Hackaert (Dutch art painter, 1628 – about 1690)

### Further Research

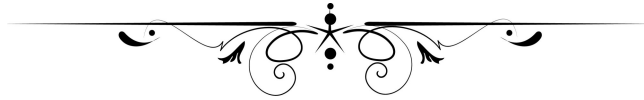
This article is intended to be no more than a first introduction to the expressions of mediumistic art made in Holland between 1900 – 1940. Most of the original works are lost over time but in the past few years we were lucky to obtain about 45 original art paintings and art drawings of that period. In 2013 we started our preliminary studies on this topic and assembled our preliminary findings in two catalogues for internal use at the foundation Het Johan Borgman Fonds. At the PHCP conference of June 2014 we exhibited five of our mediumistically received arts paintings in the meeting room of the conference. Ms. Joanne Zwart, student of art history at the Free University of Amsterdam, used our catalogues and documentation for her internship (Oct. 2014 – Jan. 2015). In June 2015 she finished her bachelor thesis in art history on this topic. We hope to find the time to continue this line of research in the near future and welcome any student researcher interested in mediumistic art to feel free to use our preliminary findings for further studies in this fascinating topic. For more information on our archive project and the PHCP conference, see [www.hetjohanborgmanfonds.nl](http://www.hetjohanborgmanfonds.nl)

### Biography

Dr. Wim H. Kramer, MBA, MBA obtained his degree in clinical and experimental psychology at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. He practiced for five years as a clinical psychologist specialized in counseling clients reporting 'paranormal experiences'. He continued his career for 15 years in several senior management positions in the telecoms industry and obtained a Dutch (Nyenrode University) and US (Simon school, Univ. of Rochester, NY) degree in business administration. Currently he holds the position of Managing Director of the Dutch Foundation "Het Johan Borgman Fonds."

# Clarifying Definition Issues around the Psychology of Exceptional Experiences

Renaud Evrard & Michael Tremmel



## Abstract

In several issues of the new Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology, there was a recurrent debate about basic definitions of exceptional or anomalous experiences, parapsychology, anomalistic psychology, and clinical practice with exceptional experiences. As participants in this debate, we decided to collaborate on a joint paper in order to illustrate our agreements and disagreements as clearly as possible. We reduced our arguments to a number of statements, each one formulated as a simple claim, and finally agreed on 55 out of 101 statements. In this paper, we summarize all the statements in four sections: 1) definition of parapsychology; 2) definition of anomalistic psychology; 3) definition of exceptional experiences; and 4) definition of the clinical practice with exceptional experiences. Our agreements may help to build a consensus for further research, whereas our disagreements show the epistemological fragility of this young field, in part due to the controversial scientific status of parapsychology.

## Introduction

In several issues of the *Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology*, we entered into a debate with other authors (Abrassart, 2013; Glazier, 2013; Mathijssen, 2013) about the definition of exceptional or anomalous experiences, parapsychology, anomalistic psychology, and clinical practice with exceptional experiences (Evrard, 2013b, 2014, 2015; Tremmel, 2014a, 2014b, 2015). It seemed important to us that we find a common language and possibly a consensus on what such a journal encompasses. However, our separate analyses generated many reciprocal misunderstandings and, with their increasing complexity, we thought our papers and respective replies obscure their goals and would lose the thread of the discourse. Therefore, we decided to collaborate on a joint paper in order to illustrate our agreements and disagreements as clearly as possible. We believe such a comparison will show where we need to develop our arguments and encourage others to join this difficult but fundamental debate.

In writing this paper, we first agreed on some basic terms. We prefer to use the term *psychic* and not the term *paranormal*, which we deem to be more ambiguous and obscure because its meaning within the context of paranormal beliefs is distinct from its meaning in the context of paranormal phenomena as researched in parapsychology. However, we do use *paranormal* where relevant. In the same way, instead of the distinction between *event* and *experience*, as provided in *Varieties of Anomalous Experiences* (Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2014), we distinguish between *phenomenon* and *experience* because these terms are more commonly used in the parapsychological literature. What is more, the term *phenomenon*, denoting an event or fact, can be used to emphasize that a circumstance in question is objective and observable, which makes it particularly suited for our distinction. In contrast, the term *event*, denoting an occurrence, can be used to emphasize that a circumstance in question is temporally determined, which is not particularly relevant in our case. We also agreed on precision in the empirical aspect of such phenomena and experiences; therefore we call them *genuine* or *ostensible* when relevant.

After this basic agreement, we reduced our arguments to a number of statements, each one formulated as a simple claim. These statements can be seen as the basic elements of our respective understanding of the psychology of exceptional experiences. Then we made counterproposals, where needed, discussed them, and finally agreed on 55 out of 101 statements. This agreement may sound weak, but it might become the basis of

a consensus for further research. The large areas of disagreement also show the fragility of this young field, where there are still strong epistemological issues, most of them linked to the scientific status of parapsychology. We summarize all the statements in the following four sections; 1) definition of parapsychology; 2) definition of anomalistic psychology; 3) definition of exceptional experiences; and 4) definition of the clinical practice with exceptional experiences.

### Definition of Parapsychology

We agreed that we need to differentiate between ostensibly psychic phenomena, which are objectively observable, and ostensibly psychic experiences, which are subjectively observed. Because ostensibly psychic experiences are arguably not always genuinely psychic ones, it is a reasonable assumption that ostensibly psychic experiences and genuinely psychic phenomena are not correlated systematically. This is, in fact, a common assumption among a number of parapsychologists. That is to say, the “psi hypothesis” may indeed apply to ostensibly psychic experiences, but we do not exactly know to which extent.

Still, provided that both genuinely psychic phenomena and genuinely psychic experiences exist, it is reasonable to assume that these are correlated systematically. This is only logical as discussion of a psychic phenomenon usually suggests that the mind is involved in some way. Thus, whenever an objective psychic phenomenon takes place, this is supposed to be accompanied by a subjective, mental experience (e.g., undergone by a person that is a sender or receiver in an experiment), regardless of whether this is a conscious or unconscious experience. Some theoretical approaches, like the *first-sight model* or the *psi-mediated instrumental response model*, assume that psi functions mainly unconsciously (Stanford, 2015). Nevertheless, these models do not deny the possibility of an influence of such an unconscious function on conscious awareness. At some point, mental experience, including conscious experience, ought to be part of the equation used to define psychic phenomena.

The concept of *psi* is still poorly defined and there is not one consistent psi hypothesis. Depending on how extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK), and thus psi, are defined and operationalized, different hypotheses are put to the test. For example, ESP and PK may be thought of as being linked together (as in the original paper by Thouless & Wiesner, 1946; or in the theory of psychopraxis, proposed by Thalbourne, 2004) or not; ESP may be reduced to precognition (Marwaha & May, 2015) or not, etc. Thus, when speaking of the psi hypothesis, we actually include all hypotheses that assume ESP and PK to be genuinely psychic phenomena, which cannot be explained away by conventional means.

When the psi hypothesis is verified, some cases of ostensible psi experiences, experienced in vivo and occurring irregularly or involuntarily, may be found to be genuine and thus may be called (*genuine*) *spontaneous cases of psi*. Reciprocally, unverified psi experiences are only potentially spontaneous cases of psi.

We agreed that historically and in its contemporary form, parapsychology cannot be reduced to the experimental study of the psi hypothesis. We disagreed about the **status of the psi hypothesis**:

- ✎ Evrard argued that we can use the psi hypothesis as a distinctive criterion to differentiate parapsychology from other disciplines. He offered to call every study that empirically tests at least one psi hypothesis *parapsychological*, irrespective of the combined approach.
- ✎ Tremmel argued that if the psi hypothesis were the defining criterion of parapsychology, this would fire the debate between parapsychology’s proponents and critics. Moreover, this would also lead to the prejudice that parapsychologists are all proponents of the psi hypothesis. However, not each and every parapsychologist is a proponent of this hypothesis (see, e.g., Irwin, 2014). The psi hypothesis is actually only one group of hypotheses among those tested by parapsychologists. Some parapsychologists test more skeptical hypotheses as well. By definition, hypotheses are claims still in need of testing, which makes them a bad choice when defining a discipline. Instead, parapsychology can be defined as the study of ostensibly psychic experiences and phenomena. These can be researched using a proof-oriented, phenomenological, or process-oriented approach (Irwin & Watt, 2007).

Because of this first disagreement, there is another one about the **boundaries of parapsychology and**



**its relation to non-psi hypotheses** (“what looks like psi but is not”):

- ✎ Evrard argued that the study of non-psi hypotheses is not specific to parapsychology: We meet it, for instance, in anomalistic psychology (as defined by French, 2001). Often, research is communicated or published in the parapsychological field without any discussion of the psi hypothesis. Strictly speaking, he claimed, such research should not be labeled *parapsychological*.
- ✎ In contrast, Tremmel argued that parapsychology, just like any other discipline, should not be defined by one or more hypotheses but by the subject under study. According to him, the study of non-psi hypotheses, which has ostensibly psychic phenomena or experiences as its object, will therefore fall into the field of parapsychology.

These disagreements are then applied to some usual objects of parapsychological studies, the so-called **anomalous/psychic/paranormal/exceptional experiences**. Do they belong to this field or not? And if so, do they belong exclusively to it?

- ✎ Evrard listed lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, and synesthesia as experiences for which there is not enough empirical support to apply the psi hypothesis, but which are nevertheless called *psychic* or *anomalous* (for instance, in the *Varieties of Anomalous Experiences* volume). According to him, these are misnomers that are prejudicial to the study of such experiences.
- ✎ Tremmel did not recognize the adjectives *psi*, *psychic*, and *anomalous* as equivalent. To the best of his knowledge, there is no academic publication that assumes lucid dreaming or synesthesia to be psi or psychic (i.e., parapsychic, paranormal) in any way or that applies the psi hypothesis to these experiences. According to him, lucid dreaming is undoubtedly anomalous because it deviates from normal dreaming and occurs infrequently (LaBerge, 2014). Likewise, synesthesia is anomalous because it deviates from what is common among a population (Marks, 2014). Out-of-body and near-death experiences are anomalous because they deviate from what is usually expected according to ordinary explanations of the world, at least from a lay person’s perspective, and occur infrequently, often spontaneously. Even though the empirical support they have received suggesting they may be psychic in nature is controversial and rejected by mainstream science, the jury is simply still out on their ontological status (Cardeña & Alvarado, 2014; Greyson, 2014; Irwin & Watt, 2007, Chapter 11 and 12).

In the same vein, we disagree on **the phenomenology of psychic experiences**, that is, how parapsychological descriptions of these experiences fit with the way they are lived:

- ✎ Evrard claimed that two gaps exist: one between the experience *in vivo* (in real life) and the experience *in vitro* (under laboratory conditions); and another one between what people experience as psi-related experiences (telepathy as mind-to-mind communication; psychokinesis as mind-over-matter, etc.) and what parapsychologists describe with their models (General ESP; implicit psi; PK as pseudo-signals, etc.).
- ✎ Tremmel replied that the first gap between *in vivo* and *in vitro* conditions is not necessarily larger than in other fields of research. People may have experiences in the lab that are comparable to those in real life. Attempts have been made to improve the simulation of *in vivo* conditions, for example using free-response instead of forced-choice designs in ESP research. Theorizing is still in an early stage in parapsychology, and there is still a lack of a commonly accepted, comprehensive theory. Future theories will hopefully reflect people’s experiences more accurately.

This discussion was continued through the definition of another discipline, which deals with ostensibly psychic experiences and phenomena: anomalistic psychology.

### Definition of Anomalistic Psychology

Non-psi hypotheses can be grouped into at least three categories:

- ✧ Non-pathological perceptual or cognitive illusion;
- ✧ Pathological perceptual or cognitive illusion;
- ✧ Fraudulent actions.

Historically, abnormal psychology considered non-psi hypotheses as well as psi hypotheses in the discussion of ostensibly psychic experiences. Around the 1930s, abnormal psychology was changing its scope and began focusing on pathological and subpathological constructs, excluding research on topics like genius and synesthesia (e.g., Hunt & Landis, 1935).

Around the 1980s, anomalistic psychology was promoted as a general approach to study ostensibly psychic experiences in an attempt to explain them with non-psi hypotheses. More specifically, Jones and Zusne (1981), who invented the term *anomalistic psychology*, mainly drew on existing knowledge to explain away such experiences, especially in the classroom. They did not, however, test specific non-psi hypotheses.

While we agreed on these facts, we disagreed on the **focus and boundaries of anomalistic psychology**, which led us to discuss the distinction between *inclusive* and *exclusive* anomalistic psychology:

- ✧ Evrard argued that every study that tests at least one non-psi hypothesis can be called an anomalistic study, irrespective of the combined approach. If such a study also opens the door to empirical testing of the psi hypothesis, then it falls in the subdiscipline called *inclusive anomalistic psychology*. The subdiscipline called *exclusive anomalistic psychology* only considers non-psi hypotheses as legitimate candidates for explanation.
- ✧ Tremmel disagreed with all these definitions. According to him, the *inclusive* variant of anomalistic psychology (or anomalistic psychology proper) is concerned with anomalous experiences of all kind (cf. Cardeña, Lynn, & Krippner, 2014), whereas the *exclusive* variant is only concerned with subjectively anomalous experiences and paranormal beliefs (cf. French & Stone, 2014). Moreover, when a study tests at least one non-psi hypothesis, it should also be called *parapsychological* as it is concerned with ostensibly psychic experiences or phenomena.

Following this disagreement, we did not see the **relationship between parapsychology and anomalistic psychology** in the same way:

- ✧ Evrard deduced that *exclusive* anomalistic psychology may be a discipline epistemically independent of parapsychology because the psi hypothesis is not held in common. *Inclusive* anomalistic psychology, on the other hand, can be seen as an epistemic complement of parapsychology because the psi hypothesis is shared.
- ✧ Tremmel disagreed, as he thought that both variants of anomalistic psychology can be seen as an epistemic complement of parapsychology. This is due to the fact because all three are concerned with ostensibly psychic experiences and their ontological status (cf. Cardeña, Lynn, & Krippner, 2014; French & Stone, 2014). Because he did not consider *anomalous* and *psychic* to be strictly equivalent terms, he also proposes the extension of parapsychology to an anomalistic psychology beyond the research of ostensibly psychic experiences and phenomena, and to include other anomalous experiences, such as lucid dreaming and synesthesia.

### Definition of Exceptional Experiences

The main debate between us is about the relevance of the new term *exceptional experiences*. Many debates about the definition of exceptional experiences occurred prior to our own, and we inherit these debates.

The first step in constructing this concept is the recognition that an experience can be interpreted as paranormal through two different perspectives: a third-person perspective as well as a first-person perspective. Within the third-person perspective (i.e., the perspective taken by scientists), an experience is paranormal when it is unexplained but in principle explicable by science and its explanation necessitates major revisions in scientific theory. Within the first-person perspective (i.e., the perspective of lay people), an experience is paranormal when it forms the basis of paranormal beliefs.

Likewise, experiences can be classified as anomalous based on a third-person perspective as well as a first-person perspective. An experience is objectively anomalous when it deviates from objective laws, norms, rules, explanations, or frequencies. At the same time, an experience is subjectively anomalous when it deviates from personal rules, models, explanations, or expectations.

The concept of *exceptional experiences* refers exclusively to a first-person perspective. It is not a euphemism for reductionistic labels for paranormal experiences. However, it is reductionistic in the sense that it is restricted to the first-person perspective. This may give rise to the suspicion that such experiences have no objective counterparts and can be explained by purely conventional psychological means.

The first-person perspective does not relate to a body of knowledge or pseudo-knowledge on what is paranormal versus conventional, or extraordinary versus ordinary, etc. Rather, it allows the individual to make his or her own discriminations, even if they are related to his or her own knowledge or pseudo-knowledge of the paranormal versus conventional.

Initially, Rhea White coined the term *exceptional human experience* to promote an experience-centered approach with a first-person perspective (Evrard, 2013a; White, 1990). Later on, she developed lists of all potential exceptional (human) experiences whose nominating power is more grounded in a third-person perspective (see, e.g., White, 1997). The scope of White's classification of exceptional (human) experiences seems larger than following ones, and researchers should clarify whether they use White's definition or another one. That is, researchers should indicate whether they refer to subjectively anomalous experiences (i.e., experiences that, according to subjective view, deviate from what is normal, which includes exceptional but perfectly explainable experiences, like being in love, cf. White, 1997) or subjectively paranormal experiences (i.e., experiences that, according to subjective view, deviate distinctly from the affected person's explanation of reality, potentially causing astonishment, cf. Belz, 2009, p. 5).

Belz-Merk (2002, as cited in Belz, 2009; see also Belz, 2012) redefined exceptional experiences (ExE) with only a first-person perspective. Additionally, Fach (2011; see also Belz, 2009) proposed a classification of ExE on the basis of a philosophical theory of "reality-models" by Thomas Metzinger. Conventional classifications of ostensibly psychic experiences (e.g., ESP, PK, out-of-body experience, near-death experience) are mainly based on a third-person perspective, whereas Belz and Fach's phenomenological classification of ExE, using two axes (ranging from internal to external phenomena, in relation to the subjective reality-model; and from dissociation to coincidence phenomena, respectively), is mainly based on a first-person perspective.

As defined by Belz, the concept of exceptional experiences should not be understood in reference to objective, scientific laws or norms. Rather, it only refers to a logic of subjective dissonance (paradigmatic breakdown; deviations in the reality-model). What counts as exceptional is left to the arbitrary choice of the individual: The exceptional is everyone's business. Furthermore, the notion of ExE does not imply any premature psi or non-psi hypotheses to qualify the experience. Tremmel added that using the term *subjectively anomalous experience* is similarly cautious. However, despite *anomalous* having a relatively neutral connotation in the English language (like *uncommon*, *unusual*, *unexpected*), it is not rigorously applied through a first-person perspective.

The concept of exceptional experience is still problematic because it is used as a set expression, which is unobvious. *Exceptional* usually qualifies something rare or superior, which may be subjectively or objectively so. Thus, exceptional experiences are usually rare or superior experiences. However, the way the set expression *exceptional experiences* is defined, it mainly refers to astounding experiences, and only subjectively so. It is also not that clear whether this term is a better alternative compared to other stigmatizing terms because *exceptional* is also used to refer metaphorically to mental handicap ("Exceptional," 2001, 2002). The applicability of the notion of ExE as a tool to destigmatize as well as normalize subjectively anomalous or astounding experiences has yet to be proven.



At this point, we disagreed about the **use of the concept of exceptional experiences in the clinical and parapsychological fields**:

- ✎ Evrard stated that conventional classifications of psychic experiences are based on the accumulation of phenomenological aspects, forming themes, but are missing culturally independent, definite explanation of their genesis. Thus, they are confusing and not helpful in the clinical setting, except to provide (transitory) labels that may help to normalize the experiences. He complained about the misuse of the ExE expression in the parapsychological literature (e.g., in the questionnaire by Brusewitz et al., 2013, using conventional categories), relying on a third-person perspective to describe illusory paranormal experiences or, on the contrary, ostensible spontaneous cases (Evrard, 2014).
- ✎ Tremmel stated that the use of conventional categories may be helpful in the clinical context. Clinically, conventional categories are used all the time. They are found in diagnostic manuals, and include categories with unclear pathogenesis. Some categories found in the *Varieties of Anomalous Experience* volume are better understood and operationalized than others. Still, most of them are clearly defined and can be distinguished from one another. A hallucination is not the same as a lucid dream, and is also not the same as a synesthetic experience. According to Tremmel, Brusewitz et al. (2013) did not misuse the ExE expression because they would have assessed third-person data. In fact, their questionnaire assessed self-evaluation data. Rather, they misused the expression because they only referred to a selection of subjectively psychic experiences instead of a broader range of subjectively paranormal experiences (approximately corresponding to the usage of Belz) or subjectively anomalous experiences (approximately corresponding to the usage of White).

We also disagreed about the **relationship between the profile of people prone to exceptional experiences and the profile of people prone to psi performance in the lab**:

- ✎ Evrard argued that exceptional experiences may be correlated with psychic phenomena, but this is not systematic. Current data suggest that the people who are prone to ExE are not the same as people who perform psi well in experimental settings. Some constructs (as transliminality) seem to approximate well the profile of ExE proneness but they lack sufficient empirical support as an approximation of the profile of psi-performers.
- ✎ According to Tremmel, the possibility exists that people who are prone to certain experiences are the same as people who perform psi well in experimental settings, even though current data do not clearly indicate this. Some researched traits, like transliminality, hold more promise than others. Notably, the actual presence of altered states of consciousness has rarely been evaluated, even though such states may be a promising candidate as a predictor of both proneness to anomalous experiences and good performance in psi experiments (Cardeña & Marcusson-Clavertz, 2015).

Finally, we have deepened the discussion about the clinical perspective of so-called *exceptional experiences*.

### Definition of Clinical Practice with Exceptional Experiences

Regarding the clinical practice with exceptional experiences, our main issue was the clinician's attitude toward the ontological status of the client's subjectively psychic experiences. In other words, does he or she need to remain neutral towards the client's first-person perspective or can he or she explore a third-person perspective, that is, the objective correlates of the experience? We agreed that in the clinical setting, merging first-person perspective with third-person perspective (assessing psi and non-psi hypotheses) may be detrimental. On the other hand, recognizing the genuineness of the events behind ostensibly psychic experiences and even assessing them experimentally can be helpful to the therapeutic process, but this is not a systematic process, at least not yet. Then, we disagreed on **the attitudes to encourage**:

- ✧ Evrard took a more conservative approach because he argued that the therapist cannot verify the correlation between ExE and ostensibly psychic phenomena. According to him, the clinical approach is focused on the first-person perspective.
- ✧ By contrast, Tremmel encouraged attempts by the therapist to explore the correlation between ExE and ostensibly psychic phenomena and the client because he thought this may be helpful to the therapeutic process (see, e.g., Gerding, 2012, on Tarazi, 1990). According to him, the clinical approach should be focused on the third-person perspective in order to make sound diagnosis. After all, the therapist may find a conclusive conventional explanation for an ostensibly psychic phenomenon, and the client may accept this. In the future, a systematic evaluation of the genuineness of ostensibly psychic experiences, for example, based on a psychological profile and not on experimental tests, might be developed to help with the therapeutic process. Yet the first-person perspective is still of importance in the clinical setting.

Then we discussed the knowledge on which the therapist and the client should base their interpretations, and the interaction between their respective knowledge. We agreed that, in the clinical setting, if a subject uses his or her own scientific or non-scientific knowledge to assess his or her ExE, the clinician should help him or her without substituting the client's perspective for his or her own perspective. General scientific knowledge on ostensibly psychic experiences has to be introduced very cautiously by the clinician, in order to respect the subjective processes of the experiencer. In contrast to anomalistic psychology, the goal of this clinical approach is to help clients to cope with their difficulties, and not to impose the best scientific theory available. However, the clinician needs an appropriate framework for assessing the client's experiences. Therefore, the clinician should rely on his or her professional knowledge in order to diagnose and treat the client properly.

We were not completely in agreement about the **overlap, in the scientific context, of the concept of exceptional experiences with the categories of anomalistic psychology or parapsychology**:

- ✧ Evrard argued that, in the scientific context, the concept of ExE could not be applied easily because the categories from anomalistic psychology and parapsychology are based on third-person perspective (i.e., the perspective of spontaneous cases, ostensibly psychic phenomena).
- ✧ Tremmel found that ExE can and should be studied and correlated with conventional categories from anomalistic psychology and parapsychology, just like it is done with paranormal beliefs and ostensibly psychic phenomena (see Irwin & Watt, 2007, Chapter 15). Research may avail itself of either a third-person perspective or a first-person perspective, and these perspectives are not mutually exclusive. Psychology, too, utilizes various perspectives. Some are closer to a third-person perspective, such as the biological perspective, while others are closer to a first-person perspective, such as the subjectivist perspective (Nolen-Hoeksema, Fredrickson, Loftus, & Lutz, 2014). The application of both perspectives is even more important for a psychology that, true to its name, is concerned with the mind and consciousness. Consequently, in the context of consciousness studies, concrete first-person methodologies are being developed, which link the first-person approach to the third-person approach and counter the notion that the explanatory gap addressed in the debate on the mind-body problem could not be bridged (Varela & Shear, 1999).

Then we debated the **clinician's stance on genuinely psychic experiences**, or requests by the client to decide for or against the reality of psychic phenomena:

- ✧ Evrard, following Devereux's (1953) argument for a "position of undecidability", argued against taking such a clear stance, as it may be detrimental to the therapeutic process.
- ✧ Tremmel argued that a "position of undecidability" is only appropriate if the client is only dealing with secondary effects, that is, with effects based on the client's interpretation of the experience, such as cognitive dissonance. A "position of undecidability" is inappropriate if the client is dealing with primary effects caused by anomalous experiences directly, such as perceptual problems caused

by synesthesia (Tremmel, 2014b). According to him, primary effects of genuinely psychic phenomena might exist independently of any personal interpretation. Thus, we might need to distinguish genuinely psychic experiences from pseudo-psychic ones as the former might need a distinct method of treatment, the administration of which is still a long way off, of course.

Subsequently, we discussed what a **proper handling of ExE** should comprise. The clinical practice with ExE should not be the only approach in clinical parapsychology. At the same time, it should not be assimilated by other approaches using a reference to a third-person perspective. While some combinations of perspectives may be desirable, they may also imply a renaming of these experiences. Ostensibly psychic experiences do not necessarily call for “paranormal therapies”. Psychopathology has its place in such a clinical practice, as genuinely psychic experiences and mental disorders may coexist. Logically, the unnecessary pathologizing of a non-delusional experience that is based on a genuinely psychic ability may be detrimental.

Despite this agreement about the challenges of such a clinical practice, we did not agree on the **theoretical models** that should be used. In particular, models like the one by Walter von Lucadou (1995) or Wolfgang Fach (2011) should be thoroughly validated before their taxonomy is used to replace the established one.

- ✎ Evrard found the phenomenological model of Fach more useful than any other, and especially better than all thematic third-person classifications. The phenomenology of near-death experience fits perfectly into the dissociative category if we look at them closely (Toutain, Evrard, Le Maléfan, & Glazier, 2015). An approach looking for unrecognized anomalous experiences, as Tremmel has proposed, is problematic as it does not start from the first-person perspective and may not have any clinical consequences.
- ✎ Tremmel found the classification of Fach’s model not suited to replace existing classifications because it is restricted to 4 or 6 categories that only relate to deviations in the reality-model (Fach, 2011). Naturally however, each type of experience is defined by various features. The rich phenomenology of, for example, a near-death experience would get lost if it has to be fit into such a classification. Even though a near-death experience may be classified as a dissociation phenomenon, such a classification is not sufficient to define such an experience properly. Ultimately, not every kind of dissociation is a near-death experience. Instead, Tremmel called for a differing approach that looks for problematic anomalous experiences that people do not recognize as anomalous, at least not right away. These experiences might well have consequences for clinical treatment approaches in the long run. There is no reason why a psychology of anomalous experiences should be restricted to only the first-person perspective.

## Conclusion

This joint paper may look unconventional to readers. We do not want to force ourselves to speak with only one voice. We believe that the clarification of definitions may help to resolve the controversies surrounding the psychology of exceptional experiences, a field that still needs to lay solid foundations.

Evrard concluded that parapsychology and anomalistic psychology must be more clearly differentiated. He suggested that testing the psi hypothesis may provide a clear-cut criterion between *exclusive anomalistic psychology* and *parapsychology*; and that *inclusive anomalistic psychology* refers to the combined testing of psi and non-psi hypotheses. These epistemological boundaries may be the basis for a better understanding of concepts like *anomalous*, *exceptional*, and *psychic experiences*, which are confusing if we do not fully explain our approach. Perhaps these confusions have been useful in promoting parapsychology as a conventional science, but the rise of academic anomalistic psychology and the pressure of its institutional context seem to have dissolved parapsychology’s unique characteristics. The core of parapsychological research is moving away from phenomena and toward experiences and beliefs, and we have many signs of a growing skepticism of the psi hypothesis in the parapsychological community. Reciprocally, people who want to study ostensibly psychic experiences without being labeled as proponents of the psi hypothesis (as some clinicians do) need to be recognized, instead of being forced to distance themselves through a criticism of the legitimacy of the para-



psychological approach (e.g., Mathijssen, 2013). Various distinct approaches should be combined for the best success (Evrard, 2013b).

Tremmel concluded that an anomalistic psychology researching anomalous experiences, such as lucid dreaming, ostensibly psychic experiences, and synesthesia (Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2014), is a useful discipline. At the same time, parapsychology can be conceived of as its subdiscipline, researching only ostensibly psychic experiences and phenomena. Although the terms *anomalous* and *exceptional* have been used to relate to topics of parapsychology in the past, such usage is not incisive and thus unfortunate (see Tremmel, 2014a, 2014b). Even though people having exceptional experiences can be a target group for therapeutic intervention, this is not the usual target group in conventional clinical settings. The third-person perspective is still essential for making diagnosis. A clinical practice addressing exceptional experiences from a first-person perspective may be neutral. However, it becomes reductive if such a practice does not also look at experiences from a third-person perspective. Researchers as well as clinicians ought to not only take the experients and their beliefs seriously, but also the experiences themselves. Consequently, an anomalistic psychology that uses conventional scientific methods and categories is needed. Any hypothesis may be tested in order to determine the ontological status of objectively anomalous experiences, regardless of whether the experient recognizes them as anomalous, and new categories may emerge. Doing so would enable scientific progress and create a solid foundation for a clinical practice with anomalous experiences.

We hope other contributors will help to reconcile our perspectives, or firmly support one of our arguments in favor of the other.

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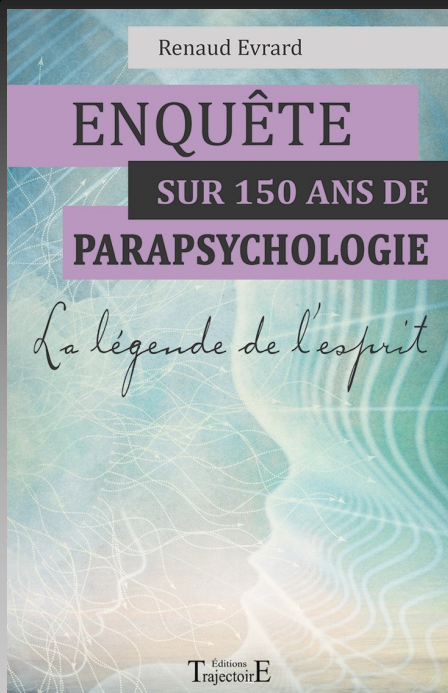
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### Biography

Renaud Evrard is a clinical psychologist and an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Lorraine (Nancy, France). In 2012, he obtained a Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Rouen, with a thesis on clinical differential practice with exceptional experiences. With Thomas Rabeyron, he co-founded in 2009 the *Center for Information, Research and Counselling on Exceptional Experiences* ([www.circee.org](http://www.circee.org)).

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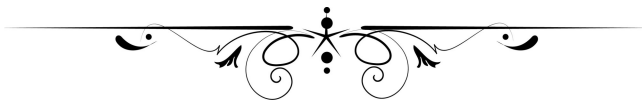
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## From the Vaults



# The Case for Survival

## An Interview with William Roll

*PRF Director William G. Roll was among a number of researchers and scholars of the paranormal questioned recently by the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship on survival evidence. Robert H. Ashby, Director of Research and Education for the Fellowship, asked the questions.*

Ashby: What is your personal view of survival after death? Do you think it is certain, probable, possible, improbable, or impossible?

Roll: Before I can answer that question, I need to make clear what kind of survival I am talking about. There can be at least two types. There may be continuation of human personality after death and there may be continuation of consciousness. Personality includes traits, memories, and special skills. These are generally considered as "belonging to" a particular individual. That of course is not to say that there is any such private ownership. The work in ESP raises the question in which sense my emotions and thoughts belong to me if they can be directly experienced also by you, and in what sense your thoughts and emotions are yours, if some of them originated in my brain or mind. Nevertheless, there are certain temporal and spatial identification marks which enable us to say that a certain past event or current personality trait is associated with my physical organism rather than with yours (or at least associated more with mine than with yours).

Consciousness or awareness refers to experience. In our ordinary waking state, consciousness easily becomes relational and we speak of being conscious *of* something — for instance, I may be conscious of a sweet taste or of a beautiful view. But the "I" is extra: We can be aware or conscious without tagging the experience as "mine." It is when we stop and think, when we leave the immediate stream of awareness, that we identify a segment of this as *my* experience of something.

In altered states of consciousness, experiences cannot always be related to any I or personality — even in retrospect. In some

dreams, in moments of absorption, and at other times, the experience is just that, without any ego or personality to reflect back on. But most of us have not paid serious attention to that aspect of ourselves.

When we think about the survival question, that activity in itself is generally the product of our ordinary waking state of consciousness. Thus we are immediately faced with an I or personality around which this state of consciousness seems to revolve. Our culture and education focus on this type of experience as representing the real me and the real world. When we recall our dreams and other forms of altered states we rarely believe they represent anything other than some kind of illusion. We therefore think of ourselves in terms of individual existence both when we consider this life and when we speculate about the next.

However, people sometimes claim that they have been conscious — indeed, optimally so — without identifying with a separate personality or self. There can be experience, then, without any particular self or personality. And vice versa, there can be evidence for an identifiable personality — or train of memories — without any (identifiable) consciousness. The Gordon Davis case and cases of psychometry, where the ESP percipient may "recall" events from the life of another person, are examples (see THETA 39-40).

In answer to your first question, finally, I must respond separately with respect to the continuation or survival of personality and of consciousness. In both cases, it happens, my reply is "probable" — but obviously for different reasons since we deal with different types of evidence.

Ashby: Has your position concerning survival changed appreciably over the past several years? If so, why? If not, why not?

## The question remains: Survival of what ?

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**Roll:** Yes, I consider the case for the survival of personality to have been strengthened in recent years mainly as a result of Dr. Stevenson's reincarnation studies. I also think that drop-in cases, the cross correspondences, death-bed experiences, haunting apparitions and other data contribute to the evidence. Of course much of this material is weak on scientific grounds, but collectively it becomes interesting. And there is consistency in the findings produced over many years and in many places.

**Ashby:** What about the survival of consciousness?

**Roll:** Two types of evidence have led to my belief that consciousness probably continues: research findings in parapsychology and personal experiences. In our ordinary state of awareness we have created the illusion of a private world — or rather our parents, teachers, and culture have programmed us to see the world in that way — where we define ourselves in terms of certain limitations (traits, memories, etc.), which describe a space we call "me," and from which we seem to observe an outside world. This outside world, which may include all or some of our body, in part consists of a different substance from our "real me," or "mind." We say it is "material"; and in part it consists of an assemblage of "you's" and "they's," similar to the "me." To the extent that we can recognize ourself in the environment, we see other me's, and to the extent that we cannot see ourself in the environment, we see this foreign material or inanimate substance. However, the findings of parapsychology require a revision of this way of looking at things. The research in telepathy or GESP suggests that there is no private me or you and the work in clairvoyance and PK suggests that there is no sharp distinction between this me and the so-called material world.

If in fact my consciousness does not only belong to my mind or body but to others as well, then it is difficult to suppose that this consciousness will cease when my mind or body ceases. On the contrary, it is reasonable to suppose that the loss of the brain will result in an *increase* in awareness since one of the main functions of the brain seems to be to screen out information which does not serve biological life.

I have myself had OBE's and experiences of field consciousness. These have been entirely unverified as to their objectivity, but they have left a strong subjective "feel" about unembodied existence both with a self or ego (OBE's) and without (field experiences).

**Ashby:** Has your position regarding the continuation of consciousness changed much in recent years?

**Roll:** Yes. As a result of my field experiences, the general work in parapsychology, and recent work at the PRF and elsewhere on OBE's.

**Ashby:** Do you believe the survival issue can be determined to a satisfactory degree of probability or improbability by those empirical means available to parapsychologists? If so, how do you envisage it being accomplished? If not, why not?

**Roll:** Yes. Survival of *personality* can be explored empirically following traditional lines of research. Of course it must be remembered that since there apparently is no such thing as an independent encapsulated personality *before* death, we cannot reasonably expect to find one *after* death.

To determine whether consciousness continues, as far as I am concerned, the best approach is to explore it where we are certain of finding it, that is *in* ourselves. Since we are concerned with the continuation or survival of consciousness, then this consciousness also exists *before* death and presumably can be studied there.

**Ashby:** What is your view of the pertinence of OBE cases to survival? Do you agree with Ducasse that any analogous conclusions about consciousness being able to operate apart from the body based on OBE's is inadmissible evidence for a post mortem survivable potential since the brain is extant in the OBE and is not in the post mortem state?



**Roll:** In the typical or traditional OBE, consciousness is experienced in terms of something closely akin to the waking, ordinary self or personality. OBE's are thus relevant both to studies of the continuation of personality and of consciousness.

Ducasse raised a crucial question about OBE's, which equally applies to other forms of extra-somatic experiences such as field consciousness. However, in my opinion he underestimated the possibilities of current research methods, particularly those of psychophysiology. Of course this work was not as prominent during his lifetime as it is now, only a few years after his death. Though it is still uncertain how much, say, the EEG reveals about mental life, a few correlations seem fairly stable — and there is universal agreement, I believe, to define death in terms of a flat EEG. Thus, should we find evidence of OBE's or field experiences when the person has a flat EEG, this would in my opinion be strong evidence that consciousness is not a function of the central nervous system and that awareness will continue when the brain is permanently inoperative. Of course in this example I assume that the clinically dead person revives to tell — and verify — his experiences.

**Ashby:** Do you agree with Tyrrell and Hart that post mortem apparitions are strong evidence for survival? Why?

**Roll:** As with all apparent psi phenomena, there are two questions to consider: Are the phenomena *genuine* (i.e. cases of ESP or PK)? And if so, what is their explanation?

If we accept post mortem apparitions as genuine, they suggest the survival of personality or part of it. If, as Hart claims, they furthermore in all essential respects resemble OBE's by the living, it is reasonable to suppose that these apparitions are conscious too. However, just as there are Gordon Davis communicators, so there are apparitions of the living which apparently are indistinguishable from apparitions of the dead and from OBE apparitions, but which do not involve any conscious experience by the person whose apparition is seen (see THETA 39-40). I am afraid, therefore, that Hart's argument cuts both ways.

**Ashby:** Do you consider that there is any evidence bearing on survival from any of the well-attested poltergeist (RSPK) cases?

**Roll:** Certainly in the cases I have stud-

ied, there's no evidence that *dead* people are involved. But RSPK cases suggest that the unconscious self may extend into the environment of the body and, in some cases, that this aspect of the self borders on consciousness. More importantly perhaps, RSPK cases, with all the patterns they have revealed about living agency PK, offer a comparison with haunting cases. If the latter should turn out to be quite distinct from RSPK, this would indicate a different process — perhaps one involving discarnate agency for the haunting cases.

**Ashby:** Do you feel that cases of ostensible possession are suggestive of survival?

**Roll:** Possibly suggestive of survival of personality — if we had enough good (i.e. definitely *psi*) cases.

**Ashby:** What is your opinion of Gardner Murphy's suggestion of field theory's bearing on survival?

**Roll:** I think that the notion of a field is much more consistent with the facts of parapsychology, and of science generally, than the atomistic ideas which have guided so much of our thinking and research — in parapsychology and elsewhere.

**Ashby:** What about Hornell Hart's "persona theory"?

**Roll:** I believe Hart's theory goes something like this: A deceased or living person provides the stimulus for a communication or apparition. This stimulus is then shaped by the psychological sets of, say, a medium and the investigator to provide a composite persona which then appears as an apparition or communicates through the medium. This theory — which is quite consistent with the notion of a psi field and with Murphy's inter-personal field — strikes me as quite plausible. Indeed even the living may be "personae" constructed by genetic and environmental factors.

Hart used the idea for his survival theory but I cannot follow him easily here. Thus who or what was the stimulus for the Gordon David "persona"?

**Ashby:** How impressive do you find Karlis Osis' findings of deathbed experiences among medical personnel?

**Roll:** Osis' studies are important with respect to our understanding of human consciousness as the time of death approaches. For example, it is interesting that the deterioration of the human organism is often

accompanied by mood elevations and expanded states of consciousness. This work will gain in importance as it is extended to other cultures and as the parapsychological dimensions of deathbed experiences are more deeply probed. Osis has himself just completed such a study in India, in addition to his previous survey in the States.

Ashby: Ian Stevenson has written: "In mediumistic communications we have the problem of proving that someone clearly dead still lives. In evaluating apparent memories of former incarnations, the problem consists in judging whether someone clearly living once died. This may prove the easier task and, if pursued with sufficient zeal and success, may contribute decisively to the question of survival." How do you feel about the relative fruitfulness of these two approaches?

Roll: I see the reincarnation work as complementing rather than supplanting mediumistic research. Both approaches focus on the survivability of *personality*.

Ashby: What, in your opinion, are the greatest obstacles to survival research?

Roll: The greatest obstacle to meaningful work in survival, as in parapsychology generally, consists in our unexpressed basic assumptions regarding our subject matter. A second serious obstacle is insufficient funding. But of the two, paucity of concepts and cash, the former is the more serious because it makes us look in the wrong places for the important facts. Our thinking and general research approach have come from the behavioral sciences and these, in turn, usually operate in the Newtonian universe. People and things are like billiard balls which only interact when they bump into each other. When a ball disappears from the table, we go fishing in the pockets around it — that's usually how we look for evidence of survival after death. There is an apparent conflict between our concepts and methods of research on the one hand and our subject matter on the other. In the same way as we would not get very far using Newtonian thinking and testing in exploring the electromagnetic field of the universe so it seems that the billiard ball approach is insufficient in probing the characteristics of psi. For here too we deal with interconnections rather than with discrete entities which only meet when they hit. Especially in survival research, which may deal with extended or public states of con-

## Dying: A New Approach

A new attitude towards death is emerging in America, where the subject has largely been taboo, and where dying is often suffered among strangers and machines in hospitals far from home.

In New Haven, Connecticut, the first "hospice" for the dying will soon be opened. The facility will provide a warm and secure place to die amid friends and family when further medical treatment is considered futile.

Hospice already provides home care for terminal cancer patients, furnishing doctors, nurses, counselling for the patient, and the family, and emotional support. Based on similar institutions in England, the idea has caught on with a public anxious to make dying a more humanized and natural part of life.

Another step is being taken by the Hanuman Foundation in New York, whose "Alternative Metaphors for Dying" project is aimed at introducing new institutions "for those who wish to die consciously."

Ram Dass, the former Richard Alpert of Harvard University, and the spiritual teacher behind the foundation, explains, "The existing psychological and physical spaces available in the West for passing through the transformation called 'death' seem at best unconscious and at worst barbaric."

Plans are being developed for support facilities ranging from a telephone service to bringing together "individuals who wish to work on themselves through guiding or being guided in dying, to a physical place for dying where intensive collaboration would be possible for a person with a terminal illness, his family, the medical team, and guides."

Interestingly, the euthanasia movement is flourishing, too. Membership in the New York-based Euthanasia Council jumped from 600 to 30,000 in the last five years.

Also, it's reported that thousands of Americans have signed "living wills" expressing their wish to be allowed to die when "there is no reasonable expectation of my recovery from physical or mental disability."



sciousness, it is necessary to recast our basic assumptions if our understanding is to increase.

**Ashby:** Do you agree with J. M. V. Wheatley's argument that since survival is non-disprovable, it is non-provable?

**Roll:** As far as I'm concerned any scientific hypothesis, to be that, must be falsifiable. Thus it must be possible, and indeed clearly is, to express the survival hypothesis in terms capable of scientific verification and falsification. Many experiments and observations, theoretical or actual, are designed to achieve this. For instance, this is true for the reincarnation work with respect of the survival of personality and the OBE and field consciousness work with respect to the continuation of consciousness without a functioning brain.

**Ashby:** Is there a "crucial" experiment which, if successful, could establish survival as fact?

**Roll:** The "crucial" survival (or ESP) experiment is one of the phenomena in the

field which turns out not to exist. When you "establish" (prove, etc.) something, it is always established (proven, etc.) to the satisfaction of someone. It is difficult to think of any supposed fact that people regard as established on the basis of a "crucial" experiment. Moreover, "facts" and people change. What turns out to be an obvious fact at one time (the sun moves around the earth) is patently false at another time.

**Ashby:** Would you agree with the position that the most impressive veridical survival evidence, e.g., some of the cross-correspondences, can be explained satisfactorily, without subscribing to a discarnate or reincarnated source, *only* by the Super ESP Hypothesis?

**Roll:** I think the term "Super ESP" has slipped into our language without our recalling who started it and what exactly he or she said. Or perhaps it's only I who am repressing my memory of the origin of what is clearly an unscientific hypothesis. If no facts can count against a hypothesis, it is

## New Books

*Theory and Experiment in Psychical Research*, the book in which PRF Director William G. Roll gives a unified explanation of ESP and PK, is the only previously unpublished title now being offered by Arno Books as part of a new Perspectives in Psychical Research series.

Perspectives in Psychical Research is described as a carefully selected set of out-of-print classics chosen to illustrate core concepts in the development of psychical research, from its roots in philosophy and natural observation to its present day computerized sophistication. Its advisory editor is Robert L. Morris, former PRF Research Coordinator and currently Eileen J. Garrett Lecturer in Parapsychology at the University of California in Santa Barbara.

Roll's book, for which he received the B. Litt from Oxford, draws on studies of English mediums, Dutch ESP sensitives, and other sources. A new foreword brings in recent research in which the theories were tested. The book includes Roll's experiments at Oxford on the relationship between ESP and personality traits, hypnosis and memory.

Included in the series are classic treatises on such stage techniques as musclereading,

mediumistic tricks, and mindreading codes; books on hypnosis and psychic phenomena (the early hypnosis work emphasized the concept of psychic fluids as responsible for ESP and PK phenomena); early spiritualist writings, in which is found the notion of spirits as mediating vehicles; scholarly works from the early days of the British Society for Psychical Research, emphasizing analyses of spontaneous cases, early controlled investigations, and the development of complex theoretical systems about the nature of mind; and, more recently, books relating to the controversies over the use of fraud in the production of physical phenomena and in the detection of ostensible psychic energies.

Of particular interest is the autobiography of Eileen Garrett, *My Life as a Search for the Meaning of Mediumship*. Mrs. Garrett was one of the most extensively tested mediums in parapsychology, and worked closely with J. B. Rhine, C. G. Jung, and many others. She was also a gifted and prolific writer. In addition, she played a significant role in supporting research and educational activities in the field through the Parapsychology Foundation which she created and which continues to play an important role in parapsychology.





unfalsifiable and thus cannot pretend to be a scientific hypothesis.

However, it also needs to be said that the evidence for the continuation of personality *after* death is usually of the same type which indicates the existence *before* death of a person's traits and memories apart from his physical organism. For instance drop-in's and reincarnation memories seem to have a definite relation to physical space (Dr. Stevenson refers to this as Francis Story's law: "All other things being equal, a person will be reincarnated at the location where he died").

Ashby: Do you consider the employment of the Super ESP Hypothesis *requisite* according to Occam's Razor\* if the only viable alternative is a discarnate or reincarnated source of veridical information?

Roll: The Super ESP Hypothesis, as used here, is not merely not requisite — it cannot be used at all.

Ashby: Is there, in your opinion, evidence *apart from* mediumship and reincarnation data supportive of the degree of psi selectivity and accuracy found in the most impressive mediumistic and/or reincarnation cases? What is it?

Roll: Yes. In so-called cases of psychometry — better called object association — there is the same type of selectivity, as far as I can see. Indeed I think we are dealing with the same psi process — and it is in a way a "survival" process, for our traits and memories seem to continue to exist in the physical systems with which we have been associated, quite independently of our comings and final going.

Ashby: Do you consider the Super ESP Hypothesis a perfectly reasonable and conservative thesis with valid evidential substantiation or what Alan Gould has termed "a myth"?

Roll: "A myth." The Super ESP Hypothesis is incapable of being scientifically valid because it is incapable of being invalid — or rather unverified.

Ashby: Are there any cases in which you consider the Super ESP Hypothesis invalid and a discarnate source or a reincarnational memory the most likely explanation for veridical material?

Roll: Discounting the Super ESP Hypothesis as "a myth," the known (and probable) characteristics of ESP, especially its apparent relation to material systems, are consistent with the evidence suggestive of the continuation of *personality* after death.

Ashby: What is your opinion of "possession" as an alternative to the Super ESP Hypothesis: more likely, less likely, does not pertain, etc.?

Roll: Again discounting Super ESP, it seems to me that cases of "possession," if adequately verified as genuine, are on a par with reincarnation data, mediumistic communicators, object association and any other material which suggests that human personality can operate apart from the body after death as well as before.

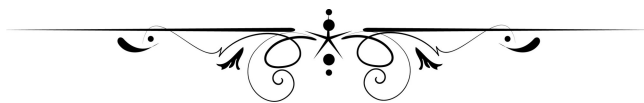
Ashby: How do you see the future of survival research?

Roll: I am more interested in the possible continuation of consciousness than in the continuation of personality. The latter, if it occurs, seems to me to be somewhat like the continuation of a person's appearance and voice in a movie taken of him. It's interesting and important if it happens but not as interesting as the continuation of conscious experience. I am not saying, mark you, that personality if it survives, is not conscious. Rather, what I question is whether our personality after death is associated with an individual consciousness. As far as I can see, the facts indicate that we do not possess a private consciousness *before* death and I see no reason why we should have one afterwards. On the contrary, we can expect a reduction in the limitations we experience when our awareness is no longer focused in the body.

For people interested in the continuation of consciousness, the first task is to probe the consciousness of the living with special emphasis on those aspects which may be capable of functioning apart from the body. Here we must join forces with psychophysicists and neurologists to determine if we can have awareness without a functioning central nervous system. And if consciousness is a characteristic of the world in general, the other sciences which describe this world, such as physics and biology, will also figure in the exploration. But the most direct route for the parapsychologists will be the deepening and the extension of conscious experience itself.

\* Occam's Razor is the rule that things should be stated as simply as possible.

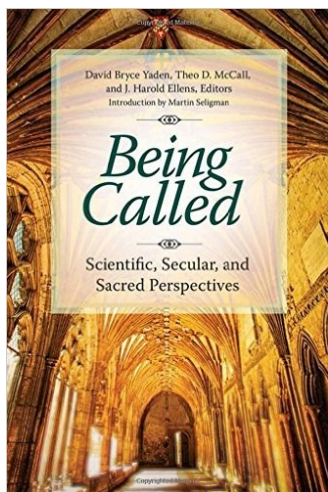
## Reviews



## Book Review

### Being Called: Scientific, Secular, and Sacred Perspectives

Wendy Chan



**Title:** Being Called: Scientific, Secular, and Sacred Perspectives

**Editors:** David Bryce Yaden, Theo D. McCall, and J. Harold Ellens

Introduction by Martin Seligman

**ISBN:** 978-1440839122

**Publisher:** Praeger

**Price:** \$48.00/£38.00

Unravelling the nature of *calling*, people would often turn to God, yet, it is not necessarily always the case. The editors of *Being Called: Scientific, Secular, and Sacred Perspectives* point out in the preface that *calling* is more about envisioning the reality that we have not yet known or seen. This book sheds light on the different views on *calling* through a wide range of approaches, including culture based, theory-based, psychological approach, etc. The book is categorized into two large segments: scientific and secular perspectives; and sacred perspectives. It also contributes on social cognition which focuses on understanding the mental structure and routines that people use to interpret which pave the way for constructing memory and judgments (Fiske & Taylor, 1984).

*Calling* is often associated with religion; the editors put forward certain questions about why scientists cannot truly believe in many narratives of what religion tries to perpetuate, to name a few, "...whether god is preexisting designer and also good, omniscient, and omnipresent... How come the world is full of innocent children dying of terrorism and of sadism?" (p.13). Emphasized by the editors in the book, every human being in the world is *called* into the future via the natural process, more specifically, there seems a natural bridge to connect the near future. Along the above mentioned narratives, Peng and Zhao (2015) draws on the frame theory to look at Chinese society in which they deem *callings* could be aroused by motivation, which echoes what Confucians always believe that people are highly affected by the position they hold in life.

This book promotes that cultural discussions should not be looking at the world by forcing people to face the reality in life; for instance a good question posed by (Duffy et al, 2015) is whether calling is always a good thing that should be regarded highly, in their narratives, as *calling* not always paints the way to achieve the virtue in the world. Other authors in the books also suggest workaholicism should be accounted for the bad *calling* in life. The book challenges the perception of readers about *calling* to a great extent.

Apart from a scientific and rather secular approach to dig deep into the issue of *calling*, a wealth of researchers from the book also suggest sacred ideas play a pivotal role in contributing to the very meaning of life, offering people orientation towards life. Inspiringly, scholars say contemplation about life and God also could be the sources for *callings*. Though editors believe that *callings* should stem from naturalistic process, there are still authors who propose that in numerous mystical or anomalous experiences, *callings* are felt by people, from their experience recalling, spiritual awakening and their self-reflection on what they experienced. The sense of peace is emphasized by different accounts of people.



This book elucidates the concept of *calling* through personal stories, scientific and empirical data crunching, questioning of religion, and a groundbreaking thought on *calling* that it should not be just looking from the religious perspectives. It is such a pleasure to read every day, chapter by chapter.

In conclusion, this book enlightens about how researchers keep track of our daily experience by not just relying on stimuli and response because after all, scientific and empirical data should not be the only area at which psychological researchers should look. It offers potential researchers a room for reflection whether cross discipline studies would have psychology move forward out of the doldrums.

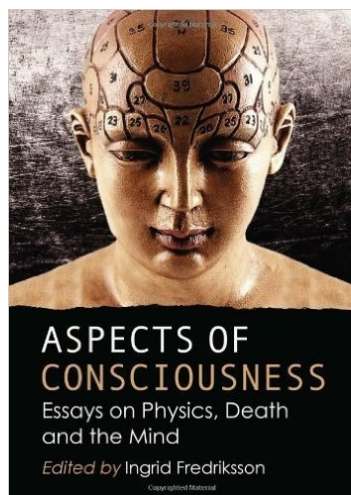
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## Book Review

## Aspects of Consciousness: Essays on Physics, Death and the Mind

Callum E. Cooper

**Title:** Aspects of Consciousness: Essays on Physics, Death and the Mind**Editor:** Ingrid Fredriksson**ISBN:** 978-0786464951**Publisher:** McFarland & Co.**Price:** \$65.00/£55.95

McFarland publishers continue to produce a steady flow of high quality publications of interest to parapsychologists, and in this instance, researchers of consciousness, physics, thanatology and philosophy of science combined – with doses of parapsychology thrown in. *Aspects of Consciousness* is an edited piece by Ingrid Fredriksson, containing eleven contributed chapters from various well-known writers and researchers on consciousness in relation to the topics of physics, death, and exploration of the mind. Fredriksson has a background in public health research and is the author of several books to date focusing on consciousness studies and aspects of survival.

Diving straight into this review of *Aspects of Consciousness*, I would describe the book as a “pick n’ mix.” With any anthology, I believe it is often the case that readers will find they enjoy some chapters more than others, and this is often due to not only to the topics considered within each chapter, but the ideas presented by those authors and their individual writing styles and abilities to critically argue their case. That being so, I can say that I did favour some chapters more than others.

Fredriksson describes in the introduction that, “This is a book about consciousness. My goal was to publish a book on this topic, as well as quantum mechanics, string theory, dimensions, space and time, non-local space, and what happens to consciousness when we die” (p.1). Two things may jump into the reader’s mind at this point. Firstly, that we are about to be presented with a very complex book linking all of these topics together, and secondly, that Fredriksson will have contributed to the writings of one of these elements of consciousness in some way. To answer the latter point first, I was disappointed to find that Fredriksson does not contribute to the book besides the introduction of two and a half pages in length and is therefore presumably solely responsible for gathering and editing the contributed chapters together. I was at least expecting a conclusion or afterword chapter from Fredriksson, with discussions on what we can make of the legion of thoughts and research presented in each chapter, and how science should accommodate such consciousness studies and move forward. To answer the former point on a complex mix of topics, Fredriksson brings some order to this by arranging the contributed chapters into three sections. Part one on “consciousness,” part two on “near-death experiences/theoretical possibilities,” and part three on “the consciousness of dualism-interactionism, economics and mind.”

Without giving overviews of every single chapter, allow me to present some brief comments on the pros and cons of the contributed chapters starting with the cons. I found the chapters dealing with physics of interest, but as a psychologist I am not an authority in this area. However, without trying to bias readers’ opinions of this book too much, I would simply like to point them in the direction of Colin Mitchell’s review of

this same book (Mitchell, 2014) who is an authority on physics and philosophy with involvement in parapsychology. As an authority in physics, he was somewhat shocked with the New-Age “gobbledegook” ideas presented in the physics chapters from which he believed parapsychology should stay well away. Normally I wouldn’t turn to other book reviews when writing my own as I wish the reader to hear my opinion on the matter. Certainly these chapters appear of interest until you read what the relevant experts have to say about them. At the very least, it leaves you taking those thoughts and ideas away from such chapters with pinch of salt. I can appreciate Mitchell’s (2014) opinion on these matters, and it appears they are shared by others (Bratcher, 2014). New-age ideas can be a dangerous thing, especially for parapsychology and consciousness studies when we adopt, or at least suggest, advanced theories beyond those we already hold but haven’t fully explored; it can be a complete case of putting the cart before the horse.

One of the contributed chapters regarding NDEs is written by Susan Blackmore who many people will be familiar with from parapsychology and consciousness studies. This is an enjoyable chapter which was created from an updated article Blackmore first submitted to the *Skeptical Inquirer* in 1991 and discusses whether such experiences are internal or external experiences. For those familiar with Blackmore’s writings, it is not at all surprising that her chapter argues such experiences to be an internal process. Some of the neurological explanations presented for NDEs I found to be weak in giving a universal explanation for the NDE. For example, in one study a computer simulation was used to show what might happen when gradually increasing electrical noise in the visual cortex – which could be caused by decreases of oxygen closing inhibitory neurons down. With lots of cells representing the central field of vision, the simulation showed white blobs appearing and increasing as the electrical noise increased, which was associated with the kinds of phenomena people report seeing during NDEs, i.e., white lights at the end of a tunnel and moving towards them. Given this was a computer simulation, and not a study of someone having a NDE (which I know in itself is difficult to do for various ethical reasons), I find it hard to place strong links between the two, although I appreciate the general theory, granted. We have learned all too often, that just because we can replicate effects, it does not mean that that is how the anomaly occurred in the original – and often spontaneous – instance. There could have been a lot more information here on trying to place conventional explanations on, “why people report visiting places in NDEs and coming back with specific information which they should not have gained access to via known sensory means”. Even so, and with such a sceptical stance, I found this to be a welcomed and enjoyable chapter.

Anthony Freeman also contributed a chapter I found to be extremely interesting, which discussed issues he has faced as the editor of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (JCS) when refereeing parapsychology papers and editing editions of JCS (especially with regards to Rupert Sheldrake’s work) against opposition. This chapter largely debates the divide between sheep and goats in parapsychological terms, and the hostility parapsychology has faced – as a science I would argue – from the other sciences. Being editor of JCS, Freeman was able to see such a conflict unfold first hand.

For me, this is an unusual book, and yet I have reviewed books previously which try to present an overview of consciousness while bringing in elements of parapsychology (for those interested in this union I would highly recommended *Pluralism and the Mind* [Colborn, 2001]). Merging such topics which cover a wide range of thought and research output is not easy, but unless we keep producing food for thought, we won’t have any potential new avenues in which to move forward. Therefore, for those interested in parapsychology and consciousness studies, *Aspects of Consciousness* should – as I found – present at least some “aspects” of particular use and interest within the choice of eleven chapters the book offers to the reader.

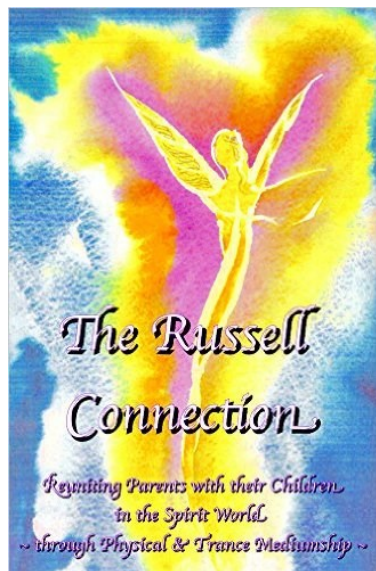
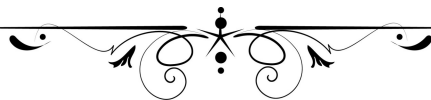
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## Book Review

### The Russell Connection: Reuniting Parents with their Children in the Spirit World through Physical & Trance Mediumship



**Title:** The Russell Connection: Reuniting Parents with their Children in the Spirit World Through Physical & Trance Mediumship

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*The Russell Connection* is the sequel to *Russell*, Gwen Byrne's first book regarding the passing of her young son Russell and her quest to communicate with him via physical mediumship. *The Russell Connection* is part biography of Gwen and her spontaneous experiences that involve communication with Russell, as well as a few accounts from other members in "Russell's Pink Panther Society" (RPPS). RPPS is a group of people who have lost children and pursue communication with them via mediumship.

This book is executed in a very conversational dialogue between the authors and the reader, thus making it very accessible. Those interested in life-after-death accounts and especially for those who have lost children will find comfort in the accounts relayed. The stories offer a window into people's lives who lost much but offer a great deal by sharing a bit of their pain and then their comfort in the contact they have had with their deceased children. The confidence and transparency that the authors have in their experiences is also very comforting.

The book has a few shortcomings. As stated, this book is a sequel and it makes many references to the first book. That being said, it is hard to read as a standalone piece. I could not fully follow what stories were being shared because I was not privy to all the context that was given in *Russell*. This book also has a rather haphazard presentation; it could have been better edited. The punctuation and typography in the book are sloppy with quite a few errors.

The placement of chapters in the book is rather confusing. One chapter will be written by Gwen Byrne, the next by another author, and then the following chapter will be Gwen Byrne again. It would have been helpful for clarity and simplicity to have all of Gwen's submissions in one section and then the submissions by various authors in another section. There is also a lack of direction with the succession of chapters; I felt like the book should have been working toward an overarching conclusion, but there wasn't one. I also believe that had the chapters been better placed within the book, a feeling of conclusion would have been achieved.

Overall, this book's purpose is meant to reach those who are looking for solace in other people's stories of communication with deceased loved ones, to offer them hope and support; I think it does just that. The stories are easily empathized with and inspire not only hope, but courage to pursue what mainstream society may deem an "unorthodox" means of coping.



**Next JEEP will focus on clinical and therapeutic approaches to exceptional experiences. We will still, of course, be taking the usual array of general personal accounts, artwork, music, creative writing, book reviews, and letters to the editor, but emphasis on those that include therapeutic or clinical aspects will be given priority.**

**Exceptional experiences are subjectively anomalous experiences. Many times these experiences can be considered transformative, spiritual, transpersonal, etc. Examples of exceptional experiences include (but are not limited to) near-death experiences (NDEs), synchronicity, out-of-body experiences (OBEs), and precognitive dreams.**

**To send an inquiry or a submission, please contact Erika A. Pratte, the editor, at**

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