



Book of Abstracts

40th SPR International Annual Conference

at the University of Leeds, UK 2nd to 4th September, 2016



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Introduction from Conference Programme Chair

Professor Adrian Parker

First a few words about time and place! It is the 40th anniversary of the SPR International Conferences and we are in part of Northumbria. I wonder how many of you know the conference is only about 30 miles from a place, which, had the outcome of the confrontation been different, would mean we would be all speaking in some form of Anglo-Scandinavian language? So I feel quite at home being here with this background. On the other hand having grown up with mantra of the “live in the here and now” and “don’t trust anyone over thirty” - I am not fond of counting years but it is a great opportunity to express thanks for what has been achieved and to appreciate what this conference really represents. I think we all agree that the success and longevity of these annual SPR conferences is due to Professor Carr’s - Bernard’s - very personable stewardship and dedication throughout so many years, combined with Peter’s humanised style of efficiency. Together, this has meant the conferences are not like normal academic high powered performances, but are rather inspiring social meetings and exchanges of ideas.

This conference follows the traditions of internationalism by having contributions from Austria, Germany, Iceland, Sweden, and USA - and it also follows the tradition of papers from university based experimental work together with those from “psi in the wild”: Papers falling under the various headings of mediumship, healing, and spontaneous phenomena. What is new is that we have also a presentation and a panel on an area of special interest: lucid dreaming. I am pleased to welcome one of the experts in this area as a guest speaker, Dr Engelbert Winkler, who is working on methods of making lucid dreaming more available. Given the historical occasion, I am pleased to be able to welcome the leading expert on Anglo-German history of this field, our dinner speaker, Eberhard Bauer from the Freiburg Institute. We also have the professional historian and educator, Trevor Hamilton, who will present material from his much awaited book on the fascinating topic of Cross Correspondences - which means he can claim to be the only person who has read them all!

I would like to add another personal angle of appreciation. During these there has been another regulator conference attendee who ever since, as a teenager, I read his classic book *Psychical Research Today*, has represented an astute mentor and personification of the ideals of the SPR: open-minded scepticism. It was therefore particularly pleasing to learn that Professor West has recently published his autobiography, which I look forward to reading and congratulate him on this.

In reflecting on these conferences, it is easy to wish that they had grown in size but maybe thinking so is missing its role – which is to stand in the middle between the extremities of viewpoints. Such a position is not easy to maintain but we have withstood the pressure from the formation of groups from ever more polarised opinions - and survived. Without the historical presence of the SPR, it is unlikely there would have been a Koestler Chair and all its off-springs. This is another reason to celebrate: the current news of the re-establishment of the Koestler Professorship. It is an ‘against all-the-odds’ success in retrieving this. Congratulations to Professor Watt on this achievement!

Stimulating Progress in Parapsychology: Prospective Meta-Analysis

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In 2012, the authors launched the Koestler Parapsychology Unit (KPU) Registry for Parapsychological Experiments

(<https://koestlerunit.wordpress.com/study-registry/registered-studies/>)

Study registration is a valuable tool that helps to eliminate or identify many questionable research practices in individual studies and thereby enhances the methodological quality of an area of research.

Researchers employ meta-analysis to quantitatively combine methodologically similar studies. When conducting a meta-analysis, they must make decisions about what data to include and what statistical methods to use. If researchers do this after knowing the outcomes of the studies, the decisions may be biased. Pre-registration of individual studies does not eliminate potential biases that emerge from decisions during a meta-analysis. Retrospective meta-analyses are similar to exploratory research because methodological decisions are made after the study outcomes are known. Prospective meta-analyses are a form of preregistered confirmatory research because the analyses and the data that will be included are specified before the results are known.

The present paper uses ganzfeld ESP research to illustrate the limitations of retrospective meta-analysis, and to highlight how prospective meta-analysis can help to resolve debates over the evidence for psi and stimulate progress in parapsychology. For the first time, we present a summary of the KPU ganzfeld ESP studies, and note the decisions facing anyone seeking to evaluate their combined outcome. We then discuss the wider ganzfeld ESP database and associated debates about the methodological decisions for meta-analyses. The extensive discussions and debates about the Milton and Wiseman (1999) meta-analysis demonstrate the latitude in making decisions for a retrospective meta-analysis and, most importantly, the potential for bias either pro or con the psi hypothesis.

We then introduce a *registration-based prospective meta-analysis* of ganzfeld ESP studies and describe the differences from the more common prospective meta-analysis in medical research. The ganzfeld prospective meta-analysis will be preregistered on the KPU Study Registry following review by parapsychologists and critics. In addition to pre-registering the statistical methods, this meta-analysis will use future study registrations to prospectively decide which studies will be included. Any qualifications or modifications for the use of a study will also be specified prospectively on the list of included studies. This approach to meta-analysis does not limit process oriented research or innovation, but simply specifies what studies will be included in a subsequent meta-analysis before the studies have been conducted.

The benefits of registration-based prospective meta-analysis as proposed here include (a) each study is preregistered and precludes most questionable research practices; (b) the meta-analysis does not require the increasingly complex methods that are being used to evaluate possible methodological biases; (c) the decision to include a study in the meta-analysis and decisions about possible qualifications for the use of study data are specified prospectively at the time the study is registered, which eliminates biases (pro or con) from methodological decisions after the study results are known and also allows adaptation to the unique characteristics of a study; (d) the properties of psi will be revealed without being obscured by methodological noise and biases; (e) potential critics of the meta-analysis outcome (pro or con) can be given the opportunity to comment on the meta-analysis plan; and (f) the field of parapsychology will be recognized to be a methodological leader.

Finally, we consider how prospective meta-analysis could be applied to other lines of parapsychological research. By pioneering high standards of methodology and research synthesis, parapsychologists send an important message to researchers in other fields (Watt & Kennedy, 2015).

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Exploring Precall Using Arousing Images and Utilising a Memory Recall Practice Task On-line

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There is on-going discussion over claims that future practice can retroactively influence prior performance. An initial attempt to examine possible precall effects using a modified priming task showed no evidence of precognition when looking at the *response times*, but did find that participants were more *accurate* to respond to material they would see again in the future (Vernon, 2015). This may indicate that a memory task relying primarily on accuracy of performance, such as a memory recall task, could be a more sensitive measure of precognition. Whilst previous attempts at this have produced mixed results (see, Galak et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2012) it may be possible to bolster potential precall effects by utilising arousing images (see, Maier et al., 2014; Lobach, 2009) within a paradigm that requires participants to remember and recall the stimuli during the post-recall practice phases to help facilitate possible precall effects. Finally, by running the study on-line it will be possible to eliminate any potential influence the experimenter could have over participants taking part. Hence, the aim of this study will be to use an on-line paradigm to present a selection of arousing images that participants then have to recall. Following the recall phase they will then be presented with a random sub-set of images to view and recall four times. The research question is simply: ‘will post-recall practice lead to greater recall of those items compared to items not practiced’.

A Reconsideration of Sheldrake’s Theory of Morphic Resonance

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Rupert Sheldrake continues to be one of the most influential thinkers with respect to phenomena that are difficult to account for in terms of conventional models of psychology and physics. His most recent book, *The Science Delusion*, sold out within just four days of publication. He is perhaps best known for proposing experimental protocols that enable the scientifically untrained to investigate common

anomalous phenomena for themselves using intuitive and straightforward methods that nevertheless afford some degree of scientific control (e.g., Sheldrake, 2002). But his most significant contribution might be an empirically testable theory for anomalous communication among genetically similar organisms, which he calls morphic resonance (Sheldrake, 2009). Sheldrake's theory describes how the thoughts or behaviours of physically isolated individuals might converge in a manner that is reminiscent of ESP because they are able to draw on a 'morphic field' that acts as a record of an organism's or species' previous behaviours.

Sheldrake's potentially powerful theory makes testable predictions that until recently have resulted in surprisingly few formal experiments. Those that had been conducted gave a relatively positive picture, tending to confirm predictions derived from morphic resonance, but were undermined by the tendency for results to be reported in popular accounts (e.g. Sheldrake, 2009) rather than peer-reviewed journal papers. We felt it important to replicate this work with word-based stimuli in a laboratory-based study that was designed to meet stringent scientific standards so that it could be submitted for journal publication as a full paper, irrespective of outcome. In that study (Robbins & Roe, 2010) sixty participants were exposed to genuine and imitative Chinese characters and then had to identify which characters they could recognize from a sheet that also included decoys. As predicted by the theory of morphic resonance, participants accurately recognized significantly more of the genuine than false characters, but also were more likely to report false memories (i.e. claim that they recognized items that were never presented) that were genuine characters than false ones. Participants' transliminality scores were also significantly related to their performance with presented characters but not with decoy characters.

These findings were interpreted as being consistent with Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance rather than as a confirmation of it because the theory is as yet too poorly specified to rule out some artifactual causes. For example, despite special care being taken to ensure that the false characters were adapted from genuine stimuli and appeared plausible to a native Chinese speaker, it was possible that the genuine characters were inherently more memorable than those contrived specially for the study, perhaps on aesthetic grounds. Any such difference could be restricted to just one or two of the stimuli used here, but since all participants were presented with the same small sample of five real and five false characters, even this could be sufficient to generate an overall difference between conditions.

In a replication study (Roe & Hitchman, 2011a,b) we addressed these shortcomings by drawing upon a larger set of more systematically manipulated genuine and imitative characters, and using a more comprehensive system of randomising across participants. One hundred and one participants were shown 8 genuine and 8 imitative characters and then took part in a distractor task before being presented with symbols in pairs (one genuine and one imitative) matched for complexity. Contrary to the previous study, participants correctly identified a similar number of real and imitative characters, and in fact exhibited more false memories for the imitative; no relationship was found between performance and scores on measures of transliminality and openness to experience. The most likely explanation would seem to be that the more thorough method in experiment 2 effectively removed weaknesses in the original design that produced an artifactual difference in memorability of genuine and imitative characters.

However, it is also possible that the second experiment introduced some artifact that inhibited performance at the task. For example, in shifting from a recognition task in which an array of symbols are presented simultaneously to a task in which symbols are presented with a matched pair, the recognition element may have been made too easy or may have encouraged guessing behaviour so that there was no scope for performance to be enhanced by a morphic resonance effect. Alternatively, it may be that some of the genuine symbols employed in experiment 2, which had to meet strict criteria in terms of properties of the head component and number of additional strokes, were more rare or less salient than some of the symbols from experiment 1 and so did not benefit from a 'strong' morphic field.

In this presentation we will describe a third study designed to account for the discrepancy between experiments 1 and 2 by discriminating between the competing interpretations described above. This was achieved by incorporating the symbols from experiments 1 and 2 so as to determine whether participants

continue to show better performance for the former stimuli when they are presented to the same participants under the same experimental conditions. We also explored the effect of the form of recognition task on performance by including three recognition conditions: selection from among an array of simultaneously presented symbols, as in experiment 1; selection from between paired symbols as in experiment 2; and rating of familiarity for symbols when presented singly, using a 2x3 mixed design in which participants experience both sets of stimuli (from experiments 1 and 2) and one of the three recognition formats. We retained measures of transliminality and openness to experience that were utilised in experiment 2.

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Growing Links Between Communities: Progress at the Research Laboratory for the Scientific Study of Mediumship at the Arthur Findlay College

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The Spiritualists' National Union was gifted Stansted Hall by Arthur Findlay MBE JP in 1954 with the intention that the building be used for the establishment of a "College of Psychic Science". The aim was to provide a location for the training of mediums in terms of both their practice and philosophy while augmenting this with the scientific method in an effort to conduct research which would aid in increasing our understanding of the process and function of mediumistic phenomena. Since then Stansted Hall has been named the Arthur Findlay College and is a world renowned centre for its educational programmes in both mediumship philosophy and practice. Despite this the utilisation of the scientific method for the evaluation of empirical evidence gathered during mediumistic demonstrations has not been widely embraced. The current president of the SNU, Minister David Bruton has begun to address this neglected area, initially with the establishment of Science days at the Arthur Findlay College, in collaboration with Professor Chris Roe and Dr Elizabeth Roxburgh of Northampton University and Dr Matt Smith of New Buckinghamshire University. This has been followed by a series of Weekends and a residential Science week with additional contributions from both Mr David Saunders, Miss Rachel Evenden of Northampton University and Minister Chris Connelly of the SNU. The purpose of these initiatives has been to provide practising mediums and students with the opportunity to explore their own experiences by utilising evidence based approaches and incorporating them regularly into their own practice. The ultimate aim of these sessions is to encourage collaboration between the scientific and spiritualist communities in order to help further our understanding of the nature and phenomena of mediumship. The most recent stage of this collaborative project is the establishment of a Science Laboratory at the Arthur Findlay College, funded

for furnishing and equipment by the SNU's friends of Stansted Hall, the SPR's survival Research Committee and the University of Northampton. In this presentation we will describe current progress at the laboratory, with an update on the facilities current status. We shall also present information on our recent collaborations with the SNU, along with findings from initial pilot work and coverage of intended forthcoming projects.

Indridi Indridason – Comparison with Other Outstanding Physical Mediums

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Indridi Indridason (1883-1912) became a medium in 1904 when he accidentally joined the first sitter group in the country. Immediately the table started to move violently. The Experimental Society was founded by academics to investigate his phenomena. A detailed record was kept of his séances comparable to those of Sir William Crooke, Schrenck Notzing and Anita Gregory. We can therefore compare Indridi with D. D. Home and Rudi Schneider with each other and find how the frequency and prominence of the various phenomena differed, such as movements of objects, levitations of the medium, visual materializations and sitters being touched as if by invisible hands.

With Indridi direct voices of communicators were heard in 77% of the recorded sittings and in different locations of the séance room and away from the medium, singing was heard, sometimes of two trained singers at the same time, a soprano voice and a male bass voice. Sometimes the medium was forcefully levitated and two men were needed to hold him on the ground. Light phenomena of various forms and colors were seen and sometimes a human figure was seen in a “pillar“ of nebulous light, near as well away from the medium. Indridi died at the age of 28. In the five years of his mediumship he produced under stringent conditions almost of all the phenomena that have been observed in physical mediumship. Reports about Indridi's mediumship were presented at the first two international conferences on psychical research in Copenhagen and Warsaw.

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Now See Hear! Detecting Being Watched or Listened To Via Extrasensory Means

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Many people have turned to see someone behind them due to a ‘sense’ they were being watched. Others have ‘inexplicably’ become aware of a conversation involving them, despite it being inaudible. There are many theoretical explanations for these events, one of which is that extrasensory awareness is evolutionarily advantageous, and therefore may have developed during an era in which danger was ever-present with survival depending on such capabilities. Evidence supporting the existence of extrasensory surveillance detection would have implications beyond purely scientific interest, yet the phenomena remains under-researched and may benefit from a fresh approach. New research being conducted at the University of Greenwich is examining not only the possible existence of ‘psychic’ detection – but also which psychosocial and neurological factors may predict this ability, as well as the belief in such phenomena.

The ability to detect attention has previously been restricted to the psychic staring effect, also known as *scopaesthesia* - a phenomenon in which people respond via non-conventional means to being the subject of another person’s gaze (Sheldrake 2003). However a new investigation will further the research by incorporating the sense of being *heard* as well as seen, which we call *acoustasthesia*. The existence of these abilities will be gauged by the accuracy of participant’s reports of being watched or listened to, differences in their behaviour during surveillance, and physiological reactions determined by electrodermal activity (EDA) which measures the electrical conductance of the participant’s skin to indicate arousal.

Participants’ will be invited to perform a cognitive task whilst announcing the words as they read them (to provide an audible element to the activity) under varying conditions a) not under any surveillance (control group), b) whilst being watched, c) whilst being listened to, and d) whilst being watched *and* listened to). Participants will not be aware which condition they are randomly assigned to, and will also be asked to report when they ‘feel’ they are being watched and/or listened to. These reports will be compared against whether and when they actually *were* under surveillance to determine reporting accuracy. Results will also be analysed to examine whether participants exhibited a physiological and/or behavioural response to the surveillance.

Reactivity (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008) which occurs when individuals alter their behaviour due to an awareness that they are being observed will also be examined – however the effect has previously only been studied when the participant is aware that they are the subject of attention via *conventional* means. This project would investigate whether the reactivity effect is replicated when such awareness is *psychically* detected. The psychosocial and neurological predictors under investigation can also be explored with regards to paranormal belief – the importance of which cannot be overstated as the majority of people believe in the paranormal (Ross & Joshi, 1992). However, admitting to such anomalous beliefs can lead to negative stereotyping (Holt, Simmonds-Moore, & Moore, 2008) despite studies proposing paranormal belief is associated with improved mental health (Shumaker, 2001). Neurological variances will therefore be measured as both predictors of paranormal ability, and as explanations for paranormal belief.

A relationship appears to be evident between paranormal belief and lability of the temporal lobe (Irwin, 2009; Luke, Firth & Pilkington, 2013) - an area of the brain involved in memory, emotion, processing sensory input, and deriving meaning. Temporal lobe lability shares considerable variance with schizotypy - a multi-factorial personality construct (Simmonds-Moore, 2010) which is thought to be a predictor of schizophrenia. People who have experienced the paranormal, or believe in its existence often score above average on the schizotypy scale (Mason, Linney, & Claridge, 2005), and evidence has been found that

particular subscales of this measure such as Impulsive Non-conformity have a significant relationship with paranormal belief reports (Friday & Luke, 2013), so both temporal lobe lability and schizotypy will be included as variables.

This original and unique fusion of parapsychological, anomalistic, neuroscientific, and social factors represents a necessary, essential, and progressive step in understanding possible extrasensory ability, its psychosocial and neurological predictors, and the permanence, flexibility, and connotations of anomalous beliefs.

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The Alpha-Numeric Dream Code - A New Way of Obtaining Seemingly Significant Direct Messages from the Unconscious in Dreams

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The 'alphabet dream code' was originally devised by a colleague, David Melbourne, who died in 2011. In this presentation I shall describe that method (which we found to be highly useful for participants), together with my later addition of the 'numeric' dream code.

David's idea (which appropriately came to him in a dream) was that if you program your mind by reading a carefully constructed list of permanent pre-set keywords, based on the letters of the alphabet (with some positive and some negative aspects), and before sleep ask your unconscious for a meaningful message,

what is likely to happen is that your knowledgeable and wise unconscious will select a relevant message from that fixed array and reveal it to you by showing several items beginning with the same initial letter - and then your unconscious will deliberately wake you so that you become aware of the message. You simply refer to the list of words. The particular aspect of the keyword 'jumps out' at you. It is an astonishingly simple and effective form of communication directly from the unconscious, which can for instance: warn you of something; encourage you; guide you; and help you make important decisions. It does not require any kind of interpretation procedure – the message is presented clearly and concisely.

David Melbourne's insight of introducing an A-Z (Avarice, Brevity, Consequences, Divinity, Envy, Faith.... etc) set of ready-made messages was a monumental discovery. It broke through the mysticism and mystery of dreams - providing us with a really practical and useful way of tapping into our inner source of wisdom. An example: *'I was in a dream in a bar drinking Sangria (which I would never drink in reality). I saw stacks and stacks of sugar. Then someone came and took some of the sugar up the stairs, I seemed to be aware of several things becoming with the letter S. Then I woke up. The letter S represented the key-word Sloth. It had a definite link to me because I have had a long-lasting problem with procrastination'*. That insight decided the dreamer to delegate her organizational commitments in order to focus on her main work as a therapist.

My first addition to the original alphabet code technique was to enable the unconscious to provide a definite Yes or No to an important question asked before sleep. Thus, if the opinion of the unconscious is positive, it should show one or more plus signs in a dream (e.g. a typical Christian cemetery with crosses) just before waking. If the opinion is negative, several minus signs should be displayed (e.g. the dashes along the middle of a road). A further, speculative, development instructs the unconscious to distinguish precognitive dreams by marking the scenery with the colour purple.

My latest, extensive, addition (involving the considerable Mind/Body link) has been to incorporate a numeric component to the procedure so as to facilitate potential foreknowledge of medical conditions. The ancients observed that 'prodromic' (running before) dreams could indicate approaching illness. For example, dreams of fire might indicate impending lung disease. In order to provide the unconscious with a way of communicating such clues, each part of the body has been ascribed a number, as have various medical disorders.

To illustrate the procedure, the dreamer might see a door number and then suddenly be woken. The dreamer can then examine the previously studied (programmed) numerical list to reveal what the unconscious is drawing attention to. Such information might be of great use in the early detection of dangerous developing illness. This numeric method is presented purely as an experimental component. Over time its efficacy will be assessed by mass feedback.

Participants at the conference will be given a free short-version of the alpha-numeric dream code, with a feedback form so that they can report their experiences.

'Anomalous Voices Re-visited': A Summary of Findings from a 14-month Investigation into Electronic Voice Phenomenon and Instrumental Trans-Communication

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This paper summarises the findings from experiments into electronic voice phenomena (EVP's) and instrumental trans-communication (ITC) by educationalist and part-time psychical researcher Dr Sean Richards, director of EVP London. During the summer holiday 2014, Dr Richards was reviewing literature from Raudive, et al. (1971) Keen et al, (1999:2011); Macey (2001); Baruss (2001:2007); Fontana (2003); Butler & Butler (2004); MacRae (2005) and Cardoso (2010:2012). He was intrigued by

some of the acclaimed results reported and wondered whether he too could successfully record anomalous voices. After some prevarication he embarked on a series of uncontrolled and semi-controlled experiments in January 2015. The results were so remarkable and astounding that he decided to experiment for a further 14 months. It has been exhausting work requiring intense prolonged concentration and hours of close listening. Working late into the night at weekends and during holidays, Dr Richards has recorded over 800 clear and distinct EVP's and six anomalous trans-images. However, many questions remain regarding the conclusions to be drawn from these results. Dr Richards' presentation provides a full description of the philosophical and methodological approaches employed, the equipment used, the questions asked and a full presentation and analysis of the findings, including a public recording and testimony from witnesses and listening-in tests.

In this first public presentation of his findings, Dr Richards presents some of the clearest EVP's and trans-images for peer assessment - particularly those which appear significant, evidential and meaningful in terms of their content and context. From the extensive literature available on the subject, it is clear that genuine anomalous voices and images have been captured on recording devices – some in scientifically controlled conditions which rule out external transmissions as a cause, and which appear free of suspicions of self-deception or fraud, yet current dominant explanations still claim that the phenomena are signals picked up from meteors, satellites, internet, radio, TV, mobile or other transmissions. Dr Richards explains how work by MacRae (2005) and Cardoso (2012) and the results of his own experiments suggest that these explanations on their own, fail to explain the phenomena. The roles of human hearing and of belief and the imagination have led some sceptics to conclude that EVP's are just a trick of the ear and the mind - it's just 'pareidolia'. Dr Richards offers arguments and evidence which suggests that whilst pareidolia may explain some interpretations of some anomalous sounds, it is unreliable as a blanket assertion of causality. Examination of specific and verifiable information provided by and within the messages themselves, casts doubt on 'pareidolia' as a general theory. Baruss (2001:2007) suggested that the causes of the anomalies may be psi-based, such as 'man-mind-machine' phenomenon. It has also been suggested that the voices are unconscious or telepathic projections. There are also magical and spiritualist-orientated and ufological theories and other trans-dimensional, matrix or field type explanations. Dr Richards suggests that the research community re-consider which of these many competing theories best fit the evidence which has been collected over the last sixty years.

Dr Richard's analysis of his data focuses upon four key issues, firstly 'message interpretation and categorisation' which includes attuning the ear and listening-in for successful interpretation and assessing paranormality. Difficulties interpreting the messages were addressed by MacRae (2005) whose method of verifying interpretations involves graphically comparing the phenomes in an evp recording with the same word recorded from a human voice. Secondly 'message verification', provides a linguistic, content and contextual analysis of the messages recorded during the study; thirdly, 'messenger verification' attempts to establish from whom and from where the messages originate, and fourthly the purposes of the messages are examined.

Dr Richards identifies a core group of messengers or 'communicators' who identify themselves by name, and from whom he received most of the messages. He recorded hundreds of names of relatives and friends and the names of some deceased psychical researchers. He categorises and assesses the evidential features of these messages thematically and in relation to the questions that were asked. Dr Richards concludes that despite these promising results there are still more questions than answers, therefore a greater effort is needed to procure multi-disciplinary and multi-community research to advance our understandings of these fascinating phenomena.

Dr Richards has written two articles on this subject, 'Shocking Observations on the State of Psychical Research' (2016) - which concerns the perception among some members of the ITC community, that there's a lack of interest in EVP and ITC research among mainstream academics and assesses the possible reasons for this. A second article 'Contemporary Research into EVP and Instrumental Trans-communication', Paper 1 - Emants Baruss (2016b) evaluates two of Baruss's articles, 'Failure to replicate

electronic voice phenomena' (2001) and 'An Experimental Test of Instrumental Trans-communication' (2007).

Dr Richard's articles and samples of EVP's from the experiments and related resources can be downloaded from the author's website. <http://evplondon.com>

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Voices of the Living or Voices of the Dead?

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This report will contain preliminary results from an ongoing PhD study looking at Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP). The report will contain a summary of findings so far from the first two studies of the PhD, and the results of an auditory detection task which is study three of the PhD.

Results from previous studies have shown that it is possible to distinguish three separate groups of people relating to belief in EVP – non-EVPer who do not believe the phenomenon exists, low-EVPer who believe it exists but have little or no practical experience of the phenomenon, and high-EVPer who believe and have had multiple experiences of apparent EVP (Winsper, 2015).

Paranormal beliefs and experiences are displayed significantly more in EVPer (both low and high) than non-EVPer, however anomalous/paranormal ability is only significantly higher in high-EVPer (which was expected as this is the group that claims to contact spirits by using EVP techniques). Low EVPer

have been shown to have more fear of the paranormal than either non- or high-EVPer, possibly this is due to less experience of apparent paranormal phenomena.

A number of different personality factors have shown significant differences between EVPer and non-EVPer, with high EVPer showing higher levels of both auditory and sleep-related hallucinations, deficiencies in reality testing, fantasy proneness and positive schizotypy.

The current study investigated whether there are differences in perception of ambiguous sound clips between these three groups, of non-, low- and high-EVPer. To facilitate this, a between participant quantitative experiment utilising an auditory signal detection task was undertaken. The task utilised white noise sound files, and white noise overlaid with speech files which have previously been utilised in an auditory signal detection task (Moseley, 2015). Independent variables in the task were the effect of either being informed that the task is investigating EVP or not; participant status (EVP believer vs sceptic) and the effect of a signal being present within the presented sound clips or not. The dependent variable was the participant's response to the signal/noise trials.

Participants also completed a number of questionnaires that had been used in studies 1 and 2, to ascertain their level of paranormal belief and experience and also their responses to the personality factors that had been shown in these earlier studies to differ between the groups.

The study was analysed using signal detection theory. It was hypothesised that high EVPer who are primed that the task contains EVP voices would display the most liberal response bias, and report hearing voices when none are present. In a previous study (Winsper, 2010) sensitivity significantly increased for all participants when told that the task was an EVP task, so it is hypothesised that this effect would also be demonstrated in the current study. Initial findings will be presented as part of this report.

This report will also contain a brief outline of study 4, which will utilise the same white noise/signal files, but the files will be manipulated so that the sound appears to originate from right or left, and internal or external to the participant. It is hypothesised from previous research that low hallucinating EVPer will display a higher localization sensitivity for the right hemisphere (left ear) and high hallucinating EVPer will not display this sensitivity (Oertel-Knöchel & Linden, 2011; Weinstein & Graves, 2002).

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Das Unheimliche – Uncanny Homes & the Trauma of Post-Ideology: Psychoanalytic Perspectives of the Uncanny, Modern Anxiety, & New Age Occultism!

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“If I had my time to live over again I should devote myself to psychical research rather than to psychoanalysis.”

Sigmund Freud

“Occultism is another field we shall have to conquer.... There are strange and wondrous things in these lands of darkness.”

Carl Jung

“In man, there's already a crack, a profound perturbation of the regulation of life...”

Jacques Lacan

Psychoanalysis has a natural tolerance for exploring the crepuscular irrational expanses of the mind and its psychic constellations that organize our desires, how we relate to others in our lives, and ultimately how we choose to enjoy ourselves. Freud's and Jung's interests in the occult are well known, and it is widely accepted by analysts that the paranormal has relevance to psychoanalysis and clinical practice. (Totton 2003) Freud's dimension of *das Unheimliche* is located at the heart of psychoanalysis. It is the dimension where all the dictums of psychoanalysis from all its doctrines come together; a dimension where a diversity of theory, research problems and clinical practice coexist. As such *das Unheimliche* offers insights into the original project at the heart of psychoanalysis and the human condition itself. (Dollar 1991)

Freud's concept involves the standard German negation of the word *Heimlich*- homely, and is thus suggested to infer its opposite - *Unhomely*. Implied within *Heimlich* is the concept of hidden, and by extension, what is hidden may be threatening, fearful, occult — *uncanny*. The anxiety of *das Unheimliche* occurs exactly at the point that the two terms come together, at the point of negation. What is homely can in a sublime instant insist in its true guise that negates any barriers between subject/object, animate/inanimate, and psychic/real. Freud's *Unheimliche* is the central "Knot" of universal human experience, a dimension that emerged within subjectivity and haunts humanity in unity with societal change and erupts in popular culture at times of social and cultural uncertainty. (Dollar 1991)

Popular culture abounds with films, TV and video games that explore the *unhomely*, and there is a resurgence of the occult practices of séances and divination utilizing modern technology. There is a plethora of reality TV shows detailing the exploits of professional ghost hunters, and ghost hunting events and associated social media attract millions of followers; hunting ghosts is so popular it is now pertinent to ask just who is haunting who! However, there is a paucity of psychoanalytic studies of the paranormal. To-date only three books published since the 1970s explore this field and muted psychoanalytic perspectives range across a spectrum from the near-open acceptance of the Jungians to the staunchly skeptical Lacanians. (Devereux 1974), (Totton 2003) & (Frosh 2013)

Working from Lacan's later teachings on the *sinthome*, the *fundamental phantasy*, and his ideas of ideology, this analysis considers a model for juxtaposing paranormal experiences with Lacan's topological paradigm of human subjectivity and experience. Utilizing autoethnographic case-studies of paranormal investigation groups this study frames paranormal experiences as a necrological discourse, revolving around anxiety, trauma and neuroses, situated within the Lacanian Symbolic order. Research was carried out by working with several different paranormal investigation groups, each of which had clearly different *modus operandi*, ranging from technical scientific to spiritualist medium, and clearly

defined subjective a priori beliefs systems. These groups were then followed as they repeatedly investigated the same location at regular intervals over a two-year period. The location chosen was the Drakelow complex of tunnels situated in Worcestershire. Drakelow is a multilayered historical site comprising of Iron Age fort and dwellings, a long history of cave and rock home habitation, and a Victorian alms village, whilst the underground site comprises of 8km of tunnels that were both a WW2 armaments factory and then a Cold War governmental nuclear bunker. A large amount of data was collected ranging from photographs of alleged manifestations, to séances leading to the witnessing of alleged possessions, and alleged intelligent poltergeist activity. Tentative conclusions must account for a range of factors, including the suggestibility of the paranormal groups, their public followers, and this researcher. However, it would seem that the modus operandi and a priori belief systems of those present has a direct correlation on the nature of the alleged phenomena reported.

Due to the nature of Drakelow research was also undertaken into the local area and the sites long history. Drakelow has a unique history entwined with the local village that oscillates between the mythic and the folkloric; its history has become unconsciously embedded in the locality and investigating groups often found themselves repeating local lore unbeknownst to themselves. Ultimately, *das Unheimliche* is not just the paranormal; it is a distinct but interdependent discourse of Real singular energy that has implications for the Imaginary order of our personalities and Symbolic social existences. Whilst manifesting as particular, singular, and universal paranormal experiences *das Unheimliche* and its phenomenon have the flavor of psychosis, but they are structured as a language that speaks, through the transference of unconscious and primary processes, of trauma and the cynical and fetishistic disavowal of the injunctions inscribed in our modern lives. In short, we cynically refuse to accept the *Uncanny* and its rightful place in the very heart of the ideological survival space we call society, and we are thus condemned to suffer the trauma of the repetitive cycle of anxiety and its repression – through our enjoyment of phantasy in popular culture we exorcise the hungry ghosts in the psychic home we call the human condition.

An Introduction to Dutch Mediumistic Art Paintings of the Interbellum

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From the mid 19-th century onwards Sprits have sent their message from ‘beyond the veil’ to our world by using a broad variety of communication techniques. Most common were séances with mediums using direct voice, table tilting, Quija board, automatic writing and many variations on these methods. Less known however is the use of art sculptures and art paintings as the ‘carrier wave’ of messages from the Spirit world.

In the process of our long running project ‘Preserving Historical Collections of Parapsychology’ (see: www.hetjohanborgmanfonds.nl) we obtained a collection of Dutch mediumistic art paintings from the interbellum (the period from 1920 – 1940). In 2013 we started preliminary investigations on these art paintings, the mediums involved, the artistic value and the Spiritual contents.

Recently we had completed archiving a very large (over 160 boxes, and 5 years of work) collection on the history of Spiritualism in The Netherlands. Thanks to this, we had the most complete collection of Dutch journals, magazines and documents available for our mediumistic art research. A Bachelor student from the history of art department of the Free University of Amsterdam added additional knowledge to our research during her internship with us in the autumn of 2014. In her Bachelor thesis she compiled an extensive literature list on this topic, based on publications in Dutch spiritualistic journals from about 1900 – 1940.

To our surprise, we found that that in the interbellum, the years between both World Wars, a significant number of Dutch art mediums were active. Their *modus operandi* differed between art produced at public séances and at séances by invitation only. The output differed considerably, ranging from simple pencil drawings to full color art paintings and significant sculptures.

In our presentation to the SPR annual conference we give a short introduction on the Dutch Spiritualistic movement and focus on the mediumistic art movement in the Netherlands between the World Wars. We will focus on the works of some well-known Dutch mediums of those days, of which we have original art drawings and art paintings in our collection. From one of these mediums we know that his art paintings were also very much appreciated in other European countries and that there was much demand for his paintings in exhibitions.

Mediumistic art was considered to be ‘childish’ or, at best, as ‘well done amateur art’ by the art establishment for many decades; but this attitude is rapidly changing into appreciation of the art works. Today, Mediumistic art paintings are more and more taken seriously by international art collectors and are on the threshold of entering auctions and museums.

Investigating Viewer Opinions on the Use of ‘Science’ in Paranormal Reality Television Shows

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Research has indicated that paranormal genre television – for example, paranormal dramas – has an effect on levels of paranormal belief due to the use of ‘scientific validation’ (Godman, 1982; Larsen, 2015). Although paranormal reality television shows investigating purportedly haunted locations has *some* similarities with psychical research and parapsychology, there is limited research into effect that paranormal reality television has on paranormal belief and ‘what the viewers really think’ with regards to *what* parapsychology is and *how* parapsychology is seen as credible science (or not) through this media representation (Gaynor, 1996).

This paper will discuss a lab-based study that investigated the impact such television shows have on people, alongside their views and opinions of how scientific the shows presented themselves to be and why. There are a variety of popular science based shows in today’s media, often featuring medicine, astronomy, etc., but where and how does parapsychology feature in this?

A mixed-method design was used recruiting sixty participants. Belief scales were distributed to participants pre and post-test. The test involved participants being assigned to either one of two groups, which involved watching either one of two different reality paranormal shows, with varying portrayals of scientific methods with regards to haunting investigations. The use of open-ended questions provided in a booklet to participants allowed for opinions on such shows to be collected, and how participants viewed such shows as ‘scientific’ alongside the believability of the ‘evidence’ the shows presented for anomalous phenomena. The views and opinions expressed were subjected to a thematic analysis.

Although no significant findings were discovered in terms of levels of belief, pre and post-test (before and after watching the programme clips), the results of the thematic analysis presented insightful information

which supported previous results, particularly in that the display of equipment used by people is considered by viewers to be scientific and provides *proof to the viewer* of anomalous processes taking place and scientific standards employed.

The study concluded that parapsychology has a chance for serious presentation in the media if the methods being used are accurately and clearly presented in line with scientific standards – and therefore communicated to the viewer. This will be further discussed within the presentation, alongside issues which may influence beliefs of the viewers and suggestions for further study.

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The SPR at War - A Report on 'The Society for Psychical Research and the First World War' Research Project

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This paper will report on the SPR funded research project 'The Society for Psychical Research and the First World War'. This historical examination of the activities of SPR members during the Great War has involved extensive research in the SPR Archives at Cambridge University Library in five key areas:

The 1915 investigation of the Angel of Mons by the SPR's assistant research officer Helen Salter.
The war and the cross-correspondences, including possible intimations of the conflict.
Other alleged premonitions of and about the war.

Spirit communications and apparitional experiences, including crisis apparitions, related to the war.
Hauntings, poltergeists and other cases on the home front.

This paper will build on and be different from the paper presented at the SPR Study Day 'Raiders of the Lost Archives' in 2015.

Dr Leo Ruickbie, PhD (Lond), MA, BA (Hons), AKC (Associate of King's College), has a PhD from King's College, London, for his thesis on the sociology of modern witchcraft, building on his research into re-enchantment that won him an MA with distinction from Lancaster University. He is the author of several books on witchcraft, magic and the supernatural. His published articles, covering such subjects as theories of magic, spirit communication, possession and exorcism, the conceptualisation of evil, folk

beliefs in the external soul and the representation of angels in modern media, show his broad interest in the history and sociology of belief and anomalous phenomena. As well as being a writer, he is an academic peer reviewer, exhibition curator, public speaker and editor. He is also a member of several special interest groups, such as the Parapsychological Association and the Society for Psychical Research, and is a member of the committee of the Gesellschaft für Anomalistik (Society for Anomalistics). In 2014 he was appointed editor of the Society for Psychical Research's magazine *Paranormal Review*.

Telepathy: Putting the Horse Before the Cart

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Telepathy has usually been seen as a faculty manifested by mental mediums (and occasionally by any one of us), and the agent, the presumed source of the telepathic material, is assigned the role of accompanist to the prima donna.

This may be a fair appraisal of the role of a medium who is asked to contact a dead communicator; she apparently exercises a radar-like faculty to detect and engage the designated person. This seems more likely than positing that the communicator is constantly trying to make contact, and the medium just has to tune in. When contact appears to have been made, the initiative passes to the communicator, but his role does not lend itself readily to investigation, as the dead are literally beyond our ken.

So to study the role of agent we must look to the living, and here there are two possibilities. One is to look at the agent in experiments, and the other is to look at the agent in real life situations. So far as experimental work is concerned there is a big problem, which is that it is usually impossible to distinguish a telepathic duet from the solo performance of clairvoyant. A second difficulty is that with trials that rely on statistical assessment you can never be sure which trial was due to psi and which were due to chance.

So to examine the role and contribution of the agent we must look at spontaneous cases, and the ideas proposed here are based on the implications of the rich store of real life telepathic experiences in which telepathy is a much more likely explanation than coincidence. And while mediums usually report having such experiences, they also happen occasionally, perhaps only once in a lifetime, to the average citizen, the occasional telepath.

Certain assumptions are made here *a priori*. The first of these is that minds are in an oceanic sort of linkage, so that in the sub-basement of our unconscious we have a vast amount of material that originated in the minds of others. Further, that our brains block this material from rising into consciousness, shielding us from a state of confusion. Above the sub-basement, at a level that might be called the lower ground floor, there is an area in which material immediately relevant to our personal concerns may be elevated into some level of consciousness. The telepath captures this material before it sinks down to the depths.

So the telepath has something akin to sharp hearing. We can all to some extent hear our name spoken in the midst of a jumble of background chatter; the telepath has acute psychic hearing. I see this ability as having the same sort of relationship to most people's negligible psychic response as calculating prodigies and pi decimal reciters have to people with average mathematical aptitudes and memories. Conceptually this is fairly simple and if not totally acceptable as a description of telepathic reception then it is at least plausible. More complex and fundamental psi-related issues arise when we turn the spotlight on the initiator at the other end of the interchange.

In real life it seems clear that it is bad news that gets picked up by telepaths. No one seems to report sudden unexplained feelings of radiant joy and finds later that at that ecstatic moment his twin has just

discovered that he has won the national lottery. It is threats of death, accident, pain, anxiety and shock (especially shock) that seem to evoke a telepathic response, whether the response is awareness of a situation, a hallucination, a community of sensation, a sense of panic, an urge to take action or just a sinking feeling.

I would summarily dismiss the idea of the ordinary citizen roving around telepathically seeking out sad tidings from family and friends. It is far more convincing to assume that the occasional telepath is in a neutral state, but is alerted by the attention-seeking urgency of the personal transmission initiated by the agent.

The occasional telepath may see a vision of his dying dog, or may feel as if she is having a heart attack or drowning, or hear a voice summoning her home, or just know that something bad has happened; whatever the nature of the telepathic communication, the telepath is having the contents of his mind modified by signals projected from the mind of the agent.

There are other practices involving agents operating remotely. Myers witnessed and reported on experiments in 'hypnosis à distance' carried out by French hypnotist researchers using their servants as subjects, and perhaps because of this relationship the projected material mostly consisted of orders, which were faithfully obeyed. Were all these servants natural telepaths? It seems unlikely. It looks more as if they were having material forcibly projected into a level of mind where it remained present and operative but below the level of conscious awareness.

Another activity with links to psi and to hypnosis is distant healing, in which *either* the patient accepts orders to act on her own physiology *or* the healer acts directly on the patient's body, this commonly being assumed to be the *modus operandi* in experiments (usually at close quarters) with animals, insects, plants and micro-organisms.

In all these cases the agent uses psi to impinge on the minds and bodies of other people (or lesser creatures). The mechanism that fits all these scenarios is PK (a process more usually associated with control over inanimate matter) and its deployment is even more apparent in face to face encounters where no telepathy is involved. But my starting point was telepathy, and returning to that theme, the conclusion is that the agent in a telepathic interchange projects flagged material precisely into a region of the receiver's subconscious from which it can be recovered telepathically. The agent is a main player and key figure.

No Time and Nowhere

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Physical evidence for a non-physical world is electrical activity in brains correlating with parapsychological experiences.¹

Visual illusions are misconstructions of optical stimuli from real external objects. Hallucinations are without optical inputs; some are repeating delusional experiences and some are single experiences of healthy people. They all feature self-created images.

Sometimes several people without prompting each create for themselves the same image, as also do those who see 'ghosts'. The question arising in both cases is why do all percipients create the same image in the same place? Where does the information specifying it come from and how is it conveyed into their heads? And for the ghosts, how and where is it stored between appearances?

The information is non-physical - we do not consistently visualise stimuli from other senses, not from electro-magnetic radiation outside the visual frequencies, nor from electrical or magnetic fields, nor cerebral probes, nor from any other physical energy - though we can create visual images without optical inputs. Professor Spiegel of Harvard Medical School in 2002 faced subjects wearing an EEG with a screen whose display could be a coloured or black and white. The cerebral circulatory changes in the control subjects responded appropriately to the coloured or monochrome displays, but in hypnotised subjects the reported images changes and observed changes conformed not to reality but to the hypnotist's words. Gurney reports a similar effect with tastes from the 19th century.

There is non-physical information in other parapsychological experiences that are not visualisations. One is telepathic intimations of contemporary distress to distant friends, non-physical for its inexplicable conveyance, sometimes over thousands of miles. Another is precognition, obviously non-physical for its temporal anomaly. J.B. Priestly found that 45% of the 1300 reports he collected in 1963 concerned emotionally disturbing calamities witnessed or received as news, and 45% concerned utter trivialities - all precognitions are apparently personal. Apparent paradoxes like intervention can be accommodated. Examples are given.

In every case receipt of this information causes measurable physical effects, namely the electrical activity of arrays of synapses firing and accompanying circulatory changes. Its arrival alters the physical state of the world – that brain – without being a cause within the world – a causeless physical effect. Causeless effects are also evident on a very small scale, where information inexplicably alters the behaviour of matter – again with temporal derangement.

Either this non-physical information is housed in another immaterial world existing behind this one or unrecognised principles outside the laws of physics are operating in the ordinary world, the formulations are equivalent. In this light a number of the disparate interests that the SPR accommodates might be seen a facets of the same thing and looked at together. It would be satisfying if they and a few other experiences could be set in a common framework.

Religion in an anthropological context is a universal feature of all tribes, peoples and civilisations ever encountered. Humans have always subscribed to another world behind this one. The deities, spirits and demons with which they populate it are cultural artefact of each group, but the world they occupy is common to all. And an undetectable parallel universe, first postulated in 1957 as a mathematical necessity, is essentially the same idea.

Another world is unexceptionable, but precognition throws up a curious little difficulty. Foreknown events seem to impinge personally – and that implies the percipient surviving up to the moment of realisation – which is very startling when the event arises after the dreamer's death. I have found only these four instances.

I do not see so few cases as hard evidence for life after death, but some very likely may.

1. Fergus Hinds. No time and Nowhere IFF Books (26 Aug. 2016). ISBN 1785351850

Bright Future for Psi? Through Physics and Phenomenology

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That parapsychology hasn't really advanced our knowledge very much recently can hardly be denied. (1) So here I will show how much stronger progress can result from a symbiosis of physics and phenomenology, two topics highlighted at the recent April Study Day. (2)

For when these are combined with the primary tools of science – clear observation, accurate description and language, parsimony, pragmatism. etc. – psi readily clarifies into one easily understood, fairly reproducible, and potentially very useful phenomenon.

One large current crisis in physics

Taking physics first, one large current problem there is the 'real nature' of time. So much is evident from various recent books and special issues devoted to this topic. Or, as *Scientific American* editor George Musser states: "There's a hole at the heart of physics, and it's all to do with the nature of time" (3)

Broadly this crisis in time understanding comes down to a tripartite rift - between Relativity Theory (RT), Quantum Theory (QT), and everyday notions of temporality. For each assigns different and conflicting properties to what is meant by time.

Taking RT first as the best-proven concept of this trio, it treats of reality as frozen in four-dimensional space-time, with past and future stretching out equally determinate to either side of a purely local Now. Suggesting therefore that people (somehow?) "pass by time~ - instead of their more egocentric notion that (somehow?) "time passes by" themselves. (4)

The great psycho-physical problem is then how to reconcile this latter *subjective* notion (which assumes an open future, free will etc.) with the *objective* RT world-picture. This problem has prompted various eminent physicists to query: "Why can't we *remember the future?*" – because RT'S time symmetry seems to suggest that we ought to be able to. (5)

But, since '*re*' means 'again' and '*future*' implies 'not yet', this common higher-physicist question is just a confused oxymoron. It's better rephrased with the neologism *pre-call* as first suggested by me long ago (6). So that "Why can't we *pre-call* the future? - much as we can *re-call* the past" is a more reasoned restatement of the same idea.

To which also the simplest - and far from facile - answer could be "Perhaps because people have never really tried" – due to their Prime Assumption that such must be impossible!

Psi is time-relevant

Whereupon psi grows is potentially crucial to this higher physics scene. For - as again I've shown long ago - common psi manifestations ('precognition', 'telepathy', 'clairvoyance', 'remote-viewing', 'ESP') – are all *most simply* construed as situational variants of a highly repressed *pre-call* capability. All seem to afford knowledge of one's personal future, and much as episodic memory functions towards the past. (7)

Very careful observation of the human condition therefore suggests that psi may occur as a highly significant, future-oriented, anomaly of subjective time - and with ca. 10^{-7} relative frequency. So affording partial time symmetry with the more frequent, past-oriented, 're-call' process.

Disciplined phenomenology is essential for psi learning

At this point also phenomenology enters in. For psi seems to manifest most during *low-noise* states of mental quietude. And conversely manifests less during opposite (and more frequent) *high-noise* episodes.

Wherefore the route to deliberate psi learning then grows clear. This merely requires due appreciation of the *pre-call* process, followed by deliberate, disciplined, and repeated attempts at replicating that psi-conducive attitude of mental quietude. To Husserl's original idea of phenomenology ('the examination and description of internal states') must therefore be added deliberate reproduction of the same.

This process can also be tailored to any reasoned 'guessing' mode. As again I've often reported elsewhere, it's quite simple to learn *pre-call* (roughly correct 'guessing') with cards, roulette, 3-digit numbers, RNGs either electronic or quantum, etc. For beginners a reasonable target would be .75 scoring in a binary (red-or-black?) situation - after 10 weeks of effort involving 100 hours and 25,000 individual trials. (8)

Throughout a regular schedule of many thousand such hours by me, *pre-call* has always served as a reliable operational guide. And it yields many quite unexpected secondary findings, which further suggest that it really is a time-inverted version of episodic memory.

Though well supported by some dozen others who've tried out such learning so far, these first reports of mine, on the new psychological territory of subjective time-future, can hardly be seen as wholly definitive. They're more akin to those early reports on the Americas, brought back by the first explorers after 1492.

Strong progress quite feasible

What's required next is more detailed and extensive measurement by others, before the full outline of this new mental skill – or the territory of subjective time-future - can grow fully clear. Though here I believe that my initial reports, on *pre-call*'s overall topography, will prove at least 90% reliable.

Three major features should also be highlighted at this point. First is my finding that individual QT events are just as predictable as say a roulette ball. (10) Second is the rather startling manner in which RT seems to apply to everyday living, whereby it emerges as the prime arbitrator of all time. Thus sealing over that tripartite rift in current time comprehension I've outlined earlier. (DIAG. 4) There's also the very real possibility of useful applications, of which perhaps more anon.

Meantime it remains for suitable competents to follow through on the *pre-call* paradigm, so escalating the currently derided psi faculty to much higher status in the greater science world.....

References

- 1/ D. West – JSPR – Oct 2012
- 2/ J. Poynton – *On Phenomenology* ; B.Carr – *On Time* ; SPR Study Day – April 2016
- 3/ Sean Carroll - *From Eternity to Here* - 2010 ; Lee Smolin – *Time Reborn* - 2014;
New Scientist - October 4 2011; *Scientific American* - Spring 2012 - *A question of Time* - 2012
- 4/ Bradford Skow – *Objective Becoming* - 2015
- 5/ e.g. Stephen Hawking - *Brief History of Time* – 1988, p144.
- 6/ Sean O'Donnell - *Parascience Conf.* - London 1974.
- 7/ “ *Proc. SPR Conference* - York 2014
- 9/ “ *Future, Memory, and Time* - Ebook 2013
- 10/ Helmudt Schmidt - *J.Parapsychology* – 33- p199

A Pragmatic Methodology for Investigating Command Hallucinations and Veridical Voices

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Are the crimes of serial murder the acts of evil people, the psychologically disturbed or are they perpetrated by people who have no conscious control of their actions? Prior to the scientific age of enlightenment, it was believed that people who committed acts of evil were possessed by the devil and were exorcised under the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. In today's secular society these ideas and practises have been superseded by scientific logic and the gulf between science and religion has widened. Ideas of possession and exorcism remain in the realm of superstition, and understanding why perpetrators of heinous crimes behave the way they do has become the prerogative of the scientific community. But still the mystery remains, and recent events in the United States are bringing questions about gun laws and mental health into sharp focus as such crimes inflict pain and suffering onto victims, their families and the greater society, not to mention the perpetrators themselves.

In recent years a new synthesis between spirituality and scientific enquiry has been emerging. New ideas in the nature of consciousness are beginning to throw some light on some of the mysteries that have previously eluded scientific enquiry. This paper highlights how previous investigations have neglected important data due to an epistemology that is fundamentally physical and rationalistic, and advocates an alternative empirical epistemology for investigating the causes of human evil by using known psychological principles but with a methodology grounded in an alternative conceptual framework developed by SPR co-founder F.W.H. Myers.

Content Analysis of Spontaneous Cases of Psi Using the Database Produced by the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre

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In a commentary on the state of parapsychology (Roe, 2012) one of us noted that much recent work has concentrated on technologically sophisticated methods for measuring unconscious responses to target stimuli or involved implicit psi tasks masked by conventional cognitive tasks (e.g., Bem, Tressoldi, Rabeyron & Duggan, 2016; Mossbridge, Tressoldi & Utts, 2012). Although the findings from such studies are certainly intriguing, it is not clear whether they have much to say about the kinds of spontaneous experience that prompted the foundation of the Society for Psychical Research or which preoccupy the general public today. Since many active researchers are employed in the university sector and are paid from the public purse, it might reasonably be argued that their research should reflect (or have some relevance to) that public's concerns. We need to ensure that our experimental designs reflect the circumstances of the phenomena *in situ*, and that experimental outcomes are tested against naturalistic descriptions of the phenomena.

Unfortunately there has been little systematic work in recent times that describes the incidence and nature of people's spontaneous experiences. Surveys that are commonly cited (e.g., Haraldsson, 1985; Ipsos MORI, 1998, 2003; Moore, 2005; Newport & Strausberg, 2001) have not been designed with the

particular interests of parapsychologists in mind, especially concerning the circumstances of experiences that might identify necessary or sufficient conditions. Case collections provide more context, but — with perhaps one exception (Feather & Schmicker, 2005) — researchers have tended to rely on earlier classic reviews (e.g., Rhine, 1962a, 1962b; Sannwald, 1963; Schouten, 1981) that may not resonate with the general public's experience today.

In this presentation we will describe a project intended to address this shortcoming by providing a systematic analysis of cases submitted to the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre. Many are concerned with religious experiences that fall outside the remit of psychical research but about 25% refer to experiences that could cast light on the necessary or sufficient conditions for parapsychological phenomena to occur. A sample of 3,000 cases have been drawn, representing approximately 50% of the case collection. These have been read to identify those of relevance to psychical research, and all qualifying cases have been coded according to contents. In this presentation we will present the results of a content analysis of the salient elements of cases in the collection and compare these with classic case collections (Greenacre, 2007; Krippendorff, 2013; Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010).

We should like to thank the SPR Research Grants Committee for their kind support of this project.

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What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us? Is The Society for Psychical Research Relevant to Modern Paranormal Investigators?

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It is clear that there is a strong and sustained general interest in the paranormal within society, particularly where it relates to ghosts, hauntings and other spontaneous phenomena. Many individuals and groups have a strong desire to study such phenomena for themselves and paranormal investigation has never been so popular as it is currently. This interest has been linked to the dramatic portrayal of paranormal investigating within the media and also the extensive growth of social media that allows groups and individuals to easily connect with their peers, sharing ideas and investigation results. Television and the social media has also given rise to a new generation of expert paranormal investigators, several of whom have gained a celebrity status amongst the shows viewers and have become highly influential within the paranormal investigation community. Techniques and equipment used on the television shows have now become accepted by many investigators as the de-facto means of conducting investigations. Many of these techniques may be described as unproductive at best, often ethically questionable and mostly worthless to psychical research. This genuine interest in studying spontaneous cases is badly served by the current media led model which places audience viewing figures and sensationalist story telling above any desire to actually inform or educate.

The consideration of spontaneous cases within parapsychology is also generally poor. Many of the current academic parapsychology modules place little emphasis on the potential usefulness of spontaneous case studies. The current academic model also provides an inadequate skill set for parapsychologists who wish to study spontaneous cases. This is particularly true in relation to physical phenomena and measurement thereof and this has resulted in a number of examinations of spontaneous cases by parapsychologists being accepted or dismissed on the basis of poorly understood or measured physical variables.

Spontaneous case investigation is unfortunately also being poorly served by The Society for Psychical Research who should be ideally placed to render genuine support and guidance to investigators and all those seeking information about the nature and study of spontaneous cases. The Society has a long heritage and extensive information resources that for the most part remain unused by the paranormal investigation community. It could be argued that the Society has not sought to engage with these groups or individuals and has in recent years moved away from the investigation of spontaneous cases, preferring to focus on discussions that relate primarily to parapsychology. For example, the guidebook for spontaneous case investigators produced by the Society has not been updated since 1996 despite the great many changes that relate to the technology and the manner in which ethical considerations need to meet that have taken place over the past twenty years.

I suggest that The Society for Psychical Research needs to reach out to spontaneous case investigators and use its resources to provide all interested parties with high quality information and support in ways that are accessible and relevant. To be effective, this outreach needs to be tailored toward the specific needs of the users, be they interested amateur or university academic.

1. It should strive to use all available media, including print, social and broadcast media using language that is understood and meaningful for participants.
2. It should strive to reflect current practises and consider questions that are raised by the portrayal and perception of modern investigating methods.
3. It should strive to be unbiased and properly consider the value and worth of all methods.
4. It must be affordable and easily accessible by any interested party.

Such an outreach programme should include online and in-person investigation training courses including the practical application of skills. Currently, there are a small number of well-constructed courses that do try to engage with those who are interested in developing their investigating knowledge and skills but these are mostly submerged by ghost hunting 101 type courses and events that are supplied by the groups themselves. Some of the well-designed courses are considered to be prohibitively expensive or not sufficiently relevant in meeting the needs of the current generation of investigators and accordingly have a greatly limited uptake.

I suggest that developing such an outreach programme would present few difficulties to the Society as it already has a strong educational bias amongst its membership and importantly a small but significant number of members who are competent in the investigation of spontaneous cases.

A Survey of University Students Concerning Putative Apparitions of the Dead

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The very first research undertaken by the Society for Psychical Research involved studies of apparitional experience, especially putative experiences of the deceased. More recently, studies of widows have revealed that more than half consistently report quasi-sensory experiences of their deceased husbands. Others have experienced apparitions of other relatives and friends (and sometimes strangers). Such experiences are often called “after death communication” (ADC). It is important to correlate the frequency and phenomenology of such experiences with the ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds of individuals. Such a study can explore whether there is a core phenomenology to experience that purport to be of apparitions of the dead (even if some elements are correlated with culture, religion, and world view) or whether the amount of variance between such apparitions based on those three factors makes it highly unlikely that there is a core experience. To access possible correlations, a survey is being administered to students at Methodist University, a small liberal arts university in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Methodist University is near Fort Bragg, the largest military base in the United States, and also has a strong international program. Its student body is diverse in religious beliefs, world views, ethnicity, culture, and age. The survey includes both undergraduate and graduate students. Responses have been collected and data will be tabulated and analyzed to determine whether there are significant correlations between the respondents’ ethnic, cultural and religious makeup with putative apparitional experiences of the deceased and to identify which, if any, phenomenological elements are independent of ethnicity, culture, and religion.

The San Pantaleon Phenomena: Miraculous Healing & Miracle Blood

Dr. Ciarán O’Keeffe

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Saint Pantaleon was a martyr during the Diocletian persecution of 303AD in the northwest region of Anatolia (the westernmost protrusion of Asia). His fascinating life was a mix of religious fervour and science, of a man battling with early instruction in Christianity and a passion for medicine. After his mother's death, he rejected Christianity and studied medicine with a renowned physician, Eurphosinos, ultimately serving as personal physician to Emperor Maximian (Roman Emperor from 285 to 305). Saint Hermolaus brought him back to Christianity, convincing him that Jesus Christ was the better physician. He became a faith healer, miraculously healing a blind man by invoking the name of Jesus over him. With his knowledge of medicine and his new found healing abilities he became revered in some circles whilst denounced for playing with magic in others. The Emperor ordered him to be executed and it is his death which became legend as his reputation throughout Europe grew. Supposedly he was burned, submerged in a bath of molten lead, drowned, fed to wild beasts, bound on the execution wheel and beheaded (the sword bent) all in an effort to execute him. When he desired death himself, only then was it possible to behead him.

His veneration spread throughout Europe and, following the Black Death in the mid-14th Century, he came to be regarded as one of the fourteen guardian martyrs, the Fourteen Holy Helpers (considered within Roman Catholicism for their healing properties due to intercessory prayer). There are relics of St. Pantaleon found all over Europe. His head is venerated at Lyon, at the Basilica of the Vierzehnheiligen in Germany he is venerated with his hands nailed to his head, many churches, shrines and monasteries have been named for him, other relics can be found at Saint Denis in Paris. By far the most fascinating aspect of his veneration concerns his blood.

This author's investigation of St. Pantaleon's miracle blood began following a visit to Madrid in Spring 2009. Whilst there, I heard of a little known monastery in the centre of Madrid which had a relic room containing hundreds of religious relics (including, allegedly, a piece of the True Cross). Monasterio de la Encarnación also houses a phial of St. Pantaleon's blood, permanently kept in a glass capsule, which remains solid throughout the year apart from on 27th July (his feast day) when it liquifies for 24 hours. According to legend, if it does not liquefy disaster will follow. Given a visit in April 2009 during which I was able to speak briefly to various members of the Monastery and conduct preliminary research (including photos and temperature readings of the *Reliquario* - Relics Room) I planned a revisit around St. Pantaleon's Feast Day. Armed with camera, dictaphone, temperature data loggers and notebook I began the follow-up investigation focused on examining the claims of the liquifying miracle blood. Without direct access to the blood (it hadn't been opened for 400 years), the investigation was one of curiosity rather than hoping for a definite conclusion. Over the course of 2 days, however, what I encountered were hundreds of other, more personal miracles regarding healing.

This paper presents the findings concerning St. Pantaleon's blood (and miracle blood generally), but also the wealth of subjective reports that drew thousands of followers, year in year out, to a place where, compared to Lourdes for example, there appeared to be no tourism or desire for money or publicity. The San Pantaleon Phenomenon was not then the reported physical transformation of his blood, but the focus for the ostensible healing power of intercessory prayer.

Capturing the Healing Craft: Using the RCT Design to Explore the Effects of Pagan Healing Spells

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The aim of this paper is to present the final results from research investigating the effects of Neo-Pagan healing spells as a form of distant spiritual healing that was presented last year.

Neo-Paganism is an umbrella term for a number of different ‘traditions’ with nature worship, magical beliefs and individualism at their core. It is a fast growing belief system in the UK with numbers of people identifying as Pagan on the UK census doubling between 2001 and 2011 from 42,262 to 80,153 (Office for National Statistics, 2012). Healing is a core aspect of neo-Pagan practice (Farrar & Farrar, 1981; Willin, 2007) yet despite this, no scientific studies have been conducted to look at its effects. However previous research investigating the efficacy of non-contact healing practices has been sufficiently successful to warrant further study (Astin, Harkness & Ernst, 2000; Byrd, 1988; Roe, Sonnex & Roxburgh, 2015; Sicher, Targ, Moore & Smith 1998).

A double-blind randomised controlled study was conducted to ascertain if there is evidence of healing effects as a consequence of being treated by experienced Pagan practitioners as they conduct distant healing rituals for specified persons. Various aspects of the design of the study were informed by previously conducted interviews with Neo-Pagan Practitioners.

The trial utilised a delayed intervention design in which participants attend sessions at the University weekly for four weeks. Participants are randomly assigned to either group A or group B, with group A receiving healing in week one, after the initial session to capture baseline measures and group B receiving healing in week two after the second session.

From the interviews it emerged that practitioners required some form of representation or symbol of the ‘castees’ as well as some indication of the issues they would like to see resolved. Thus participants were asked to provide a picture and a personal item that was passed to the practitioner along with a ‘spell request’ in which the participants indicated the changes they would benefit from. Practitioners indicated in the interviews that the belief of the castee can have a mediating effect on the efficacy of the spell and so in the first week participants were asked three questions to establish their level of belief.

Practitioners also explained that although spells have specific targets, holistic effects are often evident thus the WHO Quality of Life Scale (WHOQOL) was used as an outcome measure to capture this holistic effect.

It is hoped that this research will make an original contribution to the study of spiritual healing by investigating an approach to healing which has not been explored before.

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40th International SPR Annual Conference

PROGRAMME

Friday 2nd September

12.30-14.20 REGISTRATION – outside MOOT COURT ROOM, LIBERTY BUILDING

14.20-14.30 OPENING REMARKS

Experimental Parapsychology

14.30-15.00 Caroline Watt & James Kennedy *Stimulating Progress in Parapsychology*

15.00-15.30 David Vernon *Exploring Pre-call Using Arousing Images*

15.30-16.00 Chris Roe & Lucy Desborough

A Reconsideration of Sheldrake's Theory of Morphic Resonance

16.00-16.30 TEA/COFFEE – LIBERTY BUILDING

16.30-17.00 Annekatrin Puhle & Adrian Parker *Dreams of Deceased Persons*

Mediumship and Possession States

17.00-17.30 David Saunders et al *Growing Links between Communities: Progress at the Research Laboratory for the Scientific Study of Mediumship at the Arthur Findlay College*

17.30-18.00 Erlendur Haraldsson

Indridi Indridason: Comparison with Other Outstanding Physical Mediums

18.30 PRESIDENT'S DRINK RECEPTION – UNIVERSITY HOUSE

19.30-21.30 DINNER – UNIVERSITY HOUSE

Invited Speaker

21.30-22.15 Engelbert Winkler *Lucid Dreams: Fulfilling Your Dreams – While Dreaming.*

Saturday 3rd September

8.00 - 9.00 BREAKFAST (FOR B&B) - REFECTORY

9.00 - 9.30 Ross Friday & David Luke

Now see hear! Detecting Being Watched or Listened to via Extrasensory Perception

Dream States

9.30-10.00 Keith Hearne *The Alpha-Numeric Dream Code*

Panel Discussion

10.00-10.45 Keith Hearne, Annekatrin Puhle, David Saunders, Engelbert Winkler

The Use of Lucid Dreaming in "Survival State" and Psi-Research

10.45-11.15 TEA/COFFEE – LIBERTY BUILDING

EVP and After Death Communications

11.15-11.45 Sean Richards

"Anomalous Voices Re-Visited": Electronic Voice Phenomenon and Instrumental Trans-Communication

11.45-12.15 Ann Winsper, John Marsh & Paul Rogers *Voices of the Living or Voices of the Dead?*

12.15-13.30 LUNCH – LIBERTY BUILDING

Invited Speaker

- 13.30-14.30 Trevor Hamilton
Assessing the Assessors: the Cross-Correspondences – Automatic Writings Then and Now

Cultural Influences and Expressions

- 14.30-15.00 Steve Webley
Das Unheimliche (the Uncanny) & the Trauma of Post-Ideology: Psychoanalytic Perspectives
- 15.00-15.30 Wim Kramer *An Introduction to Dutch Mediumistic Art Paintings of the Interbellum*
- 15.30-16.00 Kimberley Thomas & Callum Cooper
Investigation of Viewer Opinions on the Use of “Science” in Paranormal Reality Television Shows

16.00-16.30 TEA/COFFEE – LIBERTY BUILDING

- 16.30-17.00 Leo Ruickbie *A Report on the Society for Psychical Research and the First World War Project*

Theoretical Aspects

- 17.00 -17.30 Mary Rose Barrington *Telepathy: Putting the Horse before the Cart*
- 17.30-18.00 Fergus Hinds *No Time and Nowhere*
- 18.00-18.30 Sean O’Donnell *Bright Future for Psi? Through Physics and Phenomenology*

19.30-21.00 DINNER – UNIVERSITY HOUSE

- 21.00-21.45 **After-dinner speaker** Eberhard Bauer
Beyond the Brexit: The Reception of SPR Work by German Psychical Researchers: Some Historical Remarks

Sunday 4th September

8.00 - 9.00 BREAKFAST (FOR B&B) - REFECTORY

Spontaneous Phenomena

- 9.00- 9.30 Terence Palmer
A Pragmatic Methodology for Investigation of Hallucinations and Veridical Voices
- 9.30-10.00 Chris Roe & Rebecca Linnett
Content Analysis of Spontaneous Cases of Psi Using the Database Produced by the Alister Hardy Religious Experiences Research Centre
- 10.00-10.30 Steven Parsons
What Have the Romans Done for Us? Is the SPR Relevant to Modern Paranormal Investigators?

10.30-11.00 TEA/COFFEE – LIBERTY BUILDING

- 11.00-11.30 Michael Potts *A Survey of University Students Concerning Putative Apparitions of the Dead*

Healing Research

- 11.30-12.00 Ciarán O’Keeffe *The San Pantaleon Phenomena: Miraculous Healing and Miracle Blood*
- 12.00-12.30 Charmaine Sonnex *Capturing the Healing Craft. Using the RCT Design to Explore the Effects of Pagan Healing Spells*

12.30-13.00 CLOSING REMARKS

13.00-14.00 LUNCH – LIBERTY BUILDING