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# Paranthropology

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*Rehabilitating The Neglected  
'Similar': Confronting The Issue  
Of Cross-Cultural Similarities In  
The Study Of Religions -  
Gregory Shushan*

*Scientific Controversies  
Shaping the Worldview of the  
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of Non-local Memory Revisited -  
Mark A. Schroll*

*Science Betrayed?: Rupert  
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*& More*



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Jack Hunter

Welcome to the twelfth issue of *Paranthropology*. This issue begins with a comprehensive overview of UFO research from an anthropological perspective, by Steven Mizrach titled “The Para-Anthropology of UFO Abductions: The Case for the UTH.” UTH (Ultraterrestrial Hypothesis) is Mizrach's alternative to the “nuts and bolts” approach of UFO sightings and the crash sites of alien spaceships, and those who are totally skeptical of UFO's. UTH offers anthropologists of consciousness an opportunity to re-examine UFO research as a transpersonal way of knowing. Although controversial, the UTH thesis is heuristic and worth consideration as an invitation to n-dimensional knowing. The next four articles provide a variety of perspectives on the work of Rupert Sheldrake—a timely endeavor needing clarity in light of the recent TED talks re-evaluation of Sheldrake's work. We begin with a general overview of Sheldrake's recent book *The Science Delusion* (titled *Science Set Free* in the USA) by John R. DeLorez. Additionally DeLorez compares Sheldrake's work to Oriental Occultism writers of second generation Theosophy. DeLorez's article prepares us for Mark A. Schroll's assessment of Sheldrake titled, “Scientific Controversies Shaping the Worldview of the 21st Century: Sheldrake's Theory of Non-local Memory Revisited.” Schroll's article is both theoretical and biographical, reflecting his 29 year inquiry into Sheldrake's work, and its relationship to David Bohm's implicate order theory, and transpersonal psychology. Additionally Schroll summarizes the laboratory experiments conducted in the early 20th century testing Lamarckian inheritance and its unexpected results inviting alternative hypotheses to explain them, as Sheldrake proposes. Following Schroll, Zelda Hall contributes a thought-provoking examination of Sheldrake's clash with current scientific theory, as well as offering us a psychotherapeutic assessment of Schroll's article—and the difficult road ahead toward our acceptance of a new paradigm. Rounding out these articles on Sheldrake is Margaret Gouin's article “Science Betrayed?: Rupert Sheldrake and The Science Delusion.” Science argues that it is objective and value free, but is it really? Gouin offers a sociology of knowledge perspective inviting us to apply the same critical analysis of Sheldrake's work to our existing scientific theories. Kaitlyn Kane's article “Critical Analysis of Culturally Intrusive Interpretations of Phenomenological and Parapsychological Scientific Studies” continues to hone this self-reflective lens of assessment through a meta-analysis of science and culture—resembling the methodological tool Alvin W. Gouldner called a “reflexive sociology” in *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970). Shifting our focus from science to religion, Gregory Shushan takes up the task of “Rehabilitating the Neglected 'Similar': Confronting the issue of Cross Cultural Similarities in the Study of Religion.” Shushan encourages us to reconsider the importance of a balanced methodology to appreciate nuanced meaning and understanding of religion that researchers currently find difficult to comprehend. The final article in this issue provides an historical assessment of mediums and related kinds of anomalous phenomena by Juan Corbetta and Fabiana Savall titled, “The Kardecian Spiritualist Movement in Argentina.” This issue also includes a book review by Mark A. Schroll that chronicles the life, healing abilities, environmental activism, fantastic tales, and human limitations of *The Voice of Rolling Thunder: A Medicine Man's Wisdom for Walking the Red Road*, written by Sidian Morning Star Jones and Stanley Krippner. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Paranthropology*.

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# The Para-Anthropology of UFO Abductions: The Case for the UTH

Steven Mizrach



## UFOlogy Stands Alone: Nuts and Bolts or ETH as Dominant Paradigms

Within the study of what can broadly be called anomalous, Fortean, or paranormal phenomena, the loosely defined para-discipline of what is usually known as “UFOlogy” often stands strangely isolated. Most UFOlogists, especially in the United States. (but perhaps less so in Britain and Europe), tend to be of what can be called the “nuts and bolts” school, and subscribe to what is usually known as the extra-terrestrial hypothesis (ETH). Essentially, they believe that UFOs represent physical spacecraft, piloted by extra-terrestrial beings. Many UFOlogists have little interest in other paranormal phenomena, and when asked if they have interest in things like, for instance, ghosts, poltergeist phenomena, parapsychology and ESP, or apparitions, they say no. After all, those things are ‘not scientific,’ whereas it seems more scientific and rational to assume that with UFOs we are simply dealing with advanced technology, nothing more than an extrapolation beyond what human beings already possess.

After all, most scientists take it for granted that there are thousands of solar systems with planets in the myriad of galaxies in the universe, and clearly out of those planets, there must be some that have given rise to intelligent life. SETI began in the 1960s because many astronomers (who doubt the existence of UFOs) like Carl Sagan (1972) took the (Frank) Drake equation quite seriously; surely by this model of mathematical odds alone “we are not alone.” Nothing there requires anything outside of existing paradigms of astronomy and biology. Indeed, entire academic disciplines are based on this possibility,

such as exobiology, or those devoted to the SETI program, who are looking for radio signals from a distant advanced civilization. The physicist Freeman Dyson even predicted that we might find extraterrestrial civilizations by looking for solar system-encapsulating spheres he called (naturally) Dyson Spheres.

The irony of course is that only recently has empirical evidence caught up with Drake’s mathematical predictions, because we are now starting to come up with ways of actually observing and detecting exoplanets astronomically. We hadn’t even found any when Drake wrote down his famous equation. Most of the early ones we found were not the least bit ‘earthlike,’ and many were giant gaseous planets like Jupiter, or not the proper distance from their stars to harbor liquid water (and thus thought to be unlikely to harbor any lifeforms), although some with the proper features for giving rise to life are now starting to be discovered. (Although some astronomers hold out some hope for Jupiter’s moons, like Europa, the general consensus is the ideal conditions for life won’t be found anywhere else within our own solar system.) We have no telescopes or technology that can tell us whether life exists on these spheres millions of light years away, but we continue to wait for that “wow” radio signal on our radio telescopes which will finally prove to us one of them contains a technological civilization that sent it.

And yet, many scientists interested in ETs, devoted to SETI, like Sagan, have discounted UFO reports, and for quite specific reasons, the primary one being the inexorable problem of physical law. To put it quite simply, how do they get here from there? Our laws of physics suggest nothing can travel faster than light and most of



those recently found exoplanets are thousands, if not millions of light years away. But worse than that, there are tremendous barriers making it hard to accelerate things even *close* to the speed of light – it would require tremendous energy, probably more than our entire civilization could produce, just to accelerate an object to 90% of the speed of light. To put things in perspective, our space probe Voyager I is now moving away from Earth as one of the fastest accelerating manmade things in the universe, having recently left the outskirts of our solar system. But it is only traveling 1/20,000<sup>th</sup> of the speed of light. At that velocity, it would take 80,000 years to reach Proxima Centauri, the nearest star, 4 light-years away (however, it is not headed in that direction). And, as books like *The Physics of Star Trek* (Krauss 1995) make clear, although sci-fi is filled with stories of ships traveling faster than light, even traveling close to it would pose insurmountable problems, specifically relating to braking/deceleration, changing course, or the ship's hull, even encountering small particles of cosmic dust (which could be disastrous).

Sagan's novel *Contact* (1985) settles on worm-hole technology as the answer, but while physics suggests they could exist, there isn't any way known – yet – to create them or affect where they lead to; and many physicists say that since they connect black holes, ships could not survive the gravitational forces present at the the point of entry. This puts the “nuts and bolts”/“ETH” school in a strange position. On the one hand, unlike other people interested in the “paranormal,” they feel they are operating within the boundaries of conventional science, which pretty much accepts that there are ETs out there. But on the other hand, that same science pretty much says even if they *are* out there, it is almost impossible for them to get here. If they are thousands of light years away, even if we got a radio signal from them, it would have had to have been sent thousands of years ago. In a way, it's virtually impossible to predict how an alien civilization would behave, especially one incredibly unlike us and more advanced than us – a point UFOlogists often make. And the other thing is, it's almost impossible to say what a more ad-

vanced technology than our own by millions of years could do, as well. (But then, why not say at that point technology *is* magic, and so even other paranormal phenomena that seem to violate our laws of physics are just other forms of ‘technomagic’?)

Also, there is another puzzle that has frequently bedeviled UFOlogy. Reports of UFO-nauts are almost always of bipedal, humanoid beings. Tall or short, blond or Gray, lizard men or frog-things, they always seem to be more-or-less humanoid – and exobiologists do not think this is what an alien race should normally appear like, given the divergent directions of evolution right here on this planet. (Some have argued bipedalism is a necessary condition for sentience, but is it really?) For example, Arthur C. Clarke's ‘Ramans’ were a tripodal race that resembled Earth's crustaceans more than us. Then there is the morphology of the famous ‘flying saucer.’ Why does this morphology predominate, and is that really the best design for interstellar travel? Plus, they always seem to be oddly adapted to Earth's environment, rarely wearing space suits (as we would have to elsewhere), and always readily able, in many cases, to communicate with us in our language. When you think about it, all of this does seem kind of odd if we are dealing with alien astronauts.

In the end, we can, I guess, wave our hands and say “they” (highly advanced ETs) found some way around the laws of physics that “we” know. In which case “nuts and bolts” UFOlogy is no longer within the paradigms of the science it otherwise strives to cling to. The problem with parapsychology – even though Duke University and Princeton have had departments investigating it at various times – is that ESP and other phenomena like it (especially precognition or psychokinesis), seem to violate the laws of physics. They would require revising the laws of science. But, if UFO-nauts are really ET aliens from planets millions of light years away, then, in effect, we are, in many ways, facing the same thing. Somehow, something in our physics must be wrong for that to be possible – but we have no idea what that could be. (It's either that, or they left their planets millions of years ago on genera-

tion ships, presuming like us they can't have lifespans longer than a century or two, and have just gotten here. Maybe at this point they have already established bases on the Moon or here on Earth underwater or somewhere nearby. Still that doesn't seem to be the case. If they did that, however, it would take millions of years to get home, too, and it seems silly to have made such an incredibly long journey just to abduct us, or kill our cows.)

It is these problems that have led to the rise of alternatives to the ETH hypothesis within UFOlogy, mostly since the 60s. Most of these alternative hypotheses are represented by slim minorities within the field. The ETH was the default position from 1947 to the mid 60s, and I would argue that even today in the 2<sup>nd</sup> decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while it's not the default, the 'nuts and bolts' ETH position remains by far the dominant one at UFOlogical conferences and conventions. The main position of UFO-skeptics like Philip Klass (1997) and Robert Sheaffer (and probably a large part of the scientific community, and skeptics such as those in CSICOP), is quite simply that all UFO reports are either misidentifications of known phenomena (including Venus, swamp gas, etc.) or hoaxes and/or deceptions, or possibly false memories, and all UFO photographs are either false 'artefacts' or photographic hoaxes. In general, the position of the *Condon Report* (1969) is still affirmed – that while all UFO sightings cannot be explained in this way (the usual figure though is that 90% can), even those we haven't yet been able to easily explain probably will eventually be explained in the same way, and not in any way that could advance scientific knowledge in any useful way, for they are certainly not alien visitors.

It's interesting that the *Condon Report* declares that. I mean, even if the essential model is correct, science could still learn *something* from studying UFO reports. Perhaps we could learn more about human misperception of stars and planets, the inability for people to correctly estimate the size or distance of aerial objects, or even the mechanisms behind the confabulation of false stories. Yet, that is the mantra of the 1969 report, that nothing of scientific value can be

gained from studying UFO reports, and therefore the Air Force and other branches of government have no need to investigate them. What the UFOlogists have been able to demonstrate is that, quite curiously, even though the Air Force's open study of UFOs, *Project Blue Book*, was shut down in 1969, it and other government agencies (including the FBI, CIA, and NSA, though *not* NASA), *did* continue to collect UFO reports, especially those near military bases or government facilities, as if to ignore the findings of the report. Anyway, the proponents of the alternative hypotheses we are about to discuss disagree with the conclusions of the *Condon Report*. There may well be things we can learn scientifically from studying UFO reports. It's just that the contributions may be to "soft" social and psychological science (sociology and psychology), rather than physics, exobiology, and astronomy. Or...to parapsychology?

### The Alternative School: The PCH

If we can pinpoint a person who is responsible for opening up the alternative direction in UFOlogy, other than the dominant positions of the ufo-skeptics and the nuts-and-bolts/ETH factions, I would say it would have to be French UFOlogist Jacques Vallee (still kicking, as we say, at age 73). Vallee is no idle dreamer with no training in science. He is an astronomer and computer scientist, and in the latter field, some of his technological contributions helped create ARPANet, the predecessor of the modern Internet. Vallee was introduced to the subject by a fellow astronomer, one of the few professional, academic astronomers to express anything other than a skeptical interest in UFOs, J. Allen Hynek. It is Vallee that the enigmatic Francophone, Claude Lacombe, in the movie *Close Encounters* (1977), is based on. (That is an interesting movie in many ways, especially given the choice of the aliens to choose a Native American sacred site, Devil's Tower, to make "first contact." In Lakota mythology/ethnoastronomy, the mountain has been linked with the Pleiades for centuries, and in centuries past was one of the sites for the Sun Dance. In that movie, "Lacombe" is the only one

who voices opposition to “Roy Neary” and other “contactees” not being allowed to meet the aliens since he realizes they were “called” to the site through visions of the tower much as might happen during a Native American vision-quest.)

His first books on UFOlogy follow pretty much in the astronomical, “nuts and bolts” vein. But, as Vallee began to study some of the field’s more unusual, bizarre cases, something began troubling him. The first is that he doubted the people were actually lying and confabulating. The reason being that if they were making up these stories for fame/attention and fortune, they would certainly try to tell narratives that were at least more sensible, believable, and conventional. But the other was the almost uncannily strange similarity of these narratives to earlier mythological stories, particularly how UFO abductions seem to resemble stories of “fairy kidnappings” during the Middle Ages, and how other UFO “encounters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> kind” seem like narratives of religious visions and apparitions, like the Marian apparitions of Fatima and elsewhere, or other stories of traveling with, meeting, and encountering ancient gods, spirits, “elves and wee folk,” daemons, djinni, and angels.

There are all kinds of curious overlaps. Fairy kidnappings feature the missing-time element that is often so characteristic of modern abductions. People were regularly warned not to eat fairy-food, yet were often given it anyway, since fairy-food opened the fairy-realm to visits from ordinary people (or could even trap them there, like eating pomegranates in Hades did to Persephone). In this vein, Vallee was fascinated by a UFO report in which the saucernaut gave the witness pancakes cooked from a grill, and told him to eat them. That’s right, they flew here over millions of light years to open a cosmic IHOP ... also, interestingly, crop circles and “saucer nests” (UFO landing sites) seem to resemble what Europeans have called “fairy rings” for many centuries, believing this is where the fairies come to dance. Today, for most of us, a “fairy tale” is synonymous with something so obviously unbelievable and mythical there’s no reason to think it deals with anything real. But, as the ethnologist Evans-Wentz (1911) showed, belief in fairies (or

the *sidhe*, “good folk”), was quite concrete and prevalent in many of the Celtic lands even in the early Twentieth century. People not only told stories about the fairies, but also claimed to see them in many rural areas, all through the 1920s and 30s.

Vallee’s book *Passport to Magonia* (1969) sums up much of this evidence. (In Nineteenth century Carolingian folktales, the Archbishop Agobard describes “Magonia” as a land in the clouds where “cloud-ships” come from, and their “aerial sailors” come here to create tempests, steal crops, or leave their celestial anchors in the roofs of churches.) Vallee’s arguments against the ETH were best summed up in a 1990 paper he gave to the Society for Scientific Exploration entitled “Five Arguments Against the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis.” In *Passport*, however, what is most interesting is not why he rejects the ETH (it is for many of the reasons we’ve already discussed), but the alternatives he begins to consider. Because, given the resemblance of modern UFO reports to medieval and ancient mythology, we can go in two distinct directions. One is the route mostly British UFOlogists and folklorists took when they created *Magonia* magazine, shortly after the publication of Vallee’s book. The authors of *Magonia* magazine (1973-2008), including American ufologist/folklorist Thomas E. “Eddie” Bullard (2010), largely follow what is known as the psychosocial or psychocultural hypothesis (PCH). It isn’t that different from what we may call the ufo-skeptic position, except that they do think we can learn something from studying UFO reports; but what we can learn is more about the nature of the creation and dissemination of myths and folktales.

The general position of folklore studies is that myths and folklore are mostly myths and folklore. OK, that is a tautology, but let me make clearer the point that was just made. Anthropologists and folklorists studying modern day folklore, such as Jan Brunvand, the savant of urban legends, or Alan Dundes, have developed interesting models of what myths and folktales can tell us about society and culture and its concerns, anxieties, and foci. In general, though, few follow the school of mythology in the ancient

world known as Euhemerism, where the ancient philosopher Euhemerus declared that myths and stories of gods and demigods simply might be embellishments and exaggerations of actual history and objective realities and events. Brunvand, not surprisingly, does not tend to think stories of microwaved cats, people in bathtubs with missing kidneys, choking Dobermans, or gang members constantly waiting on the side of the road with dimmed headlights are “real,” even partly so. While these stories can tell us what kinds of things our culture worries about or focuses on, they certainly don’t describe, even through misperception, anything that actually happened in space-time. Brunvand is interested in how these stories spread, he calls them FOAFtales because when asked where they heard them, people inevitably say “from a friend of a friend” (2000). The people aren’t lying – they surely did hear what they heard, although they rarely saw the described thing for themselves. (Or, perhaps a wee bit of the age-old game of “Telephone” is at work, too.)

This is generally the position of *Magonia* magazine. The PCH school has mostly focused, since the 1970s and 80s, on showing how stories of UFO abductions, sightings, and contact “of the 3<sup>rd</sup> kind” are clearly drawn from a modern reservoir of folk images and ideas – popular culture science fiction, instead of religious traditions or fairy myths. Magonia authors have long pointed out the resemblance of the first “flying saucer” reports, following Kenneth Arnold in 1947, to science fiction stories in sci-fi magazines of the 1930s and 40s. And how, despite claims to the contrary, even the UFO abduction reports (the first documented one is thought to be Betty & Barney Hill’s, in 1963), resemble science fiction stories, even that of the famous black-and-white comic and movie strip serial, *Flash Gordon*. Carl Jung famously described flying saucers as a “Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies” (1979), although Jung would take varying positions throughout his career as to the objective reality of UFOs. Jung did believe in “the paranormal,” unlike Freud, and co-wrote about the phenomenon he called synchronicity with physicist Wolfgang Pauli.

Arnold’s account of his sighting of “saucers skipping across the sky” in 1947 was first carried by Raymond Palmer’s magazine of the paranormal, *Fate*. Palmer is such a fascinating figure for the authors of *Magonia*. He was the one who really brought UFOs to modern awareness, publishing Arnold’s 1947 eyewitness account. He held a variety of odd beliefs, including in the so-called ‘Oahspe Bible,’ or the “Shaver Mystery,” Richard Shaver’s letters describing a “true” story in which beings inside the Hollow Earth known as “Deros” use rays to control mankind. What’s most important for our theory here, however, is from before his ventures into the paranormal in the late 1940s and 50s, it’s what Palmer was doing before in the 1930s and 40s that is of particular significance. He was the editor of one of the most widely-read science fiction “fanzines,” *Amazing Stories*, from 1938 to 1949. He edited what is widely thought to be the very first sci-fi fanzine in 1930, *The Comet*, with Walter Dennis. He was also associated with a number of other magazines publishing sci-fi stories, including *Fantastic Adventures*, *Other Worlds*, and *Space World*, even up until his death. (Trivia: The DC superhero Atom’s real name, his alter ego, is “Raymond Palmer,” a tribute to the living person. *Amazing Stories* also carried the very first science fiction story of an aspiring writer, Isaac Asimov.)

*Fate* (and other paranormal magazines later edited by Palmer, like *Search*), was supposed to carry “true” or “real” stories of Fortean/paranormal events and phenomena. Yet even while publishing that, and even after having left *Amazing Stories*, Palmer continued to edit and publish science fiction “fanzines” as well, until his death (it was at the helm of *Amazing Stories* that he received, and then published, “the Shaver Letters.”). One cannot help but notice, as the Magonia authors have, the resemblance between the fictional space-operas of *Amazing Stories* that Palmer loved so much and published so frequently, and the ‘true’ and ‘real’ accounts of UFO sightings and encounters described in *Fate*. It is amazing how much the UFO reports of the 1940s and 50s reflect this folkloric background, combined with reflecting the overall paranoid atmosphere of the early Cold War, when every-

body was watching the skies – in fear. About the only theory competing with the ETH in early UFO magazines was the belief that they were secret Soviet projects sent to spy on us, perhaps based on captured German technology.

Then there are the contactees. Early UFO sightings, post-Kenneth Arnold, in the world's first "UFO wave" that followed immediately after, were solely of what Hynek called the First and Second kind. People either reported seeing unidentified aerial objects (typically saucer-shaped "flying saucers"), or occasionally by 1948 and 1949 some were reporting seeing them landed on the ground. By the 1950s, the first "3<sup>rd</sup> kind" stories were being reported. People had met the saucer occupants, and they were friendly (and humanoid)! These first recipients of contact with the saucer people, like George Adamski, George Hunt Williamson, and George Von Tassel (it is a strange synchronicity how many of the first contactees were "Curious Georges"), became known as "contactees." And what to make of the bizarre "contactee" era of the 1950s is a problem that vexes many UFOlogists, most of whom often think these folks were all on the "lunatic fringe" and mostly to be ignored. The "contactees" claimed that the Space Brothers (their name for the aliens), had come here to warn mankind of the interplanetary dangers of nuclear war. They were here, like benevolent overlords, to save us from ourselves.

The striking similarity of that story to the fictional narrative of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) has not been lost on the Magonia authors. The Space Brothers told Adamski and others that they were from elsewhere in the solar system, often claiming to be Venusian. (This is obviously impossible, given the surface temperature of the planet.) Many of the contactees described the Space Brothers not only as humanoid, but as "Nordics" – humans with a very "Aryan" blond-haired and blue-eyed tall and muscular appearance. (Perhaps it is no accident another contactee was Guy Ballard, whose "I AM" movement had ties to William Dudley Pelley's Silver Shirts.) Contactees like Adamski would ride with the saucer people – voluntarily, as there would be no (official) 'abductees' until Betty & Barney Hill in

1963 – who would often take them to their bases on Mars and Venus, where somehow they and their companions could breathe and live comfortably without any space suits or protective equipment.

For most in the "nuts and bolts" faction of UFOlogy (where I would say Stanton Friedman is one of the dominant spokesmen), the "contactees" like Adamski were all liars and confabulators. However, they consider the less "fantabulous," but more horror-movie like, stories of the "abductees" since 1963 to be true, as well as "CE of the 3<sup>rd</sup> kind" reports dating from after the contactee era of the Fifties, where the entities no longer seem to be the "eager to tell us why they're here" Space Brothers. Many of the contactees, like Ballard and Williamson, had ties to odd occult organizations, as well as fringe political movements. However, for the PCH adherents of Magonia magazine, it's all a process of continuity, not discontinuity. Perhaps one we could best describe as an evolving mythology. As our societies evolve, our anxieties change, our fixations shift, and the stories we tell "as fiction" do too, so do the "real" stories of UFO witnesses, many of whom grew up on an intensive diet of science fiction literature, and later TV shows and movies.

## The Ultraterrestrial Hypothesis (UTH)

It should be noted that despite the general predilection of Magonia magazine, this is not where Vallee himself ended up with his studies of the phenomenon. In the end, unless we accept the Euhemerist version/school of myth, myths and folklore can only reflect what's going on inside peoples' psyches and imaginations – not anything 'real' to the objective external world. Yet Vallee, who first realized the resemblance of UFO accounts to mythological stories, could not shake empirical data that they also represented an external, objective reality. Jung puzzled about radar reports. Can myths be tracked on radar? At times, especially with his concept of synchronicity, Jung played with the idea that our myths could take on a kind of concrete, physical manifestation, breaking through the barrier of Carte-



sian dualism. But...as metallic, solid, tangible objects that leave impressions in the ground and traces on radar? Can the subjective be seen by multiple simultaneous eyewitnesses? Vallee, in particular, fretted over material traces that UFO objects left behind, of the multiply-observable and measurable luminous energies they radiated, and the physical effects they left behind on witnesses, including what some researchers have called “nightburn” (which appears to be UV radiation).

So we have something – the UFO – stories of which reflect earlier tales in mythology. Yet, it has some kind of concrete objective or physical existence. This leaves only one other additional way we can go. Maybe some of what exists in ancient stories of angels, demons, fairies, djinni, and cloud-sailors also refers to an objective existent reality of beings/entities and objects. Perhaps all that has been changing is our frame of reference. Our interpretations for these strange and bizarre experiences have been shifting. But perhaps there is no “hard line” between 1947 and everything that came before, it’s just that in our world of hard science, where few believe so much anymore in angels, what they would have called Magonians in 847, or angels in 1347, they called aliens in 1947. Or maybe “airship pilots” in the Great Airship Wave of 1896-7, or the “ghost rockets” and “foo fighters” of 1943-6. But then, if these beings *are* “real,” and not from outer space, then where are they from?

In general, most of the non-ETH hypotheses other than Vallee’s would say “right here.” Ivan T. Sanderson (2005) famously argued there could be a hidden advanced civilization beneath the Earth’s oceans and collected stories of USOs (unidentified submarine objects), a theme that appears in the film, *The Abyss* (1989). (Although it seems the aliens of the Abyss are from other planets, and just prefer to live beneath our oceans.) There were quite a few characters in early UFOlogy who believed in the Hollow Earth, and said the UFOs came from within the Earth’s crust, and there was a theory that they were some kind of secret project of some government – us, the Russians, Nazi technology, or belonging to a hidden civilization or secret soci-

ety? Most of these theories have fallen by the wayside since the 1950s. We’ve mapped a great deal of the bottom of the oceans, and there is no hidden Atlantis there. We’ve explored much of the crust of the Earth, and still no Deros hiding underneath. If they’re from “here” but not really “here,” where are they from? There is also the “Earthlights” theory of Paul Devereux (1982), but it can only explain sightings of structured craft and entities through induced hallucinations.

The only answer that Vallee could arrive at – and there is some indication he swayed his friend J. Allen Hynek (1975) to it toward the end of Hynek’s life – is other dimensions of existence. Parallel universes. After *Passport*, he wrote about his theory in the book *Dimensions* (1989). Other dimensions of existence in some ways are much like wormholes. Physics does predict they should exist. The Many-Worlds hypothesis of quantum mechanics says there are an infinite number of them. Many cosmological models increasingly have also come to the view that the Big Bang could have been a local event, in which our universe was spawned, but in effect could be part of a multiverse of an unknown number of other ‘bubble’ universes. However, while many physicists, such as Michio Kaku (2004) and Fred Alan Wolf (1988), are almost certain they exist, there are two other problems. It might be impossible to empirically prove they do, and there might be another problem similar to one discussed earlier. Other universes should, at least in theory, be sealed from each other causally, there should be no way to get from one to another (unlike, say, in the series *Sliders*). Again, perhaps through black holes and singularities, but who could survive the journey? There are no easy answers here either, but it seems to be where Vallee feels the data are taking us, whether we like it or not.

There is one other aspect to the theory that Vallee develops in *Dimensions* that we should discuss. It seems clear, he argues, that we are dealing with other-dimensional beings, called by various names or seen in various guises, throughout history, and they have interacted with us, perhaps continually, throughout much of human history. Well, as you compare UFO sightings with, say, Marian Apparitions and other re-

ligious phenomena that humans have interacted with, you are left with an inevitable conclusion. Visions and apparitions, not unlike the Space Brothers of the 1950s, leave people behind with *messages*. People are profoundly transformed and altered by these encounters. But for what purpose? Perhaps having begun his career in information science and cybernetics, Vallee most controversially argues we are dealing with a *control system*, a thermostat which instead of driving room temperature, directs human evolution.

Developing his theories in parallel with Vallee, was another controversial figure in UFOlogy, John A. Keel. (He died in 2009 at the age of 79.) Like Vallee, Keel also came to reject the ETH. You can famously see Keel depicted in the movie *Mothman Prophecies* (2002), starring Richard Gere. The film is based on Keel's self-narrated, presumably nonfiction, book, of the same title (1975), based on things he claimed to have seen in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, from 1966-7. But the film does to Keel, oddly, what the novel VALIS (1981) did to author Philip K. Dick: split him into two people. It also moves the story from the 1960s into the present (the Aughts), making "Klein" a reporter for the Washington Post, who is perhaps supposed to be the naïve, wet-behind-the-ears, pre-Mothman "Keel," and played by Gere. Later on "Klein" will meet "Alexander Leek" (Keel backwards, get it?) and it is "Leek" who goes on to describe some of the theories Keel was himself most known for. In particular, "Klein" is puzzled over the ability of the entities he's interacting with to know the future. Does that mean they are godlike?

"Leek" uses the metaphor of a window washer who's perched high up on a building, who can see farther than you on the ground. Does that make him a god? Does that make him any smarter than you are? "Leek" tells "Klein" that "Indrid Cold" and other entities he's interacting with are probably not gods. They may exist outside our normal space-time continuum, thus they are able to know our future, even if we here "on the ground" (in 3-dimensional reality) cannot. But, warns "Leek," (an ongoing Keel theme), not only is "Indrid Cold" not anywhere near omniscient, he's also got one other defi-

ciency: he's also anything but omnibenevolent. Much like Emmanuel Swedenborg once warned about the spirits: they deceive, they lie, and they manipulate. They may be able to see the future, perhaps imperfectly, but even to the extent they can, they use that ability to manipulate and control us – probably not to our betterment, and for whatever their purposes are, probably just *scha-denfreude*.

This paranoid theme runs through much of Keel's late writings, first in the *Mothman Prophecies* (1975), then later *The Eighth Tower* (1977), and *Disneyland of the Gods* (1988). He was sent out to investigate sightings of a strange creature dubbed "Mothman" in Point Pleasant, West Virginia in 1966. (The name was kind of a funny pun on an Adam West-era Batman TV character.) This winged creature with glowing eyes menaced the town, which was plagued not just by Mothman, but also sightings of UFOs and the ubiquitous Men-in-Black. Except that the MIBs for Keel are not a secret neuralyzer-equipped government agency dealing with ETs. He seems to conclude, along with his friend Gray Barker, that they are probably not human, either. Then showed up "Indrid Cold," a strange, time-shifting alien intelligence first encountered by "contactee" Woodrow Derenberger, who later uses "Woody" and several others to ferry messages to Keel. The theme of "time" runs through the book. "Cold" repeatedly indicates that he is outside of it. He keeps telling "Woody" and others "I will see you in time," and towards the end starts giving Keel prophecies about the future, in particular predicting that either a World War Two-era TNT plant near Point Pleasant will explode, or some other disaster will kill hundreds in Gallipolis, Ohio, across the river from Point Pleasant, West Virginia. There were darker warnings of world apocalypse coming in December of 1967, following an attempt on the life of the Pope, or the lighting of the White House Christmas tree by Lyndon Johnson.

Sure enough, the book's climax (much like the movie's), comes with the collapse of the Silver Bridge, which indeed connected Gallipolis with Point Pleasant, on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1967. That collapse killed 46 people, most of whom

were motorists stuck on the bridge because of a mysterious malfunction of the traffic light on the Ohio side. This caused traffic to snarl on the bridge, probably put more weight from cars on it than it was designed to handle, and it collapsed, plunging vehicles with Christmas presents and their drivers into the icy waters of the river below. After the Silver Bridge collapse, Indrid Cold goes strangely quiet (as does another odd “Princess Moon Owl” who tells people to meet her on Mount Misery in New York), Mothman sightings end, and the UFOs and MIB leave the town. Keel bemoans the fact that “Cold” misdirected him, warning him of a coming disaster, but not giving him enough information to know its true nature, or prevent it from happening or save people from it. The ending to the book is utter and pure Keelianism, with the author signing off with this lament. All throughout *Mothman Prophecies* he points out that what “Cold” and his gang are up to may just be to drive him (and others) crazy. “Make him look like a nut!” So here comes the ending (Keel is quoting Damon Knight, author of a 1970 book on Charles Fort): “If there is a universal mind, must it be sane?”

It’s a theme that Keel will hammer home in *8th Tower* and *Disneyland of the Gods*. He very much agrees with Vallee’s “control system” hypothesis. But Vallee seems to think the “control system” he’s talking about could be benevolent, possibly working to direct human evolution and consciousness in a positive direction. Keel will have none of that. First off, unlike Vallee, he doesn’t think people are merely perceiving the same thing differently in different epochs. No, he believes “the phenomenon” – “the Great Phonograph in the Sky” – is a chameleon, constantly changing shapes and forms to drive expectations, manipulating and exploiting our beliefs, cloaking itself in the disguises appropriate to each era, hence he says “Belief is the enemy.” It probably “uses” people (temporarily possesses or controls them) to achieve its purposes in the physical world. It manipulates us, by and through religious belief. “The phenomenon,” says Keel, “is as much a feature of this planet as the weather.” It may be “from” a next door dimension or universe outside our normal space-time, but it can

constantly move back and forth between “its” realm and “ours.” In essence, Keel calls the UFOs “ultra-terrestrials,” in a sense not really from another planet, but perhaps from some imperceptible range of the electromagnetic super-spectrum.

Keel, more forcefully than Vallee, connects “the phenomenon” (UFOs) to other paranormal occurrences, suggesting they may arise from the same continuum, perhaps emerge out of the same “window zones” where doorways between our world and ‘others’ are weaker. Much like a true Fortean, Keel sees parapsychology, spiritualism, ufology, and cryptozoology as a kind of circle, which begins and ends nowhere and everywhere. Keel observes that UFO witnesses also tend to have other kinds of paranormal experiences, including ‘monster’ sightings, precognitive visions, automatic writing, and poltergeist experiences. Both Keel and Vallee are the major influences on Spanish UFOlogist Salvador Freixedo (1992), who picks up the theme that their “control system” may also be behind religious phenomena like Marian apparitions, certainly including Fatima, using them to manipulate people to mysterious – but likely not necessarily ‘holy’ – ends. Anyway, in the book *Disneyland* (1988), Keel sums up his cynicism. We truly are the gods’ playthings, a toy in their hands in this silly little playground of a planet. Beams of light are still playing the same game they did thousands of years ago, and people are hearing voices, much like a tentmaker on his way to Damascus got blasted off his horse, except now they claim to come from superior intellects on far-away planets.

The ultra-terrestrial hypothesis, especially its Keelian version, receives cold scorn from much of the nuts and bolts Ufological establishment. And the feeling was mutual. I have one of Keel’s privately printed pamphlets, *The Flying Saucer Subculture*, where he mercilessly makes fun of them (no publication date). He describes them as being like a group of Trekkies at a Trek convention, addicted to geeky science fiction, except taking themselves far more seriously, without cause. For ETH adherents, the UTH (ultra-terrestrial hypothesis, now similarly shortened), is

a retreat from science, which is also an attempt to retreat from empirical proof, and from respect from the aerospace establishment and so forth. The “nuts and bolts” crowd continues to search for physical proof that will convince the establishment, if not photos, which can be faked, then finding some implant in a body or a saucer part that can be demonstrated to irrefutably come from another planet. Keel would say the reason they haven’t found one is that the spiritualists are on a far better track than they are. But in their view, there is no way to prove the existence of other dimensions of existence, so it is just a retreat to supernatural and magical thinking, and away from “science-iness.”

Another Fortean sub-domain where the UTH has gained some ground is crypto-zoology. The general crypto-zoologic paradigm is that “monsters,” especially the so-called “lake monsters” like “Nessie,” or ‘missing links’ like the ape-man “Bigfoot,” are probably the survivals of undiscovered prehistoric species. Again, nothing that would require altering the accepted paradigms of zoology, just an expansion of the zoological catalogue. But a researcher of the Loch Ness monster, F.W. Holiday, put forward a different theory. Frustrated, like many were, on “Nessie’s” ability to disappear when looking for it with submarines or sonar, Holiday noticed its similarity to magical creatures in earlier Celtic folklore. In his book *The Dragon and the Disc* (1973), Holiday suggests “Nessie” may be inter-dimensional, as are “sky serpents” (the disc or UFOs), and that both may once again be the source of many of our religious & mythological beliefs. Holiday also discusses the ‘ley’ lines of Britain and the tendency of UFOs and crypto-creatures to materialize at their confluence, something also commented on by Fortean John Michell (1983).

The UTH seems to be gaining ground in the sphere of popular culture as well. At the end of the film *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008), the trusty para-archaeologist Indiana Jones asks his pal “Oxley” about where the crystalline “culture bringer” beings they have just encountered are from, as their whirling saucer-ship vanishes from view. “Are they from outer space?” he asks. “Ox” replies, “No, from the space between spaces.” In

the film *Dark Skies*, released this year (2013) (and with the same name as an earlier UFO-themed TV series), a family is menaced by “Gray” beings who seem to be after their children. The film is modeled after other “reality-mockudrama” themed paranormal films like *Paranormal Activity*, *Blair Witch Project*, or *The Fourth Kind*. Anyway, the beings seeking their children are never explicitly identified as extra-terrestrial. The tendency of various protagonists in the film to go into trance, or the strange arcane symbols found on one child’s body, suggest different explanations.

### The UTH and UFO abductions

Which brings us, finally, to the subject of abductions, which have been the focus of so much UFO research since the 1980s. The first person to investigate abductions systematically was the artist Budd Hopkins, who died in 2011. It is Hopkins that pretty much established the conventions of the field in his book *Missing Time* (1988). He noticed the pattern of abductees having periods of temporary amnesia, the “missing time” of the book’s title. Under hypnosis, the abductees would recall what had (supposedly) actually occurred during their missing hours. How they were brought aboard an alien spaceship, probed and examined scientifically by the ubiquitous “Grays” of contemporary UFO lore, and then returned to Earth, with their memories wiped. It was Hopkins who first put forward some of the ideas that still dominate abduction research today: that this might involve some sort of reproductive purpose, with the Grays coming from a planet where they have lost their ability to breed, and are using human gametes to create alien-human hybrids. Or, it could be that the aliens were leaving behind “implants” or devices in the bodies of their abductees, perhaps for tracking or monitoring purposes.

Hopkins always viewed the abduction phenomenon strictly within the conventions of the ETH. He felt it was clear it must involve alien beings from another planet, and that whatever they were doing, it was for purposes of some alien technological science project we were simply too primitive to fathom. Shortly around the

time of Hopkins writing his book, one of the world's most famous self-discovered and self-admitted abductees, Whitley Strieber, came forward, writing his book *Communion* in 1987, later to be made into a 1989 film starring the ever-spooky-looking Christopher Walken. Strieber's story has usually received benign attention from most UFOlogists. He had been a horror and science fiction writer before his proclaimed abduction experiences, having written the novels *Wolfen* and *The Hunger*, and it seems many UFOlogists, especially from the "nuts and bolts" crowd, tended to think his claims were simply a new kind of "reality fiction" (so to speak). For his part, Strieber tended in his early books to interpret what happened to him from within the ETH paradigm. But recent works have tended to move away from that, and some of his most recent writing like *Solving the Communion Enigma* (2012), seems to indicate that he views his "Visitors" (his term for "the Grays"), as inter-dimensional beings, from a "multiverse" of universes.

In a similar fashion to Philip K. Dick, Strieber has always considered a range of possibilities about the nature of his own experiences, and has himself mused whether it might be due to a condition like Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE), or perhaps some kind of military-intelligence project or experiment in which he was an unwitting recruit. Another recent theme in his work, especially in *The Secret School* (1997), is the question of whether "The Visitors" had in fact interacted with Strieber as a child, long before his "second" set of abductee encounters with them in the 1980s. In *The Secret School*, Strieber discusses how many abductees are reporting similar recovered memories to his, of being taken some place by "The Visitors" as children where they were being taught *something*. They are then sent back with their conscious memories having been erased, while these secret teachings remaining locked away in their minds. Strieber notes the presence of the theme of apocalypse in much of his fiction right before his second set of abductions, whether it be nuclear war (*Warday*) or ecological collapse (*Nature's End*), and muses that this may be the real point of *The Secret School*. In his 2012 novel *The Omega Point*, dealing with themes of

eschatology, he follows on from a 2010 book entitled *2012: the War for Souls*, which deals with an inter-dimensional invasion. But in his (presumed) nonfiction, Strieber thinks that various "Visitors" he has encountered, most notably a figure he calls "The Master of the Key," may be trying to warn – or prepare – him for catastrophic events affecting the future of humanity.

This brings us to one of the major figures in contemporary abduction studies. With his tenured position as a psychiatrist at the Harvard Medical School, John Edward Mack, who died in 2004, brought desperately sought academic credibility to UFOlogy and abduction studies when he commenced his own study of abductee reports, beginning in the early 1990s. Harvard, for its part, investigated Mack for possible charges of academic misconduct, beginning in 1994, but never showed anything conclusive, other than that many other people at Harvard found the focus of his research embarrassing for the school. Mack would publish a summary of his findings in *Passport to the Cosmos* (1999), written to summarize his research. However, many in the "nuts and bolts" faction of UFOlogy soon found themselves disappointed with Mack. Although he did not discount the ETH, Mack made statements that were often at odds with it. In *Passport* and other works, he discussed the obvious similarity between abduction reports and the vision-quests of Native American traditions. He also tended, like Strieber, to point out the "spiritual" and "transformational" impact of abductions, indicating his view that abductees might be dealing with 'transcendent' forces, not necessarily physical ET scientists out to borrow gametes and tissue for 'mad science.' And some of his comments suggest he had also begun to take a "UTH" view of the abduction phenomenon, whereby abductions were taking place in "inner" as much as "outer" space.

Before commencing his study of abductions, a literature review of Mack's earlier work shows some interesting patterns. Like Strieber, he had been very worried about nuclear war. Some of his earlier work involved his participation in the group Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and warnings about the effect of nuclear winter,



which led to actual anti-nuclear weapons advocacy. He had also showed some interest in what might be called ‘transpersonal’ psychology, which considers spirituality and treating “ailments of the spirit” as a part of the process of therapy. He wrote about the psychology (pathological as it might be) of some of the figures involved in the genesis of the Cold War, such as nuclear scientist Edward Teller. Toward the end of his life – cut short by a drunk driver in 2004 – Mack focused deeply on what he called the “transformational” aspect of the abduction phenomenon. How many abductees reported that their experiences had changed their “world view,” including perceptions of how humans fit into the larger interconnected universe (or multiverse), or even the relationship between mind and matter, consciousness and the physical world. The two things that one can state for certain are that Mack was convinced abductions were “real” to their percipients/experiencers, even if we couldn’t be certain of their physical reality in the world of time and space, and that whatever forces were behind them, they had a “real” purpose which once again, seemed to involve – a la Vallee – the evolution of the consciousness of mankind.

By the 1990s, studying anthropology in graduate school, I too became interested in the subject of UFO abductions (though I had been interested in UFOs for a long time.) But as an anthropologist, there was something I noticed – something that also caught the attention of Strieber, Mack, Keel and Vallee, who I had started reading. I wrote letters to both John Keel and Jacques Vallee. What I observed was that these narratives were similar to other kinds of visionary encounters among indigenous cultures, or in traditional societies. In particular, I saw their strange resemblances to stories of shamanic vision-quests among Native Americans or Australian Aborigines. The Aborigines would also tell stories of “experimentation” on their bodies by the sky-beings, with their skeleton being replaced by quartz rock. Native American people also have all kinds of legends of being kidnapped by the sky-people and strange things would be done to them in their realm. It seemed obvious

to me that many features of the abduction experience, especially the altered perception of time and memory and what people called “cover memories” of things like owls, were characteristic of an altered state of consciousness (ASC), or shamanic trance state. At the time, many skeptics had been noting that most abductions were reported by people in bed at night-time and could be a form of what is known as hypnagogic experiences, brought about in the liminal state between sleep and waking, characteristic of earlier legendary phenomena such as “the night hag,” or black cats which sit on your chest and steal your breath while sleep paralysis is beginning.

Philip Klass (1997) and others argued that people like Strieber probably suffered from Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE). Due to the research of people like Michael Persinger, with his “God Helmet” at Laurentian University (it stimulates the temporal lobes with weak electromagnetic fields), we today know that electrical stimulation of the temporal lobes can cause strange and powerful quasi-mystical and quasi-religious visionary experiences, including feelings of a sensed ‘numinous’ presence in the room “outside of the corner of one’s eye” that is watching and observing them (that’s also what many abductees say about the “Grays” when they first appear.) People who suffer from TLE have naturally occurring “electrical storms” in the region of their temporal lobes due to their condition that may cause them to have episodic visionary experiences, and some neurotheologians have suggested this may have been true of many of history’s most famous mystics. Paul Devereux (1982) has also suggested that the EM energies given off by “Earthlights” might also trigger these experiences in people, providing the basis of all UFO narratives beyond the seeing of a ball of light in the sky. Users of DMT report hallucinogenic experiences with ‘alienlike’ beings, which Terence McKenna dubbed “self transforming machine elves,” that are also similar to UFO abduction narratives. So, to summarize, as I once noted for an obscure Austin ‘zine called *Crash Collusion*, back in the 1990s, UFO abductions seem to be associated with an ASC, and the accounts of the events are remarkably

similar to mythological narratives going back millennia.

So there we have it. Clearly, these are subjective phenomena, mental fugues, without any actual objective reality. Like the authors of *Magonia* magazine argue, a puzzled brain disoriented by these fugues fills in the details from the main source of modern folklore, science fiction. Under hypnosis and perhaps some implanted false memories (argue authors like Elizabeth Loftus), a puzzling experience becomes a tale of alien experimentation. And yet, like Mack, or Vallee, I struggled with this as an explanation of sufficient power to deal with what abductees were claiming. Certainly, the experience was “real” in its impacts on peoples’ lives, but so are mystical experiences, and in the end that can’t really prove anything about their empirical nature, either. But there was this nagging problem. Can “intra-cranial” events cause peoples’ skin and eyes to show the effects of actinic UV radiation, the infamous “nightburn” of so many UFO stories? If these are taking place solely within the Cartesian divide, what about physical traces left behind by some of these objects on the environment? And, for me the biggest issue, what about multiply witnessed events? Is there any psychological mechanism for two people sharing the exact same subjective experience? (There is the phenomenon of *folie a deux*, but there have been UFO sightings where the multiple witnesses were in fact independent of each other and could not have influenced each other, delusionally or otherwise.)

Almost all UFO abductions involve a single person who could, of course, be hallucinating, but there are also cases of multiple abductions. The most notable is the 1976 Allagash case, where all four men say they were abducted, and each saw the three others onboard the UFO. They all describe the same environment. Then there is the infamous Travis Walton case, the basis of the movie *Fire in the Sky* (1993). Only Walton claims to have been abducted, and in the end, the veridicality of that experience rests on his testimony. But he was in a truck with 5 other men, and the five others all saw the same UFO. Walton says he saw in the sky, with him being

struck by a beam of light before they fled the scene. (This caused them to flee in panic, but struck with guilt for leaving Walton there, they eventually turned around, to find him at that point gone from the scene. He would turn up hundreds of miles away, and days later, with no initial memory of what happened to him.) With cases like the Allagash or Walton accounts, there really can only be three possible explanations. One is that all the men are lying. The other is that something somehow caused several people to have the same false perception or hallucination (and that something would have to be, in itself, ‘objectively real.’) The third is that we are dealing with something that must *at least* have some objective, physical existence in our 3-dimensional physical universe, even if, as Keel argues, that might be a temporary, adopted state.

This is what has led me to consider the UTH, even if, as some UFOlogists like Stanton Friedman have argued, it somehow represents a retreat from science back toward “magical thinking” and simply disgraces the field. I am vexed by the same data that has perplexed Vallee. We are dealing with something, Keel’s “phenomenon,” that probably did not first come knocking in 1947. It’s just that ever since 1947, we have had a frame of reference for it largely drawn from science fiction – the authors of *Magonia* are definitely right there - that has fit our times, and that frame is ETs, alien astronauts, Martian invasions against our independence, and flying saucers. Yet this phenomenon also seems to have been involved in earlier kinds of mythological, mystical, and visionary experiences. And it can’t be from the distant reaches of outer space – it interacts with us frequently, continuously, like Keel says, “it’s a feature of the planet like the weather.” Whatever the UFO entities are, they aren’t visible or tangible to our physical universe all the time, the experiencer reports are full of UFOs vanishing from sight, not by flying off into space, but sometimes by changing shape and transforming like an extra-dimensional object, or melting into solid matter.

That’s what leads me to the UTH, as opposed to the ‘purely’ psycho-social PCH. As Sherlock Holmes famously declared, once one

has ruled out the impossible, whatever remains, even the incredibly unlikely or improbable, must be the truth. We can't prove the existence of other dimensions or planes of reality. But a growing number of physicists do claim that our scientific models suggest they should exist. Still, those predictions also suggest that movement from one universe to another should be impossible. But, again, is this something we know for certain? The one thing I am sure of, however, is that there is an intelligence behind the phenomenon, and that whatever we are dealing with cannot be visiting us on a regular basis from somewhere in our universe that is thousands of light years away. The ETH fails, but I also find the 'pure' form of the PCH insufficient, so I turn to Vallee's UTH (sometimes also known as the EDI, or extra-dimensional intelligence theory), as the best model, for now. Perhaps, as Patrick Harpur (2003) has argued, these entities in some way interact and mold themselves to our perceptions and beliefs, in some way crossing the Cartesian divide between physical reality and imagination, and this explains the nature of their manifestations. None of these things are within existing scientific paradigms, but perhaps in the future they could be. The contribution of UFOlogy to science, contra the *Condon Report*, could be a re-evaluation of core concepts.

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## Review/Commentary: Rupert Sheldrake's "Science Set Free"

John R. DeLorez



I tried to order this book under the title *The Science Delusion* from Amazon.co.uk several times last year, but it was sold out each time. When it became available last October here in the US under the title *Science Set Free* I got my copy right away. It is an excellent summary of how science can be too selective as to what it is willing to accept as data worthy of evaluation. For all intents and purposes, this biased approach to what it considers valid data blinds science to anything that might possibly exist outside of its presently accepted materialistic framework.

The structure of *Science Set Free* is a little different to most books on technical subjects that I am used to (in a good way). In the introduction Sheldrake lists ten core assumptions that he has observed that most scientists take for granted as being facts. "In this book, I argue that science is being held back by centuries-old assumptions that have hardened into dogmas. The sciences would be better off without them: freer, more interesting and more fun."

He then goes on to dedicate a chapter to each of these ten dogmas. Each chapter provides a summary of current research being done within that subject area by mainstream science and includes competing opinions held by those involved. At the end of the chapter he doesn't offer solutions or suggestions for how he feels science should be doing things differently, instead he presents a list of questions and challenges scientists to honestly answer them for themselves. He then closes each chapter with a very brief summary of the material just covered. As one would expect, if you are familiar with Rupert Sheldrake's work, in several chapters he addresses the mind/body topic and some of the relevant research being done in that area (See

Schroll, in this issue, for a discussion of Sheldrake's theory of non-local memory).

### Sheldrake's Morphogenetic Fields and Their Relationship to Second Generation Theosophy

I first became aware of Sheldrake around 1986 when I added his book *A New Science of Life* (Sheldrake, 1981) to our inventory in the Metaphysical Bookstore that we operated between 1986 and 2005.<sup>1</sup> I found his discussion of the subject of morphic resonance and morphogenetic fields interesting at the time because it dovetailed so well with the type of phenomena referred to today in parapsychological studies as anomalous experiences. More importantly to me, it seemed to correspond very well with the concept put forth by Oriental Occultism writers of second generation Theosophy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries of an Animal Group Soul.<sup>2</sup> Based upon primarily Hindu and Buddhist teachings, the model developed during this period postulated the existence of consciousness as an energy form/field that was not limited to the confines of the brain, but took on the dimensions of the physical body. It was also considered to be a multiphase energy form functioning in a slightly different manner simultaneously on multiple parallel planes. In this model although consciousness is associated with the material body, it is in fact independent of it and is not a byproduct or biological function of the physical brain, the exact opposite of today's materialist's view. This hypothesis of an energy field distributed over multiple parallel planes is not all that dissimilar to ones put forward by some theoretical physicists today who suggest that the ten dimensions of String Theory (see Hawking 1988) may



also require the existence of multiple parallel planes.<sup>3</sup>

### Challenging Scientific Assumptions in the Exploration of Anomalous Experiences

Sheldrake points out in this work that the main challenge facing science in exploring areas similar to morphic resonance and morphogenetic fields is not that such conventional research tools as the scientific method are in any way inadequate to the task, but that the frame of reference from which the researcher views the world tends to preordain the outcome of the research.

For example, as the very first step for researchers investigating a reported haunting it is common for them to begin by ruling out any possible mundane causes. This would seem logical, but by putting this as the first step there is the implied assumption that all phenomena can be explained away through the means of material science. Then, if, and only if, a conventional explanation cannot be found as to the probable source for the phenomena should other possible causes for the anomalous experience be explored. By searching for mundane causes first to the exclusion of all other possibilities, it is conceivable that much significant data could be overlooked.

A similar approach to explaining away anomalous experiences comes from the portion of the research community that has studied stage magic, either as a learned skill, or as a research subject itself (don't get me wrong, I enjoy a good magic act and had my own "Mandrake The Magician" magic set as a kid). The position that I often see put forward by a researcher who claims such a background is that if a stage trick can be developed that duplicates an anomalous experience, then all anomalous experiences of this type are by default proven to be tricks. To me that is a claim that is no more logically valid than if one were to hold the position that just because today a sunrise can be generated and recorded on film through the process of computer programming, then all sunrises that can be seen on film must have also, by default, been computer generated.

### The Scientific Method in the Study of Anomalous Phenomena

Sheldrake has accumulated a great deal of evidence that shows what happens with respect to ESP, the apparent transfer of species memories between generations, etc., enough to enable him to propose a model for a mechanism and medium of transmission of information through morphic resonance and morphogenetic fields. But he acknowledges that there are significant challenges involved for science in attempting to use the classical scientific method for testing this type of model. In particular, the scientific community's adherence to the various dogmas discussed in *Science Set Free* prevents it from actually performing research in the same manner as it does in investigating the material world.

The use of the scientific method that I was taught began with the researcher observing the phenomenon to be studied. Then, after observing the phenomenon, the researcher was to formulate a preliminary hypothesis that would attempt to offer an explanation of what was observed. This hypothesis, and the predictions for the operating characteristics inherent in the model, would then be tested and the results evaluated for consistency with the hypothesis. But if the only hypothesis developed by a proponent of the materialist scientific worldview is that the phenomenon was the result of unknown material world causes, then only material science related potential causes will be likely to be explored in the testing.

Additionally, a factor fundamental to designing a proper test using the scientific method is the requirement that (1) all variables related to the test are known, and (2) that all of the known variables can be monitored and recorded to show that they are consistent and unchanging from test to test. If science will not even acknowledge the possibility that anything exists outside of the limitations of the dogmas that Sheldrake outlines in *Science Set Free*, and there are in fact other factors involved that are beyond the realm of conventional material science, then how can science identify the variables associated

with the typical type of lab experiments that are done at present relating to the study of ESP. And, if science cannot, or chooses not to identify the variables, how can science monitor them or determine if these unknown variables vary from test to test?

When I find myself in a discussion related to this subject I tend to use the example of the modern radio telescope. If I were able to go back in time to the mid 1800's to my alma mater and provide the School of Electrical Engineering with a description of the mechanics of construction for a radio telescope, and then tell them that if they were to build such a device they would be able to hear "the music of the spheres," I would no doubt receive a much less than positive response. Why? Because in the mid-19th century science was still a few decades away from discovering electromagnetic radiation. The technology had yet to be developed for detecting it, therefore, since no one had ever discovered or measured such a thing, it must not exist.

Science has reached a point where it needs to allow for more possibilities than just those consistent with a material world view if it is to be able to continue making progress in exploring the universe that we live in. Anomalous experiences are an area that cannot be understood solely from the perspective of the material world where everything, including anomalous experiences, is held to be based exclusively upon a foundation of materialism. I truly believe that any scientists serious about reaching an understanding of the physics of parapsychology, and not just participating in the debunking of it, must in addition to their training in the hard sciences do extensive work in what in the West gets dismissed as Mysticism. I do not mean that scientists must become mystics, but without studying this area how else will they acquire a frame of reference to use in understanding and evaluating what it is that they are attempting to study?

Charles Tart in an article in an earlier issue of *Paranthropology*; "Proceeding with Caution: What Went Wrong? The Death and Rebirth of Essential Science" (Tart, 2012) made a case for the need to bring science back into spirituality, that there is a need for experiencing in both

spirituality and science, as well as a need for observing. There have already been some who, in the pursuit of understanding their subject, have sought to add experience to knowledge by participating in the practices of their subjects. One such is anthropologist Michael Harner who describes his experiences in altered states of consciousness in his book *The Way of the Shaman* (Harner, 1990). Another, perhaps better known to readers of *Paranthropology*, was Ethnobotanist Terrence McKenna<sup>4</sup> (who some might say strayed a little too far into the experiential end of the spectrum).

## Conclusion

Unless science becomes willing to put nearly as much effort into developing an understanding of the alternate theories of reality held by spiritual systems (views of reality that are used by these cultures to explain anomalous experiences), as it puts into the study of physical models, it will remain difficult for science to overcome the limitations inherent in the core beliefs that Sheldrake explores in *Science Set Free*. Unquestioned beliefs that are held so commonly and so strongly that; "I am convinced that the sciences are being held back by assumptions that have hardened into dogmas, maintained by powerful taboos. These beliefs protect the citadel of established science, but act as barriers against open-minded thinking."

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## Biography

John R. DeLorez BSEE Purdue University, Retired Naval Officer. Following the Navy the next twenty-odd years were spent working in Engineering Management and as a Consultant to the Semi-Conductor Industry. John was also involved with the Southern California Metaphysical and Pagan communities in various ways, including operating a Metaphysical Bookstore for 18 years and teaching classes based on Theosophy, the Hermetic Doctrine and the Science of Metaphysical and Occult Philosophy for over thirty years. <http://www.smopblog.com>

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<sup>1</sup> Before I retired I made a living as an engineer, bookseller during those years was my avocation.

<sup>2</sup> A few books are listed in the References section that follows that are available related to the subject of the Group Soul, the collective soul of animals and plants, a concept developed by second-generation theosophists (see also Besant, 1904; Leadbeater, 1902, 1919; and Jinarajadsa, 1921).

<sup>3</sup> For a General Public introduction to some of the models that have evolved from String Theory re: parallel universes I recommend viewing:

*Through The Wormhole, Season Two, Are There More Than Three Dimensions?*

<http://www.cornell1801.com/bbc/THROUGH-WORMHOLE/204-more-three-dimensions.html>

*Through The Wormhole, Season Two, Are There Parallel Universes?*

<http://www.cornell1801.com/bbc/THROUGH-WORMHOLE/206-parallel-universes.html>

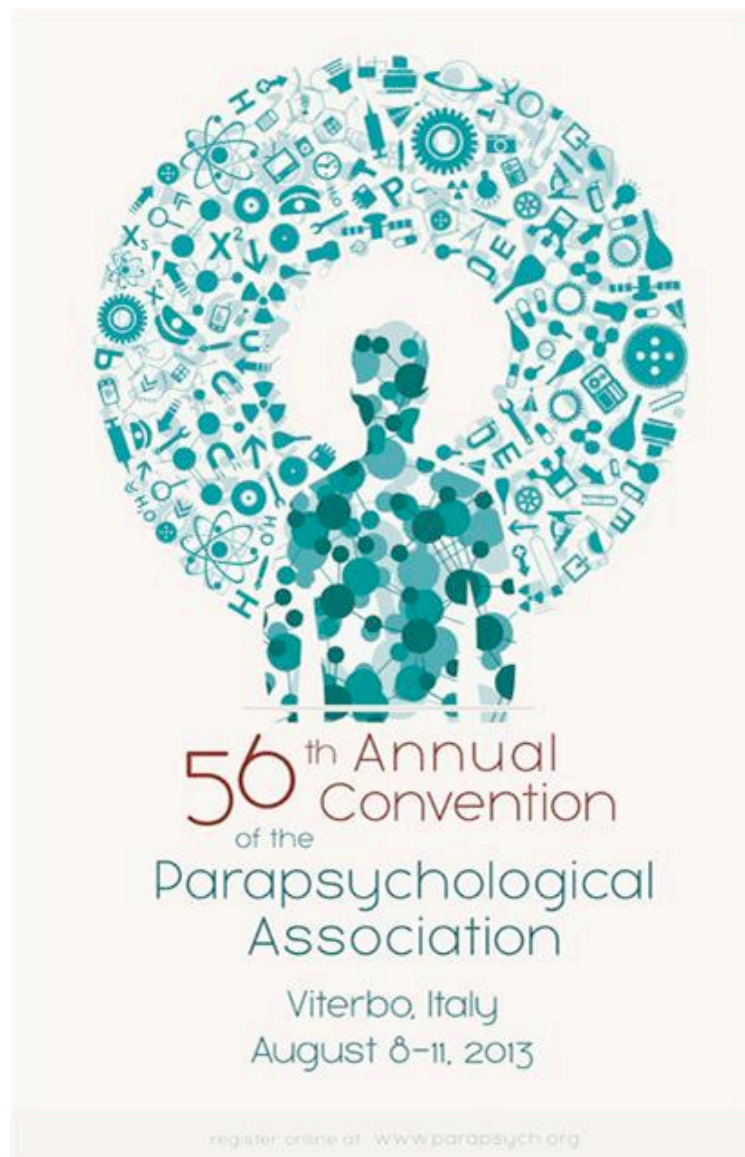
Or the 3 part NOVA series: *The Elegant Universe*:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/physics/elegant-universe.html#elegant-universe-einstein>

<sup>4</sup> Sheldrake – McKenna (1989 – 1998) The Sheldrake - McKenna - Abraham Trialogues

The “trialogues are from a series of lively, far-reaching discussions between Rupert and his close friends Ralph Abraham and Terence McKenna, that took place between 1989 and 1998, in America and England”:

<http://www.sheldrake.org/Trialogues/index.html#mini>



## Scientific Controversies Shaping the Worldview of the 21st Century: Sheldrake's Theory of Non-local Memory Revisited

Mark A. Schroll



This article provides a brief examination of Rupert Sheldrake's theory of non-local memory (which will be defined later in this discussion), and represents one of several scientific controversies shaping the worldview of the 21st century.<sup>1</sup> Providing many more of us with an accessible means of introduction to the theory of non-local memory in Sheldrake's book *Science Set Free: 10 Paths to New Discovery* (2012) (titled *The Science Delusion* in the UK), written for an audience unfamiliar with his previous work, and whose content is accessible to persons without a scientific background; and yet, Sheldrake's writing style (even in its most accessible form) reflects an academic orientation. I would therefore recommend John Briggs and F. David Peat's *Looking Glass Universe: The Emerging Science of Wholeness*. (1984) as a good companion volume that offers a lively and enjoyable examination of Sheldrake's work (including introductory overviews of David Bohm, Karl Pribram and Ilya Prigogine). For those of us seeking a scholarly examination of Sheldrake's work I recommend Kevin J. Sharpe's (1993) *David Bohm's World: New Physics and New Religion* (pp. 65-68), which includes a critical examination of Whitehead's process philosophy); see also Sheldrake, 1981, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1990; Sheldrake & Bohm, 1982; Sheldrake & Weber, 1982).

Many have been critical of Sheldrake's work, including (the late) Rene` Thom (1923-2002) whose work contributed to the development of chaos theory. On August 11, 1986, during the International Wittgenstein-Symposium in Kirchberg/Wechsel, Austria, I asked Thom what he thought of Sheldrake's research and his usage of morphogenetic fields (M-Fields). Thom replied, "I think Sheldrake is crazy." Explaining his reply he argued that organisms can only be de-

scribed in terms of local causes and that form only comes into being when an organism reaches equilibrium. We also discussed the (at that time) recent violation of Bell's inequality. Thom said, "I accept the violation of Bell's inequality, but I don't like it." Thom elaborated, saying he does not accept the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, but instead directed his own research efforts toward continuing to support and prove the correctness of Einstein's worldview in toto. Opinions were mixed at this conference, as earlier in the day before speaking with Thom I asked Roger Penrose what his view of non-locality was, and whether this concept helped to support holism. "Penrose replied, that according to his understanding of [the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox or] EPR and the violation of Bell's inequality, d'Espagnat's postulate of non-locality<sup>2</sup> does appear to be the best interpretation of the experimental results; adding that as a result of the postulate of non-locality, physics does indeed have some holistic features" (Schroll 1987:245). Einstein's EPR concerns are more thoroughly summarized in Schroll 2010b; whereas this article's focus is an inquiry of these concerns as they relate to non-local memory. Before this inquiry begins I want to briefly address a question that will be forming as you read this article: what is the origin of this theory, how does it relate to psi research, and is there any evidence to support it? This question is addressed in the Appendix: Experimental Biology's Relationship to Psi Research, which can be read as a separate article.

### Prologue

This article provides a brief autobiographical reflection on my search for a theory of psi that led me to a theoretical examination of Shel-

drake's theory of non-local memory. My decision to search for a theory of psi began at age six in 1964 in an attempt to find a way of explaining an experience of dream telepathy. At this age I had no knowledge of psi or dream telepathy (specifically it was the remote diagnosis of a school classmate who suffered a ruptured appendicitis). I was unaware I was suggesting a way of knowing that violated scientific reality. Nor did I realize the concern I would raise by suggesting this way of knowing. I was only trying to help my friend. Thus I learned the hard way how people respond to persons who speak out about their experiences of psi abilities.<sup>3</sup> Sixteen years would pass before I was to learn Stanley Krippner accepted Montague Ullman's invitation to become the Director of the Dream Laboratory in Brooklyn, New York, at the Maimonides Medical Center the same year of my dream telepathy experience (Ullman, Krippner & Vaughan 1973). Four more years would pass before I met Krippner; I met Ullman in 2006, and later searched for a theory of psi with both of them (Schroll 2008a, 2010b, 2012a). Along similar lines of inquiry on October 11, 1988, I had a two hour conversation with Sheldrake where we discussed non-local memory and related topics based on our previous correspondence.

## Introduction

My introduction to Sheldrake's work began at the two-day conference "Science and Mysticism: Exploring the New Realities," September 29-30, 1984, at the Harvard Science Center, Harvard University. Bohm, Huston Smith, and Renee` Weber also gave lectures at this conference. Prior to attending this conference I had read Charles T. Tart's article "Transpersonal Realities or Neurophysiological Illusions? Toward An Empirically Testable Dualism"<sup>4</sup> (Tart, 1981), and, in a marginal note, I defined consciousness as:

The immediacy of the continually emerging effort to establish an awareness of the reciprocal interaction taking place between the person-the-environment-and-the fundamental unifying principle bonding this

relationship together at any given moment (Schroll 2001) (Schroll 2005:57) (Schroll 2012b:14).

Clarifying this definition: "In referring to 'the person,' I take the view that we possess a self-awareness that has free will to make decisions toward being-in-the-world. By 'environment' I mean both nature and the built environment and/or the totality of our physical planet that we call Earth. By the 'fundamental unifying principle' I mean something beyond space-time that serves as a generative process of organization, and has the ability to bond this reciprocal interaction of person and environment together with this generative process at any given moment" (Schroll 2012b:14-15).

Three months after the Harvard conference I sent this definition to Tart, adding I considered Bohm's implicate order model of cosmos and consciousness (Bohm 1980a, 1980b) to be compatible with Tart's emergent interactionism model. Also I asked Tart if he felt there was any relationship between his concept of mind/life, and what Sheldrake was calling M-Fields? Tart replied:

The conceptual framework sketched out in my book *States of Consciousness* [1975] dovetails nicely with the emergent interactionist approach, although I didn't get specific about some aspects in that book. At the time I wrote it I didn't think the scientific community was ready to think about all aspects of consciousness. Yes, Sheldrake's ideas do fit in. His morphogenetic fields are a biologically sound way of talking about psi influences, and this terminology got attention where resistance might have automatically excluded material that talked about psi (personal correspondence, Tart, 1985, February 14).

Following my correspondence with Tart and the Harvard conference I began a literature review of the historical roots of Sheldrake's work. Specifically my inquiry was guided by the question is this fundamental unifying principle of con-



consciousness something like Bohm's concept of quantum potential or Sheldrake's morphic resonance (which works on the same basis as physical resonance)? A question whose inquiry we shall explore in the next section.

### Scientific Controversies Shaping the Worldview of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Revisited

On August 12, 1986, I presented the paper "Non-local Memory and the Perennial Philosophy" at the 11th International Wittgenstein-Symposium: Recent Developments in Epistemology and Philosophy of Science held in Kirchberg/Wechel, Austria; a year later this retitled paper was published (Schroll 1987). But what do I mean when I refer to non-local memory? By non-local memory I am referring to the radical theory "memory may not even [sic] be stored inside the brain at all, but may instead be distributed non-locally throughout the fabric of the universe" (Schroll, 1987, p. 248). Today I no longer say that memory is "distributed non-locally throughout the fabric of the universe" but instead say memory (and/or consciousness) is more accurately described as a field state whose properties operate according to "the mechanics of resonance" (Sheldrake, 2012, p. 199; Abraham, 1987).

Nevertheless this attempt at understanding non-local memory is still inaccurate because it implies some kind of physical medium (wave frequencies) where memory is stored. Sheldrake on the other hand discusses non-local memory in terms of wave frequencies (2012:197-199), with which I have some slight disagreement. Instead the most general way to describe the kind of field I am referring to is it is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, existing in a liminal state between being and non-being (hence non-local). In his book *Presence of the Past* (1988), Sheldrake offers a more precise way to envision non-local memory, suggesting it "corresponds to Jung's conception of archetypes as 'innate psychic structures' [otherwise known as the collective unconscious]" (Sheldrake 1988:251). If such theoretical speculation can be proven, then it follows that, "Jung and transpersonal psychology will not be

properly recognized and understood until psychologists stop envisioning the human condition in terms of Newtonian physics[...]Mind is no longer confined to our physical bio-chemical brains and skin encapsulated egos, but is capable of being considered as a field or morphogenetic field as Rupert Sheldrake refers to it" (Schroll 2008b:255).

This brings us back to the question, *is this fundamental unifying principle of consciousness something like Bohm's concept of quantum potential or Sheldrake's morphic resonance?* Prior to publishing *Presence of the Past* in 1988 (and still a relevant means of answering this question) Sheldrake and Bohm discussed the similarities in their work which prompted Bohm to suggest that, "many of the properties Sheldrake ascribes to morphogenetic fields and chreodes" operate in a similar way to Bohm's view of quantum potential (Sheldrake & Bohm 1982:44). To further clarify this point and sum up Bohm's view of these similarities, it is worth quoting him at length, who tells us quantum potential energy has:

[...]the same effect regardless of its intensity, so that even far away it may produce a tremendous effect; this effect does not follow an inverse square law [like other energetic fields—light, gravity, magnetism, etc—which fade out over distance]. Only the form of the potential has an effect, and not its amplitude or its magnitude[...]So we can say that[...]the quantum potential is acting as a formative field on the movement of the electrons. The formative field could not be put in three-dimensional [or local] space, it would have to be put in three-n dimensional space, so that there would be non-local connections[...]There could thus be a [non-local] transformation of the formative field of a certain group to another group. So I think that if you attempt to understand what quantum mechanics means by such a model you get quite a strong analogy to a formative field (Sheldrake & Bohm, 1982:44).

In other words Sheldrake's theory of non-local memory is suggesting that the brain is a receiver and consciousness (memory) exists within an n-dimensional field state.<sup>5</sup> This field state of n-dimensional memory (or collective unconscious) suggests we have direct access to more than our personal and contemporary cultural history, as Sheldrake points out: "Minds extend beyond brains in time as well as space. We are connected to the past by memory and habit, and to the future by desires, plans and intentions" (Sheldrake, 2012:226).

The fluidity of spacetime (whose four-dimensional existence has been recognized in physics since Einstein's discovery of general relativity in 1915) whose central idea is "that *matter tells spacetime how to curve, and curved spacetime tells matter how to behave*" (Kaufmann, 1979:70). Likewise this theoretical framework tells us that even in normal consciousness when we are looking out into space we are looking back in time, and yet this same fluidity of perceptual awareness of spacetime has not been incorporated into the human sciences' paradigm. Thus morphic resonance is merely the application of field theory to our understanding of how form comes into being and to our understanding of learning theory.

## Conclusion

This article can be summed up as one more small step toward attempting to clearly articulate the work that Sheldrake and many others have been doing. Much more experimental and theoretical work will be needed to establish and generalize these ideas. Nevertheless to some of us these ideas will seem too fantastic, bordering more on science fiction and beyond the boundary of science fact. It was in an attempt to address these concerns that led me to write "Scientific Controversies Shaping the Worldview of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in 1987, and is why I am revisiting it now.

The theoretical framework of social science or human science is more than 100 years out of date in terms of the theoretical evidence we have examined throughout this article; including footnote number one. Consequently the paradigm-

matic resistance to Sheldrake's theory of non-local memory (and psi research) is frequently based on out dated concepts to which we continue to cling. In other words, groups or persons who seek to explain transpersonal experiences (like non-local memory) solely by reducing them to their neurophysiological correlates offers a perspective similar to that of lifelong celibate nuns explaining the experience of orgasm to virgins. This method to explain and sum up transpersonal experience is also done by persons who argue for the importance of empiricism that no longer seems to completely sum up our sense experience, but merely objective data gathered with or without instrumentation. I have attempted to point this out through a variety of examples in this article and by a brief examination of the experimental work on Lamarckian inheritance in the Appendix (illustrating that the concept of morphogenesis and learning is stranger than we have yet to acknowledge in our established theories of biology and psychology).

## Experimental Biology's Relationship to Psi Research

William James taught the USA's first course in psychology at Harvard in 1875, and at that time William McDougall (a colleague of James) was at Oxford. James passed away August 26, 1910. Due to McDougall's correspondence with James, he later succeeded Hugo Munsterberg as chair of experimental psychology at Harvard in 1921. It was during this time that McDougall conducted his famous experiments on Lamarckian inheritance (McDougall, 1927, 1930, 1938); Rhine & McDougall, 1933). While these experiments were going on in the USA, Alexander Gurwitsch in Russia (1922) and Paul Weiss in Vienna (1926) were developing the concept of *morphogenetic fields* (See Sheldrake, 1981, p. 50). If the Internet had existed back then, McDougall and his research assistant J. B. Rhine would have had a much broader information network. Indeed McDougall and Rhine would have found morphogenetic fields a very useful concept to help make sense of their experiments from 1927 to 1932, which indicated that both the control and

the experimental group of rats were somehow "evolving, learning or establishing new habits" (Briggs & Peat, 1984).

McDougall's and Rhine's experiment was replicated by F.A.E. Crew at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, who was critical of the Lamarckian hypothesis. Crew's findings refuted the Lamarckian hypothesis because both trained and untrained rats learned at the same rate (Sheldrake, 1981). "A satisfactory explanation" was never found, and Crew admitted "the question remained open" (Sheldrake, 1981, p. 189). Further experiments at the University of Melbourne produced similar questionable results (Agar, Drummond, & Tiegs, 1942; Agar, Drummond, Tiegs, & Gunson, 1954), both refuting the Lamarckian hypothesis, yet confirming this bizarre evolution of new learning. Here again (due to the slow process of information exchange at that time), *morphogenetic fields* had yet to be associated with human learning and memory, nor was the field concept part of either American psychology or biology. Behaviorism dominated the discussions of the day.

As a brief aside, in his reflections on the narrowness of Behaviorism, specifically its failure to account for our changing views of physical reality beginning in 1905 and continuing throughout the entire 20th century (i.e., general relativity and quantum theory), Wolfgang Kohler tells us in his book *Gestalt Psychology* (1970):

The Behaviorist does not generally show too great an interest in epistemological considerations. It is just one point which suddenly catches his attention: "How can I know about the direct experience of others?" I shall never have a definite proof of the validity of such knowledge. But physics, that is another matter. There we are safe." The Behaviorist forgets that to prove the existence of an independent physical world is about as difficult as to make sure that other people have experiences[...]The Behaviorist sees only a single theorem of epistemology—one person cannot observe another person's experience. As an extremist he dwells exclusively on this point and

ignores the context from which it is taken (Kohler, 1970:31-32).

Returning to our previous discussion, by 1927 McDougall, J. B. and Louisa Rhine had relocated to Duke University, where they had the opportunity to establish a laboratory to scientifically investigate psi. All the while during this time they struggled against the resistance of a scientific paradigm that was mechanistic and materialistic, and which held the view that consciousness and introspection could no longer be viewed as valid concepts. This was because after the death of William James, J. B. Watson in 1913 eliminated consciousness and introspection from the scientific study of psychology with his Behaviorist Manifesto. Likewise (due to the rise of behaviorism) *subjective verbal reports* also became suspect as legitimate sources of data. Finally now after a century of its exclusion a "first-person approach" is being reclaimed as a means to "help us discover new ways in which we can utilise the phenomena we study, so that we are not forever burdened with an almost entirely theoretical science that, ironically, is in need of a comprehensive theory, and we may instead begin to discover new applications for the useful implementation of the phenomena we study" (Luke, 2012:196); a comprehensive examination of these methodological concerns can be found in Schroll 2010a. Recent experiments that attempt to validate Sheldrake's M-Field and morphic resonance theory can be found in Sheldrake 1985 and 1988.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional scientific controversies that exceed the limits of this article include (but are not limited to) comprehending what it means to live in a non-local universe (d'Espagnat 1983) operating as Prigogine's dissipative structures (Prigogine & Stengers 1984) in n-dimensions of unified spacetime-matter-consciousness, all of which requires more than rational cognitive processes which Godel's incompleteness theorem proves (Carpenter, 1981; Rucker, 1983). These controversies reveal that the ground of reality is at the same time both disappearing and reappearing in ways we are yet unable to fully comprehend; language fails (leaving us to contemplate these new realities in silence) because there are no metaphors capable of offering us a meaningful description (Jones, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> On August 20, 1988, following his lecture on "Nonseparability and Some Views on Reality" (given at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Wittgenstein-Symposium, whose theme that year was the Philosophy of Natural Science), I had a two hour luncheon conversation with d'Espagnat. The focus of our conversation kept itself to the theoretical implications of nonseparability and/or non-locality, as d'Espagnat remains skeptical of psi phenomenon. For a summary of how d'Espagnat's work assists us in understanding the physics of psi and non-local memory see Schroll 2010b.

<sup>3</sup> Eventually I will publish a complete account of this dream telepathy experience. Although because it is a very personal experience, and recollecting the overwhelming critical response from both teachers and students to my public discussion of this dream (which later was proven true) continues to remain too painful for me to discuss 49 years after all this took place.

<sup>4</sup> I do not support dualism but instead argue for the support of Bohm's implicate order proposal, providing a brief examination of this position in Schroll 2012b:15-16). Tart takes up these considerations in *The End of Materialism* (2009) on pages 68-73.

<sup>5</sup> In my personal correspondence with John R. DeLorez February 4, 2013, I agreed with his suggestion to replace the word "receiver" with the word "transducer." This does help to change the imagery from a passive downloading or passive acquisition of information that is in a physically separate domain and replaces it with an image that is more organic and co-evolutionary. Thus the brain as transducer is transforming the energy state of n-dimensional quantum potential energy (the collective transpersonal unconscious or Akashic Field) into a bio-chemical electrical state (personal consciousness). Moreover as a reciprocal process our bio-chemical electrical states of personal consciousness through a reverse process are able to add to the collective transpersonal unconscious. The most succinct way Bohm referred to this was a process of "projection, injection, and re-projection," yet saying more than this exceeds the limits of this article. Further inquiry of this idea could also frame it as an application of alchemy to understanding consciousness. In its purest and most respectful form it is a means of explaining and revealing so-called invisible domain(s), or in the words of Irvin Laszlo, "an information field at the very heart of the cosmos" (Laszlo, 2004, p. 56)

Additional inquiry could explore if the way Sheldrake framed his discussion of non-local memory was influenced by the views of Albert Hofmann, who tells us:

The transmitter-receiver concept of reality discloses a fundamental fact that the reality we experience is not a fixed state, but it is the result of a continuing process, a continuing input of material and energetic signals from outer space and a continuing decoding process in inner space, transforming these signals into psychic experience (Hofmann, 1988, p. 8).

### Biography

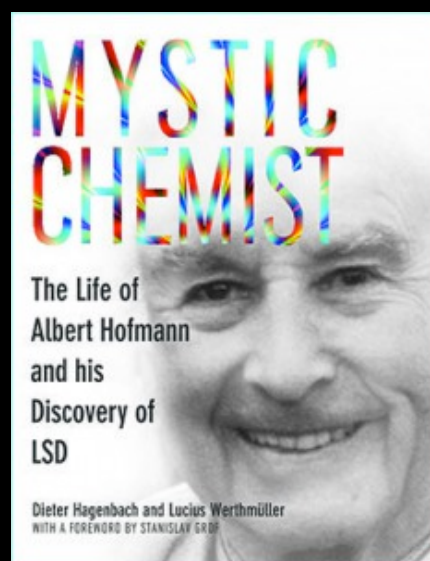
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## **An Idea Whose Time Has Come: Morphic Resonance and the Birthing of a New Paradigm**

Zelda Hall



Mark A. Schroll started early upon the path which he now treads. He introduces his article “Scientific Controversies Shaping the Worldview of the 21st Century: Sheldrake's Theory of Non-local Memory Revisited” (2013, this volume) with “a brief autobiographical reflection on my search for a theory of psi,” and tells us his search began at the early age of six as an attempt to find a way of explaining an experience of dream telepathy. The response of his peers and his teachers (when he was so foolhardy as to speak out about his remote diagnosis of a classmate who had a ruptured appendix) was sufficiently painful to result in extreme caution about repeating further public disclosure. Schroll tells us: “I learned the hard way about how people respond to persons who speak out about their experiences of psi abilities.” His caution lasts till this day. And yet this dream telepathy experience led him to pursue an explanation for this form of knowledge, as expressed in his article.

### **The Calling**

It is not unusual that an experience of such dissonance and alienation from our peers leads us on ‘the road less travelled’ and where the persistence of this dissonance, while at times painful, draws us on, in pursuit of some solution to our dilemma. In my view Schroll’s early sense of alienation indicates the presence of what James Hillman refers to as the ‘daimon.’ A calling of soul or of ‘fate.’ This is often revealed in dreams. I believe the ‘calling’ referred to here, and the pattern which creates it, may be the morphic resonance of the individual to a specific field. Sheldrake relates the concept of morphogenetic fields to both Jung’s collective unconscious and archetypes, and to Marie-Louise von Franz’s idea

of the “group unconscious” of families, clans and tribes, and the “common unconscious” of national units (See Sheldrake 1988:251-252). In this model we resonate as individuals with a particular morphogenetic field which shapes our experience, or what I refer to as a “life myth.” It is the part of universal consciousness that is unfolding specifically through us. This to some extent can be compared with what David Feinstein and Stanley Krippner refer to in their book of *Personal Mythology*: “Your personal mythology is the distinctive, though sometimes imperceptible, self-psychology that guides your behavior and prepares the way as you evolve in the world.” (Feinstein & Krippner 1989:2). The concept of life myth also bears relation to Arnold Mindell’s ‘dreambody.’ Mindell discovered through his study of theoretical physics, Jungian psychology, and his work with patients that the patterns in a person’s life were reflected as much in her body symptoms as in her dreams. The term dreambody encapsulates this connection (Mindell 1984).

As Schroll’s article points out, Sheldrake postulates a non-local memory which connects us to the past, and I believe, reaches to pre-birth. Part of this field relates to our cultural and familial background. It is not coincidental that we are born in a particular time or place. Schroll’s personal experience is part of a greater field and therefore his concern with the development of a new paradigm resonates and connects him to the whole. So first I would like to look at how a shift can manifest on a personal level and what impedes it, and then examine how that is reflected in the larger world.

## Road Blocks

At six Schroll had not yet reached the stage of socialisation generally known as 'conformist consciousness.' A stage that is usually regarded as beginning in middle childhood and extending to late adolescence. But it could be argued that this type of awareness represents the mainstream consciousness (or perhaps it is more appropriate to call it the 'group unconscious') in which most adults function much of the time in most cultures. It can be characterised as institutional, conventional, and conformist (Wade 1996). This is also the stage of development at which reports of children of prenatal and past life memories and other anomalous phenomena decrease drastically. The child must be socialised, or such is the commonly held belief. This is part of our ancient survival strategy; and so the process of enculturation ensures that we are conditioned into the mores of our time and achieve what Charles T. Tart refers to as 'cultural consensus trance' (Tart 1988).

Therefore, while I would like to imagine that a child telling such a story these days might be met with more openness, I fear this may not be the case. If we notice what William James (who as many know was a philosopher with an interest in consciousness) called a 'white crow,' and then afterwards we deny its existence in order to conform, to be accepted. We certainly don't tell about predictive or telepathic dreams! James is often quoted describing paranormal experiences as 'white crows,' saying that seeing only one white crow is sufficient proof that all crows are not black. I too have had experience of telling about such phenomena only to be greeted with either disbelief or stunned, and even fearful, silence. Following our daimon may require that we liberate ourselves from this conditioning and awaken. Or we pick our audience more carefully! Schroll adds the additional point that:

...after the death of William James, J. B. Watson in 1913 eliminated consciousness and introspection from the scientific study of psychology with his Behaviorist Manifesto (Schroll 2013, this volume).

What a contrast James was with Watson, the father of behaviourism (of which the aims were to explain, predict and ultimately control human behaviour, and, in my view, a fairly extreme form of enculturation). We can only imagine how Watson might have reacted to a child's account of his dreams. I have often wondered why behaviourism should have gained such popularity at this time, and is worthy of more historical study.

## Sigmund Freud vs the Mother Rat

Till the development of humanistic psychology by Maslow and others in the middle of the twentieth century, psychology was dominated by two major schools, behaviourism and Freudian psychology, not only in the U.S.A. but in Europe too. Which is why, as an undergraduate in Ireland in the early 1970s I had a choice between studying Sigmund's psychoanalytic perspective, or the maternal behaviour of a rat.

Maslow rejected not only behaviourism (with its disregard for consciousness and introspection) but also what he saw as the biological reductionism of Freud and his followers (Maslow 1969). It was with the further development of humanistic psychology into Transpersonal Psychology that a new field began to emerge which was a radical departure from the dominant thinking in academic circles of the time and could not be contained within the Newtonian-Cartesian Western scientific paradigm. Those involved in the early days such as Stanislav Grof, Jean Houston, Stanley Krippner, Ralph Metzner, Arnold Mindell and Charles T. Tart, were inspired by Jung; and their vision was informed by David Bohm's concept of the implicate and explicate order, as well as Karl Pribram's holographic model of the brain. But they too encountered accusations of being unscientific and 'irrational,' just as Shel-drake is today. I therefore wholly agree with Schroll who tells us:

Jung and transpersonal psychology will not be properly recognized and understood until psychologists stop envisioning the human condition in terms of Newtonian physics[...]Mind is no longer confined to



our physical bio-chemical brains and skin encapsulated egos, but is capable of being considered as a field or morphogenetic field as Rupert Sheldrake refers to it (Schroll 2008:255).

A mind that is no longer confined to the physical implies less possibility of control, of predictability, and of outcomes that we can rely on. Having wrested the power from the hands of the gods the materialist reductionists are reluctant to abandon illusions of the potential of omnipotence. People with experience of non-local consciousness and mystical experiences can comprehend the world-view of the materialists because their model can encompass different experiences. But it doesn't happen the other way round. Schroll sums this up, telling us: "In other words, groups or persons who seek to explain transpersonal experiences (like non-local memory) solely by reducing them to their neurophysiological correlates offers a perspective similar to that of lifelong celibate nuns explaining the experience of orgasm to virgins" (Schroll 2013, this volume). It could be argued that, while the world of Bohm's implicate and explicate order could contain the Newtonian paradigm, the opposite is not the case.

### **Tipping Point**

As Kuhn points out in his writing on how revolutions come about in science, each paradigm for reality contains its own flaw:

Part of the answer, as obvious as it is important, can be discovered by noting first what scientists never do when confronted by even severe and prolonged anomalies. Though they may begin to lose faith and then to consider alternatives, they do not renounce the paradigm that has led them into crisis....once it has achieved the status of paradigm a scientific theory is declared invalid only if an alternate candidate is available to take its place (Kuhn 1970: 77).

As Schroll makes clear in his article, the 'new' candidate for a paradigm has been with us since early in the last century. But the tipping point has not yet occurred. It takes some time for a morphogenetic field to become established. The new 'field' has not yet stabilised. The tremendous resistance to Sheldrake's ideas, especially relating to telepathy, is very apparent. And that a scientist can become very unscientific is illustrated in an encounter between Sheldrake and Richard Dawkins (the evolutionary biologist best known for his books *The Selfish Gene* (1976) and *The God Delusion* (2006)).

While Dawkins has certainly stimulated much debate and has successfully dismantled the naïve concepts of God as a benevolent father figure (thus challenging a fundamentalist view of religion), he also seems to have difficulty really examining the evidence for a view which differs from his own. Sheldrake tells of receiving a request to take part in a discussion on his research of unexplained abilities of people and animals with Dawkins for his television programme *Enemies of Reason*. He was a little reluctant but was reassured by the company representative that it would be "a discussion between two scientists, about scientific modes of enquiry." However Sheldrake tells how Dawkins ultimately refuses to examine evidence to the existence of telepathy:

The previous week I had sent Richard copies of some of my papers, published in peer-reviewed journals, so that he could look at the data. Richard seemed uneasy and said, "I don't want to discuss evidence." "Why not?" I asked. "There isn't time. It's too complicated. And that's not what this programme is about." The camera stopped. The Director, Russell Barnes, confirmed that he too was not interested in evidence. The film he was making was another Dawkins polemic. I said to Russell, "If you're treating telepathy as an irrational belief, surely evidence about whether it exists or not is essential for the discussion. If telepathy occurs, it's not irrational to believe in it. I thought that's what we

were going to talk about. I made it clear from the outset that I wasn't interested in taking part in another low grade debunking exercise." Richard said, "It's not a low grade debunking exercise; it's a high grade debunking exercise" (Dawkins & Sheldrake nd).

In addition a recent TedX talk by Sheldrake so enraged some viewers that they insisted it be taken down from the site, saying it was not science. Despite my awareness of the tension that is involved in the shift to a new way of thinking, the hostility in some of the comments is astonishing to me. It's a good thing we're not still burning witches in Europe. As of today, 14th March 2013, the talk has been taken down. This too has been greeted with a huge amount of protest from those who, even though they may not agree with Sheldrake, still support his right to speak.

## Conclusion

To conclude: this article by Schroll and his impassioned exploration of the controversy surrounding the work of those researching a new model of reality is a contribution to the strengthening of the morphogenetic field of the new paradigm. We are co-creating in the birthing of a new world. I would also welcome more exploration of his dream experiences. I much appreciate our correspondence and his encouragement to express my thoughts and ideas.

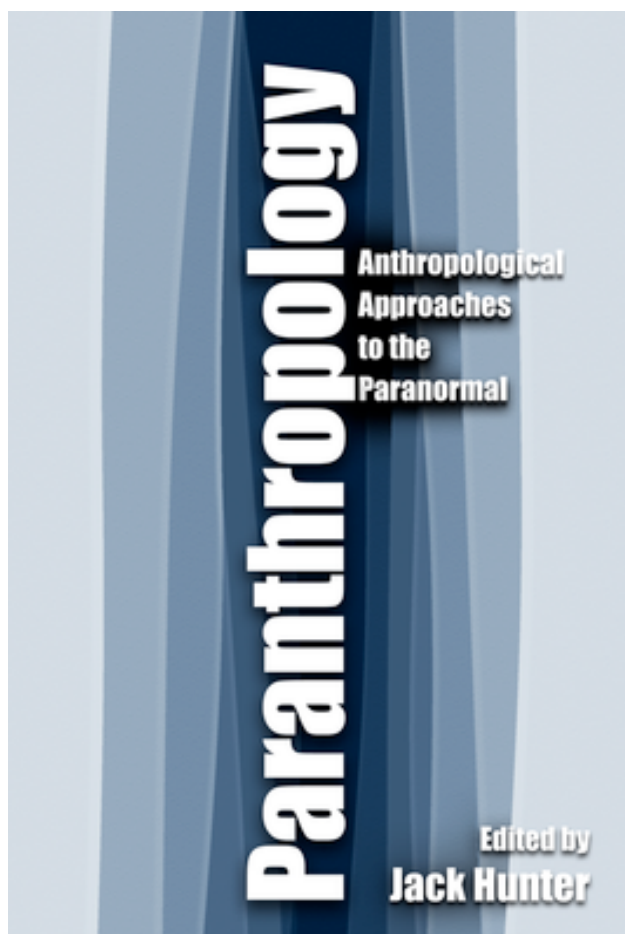
The new paradigm has not yet become a stabilised field. But recent research by Sheldrake, Dean Radin, and many others into psi phenomena has provided whole flocks of white crows. And, to quote Victor Hugo: 'nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.'

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## Biography

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# Science Betrayed?: Rupert Sheldrake and The Science Delusion

Margaret Gouin



On December 12, 2012, *Disinformation*, an independent American media company, posted an interview with Rupert Sheldrake about his book *The Science Delusion* (US title, *Science Set Free*).<sup>1</sup> In the course of discussing the interview online, a few of us thought it would be interesting to explore Sheldrake's work from different angles (see DeLorez and Schroll, in this issue).

The angle I have chosen is to study the book, and related issues, through the lens of the sociology of knowledge. I am not a sociologist, but have become interested in the epistemological method involved. In particular, with regard to this article, I will be focusing on the sociology of *scientific* knowledge (SSK). It is not at present a major area of sociology,<sup>2</sup> but was prominent from the 1970s to 1990s. One of its major theorists was David Bloor at the University of Edinburgh. His book *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (Bloor 1976) sets out his 'strong programme' for studying scientific knowledge using a sociological framework. It is based on four premises:

1. SSK must be *causal*, i.e. concerned with conditions which bring about belief or states of knowledge.
2. It must be *impartial*, requiring explanation of both sides of any dichotomy such as true/false, rational/irrational, success/failure.
3. It must be *symmetrical* in style: e.g., the same type of cause should explain both true and false beliefs.
4. It must be *reflexive*: the patterns of explanation applied to scientific knowledge must be applicable to sociology itself. (Bloor 1976: 4-5)

SSK reflects the premise that in any given culture there are features which are not considered

themselves to be 'scientific' but which influence what counts as science in that culture (Bloor 1976:3).

... the claim was that 'the social dimension' of knowledge needed to be attended to in order to understand what counts as a fact or a discovery, what inferences are made from facts, what is regarded as rational or proper conduct, how objectivity is recognised, and how the credibility of claims is assessed. The target here was not at all the legitimacy of scientific knowledge but the legitimacy of individualist frameworks for interpreting scientific knowledge. (Shapin 1995:300)

It is important to note the last sentence of the above quote. Bloor rejects 'scientific relativism,' the idea that what counts as 'science' for one person may be entirely different for another (a classic example being creationism versus evolution). SSK—as developed by Bloor, at least—presupposes both a materialistic world and the reliability of human sense-experience interacting with that world (Bloor 1976:29).

Bloor reviews a number of objections that may be raised against SSK, and one has particular prominence. That is that knowledge which is 'true' or 'right' is by virtue of that very fact immune from any kind of inquiry. 'Causes' only need to be invoked to explain deviations from what is 'right' (Bloor 1976:5-6); nothing 'makes' people believe in what is right, it's simply the normal and natural state of things. A comparison with established religion suggests itself: the priesthood declares what is True—and therefore, by definition, is beyond being questioned. All inquiry is reserved for heresies, the false or mis-

taken beliefs; and causes (witchcraft, for example, or the Devil), are sought for why people should form them.

If SSK poses a threat to science, then, it is to its status as somehow *sui generis* and therefore not subject to the principles and procedures of examination and evaluation that apply in all other fields of knowledge—including *science itself*. There is no form of knowledge which is so privileged as to be above inquiry:

All knowledge, whether it be in the empirical sciences or even in mathematics, should be treated, through and through, as material for investigation. ... There are no limitations which lie in the absolute or transcendent character of scientific knowledge itself, or in the special nature of rationality, validity, truth or objectivity. (Bloor 1976:1)

To understand why it so often seems that we feel science should be an exception to the general rule of investigation, Bloor turns to Durkheim's distinction between the *sacred* and the *profane* (Durkheim 1995:34-39). This distinction, as Durkheim makes clear,<sup>3</sup> is not one of degree: it is absolute. For Bloor, attributing sacredness to scientific knowledge would account for why it is held to be above investigation:

The puzzling attitude towards science would be explicable if it were being treated as sacred, and as such, something to be kept at a respectful distance. This is perhaps why its attributes are held to transcend and defy comparison with all that is not science but merely belief, prejudice, habit, error or confusion. (Bloor 1976:41)

The sociology of knowledge should be precluded from inquiring into science because this poses a threat to science's 'purity' *by the very act of presuming to inquire*: 'Science is sacred, so it must be kept apart....This protects it from pollution which would destroy its efficacy, authority and strength as a source of knowledge' (Bloor 1976:43).

The most 'sacred' parts of science are what we think is most important about it. Bloor sug-

gests these could be its foundational principles and methods, its greatest achievements and its most abstract ideals. The less important parts are the more mundane ones—routines, applications, techniques. The more removed from 'pure' science they are, the less they are seen as 'sacred' and the more they partake of the 'profane.' So if the activity of investigation based on 'sacred' scientific principles must necessarily be inferior in 'sacredness' to those principles themselves, how can you turn that activity of scientific investigation onto those principles? The answer of many scientists, Bloor suggests, may well be that 'Only ruin can ensue' (Bloor 1976:43).

Of course not all scientists oppose the examination of their knowledge and beliefs. And of course, there are those in other fields of knowledge who are equally protective of their own areas of specialisation. But the exalted status of science and scientists in our society has given rise to an environment where questioning their accepted wisdom can cause quite a backlash; and nowhere is this more clear than in the case of Dr. Rupert Sheldrake.

Dr. Sheldrake had already had a distinguished career in biochemistry and cell biology by the time he published his book *A New Science of Life* in 1981 (Sheldrake 1981). In this book he introduced his hypothesis of morphogenetic fields. The book was subject to a scathing attack by John Maddox, the editor of *Nature* magazine—an attack (Maddox 1981) which is credited by some with ultimately ruining Sheldrake's academic career (Freeman 2005:4). In 1994 Maddox reiterated his condemnation of Sheldrake's book in a BBC interview, and the terms he used are revealing: 'Sheldrake is putting forward magic instead of science, and that can be condemned, in exactly the language that the popes used to condemn Galileo, and for the same reasons: it is heresy.'<sup>4</sup>

Maddox makes clear that his objection to Sheldrake is fundamentally a religious one: he has committed *heresy*. Has he committed heresy against some god? Apparently not: Sheldrake's sin is against *science*, by pretending that what Maddox chooses to characterise as 'magic' is actually scientific. (Maddox does not appear to re-

alize the impact of his comparison: Galileo the heretic is now considered one of the greatest of scientists—his ‘heresy’ completely vindicated. One wonders, will the same fate ultimately befall Sheldrake?)

From the point of view of SSK, the issue here is not whether Maddox or Sheldrake—or Galileo for that matter—is ‘right,’ is a ‘real’ scientist or not, but how Maddox’s attitude appears to bear out Bloor’s theory that the ‘special status’ of science is based on its ‘sacredness.’ How else could an offence against science be qualified as ‘heresy’?

Controversy has continued to dog Sheldrake’s footsteps,<sup>5</sup> notwithstanding which he has continued to do his research, publish books and articles, make presentations and engage in debates. On January 13, 2013, he gave a talk at an event sponsored by a non-profit organisation called ‘TED’ (which stands for ‘Technology, Entertainment, Design’). TED prides itself on purveying ‘ideas worth spreading’ by means of 15-20 minute videos which are posted for free on its website, under the banner ‘Riveting talks by remarkable people, free to the world.’<sup>6</sup> Sheldrake’s talk was part of a ‘TEDx’ event held at Whitechapel, London, under the theme ‘Visions for Transition.’<sup>7</sup>

Sheldrake was one of ten speakers presenting on a wide variety of topics. His 18 minutes of video ignited a firestorm of indignation among some who claimed that even inviting Sheldrake to speak at a TEDx event cheapened TED’s image as a purveyor of serious science (which is what TED now appears to claim for itself), to such an extent that the video should be removed from the Web. The demand to suppress Sheldrake’s talk prompted the parent organisation TED to open (for a short period of time) a ‘conversation,’ soliciting opinions from TED members as to whether or not the talk should be allowed to stand. The ‘conversation’ generated 478 comments before it was closed.

For anyone interested in SSK, I would suggest that there could be a PhD in those comments. Many are very even-toned. Some are supportive of Sheldrake’s theories, and some do not accept them, but agree that he has a right to

put them to the public. However, there is a vocal minority of (apparently) scientists who vigorously and vehemently decry Sheldrake both in the ‘conversation’ and on their own blogs. Their attacks are personal and vicious: he is called a ‘woomeister’ (‘woo,’ or occasionally ‘woo-woo,’ appears to be a technical scientific term, judging by the number of times it is used by people with scientific credentials), a ‘quack’ and a ‘non-scientist’; he is held up to ridicule for having ‘no evidence’ for his claims; and a particularly intense attack is mounted on his discussion of apparent variations in the speed of light.<sup>8</sup>

TED soon (March 14, 2013) removed Sheldrake’s talk from its YouTube feed, as well as that of Graham Hancock who spoke at the same TEDx event, and placed them both in a blog post.<sup>9</sup> The post begins:

After due diligence, including a survey of published scientific research and recommendations from our Science Board and our community [with a hyperlink to the earlier ‘conversation’], we have decided that Graham Hancock’s and Rupert Sheldrake’s talks from TEDxWhiteChapel should be removed from distribution on the TEDx YouTube channel.

The action—which many condemn as censorship—has given rise to another torrent of comments. Many are supportive of Sheldrake and Hancock, or at least condemn TED for removing the talks, which is seen as contrary to the mission of spreading innovative ideas that TED so proudly arrogates to itself. Questions are also raised as to what or who might constitute the ‘Science Board,’ since no such board is listed anywhere on TED’s website, or what scientific research was consulted. It is also clear from watching the videos in question and comparing them with what TED claims in their post that they say, that TED’s ‘Science Board’ is either deliberately misrepresenting what both Sheldrake and Hancock said, or has not watched the presentations in question. Repeated queries to TED asking them to clarify their statements by reference to the content of the videos have gone un-

answered. Indeed, TED seems as of my last view of the comments to this post (16 March 2013) to have retreated behind a stone wall of silence.

Leaving aside the case of Graham Hancock (without meaning in any way to derogate from the importance of his situation), what the actions of TED suggest is that Sheldrake is being condemned, not for having proposed theories which he is prepared to submit to other scientists for testing and possible falsification, but for propounding theories on topics which are anathema to a small but very vocal group of scientists who freely condemn Sheldrake's work without, apparently, knowing much about it. (Indeed, Jerry Coyne—one of Sheldrake's most vigorous detractors, and apparently one of the first who asked TED to remove his presentation<sup>10</sup>—prides himself on never having read *The Science Delusion*.<sup>11</sup>) Sheldrake describes in *The Science Delusion* a number of occasions on which he appeared in debates with other scientists on matters related to his theories, only to find that they hadn't read any of the information he had provided and were ignorant of the issue on which they were supposed to debate.<sup>12</sup> To what extent this can be considered a 'scientific' attitude is, I think, open to debate; but TED's actions would appear from their own justification of them to be a classic exercise in 'protecting the purity of science' as suggested by Bloor.

As well as dogmatic ideology, Sheldrake identifies 'institutional inertia' as inhibiting scientific creativity (Sheldrake 2012: 4). This problem is highlighted by the recent exposure of scientific frauds committed by Dutch social psychologist Diederik Stapel over a period of many years.<sup>13</sup> The report of the investigating committees points out (Levelt Committee: 9) that three young researchers and two professors at Stapel's university had previously raised concerns about his work—none of which were investigated. The whistle was finally blown not by Stapel's peers, but by his students, even though they put their own academic prospects in severe jeopardy thereby.

The Committees' findings are particularly striking with regard to the attitude of the scientific research community generally (both in The

Netherlands and internationally). In reviewing numerous published papers authored and co-authored by Stapel, they note:

It is almost inconceivable that co-authors who analysed the data intensively, or reviewers of the international 'leading journals,' who are deemed to be experts in their field, could have failed to see that a reported experiment would have been almost infeasible in practice, did not notice the reporting of impossible statistical results, such as a series of t-values linked with clearly impossible p-values, and did not spot values identical to many decimal places in entire series of means in the published tables. Virtually nothing of all the impossibilities, peculiarities and sloppiness mentioned in this report was observed by all these local, national and international members of the field, and no suspicion of fraud whatsoever arose. (Levelt Committee: 53)

Why was this? Perhaps because Stapel was a 'golden boy' in the field, whose scientific skill was considered beyond doubt, and it was believed that only he had the expertise to perform his experiments properly:

People accepted, if they even attempted to replicate the results for themselves, that they had failed because they lacked Mr Stapel's skill. However, there was usually no attempt to replicate, and certainly not independently. The few occasions when this did happen systematically, and failed, were never revealed, because this outcome was not publishable. (Levelt Committee: 54)

Why was this outcome 'not publishable'? Perhaps because it didn't say what it was 'supposed' to say—i.e., it didn't agree with Stapel's results. It turns out that Stapel was, in the scientific terminology I am learning from comments on TED, a 'woomeister,' and his experimental results couldn't be replicated because they were totally



false in the first place. Yet the assumption was so overwhelming that Stapel was right, no matter what the results said, that ‘logically,’ the counter-indicating results *must* have been wrong. It’s just that they weren’t. As a result of which, as the Levelt Committee sadly reports (54), ‘much research funding and expensive research time has been wasted.’

Stapel’s case reveals the extent to which a fraud within the scientific community can be perpetrated for years. It also points out how every single anti-fraud safeguard on which the scientific community prides itself can fail, and go on failing, through a conspiracy of silence and sloppiness—a conspiracy of scientists. Why was Stapel allowed to go on for so long without being exposed, whereas virtually every time Sheldrake makes a public appearance he is immediately excoriated by people who cannot even be bothered to read his data?

At least part of the answer may lie in the fact that Stapel was an accepted ‘expert’ operating in an apparently normal fashion within an established institutional framework, while Sheldrake’s ideas and hypotheses are more original and farther removed from the mainstream of what Kuhn has called ‘normal science’ (Kuhn 1996:5). Stapel was part of the ‘pure’ science that had to be protected; Sheldrake is part of the restless, questioning science that threatens the *status quo*. The resistance of scientists to innovation has been remarked on but very rarely studied, as Bernard Barber noted many years ago (Barber 1961:596). Barber identified a number of cultural elements that limit the receptivity of the scientific community to new discoveries. These include substantive concepts and theories about ‘what the world is really like,’ methodological preferences, and religious ideas—which may, in the current climate, include *anti*-religious ideas such as the so-called ‘New Atheism’ (Barber 1961:596-99). Social factors, such as a scientist’s standing in the profession and the pattern of specialization prevailing in the field, also play a part (599-601). Barber also identified problems with scientific publications which resist or refuse the publication of innovative research (601). This last is interesting in the light of a charge fre-

quently leveled against Sheldrake—that he has no papers published in ‘peer-reviewed’ journals. Sheldrake’s experience with *Nature* magazine in 1981 may suggest that peer-reviewed journals are not always open-minded towards the new and unconventional. A related situation arose with *New Scientist* when Sheldrake’s 1988 book *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature* was republished in 2011. The publishers of the new edition used material from *New Scientist*’s review of the original publication as a jacket blurb, and *New Scientist* tried to deny that it had ever said anything approving about Sheldrake’s work. When confronted with a copy of the original review, deputy magazine editor Graham Lawton commented, ‘I think it is fair to say that if we were to review the new edition, Icon wouldn’t be mining it for promotional purposes’<sup>14</sup>—which seems tantamount to saying, ‘we haven’t read the book, but we can tell you that we would give it a bad review in any case.’ Hardly the kind of attitude that would make for impartial peer review.

Much of the debate seems to revolve around the contention that Sheldrake isn’t stating ‘facts.’ Which raises the question, just what *is* science, anyway? Is it a body of uncontestable facts, or is it a process of inquiry? Sheldrake seems to be firmly on the side of process:

It is not anti-scientific to question established beliefs, but central to science itself. At the creative heart of science is a spirit of open-minded enquiry. Ideally, science is a process, not a position or a belief system. Innovative science happens when scientists feel free to ask new questions and build new theories. (Sheldrake 2012:25)

As Bloor has pointed out, much of what are conventionally considered scientific ‘facts’ are not actually proven ‘facts’ but rather theoretical constructs that have become so commonplace as to be considered above questioning:

...what we count as scientific knowledge is largely ‘theoretical,’ It is largely a theoretical vision of the world that, at any time,



scientists may be said to know. It is largely to their theories that scientists repair when asked what they can tell us about the world. *But theories and theoretical knowledge are not things which are given in our experience. They are what give meaning to experience by offering a story about what underlies, connects and accounts for it.* (Bloor 1976:12, emphasis added)

What an interesting turn of phrase—‘*by offering a story[...]*’ So we could say, perhaps, that Rupert Sheldrake is offering us, in his theory of morphogenesis, a *story* in which he attempts to shape a description of what ‘underlies, connects and accounts for’ the data he has accumulated over years of experimentation. Similarly, it might be said that Richard Dawkins offers us a *story*, in his theory of selfish genes, which attempts to account for his research findings (Dawkins 2006). But *both are theories*; neither is ‘fact.’ (In the study of religions, this kind of story is often referred to as a *myth*. Wouldn’t that make a great essay topic?—“‘*The Selfish Gene* is a creation myth’: discuss”).

Sheldrake doesn’t question the validity of science as a means for gaining knowledge of the world; what he questions—especially in *The Science Delusion*—is the validity of the stand of those who seem to have reified ‘science’ into a fixed and immutable set of beliefs, a world-view, sacred and unquestionable in nature. Perhaps he overstates his case at times, but that doesn’t mean he has no case. It’s quite clear from his book and from the many online comment threads about his work that more than a few scientists support his open-minded attitude of inquiry. Whether or not they agree with his theories isn’t at issue here, what matters is that they support his right to explore what interests him without prejudging it to be ‘correct,’ ‘rational,’ ‘valid,’ ‘scientific,’ etc. Is Sheldrake being condemned by a vocal group of scientists because he has betrayed science, or because he envisions what science, untrammelled by ‘sacredness’ and fixed ideas, could be? Perhaps it’s time for a sociological study of the culture of ‘science’ within which this occasionally very unpleasant debate continues to rage.

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- 1 <http://www.disinfo.com/2012/12/disinfocast-37-rupert-sheldrake-science-set-free/> (accessed 11 March 2013).
- 2 The history of SSK is complicated, and beyond the scope of this article. In recent years, the field appears to have been dissipated among a number of other specialities, including but not limited to Science and Technology Studies (STS).
- 3 'In the history of human thought, there is no other example of two categories of things as profoundly differentiated or as radically opposed to one another. [...] the sacred and the profane are always and everywhere conceived by the human intellect as separate genera, as *two worlds with nothing in common*.' (Durkheim 1995: 36, emphasis added)
- 4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRjQmZLT8bI> (accessed 13 March 2013)
- 5 See Sheldrake's website, <http://sheldrake.org/D&C/controversies/> for details of some of these.
- 6 <http://www.ted.com> (accessed 10 March 2013)
- 7 According to TED, 'Created in the spirit of TED's mission, "ideas worth spreading," the TEDx program is designed to give communities, organizations and individuals the opportunity to stimulate dialogue through TED-like experiences at the local level. TEDx events are fully planned and coordinated independently, on a community-by-community basis.' <http://www.ted.com/tedx> (accessed 10 March 2013). So this event was not produced by the central TED organisation.
- 8 [http://www.ted.com/conversations/16894/rupert\\_sheldrake\\_s\\_tedx\\_talk.html](http://www.ted.com/conversations/16894/rupert_sheldrake_s_tedx_talk.html) (accessed 10 March 2013)
- 9 <http://blog.ted.com/2013/03/14/open-for-discussion-graham-hancock-and-rupert-sheldrake/> (accessed 15 March 2013)
- 10 <http://whyevolutionistrue.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/tedx-has-second-thoughts-about-rupert-sheldrakes-talk-asks-viewers-to-weigh-in/> (accessed 16 March 2013)
- 11 <http://whyevolutionistrue.wordpress.com/2012/12/03/rupert-sheldrake-peddles-his-woo-to-americans/> (accessed 15 March 2013): see para. 5, 'I haven't read his book, and won't [...]'

12 Sheldrake 2012: 254-57. See also <http://www.sheldrake.org/D&C/controversies/> (accessed 15 March 2013)

13 An English summary of the events is provided online by Dr. Wouter Hanegraaff: <http://wouterjhanegraaff.blogspot.com/2012/12/something-rotten.html> (accessed 11 March 2013)



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# Critical Analysis of Culturally Intrusive Interpretations of Phenomenological and Parapsychological Scientific Studies

Kaitlyn Kane



I decided to investigate the potential role of the cultural intrusions that lead an audience receiving the results of scientific studies in the fields of phenomenology and parapsychology to discredit them. Cultural intrusions, often arising from subtle themes embedded in the enculturation process of which many people are unaware, shape perceptions, interpretations, and even the presentation of events that are quite possibly factual.

Cultural intrusions are often found shrouded in the casually accepted and generally irreproachable category known broadly as 'Common sense.' Common sense is the dominant lens used in deciding what fits and what doesn't fit into our modern scientific paradigm. The strength and resilience of this category is demonstrated almost daily as true science labors on, encountering resistance through calls to 'prove it.' And, when science is confronted with a phenomenon that cannot be mechanically repeated, the "Aha" chorus, citing common sense, swells.

The identification and understanding of cultural intrusions are essential when interpreting and analyzing account statements from people who claim to have experienced near-death and related phenomena. The same identification and understanding of cultural intrusions should also be explored and considered within the interpretations made by the interpreter when analyzing such claims. Mark A. Schroll has addressed similar concerns regarding cultural intrusions. He suggests that when approaching this problem:

[W]e must first begin by consciously realizing that many of the so-called 'facts' we use to construct our paradigm are not 'facts' at all, but socially constructed shared

assumptions, consensus reality, and agendas for research. We adopt these agendas for research through the process of enculturation, that is, cultural amnesia, becoming 'hypnotized' by consensus reality and begin acting toward our cultural assumptions as 'social fact,' which later manifest themselves as social-psychological pressures (1988:317-318).

My aim herein is to question the cultural intrusions that influence the acceptance or dismissal of paranormal reports. I think it should also be briefly noted before I begin my analysis the influence that language can serve in reinforcing these cultural intrusions. You may not fully realize it, but your frame of mind has already been influenced upon picking up this journal and reading, *Paranthropology: Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal*. Prefixes such as *para-*, *ab-*, and *super-* all carry culturally negative connotations that contradict their morphemes, as well as modern reason. It is important to be aware of these cultural negative connotations so that one's judgment can remain unbiased when analyzing phenomenological and parapsychological studies.

## Dearth: Reflections on Assessing Anomalous Phenomena

I have long been curious about speculations on the nature of reality, and the various constituents of what is considered normal and abnormal. What are the standards applied to the reality/unreality dichotomy that merit the application of such labels as abnormal, unreal, or delusional? While there is most assuredly sound evidence to support the physical laws of the material reality

with which most people are able to identify, there is an unfortunate dearth of extensive veridical evidence concerning any non-physical laws supporting a possible reality beyond the perceptions of the five known human senses. The key word here is *dearth*, which is not to be confused with disproving, contrary, or opposing evidence. The popular saying, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" actually holds true. Yet, even in our progressively more logical society, the absence of evidence is perceived as credible scientific evidence disapproving the matter, long before the actual nature of the evidence problem is even considered. The evidence problem here is the 'one off' problem. For example, a claim of a near death experience is not something that the person claiming the experience can be marched into a laboratory and ordered to 'do it over again.' But how can the validity of any scientific research about an anomalous subject be discounted without even the appropriate scientific follow through considering its legitimacy?

This same concern was expressed by Michael Winkelman in his paper, 'A Paradigm for Understanding Altered Consciousness: The Integrative Mode of Consciousness.' He concluded that:

Studies of both ordinary consciousness and [altered consciousness] have produced findings that are anomalies for the dominant materialistic assumptions of the physical sciences. But the anomalies have few central roles in any major field of scientific inquiry, with the question of consciousness seen by some as falling outside of scientific inquiry altogether. Anomalies of altered consciousness are generally seen as exceptions that are best dismissed as distorted data rather than novel findings [...] (2011:27).

Today, non-replicable one off problems are too readily dismissed, the justification for such dismissal flowing from specious rationalizations couched in pseudo-scientific terms. The weight carried by the use of such culturally official language is immense and almost guaranteed to create a troublesome cultural stigma attached not

merely to the report, but to the reporter and to anyone who seeks to investigate and understand the report. Furthermore, these cultural stigmas only serve as reinforcement to the high probability of a professional "career suicide" if associated with any further attempts to pursue research or studies of the subject. But, what is it that gives these cultural stigmas legitimacy and longevity without any hard scientific backing? It seems as though the unwitting cognitive acceptance of a cultural intrusion might play a bigger role in the way people think than they may have originally realized. And, if one has a problem with the content of these cultural intrusions subtly influencing their perceptions, then my best advice would be to set them to the side as just a reference into the perceptions of their surrounding cultures, and to move forward opened minded like the Horizon Research Foundation and The Windbridge Institute. Of course, acknowledgment of having a problem is the first step to addressing a problem.

The Horizon Research Foundation is just one of the leading researchers in the small-arena of paranormal research and the principles of phenomenology. The Horizon Research Foundation is an independent organization devoted to the study and understanding of human consciousness towards the end of life. Just a few of the ongoing studies by this foundation are the Aware Study, the Human-Consciousness Project, BRAIN-1 Study, and the COOL Study.

The Horizon Research Foundation's intention of these studies is to acquire enough useful knowledge into the cognition of those close to death, in order to create a model which palliative centers and hospices could use. Such a model would be highly beneficial in the preparations for commonly reported death bed vision events and for providing insight into the events of any death-bed experiences. Their intent is not to prove or disprove the existence of any kind of after-life reality. Therefore, any presumption that results gathered in the study lack adequate scientific validity on such grounds as the "one-off problem," would be missing the point of the studies methods and results.

As awareness of near-death phenomena expands and the research devoted to them grows the findings are being cataloged to be used as baselines for future similar studies. Most of these findings unfortunately rarely make it to any mainstream scientific publications. And, because they are commonly perceived through the cultural intrusion of "common sense" they are often automatically branded as bogus.

Another field that seems to be even more vulnerable to superficial cultural scrutiny than phenomenology is parapsychology. Parapsychology is an interdisciplinary study of interactions between living organisms and their external environment, which seem to transcend the commonly known physical laws of nature. Parapsychological studies include attempts to understand telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis, and survival studies. The Windbridge Institute for Applied Research in Human Potential has many scientifically sound investigations into the mysteries of parapsychology. Among these they have accumulated many studies concerning the authenticity of mediums. The Windbridge Institute screens every medium that participates in one of their studies using an intensive and thorough 8-step screening and training procedure. Depending on the results from the completion of the screening process, the medium can become a Windbridge Certified Research Medium (WCRM) and participate in research.

One such proof-based study acquired 14 different WCRM's to gather evidence to address anomalous information reception (AIR) by mediums. The methodology used to conduct this study is in concurrence with other standard scientific approaches. The study also took extra measures to assure the prevention of fraud by using a 'quintuple-blind' study research. The results of this study revealed that, 'the item percent accuracy data, the overall score data, and the reading choice data all demonstrate strong statistically significant evidence for anomalous information reception' (2011:2).

The implications of these conclusions are controversial, thus causing them to be highly attractive of criticism concerning scientific accuracy. An assumption that the results of this study

were consistent with the "one-off problem" would seem rationally fitting. But before any such assumption can be made there should be further research to determine if that is so. However, because of cultural intrusions, the bias of "common sense," the likelihood of further re-testing in this study is minimal. It is unfortunate that the insights obtained from this case will be presumptively discarded by most people.

### **Can Neuroscience Provide the Means to Assess Anomalous Phenomena, or Vice Versa?**

In considering the evidence supporting anomalous information receptions, a simple question arises: If there is indeed some kind of anomalous information reception shouldn't it be applied to the research of certain mental disorders? Could these be the origin of "hallucinations" and what stimulated them? Are hallucinations just the result of a faulty perception in the patient, or a fault in the clinician's perception?

I am familiar with the case of a woman who was diagnosed as mentally retarded and having both visual and auditory hallucinations. But the doctors were the only ones who perceived her "visions" and "voices" as being hallucinations. There were assuredly mental abnormalities in her learning capabilities and social interactions, but there were no concomitant psychotic symptoms. She also was not affected by any kind of delusion. She was able to see here and there and knew the differences between the two. The things that she heard and saw were strikingly similar to many reports of after-death communication phenomena. She constantly talked to deceased relatives. She knew certain things and specific details with no known source for that information other than her "hallucinations." Her "sources" of information remain a mystery. The doctors assumed that it was just the result of delusional associations to and from familiar memories. In Charles T. Tart's chapter on "The Nature of Ordinary Consciousness" he addresses this concern, telling us:

The prejudice that our ordinary state of consciousness is natural or given is a major

obstacle in understanding the nature of mind and states of consciousness. Our perceptions of the world, others, and ourselves, as well as our reactions to (consciousness of) them, are semiarbitrary constructions. Although these constructions must have a minimal match to physical reality to allow survival, most of our lives are spent in consensus reality, that specially tailored and selectively perceived segment of reality constructed from the spectrum of human potential. We are simultaneously the beneficiaries and the victims of our culture. Seeing things according to consensus reality is good for holding a culture together, but an obstacle to personal and scientific understanding of the mind (1975:33.).

Relatively recent evidence from the field of neuropsychology has concluded that there are in fact specific regions in the brain that are associated with hallucinations. During auditory hallucinations there is heightened electro-activity found in the temporal lobe, hippocampus, and amygdala without the presence of any observable external stimuli. The main function of the temporal lobe is the processing of auditory perceptions. Neuroscientists and psychologists assume that the temporal activation is the result of an underlying abnormality in the hardwiring of the brain's chemical or biological signaling processes. This is also their reasoning behind the activations in the hippocampus and amygdala. While that may be, it is also possible to see these brain activations as evidence of external forces as yet unknown in either science or in common sense.

### Conclusion

The influence of cultural intrusions has quietly but greatly limited the perspectives on scientific studies in the fields of phenomenology and parapsychology. A limited perspective goes against the true purpose of science. Science and scientific research were intended to open up the doors to investigation of the unknown not close them. Yet, cultural intrusions and common sense

have locked these doors and swallowed the keys. It's imperative that cultural intrusions are cross examined until the keys are found and the doors of the unknown are opened up for true scientific investigation and research.

In addition to my proposal of spreading cultural intrusion awareness, I also propose that the perceptive applications used in the research of phenomenology and parapsychology be applied into every field of scientific research and vice versa. Whether it is or isn't relevant to the subject matter. It is fundamental in the process of scientific inquiry to not only analyze the subject matter at hand critically, but to also in turn analyze that analysis critically. The point of this is to ensure a multi-dimensional approach to scientific observation and that every angle, corner, and void space is thoroughly considered in the process of and before the conclusion of scientific research.

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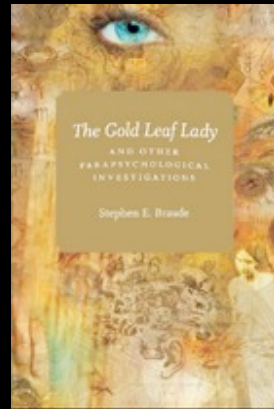
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# Rehabilitating The Neglected 'Similar': Confronting The Issue Of Cross-Cultural Similarities In The Study Of Religions

Gregory Shushan



The purpose of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to argue for the methodological viability of cross-cultural comparative studies of myth and religion, particularly those which consider, or even focus on, similarities. As victims of a postmodern backlash, 'comparison' and 'similar' have almost become taboo words in the study of religions. So academically unfashionable has 'comparative religion' become that until a recent but tentative resurgence, it was all but superseded by research into single religious traditions in isolation. While I agree with many of the criticisms levied by comparison-sceptics,<sup>2</sup> I would also contend that the problem is not that comparison is an inherently naïve and flawed exercise: the problem is that comparative methodologies often are. In looking specifically at the issue of similarities, I will attempt to disentangle it from criticisms of comparison *per se*.

Perhaps the most common criticism of comparative research is that it has tended to ignore social and historical contexts in the search for grand, unified theories. This is (or was) often motivated by a highly idealized romantic universalism typified by figures such as Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade, among others. It is, in part, a reaction to universalist ideas that has all but driven the study of cross-cultural similarities out of the field. To suggest even that 'religion' itself might be universal is academically hazardous, let alone arguing that particular beliefs or practices are.<sup>3</sup>

Immediately we can discern two conflated arguments here: We should not compare – or we should only focus on differences – because comparative scholars look for similarities in order to bolster a universalist agenda. It is undeniable that many comparisons in the past have indeed

argued for a universalist interpretation, but this does not indicate that 'comparison' means the same thing as 'looking for universals.' Comparison itself does not dictate to researchers what they discover or their conclusions, as Robert Segal has cogently discussed;<sup>4</sup> or even their overall methodology. It is their own theoretical frameworks, and their own scholarly and personal perspectives, interpretations, and indeed sometimes agendas. While it may be the case that personal universalist orientations have motivated some scholars to (consciously or otherwise) construct dubious similarities in order to support their theories or beliefs, it is also the case that comparison can lead to observations of genuine (dare I say objective) similarities (see below). The fact that such observations can then lead to arguments which favour universalism (in one or more of its many guises) as the most compelling explanation is beside the point. In other words, comparison and the observation of similarities are methods of enquiry, not theories or conclusions.

Comparative studies have also (often rightly) been criticized for assuming an evolutionist position, with Christianity in particular (and sometimes Abrahamic monotheism in general) being characterized as not only the normative standard by which all 'other' belief-systems are judged and found wanting, but the pinnacle of human religious thought with a monopoly on 'truth.' However, we cannot in the same breath criticize comparison for being evolutionist (promoting the exclusivity of religious 'truth') and universalist (promoting the inclusivity of religious 'truth'). Claims that comparison is faulty for generally assuming historical connection or diffusion<sup>5</sup> as an explanation for cross-cultural similarities adds a further element to the conundrum of generali-



zations about comparison: does it assume evolutionism? Or does it assume universalism? Or does it assume diffusionism? Because these are competing arguments, comparison cannot assume all three simultaneously.

In actuality, comparison doesn't assume anything (other than the existence of comparands), any more than not making comparisons assumes something. Making comparisons and not making comparisons are not theories in and of themselves – they are methods. Segal<sup>6</sup> writes that criticisms of comparative studies of religion are often 'mischaracterizations either of the method or of the quest for knowledge itself,' clarifying that 'the comparative method is itself neutral.'<sup>7</sup> While I would add here that the term 'comparative method' should be modified to the plural 'methods' in order to avoid implying that there is a single way of comparing, comparison indeed should be seen as a methodological tool, not a stance. As Segal adds, comparison 'dictates no one explanation and is compatible with any.'<sup>8</sup> Comparison itself is an act, even a concept; though it is not the epiphenomena of an *-ism*.

The postmodern orientation, when it has allowed for comparison at all, has explicitly favoured difference. Some even consider the act of focusing on cross-cultural similarities to be politically incorrect, on the grounds that it allegedly denies individuality by ignoring the uniqueness of each tradition. It is, apparently, 'violating the integrity'<sup>9</sup> of one religious tradition to suggest that it has things in common with another. Patton and Ray summarize the position of this extreme end of the anti-comparative campaign:

...to compare is to abstract, and abstraction is construed as a political act aimed at domination and annihilation; cross-cultural comparison becomes intrinsically imperialistic, obliterating the cultural matrix from which it 'lifts' the compared object. Thus, to compare religious traditions, particularly historically unrelated ones, or elements and phenomena within those traditions, is to attempt to control and ultimately destroy them.<sup>10</sup>

How this relates to those of us who undertake comparisons of ancient religions is unclear, for there is no possibility of using our academic imperialism to annihilate that which no longer exists. While this may seem a facetious remark, it is relevant in that it demonstrates clearly that the accusation cannot withstand scrutiny if it is applied to the act of comparison overall (as opposed to being used to critique individual cases). Furthermore, it should be noted that Western universalizing scholars do not have a monopoly on the observation of similarities: those with 'other' perspectives sometimes see similarities between the traditions of their own cultural background and 'alien' Christianity, as is evidenced by any number of non-Western syncretisms from Din-i-Ilahi to Baha'i to Haitian Vodou.<sup>11</sup> As with our other *-isms*, comparison is not by definition imperialism.

In response to such arguments, Wendy Doniger<sup>12</sup> makes the excellent point that too much focus on difference can be more damaging than focusing on similarities, because it can create or validate divisive categories of 'us' and 'them.' This can lead to far more serious consequences than post-Saïd Western academic guilt complexes, such as legitimizing religious intolerance and racism. As Doniger also points out, the original intent of the focus on similarities in comparative studies by people such as Eliade was, after all, to foster understanding of other cultures, partly through identification with one's own. It is not an 'injustice'<sup>13</sup> to simply observe that the religions or mythologies of different cultures share similar concepts and themes. To say 'I am like you' or 'you are like me' or even 'you two are alike' is not necessarily an insult. In fact, such an observation can be seen as validation of each tradition's beliefs, as Huston Smith<sup>14</sup> argues. And as Smart<sup>15</sup> pointed out, while every culture is unique, 'it does not follow that we have no common feelings or perspectives.'

Nevertheless, Doniger<sup>16</sup> also writes that similarities are mainly valuable as 'a useful base from which to proceed to ask questions about the differences.' She does not, however, provide a sound methodological or theoretical reason why it cannot be the reverse – why differences cannot be a

useful base from which to proceed to ask questions about similarities.

The position of 'difference' is so grave, in fact, that as Doniger<sup>17</sup> has noted, it often undergoes linguistic Gallicization in order to convey its true postmodern import; the subtle nuances of *différence* apparently being untranslatable into English. In response, my argument here may be similarly loaded with the *gravité* of the French language by characterizing this exclusivity of focus on difference as a veritable *crainte des similitudes*.

Jonathan Z. Smith wrote that similarity is 'incapable of generating interesting theory.'<sup>18</sup> Let us look at this statement in detail. The first difficulty is that Smith does not make explicit what he means by his use of the entirely subjective term 'interesting.' Even if we may disagree with the theories of Jung, Frazer, Levi-Strauss, or Eliade, we cannot fault their work simply on grounds of being 'uninteresting.' Indeed, even the works of the most 'discredited' of comparative scholars are 'interesting' (as well as important), even if only in that they gave rise to increased reflexivity in the field and have led to reconceptualizations of comparison.

The second problem is that I am not sure that Smith's perception of 'theory' in this case is something intended to explain a particular given set of data, or to answer a particular question relating to religions. Instead, it seems that Smith is considering theory to be something that exists for its own sake, as an end in itself – an abstract intellectual exercise rather than a tool in the service of explanation. It is not a 'practical' model in that it appears to be designed to reveal more about ourselves than to facilitate actual research which will help us to better understand religions. Of course, it is a matter of personal preference and interest whether one wishes to study religions, or whether one wishes to study the Study of Religions. The issue is perhaps that the concept of similarities simply does not facilitate the kind of scholarship which personally interests Smith. This, however, is not a compelling argument against anyone else focusing on similarities in comparative studies of religions.

Smith<sup>19</sup> has also argued that the very act of comparison is a 'subjective experience.' Comparison 'is more impressionistic than methodical,' and is 'not science, but magic.'<sup>20</sup> Patton and Ray<sup>21</sup> concur, characterizing comparison as an 'intellectually creative exercise' more akin to art than science. Again, this view presents various difficulties. While comparative studies may be imperfect in that they rely on the researcher's 'intuition' and are limited by his or her skills, knowledge, insight, powers of observation, and methodology,<sup>22</sup> what form of scholarly endeavour (or even human endeavour) does not fit this description – including, of course, noncomparative studies of religions? Certainly there is always an element of creativity and imagination in the analysis of data. If postmodernism has taught us anything, it is the impossibility of an entirely neutral and value-free scholarship. Indeed, without individual interpretation and observation (both creative acts) we would have only description (which, as Smith rightly argues, is in itself interpretative and reliant on observation).

It does not, however, follow that objective similarities do not exist (as Doniger concurs<sup>23</sup>); any more than it follows that objective differences do not exist. An acknowledgement of intellectual creativity by no means demonstrates that the identification of a cross-cultural parallel is by definition an entirely subjective experience, or entirely created by the mind of the scholar. Clear objective similarities can be discerned cross-culturally in many areas, and amply demonstrated phenomenologically, just as differences can. In this context, 'phenomenology' does not embody essentialist or other types of theories with which it is often associated, but is rather simply the method of attempting to empirically determine what is apparent in a text, image, etc. As with comparison and similarity, phenomenology is not by definition linked with a particular type of conclusion. If, for example, a phenomenological analysis of five texts from five different traditions contain, within the context of descriptions of afterlife experiences, references to a post-mortem evaluation of the earthly behaviour of the deceased,<sup>24</sup> it would be invidious to argue that this is a subjective scholarly fabrication, and

a wilful denial of the apparent for the sake of abstract (and abstruse) argument (and of course, it would be equally invidious to argue that the descriptions are exactly the same and wholly independent of their individual contexts). These descriptions are not only comparable (*anything* is technically 'comparable'), they are directly analogous, thematically as well as phenomenologically (and in some cases, functionally). In contrast, a description of the perils which face souls of the dead in the ancient Egyptian *Coffin Texts* is clearly not analogous in any of these ways to a description of equestrian equipage from a 1906 Sears and Roebuck catalogue. While such an observation would seem self-evident to the point of absurdity to the etic guest observer of the subtle and arcane questions which occupy practitioners of the art/science of the Study of Religions, the point apparently needs to be made. It may be that similarities are *found* because one is looking for them (just as differences are), though this does not mean that the similarities themselves are dependent upon observation (Schrödinger's Cat notwithstanding!). While *description* may be reliant upon observation/interpretation, *existence* is not. The comparison of religions is not an exact empirical science, though solipsism is not the inevitable alternative. In short, there has been no convincing argument for the usefulness of, or the logic behind a default theoretical or methodological primacy of difference over similarity.

Of course, what we identify as a similarity and what we identify as a difference is another matter for personal observation and interpretation. Again, this does not mean that similarities or differences do not exist, but rather that there are different levels of difference/similarity on which one might focus: structural (a myth, for example), thematic (the episodic components of the overall narrative), and symbolic (the specific way the thematic components are expressed).<sup>25</sup> Because similarity and difference are on a continuum, the definitions and boundaries of each term (or any others the scholar might use) must be determined by the individual according to the questions being asked.

Just as 'comparison' does not mean 'looking for universals,' by the same token 'looking at

similarities' does not mean 'ignoring differences.' As Carter<sup>26</sup> reminds us, the identification of similarities assumes the existence of differences. Put simply, without difference there could be no concept of similarity, for difference is (what we perceive to be) the norm which makes the similarities apparent. Inversely, the concept of 'different' is only comprehensible by reference to the concept of 'similar.' Each provides us with the opposing category, and therefore with the tools which enable us to organize and interpret our data. Indeed, both similarities and differences can only be adequately *explained* with reference to each other. As Paden<sup>27</sup> stated, 'True comparative sensibility is held captive neither by particulars nor universals....'

Perhaps one of the reasons comparative studies have so often focused on similarities is that the dissimilarities are so vast as to be almost incalculable. We are not surprised, for example, to find that the Egyptian god Osiris does not judge the Vedic Indian dead; or that the Sumerian goddess Inana does not descend to the Chinese Yellow Springs to play a Maya underworld football game with a decapitated head. These kinds of culture-specific differences are unsurprising, to say the least. Considering similarities is not to deny uniqueness, but rather to take it for granted. In fact, it is the vastness and expectedness of differences that makes the similarities potentially significant. It is precisely because of this that differences can be 'a useful base from which to proceed to ask questions about similarities.' While the fact that differences occur is mundane, the very existence of similarities demands explanation, for it means that the belief or phenomena in question cannot be explained solely by reference to the given culture's own belief context. This does not mean that interpretation of similarities (or differences) is dependent on any particular theoretical *-ism* (just as comparison itself is not). The presence of similarities does not dictate what conclusions will be drawn from them. Indeed, options do include the currently dreaded universalism and diffusionism, but also more fashionable reductionist explanations based on cognitive theory or social/environmental constructivism (both of which, incidentally, also rely

on some sort of universalism), as well as theoretically eclectic approaches.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, the purpose of looking at similarities need not always be to explain why they exist, as Freidenreich has amply demonstrated.<sup>29</sup> Sharma's<sup>30</sup> 'reciprocal illumination' model, Doniger's recontextualization (despite her main interest being difference)<sup>31</sup> among others have demonstrated alternative ways in which considering similarities in comparative studies can be fruitful.

In conclusion, the concepts of 'similarity' and 'difference' are methodological problems and not inherently theoretical ones (in the sense that they are not, by definition, dependent on an association with any particular theory). The use to which one puts these categories, and whether one's research question concerns historical connection, universalism, recontextualization or whatever, is a matter of individual scholarly orientation. It is possible to explore any and all of these areas responsibly, as long as it is done with a sound and explicit theory and methodology which acknowledges the most important lesson learned from the postmodern critique of comparison: the importance of an awareness of context, both of our data and of ourselves.

While many criticisms of particular cross-cultural comparisons and their methodologies are valid, the critical reaction has sometimes been over-corrective and unproductive. I would argue that the neglect and scorn of similarities because of political orientation or theoretical bias – this *crainte des similitudes* – is bad scholarship and bad science. Similarities and differences must both be taken into account, for examining half the data can only result in the formulation of half a theory. Of course, the extent to which we engage with one or the other depends upon the questions being asked.

<sup>1</sup> The ideas and arguments in this article were developed for my book *Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations: Universalism, Constructivism, and Near-Death Experience* (Continuum, Advances in Religious Studies, London & New York, 2009), where they are explored further and put to practical use.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary, see Patton, K.C. & B.C. Ray, "Introduction" in K.C. Patton & B.C. Ray (eds.) *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Post-modern Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. P. 1-19.

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<sup>4</sup> Segal, R.A. (2001). "In defense of the comparative method." *Numen*, No. 48, p. 348

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<sup>6</sup> Segal, "In defense of the comparative method." P. 339.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. P. 349.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. P. 373.

<sup>9</sup> Kobber, A.J.F., "Comparativists and non-comparativists in anthropology" in: R. Narroll & R. Cohen (eds.), *A Handbook of Methodology in Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973. P. 190.

<sup>10</sup> Patton and Ray (2000), op. cit., P. 2.

<sup>11</sup> This idea will be explored further in a paper entitled, 'A world theology or western imperialist construction?: syncretism, universalism and cross-cultural emic perceptions of etic "sacreds"' (in progress).

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## Biography

Dr. Gregory Shushan is author of *Afterlife in Early Civilizations: Universalism, Constructivism, and Near-Death Experience* (Continuum Advances in Religious Studies, 2009). He has been Visiting Lecturer in Religious Studies at University of Wales Lampeter, Lecturer in the Study of Religions at University College Cork, guest lecturer in Anthropology of Religions at Swiss University, and Research Fellow at the Centro Incontri Umani (The Cross Cultural Centre) at Ascona, Switzerland. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, University of Oxford, researching comparative afterlife beliefs in indigenous religions worldwide in the context of shamanic and near-death experiences. The project is supported by a grant from the Perrot-Warrick Fund, Trinity College, Cambridge.

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## The Kardecian Spiritualist Movement in Argentina

Juan Corbetta & Fabiana Savall



### Spiritualism in the “Rio de la Plata”

The first history of spiritualism in Argentina was written by Cosme Mariño, an Argentinean politician and journalist who was the founder, together with José C. Paz of *La Prensa* (The Press) magazine, and an active participant in the political and social activity in Buenos Aires city at the end of the Nineteenth century. He was also the President of Constancia, one of the first spiritualist associations in Buenos Aires, for nearly 20 years (Mariño 1963).

Mariño in his book *El Espiritismo en la Argentina* (*Spiritualism in Argentina*) stated that the origin of the Kardecian movement in Argentina was 1896. César Bogo, spiritualist journalist of the Twentieth century and president of the Confederación Espiritista Argentina (CEA) (Argentinean Spiritualist Federation) moved the date back to 1857, but he never mentioned documents to confirm this information (Bogo 1980). Recent research on this topic revealed an article in *La Fraternidad* (*The Fraternity*), a magazine for the association of the same name, where Antonio Ugarte, one of the founders of this group, and its President at the time, wrote a brief history of the movement in 1884 (Ugarte 1884:44-47). He then published a letter he received from Montevideo, Uruguay in *La Fraternidad* magazine. This letter was signed by Justo José de Espada and offered firsthand information to correct and complete Ugarte's report (de Espada 1884:63-64).

Mr. Espada, who was a Spanish merchant, brought Spiritualism to Buenos Aires, Argentina in October 1857, only six months after the publication of *The Spirits Book* by Allan Kardec. He founded the first group, and also the first association, with Carlos Guerrero, Antonio Gómez, Henri de Llano and Francisco Casares. The barber Torcuato Zubiría was the medium. Their

meeting place was the second floor of the Botica de Arizabalo, a pharmacy at the corner of Corrientes Avenue and Carlos Pellegrini Street, opposite San Nicholas Church.

In spite of convincing séance phenomena (raps, table levitations, spiritual messages), the group broke up. Justo de Espada, de Llano and Casares started a new group in Casares's house, and invited respectable and educated people, such as the medical doctor Camilo Clausolles, the engineers Lasange and Hernández, the professor of languages Ángel Scarnicchia and others. The mediums were Julian Garcarena and the engineering student Carlos Santos. The differences they had in connection with the interpretation of the doctrine produced further divisions. Espada founded another group exclusively dedicated to the theoretical study of Allan Kardec's books, but this group quickly disappeared (Theoretical branch). Clausolles and Lasange met the physical medium Estela Guerinneau and started an experimental group (Experimental branch). Finally Scarnicchia, Hernández, Santos and Garcarena represented the third branch (Theoretical-Experimental) which included the two previous points of view. This group was the seed of Constancia association, founded in February 1877.

### The 80s Generation and Their Debates

In the Nineteenth century, the spirit of positivism allowed the reorganization of social life based on scientific knowledge and governments which promoted the opening of frontiers to men, ideas and products. Positivism promoted the continuous advance of science and technology and an optimistic vision of life and the future, with the conviction that this uninterrupted development would produce a world without wars populated by happy working citizens.

Positivism in science was represented in Argentina by the “80s Generation,” a group of intellectuals, politicians and thinkers who governed the country and founded the principal public institutions. They adopted a strong anticlerical and secular position. Spiritualism coincided with these principles, and thrived inside this cultural movement in Buenos Aires city. In the rest of the Argentinean provinces, the growth was less important.

The Kardecian doctrine was born in the spirit of positivism. Spiritualism attempted to give rationality to certain experiences considered “supernatural.” Their innovative project was the impulse to search for experimental answers to the death problem. Furthermore, their secular conception based on the acceptance of God, the idea of the soul’s eternity and the rejection of any cult or religious organization, fitted perfectly into the secularization process.

Spiritualism generated debates, controversies and fights with science, major religions and with the government. Many representatives of the 80s Generation adopted positions in favour of this movement, including Cosme Mariño, Rafael Hernandez, Felipe Senillosa and Pedro Serié; against it as in the case of Miguel Puiggari or Pedro Goyena; or were indifferent to it as with the President Julio A. Roca, Vice President Nicolás Avellaneda and the philosopher José Ingenieros.

Some spiritualists were called “embarrassing spiritualists,” because they professed it only in private as their sympathy for the doctrine could have been detrimental to their public posts, position or social status. Examples of this type were, according to Mariño, Drs. Isaac, Jacobo and Nicánor Larrain, and the senator and diplomat Miguel Cané.

Mr. Cané’s connection with the Kardecian movement was documented by Felipe Senillosa in one of his books. By recommendation of Carlos Encina, Senillosa accepted to participate in a “materialization séance” of the medium Camilo Brédif. The condition was to put the medium in a bag sealed by Senillosa himself, inside a cabinet. Senillosa believed that under such conditions, no tricks could possibly take place. When

Senillosa and Cané went to the next room to drink tea, the form of a young Indian came out from the cabinet where Brédif was secured and approached Mr. Cané asking for a cup of tea. He answered the spirit and gave her the cup at once (Senillosa 1894:91-92). Although Cané himself confirmed at the end of the séance that Mr. Brédif was inside the bag with the seal untouched, he called the medium “a magician,” when he published this experience in *El Nacional* (*The National*), an important newspaper of Buenos Aires.

### The “Great Mediums” Period

The arrival of the French medium Camilo Brédif in Buenos Aires could be considered a decisive event in the history of Argentinian Spiritism. Thanks to his materialization séances Buenos Aires society came to know the new doctrine and its extraordinary phenomena. Brédif, who was a photographer born in 1846, had excellent mediumistic conditions and he was one of the twelve founders of Constancia association.

His activities in the séances were recognized as a determining factor of spiritualist growth in the country, as indicated in a chronicle of the time: “Not long ago no one dared to say in a loud voice and in front of other people: I am a spiritualist (...). The arrival of a physical effects and materialization medium such as Mr. Camilo Brédif, has been enough to spread at ray velocity the good news around Buenos Aires” (H. 1877:45). Nobody wanted to miss his séances, from ordinary people to the ruling classes. After a table deed one of them exclaimed: “These séances are better than political meetings!” (O. 1877:78), and immediately after that he proposed a toast among everyone present, which revealed the festive nature of his participation.

There are different opinions about actual date of Brédif’s arrival, but he most probably arrived in 1875, and immediately started to organize séances in Buenos Aires and other Argentinean provinces. In May 1876, he offered séances in Progreso y Caridad (Progress and Charity) society in Montevideo, Uruguay, where the attendees verified “raps,” table levitations,

movements of objects and sensations of physical contact with the spirits. A chronicler narrates that after the medium was put in a bag inside a dark room, tied and immobilized, two hands appeared from the curtains and were touched by the people present. Next a “head” was revealed, but the form was difficult to distinguish, except by those who were near the curtains (Constancia 1878:110). In September 1876 Brédif returned to Buenos Aires and incorporated a new phenomenon called “direct writing,” which was produced by another physical effect medium called Estela Guerineau. “Direct writing” consisted in putting a pencil locked between two little blackboards like the ones used by children at school. When the boards were unlocked, answers or messages in relation to questions thought by the people present allegedly appeared on them.

Brédif’s influence was decisive in the foundation of the Constancia association, but he was expelled for misconduct. He reentered the society in May 1884 and obtained the category of active member, but he was expelled again (Members Registry Book of Constancia Association 1877:3). After that event, his name and all references to him disappeared from all magazines and documents. We still do not know what happened with this extraordinary medium. What can be called the “prehistory of Argentinian Spiritualism” started with Justo de Espada and finished with Camilo Brédif.

The first well known “Argentinian” physical effects medium was, as mentioned above, Estela Guerineau. She was born in Tucumán province and came to Buenos Aires in her youth. She was an active participant in the first spiritualist groups, previous to the foundation of Constancia. She married Modesto Rodríguez Freire who was the editor of an important Spanish magazine in Buenos Aires called *El Correo Español* (*The Spanish Mail*) in 1880. They organized séances at home, to which politicians, military men and curious people were invited. Guerineau Spirit Guide was the Ing. Lasange’s spirit, the same person who participated in the organization of the first groups.

The phenomena around Guerineau were similar to Brédif’s. During a séance, with the

participation of the politician Aristóbulo Del Valle, the General Bosch, Dr. Roberto Cano, Mr. Pedro Paso and the prestigious lawyer José María Rosa (minister in Roca’s administration), where all the participants were sitting around a 99lb. table, with good lighting and the medium’s feet and hands under control, two complete table levitations were observed. In the second levitation, Dr. Paso was actually sitting in a chair on the table. In another version of the same séance a description of “direct writing” phenomena was included: “Mr. Rodríguez invited Dr. Del Valle and me to hold in our hands a little blackboard with a pencil on it. We did so and when we hid the blackboard from direct light, the pencil placed itself in vertical position, as if handled by an invisible hand and wrote a warm message (a thought) to Del Valle. The message was signed by a dead person I was related to: the signature was similar to the one he used in life” (Lob Nor 1915:11). At the end, Del Valle asked Guerineau to repeat the phenomenon, requiring the apparition of a word that he was thinking of. One word appeared on the blackboard: Vercingetoris, the proper name that Del Valle had in mind.

Ms. Guerineau was the first local physical effects medium comparable to the famous Italian medium Eusapia Paladino. She initiated, together with Clausolles and Lassange, the branch of scientific spiritualism, a line of thought that was displaced from the institutions in the following years.

Another exceptional medium, but of “psychic effects,” was Antonio Castilla. He was born in Buenos Aires on November 5th 1859. When his father died, Antonio dropped out of school and went to work as a farmhand. He participated in the first family séances of La Fraternidad (The Fraternity) association. In February 1879 he became ill and as physicians could not cure him, his friend José Rodríguez who was a member of Constancia, asked the healer medium Juana de Navajas for a prescription. Antonio was cured with the medicine prepared and he joined Constancia on May 30th 1879 with the member number 82 (Members Registry Book of Constancia Association 1877:82).



Cosme Mariño thought Mr. Castilla was undoubtedly the best medium he had ever known. In his memoirs, Mariño wrote: "When I joined 'Constancia' in 1879, Castilla was a well-developed medium and thanks to his mediumship the Spiritual Guide of the Society called Hilario gave remarkable discourses that we couldn't conserve because we didn't have stenographers available" (Mariño 1963:34). Two years later, the same spirit, Hilario, prepared Castilla's brain to incorporate the so called "magnetism spirit," an entity who had studied all sciences through different reincarnations. Castilla could hardly read or write, so when the magnetism spirit communicated a message through him there was a very clear difference between medium and spirit.

Mr. Castilla's séances were conducted on Wednesday evenings, the day when sessions were open to visitors at Constancia. The people who were interested in these séances had to collect an invitation card in advance at the association and would often have to wait many weeks because the demand was very high. Well-known people of Buenos Aires were frequently invited as well. Mr. Ovidio Rebaudi, a chemist and famous member of Constancia, recounted an example of these meetings: "A lady dressed in black stood up in a spasmodic way, bending back and exploiting in a kind of violent sneeze, but once on her feet, quiet and with closed eyes, she gave us a severe and persistent look [...] Immediately, the lady in an apparently somnambulist state and still with closed eyes, went towards the medium Castilla [a cigar vendor of low education] as if she could see him and magnetized him by making some passes over the medium's head" (Mariño 1963:121). Castilla inhaled deeply, stood up and let the Séance Director know that he was ready and at his disposal to answer all the questions.

After a short silence, one of the lawyers present proposed a legal topic: the limits of the citizen's responsibility in face of the law. Rebaudi remembers that "The modest cigar vendor became a speaker with a straight up posture who looked impressive and had measured manners and a good low tone of voice" (Mariño 1963:122). Mr. Rebaudi assures that the medium

spoke for an hour and fifteen minutes, with a perfect oratory that he had never heard before in Europe or America. At the end the medium, who was breathless and with a sweaty face, asked the people present if there were any other observations or questions. The lawyer who proposed the topic said: "Despite the originality of the doctrines exposed, I couldn't make any objection; I am completely convinced. Your beautiful speech has surprised me and I am leaving this place deeply impressed" (Mariño 1963:122).

In another séance, Dr. Domingo Demaría, a confessed materialist, proposed a debate on the validity of this philosophic school, expounding the arguments of its main representatives. The "magnetism spirit" refuted with all kinds of arguments: "He emphasized that the positivists themselves had demoralized Comte and his school, but in relation to the intention of founding a materialistic base for the physical and natural sciences, he had no criticism" (Mariño 1963:81). Finally the chronicler remarked that Dr. Demaría was completely defeated after three hours of discussion.

Mr. Castilla was similarly unaware of religious topics. Dr. Juan Francisco Thompson, Reverend of the Methodist Evangelic Church of Buenos Aires, proposed a discussion about biblical matters such as the existence of evil and hell and the divinity of Christ, with the double intention of destroying the medium and convincing people of the superiority of the Protestant Church. Mariño remembers "Thompson had an interesting and dynamic discussion with Castilla for a long time, but at 12 P.M., three hours after the debate started, both of them had the hands full of truths as Thompson said, to continue the fight. The meeting was adjourned with the promise to continue with the discussion in another opportunity" (Mariño 1963:109).

Mr. Castilla's mediumship continued intermittently for two decades. At the end of 1888 Constancia magazine published a list of more than one hundred guests at Castilla's Wednesday séances with evident pride and included the topics developed by the magnetism spirit during the year. The topics included ranged from the origin of intelligence and human language to the

goodness of civil marriage or the relation between magnetism and hypnotism, going through the existence of true liberty, the debate about complicated academic topics or personal opinions such as: “Is the fire in the center of the Earth due to the caloric accumulation since the planet formation or is it the result of complex chemical actions?” (Constancia 1888:479).

However, the following year in the “mediumistic works” section of the magazine *Constancia*, complications in the manifestation of the magnetism spirit were emphasized. The explanation provided was: “This has happened due to the illness of the medium Antonio Castilla who takes part in the phenomena production” (Constancia 1889:62-63). In the November 25th 1900 issue of *Constancia* magazine, the medium’s death was announced. He was only 41.

### **Spiritualism from the Twentieth Century to Today**

The growth of spiritualism in Argentina, as in other countries around the world, was mobilized by the existence of the great mediums. When these important figures and the pioneers started to die, the expansion stopped. The mediumistic phenomena were important at the beginning of the movement, and their function was to try to prove the existence of the spiritual world. The feats of the great mediums served to attract people to the Kardecian movement. With the passing of time, the focus of attraction changed from the phenomena to the philosophical and moral concepts and contents. Simultaneously, as a cause or consequence of these changes, the great mediums disappeared, which made the verification of the phenomena difficult. Nevertheless, the spiritualists both inside and outside societies continued reporting spiritualist phenomena. The healing phenomena disappeared from many séances, but the practice continues to this day in some associations and in domestic spaces.

Spiritualism itself recognized a stagnation phase between 1910 and 1940 in Argentina, with some periods of growth in the post war years. The new vanguard obtained the official recognition from the government either as NGOs or at

the Worship National Registry. Since 1960-70 spiritualism went through a “golden period” with the presence of a big group of intellectuals, publications and conferences. The “Military Process” (1976-1983) closed this “golden age,” but the number of members and spiritualist associations in Argentina had already been decreasing significantly. Many associations were closed and others continued with a few members, or without mediumistic séances because of the lack of mediums.

Between 2007 and 2010 the Instituto de Psicología Paranormal (Paranormal Psychology Institute of Buenos Aires) and the Museo Roca – Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas (Roca Museum – Historical Research Institute) started a research project called “El espiritismo en la voz de los espiritistas” (Spiritualism in the voice of Spiritualists). This work helped to extend and disseminate knowledge about the Kardecian movement in Argentina.

At present, in Buenos Aires City, two of the world’s oldest spiritist associations are still active: *Constancia* (1877) and *La Fraternidad* (1880). In Argentina, there are another five associations founded in the Nineteenth century which also continue working. Although Kardecian spiritualism was important and relevant in the past, nowadays it has become a small movement comprising between 60 and 80 associations with 20-40 members each. The majority of Argentinean spiritualists underline the presence of the Kardecian doctrine in the mass media, films, etc. At the same time, they agree on the lack of an appropriate ruling class (Gimeno, Corbetta y Savall 2010:27).

A recurrent problem has been the unity of the movement, sought through time but never reached. Since the very beginnings of spiritualism in Argentina, there were three orientations in relation with the spiritualist phenomena: the Kardecian philosophy and moral system known as practical spiritualism, theoretical-practical spiritualism and theoretical spiritualism. These differences continue to be evident to the present day.

While some spiritualists ask themselves about the causes of the Kardecian movement’s decline,

in Santa Fe Province we can find the exception: Espiritismo Verdadero in Rafaela City. The association founded in 1928, has been growing for the last 30 years non-stop. There are 1000 spiritualist people in the city, and 500 are members of this association. All these members participate in different activities such as: youth groups, research groups, mediumistic séances, study séances, and in charity activities through their own Foundation. They also support a spiritualist school on Sundays. It is difficult to determine the reason why “Espiritismo Verdadero” has had a different history. Probably because they maintain the transmission of the doctrine inside the families and their ties of kinship have turned the spiritualist community in Rafaela into a “clan.” Another particularity that distinguishes Espiritismo Verdadero from other associations is their non-religious adherence in relation to the doctrine. Also, the society promotes a democracy and the impossibility of re-election of authorities, which brings about the constant renovation of leaders.

The spiritualist of Rafaela assures that they don't practice any active proselytism despite the fact that they are recognized and respected by the non spiritualist community. Maybe the key to understand the present state of the Kardecian Spiritualist Movement in Argentina is hidden in this small city.

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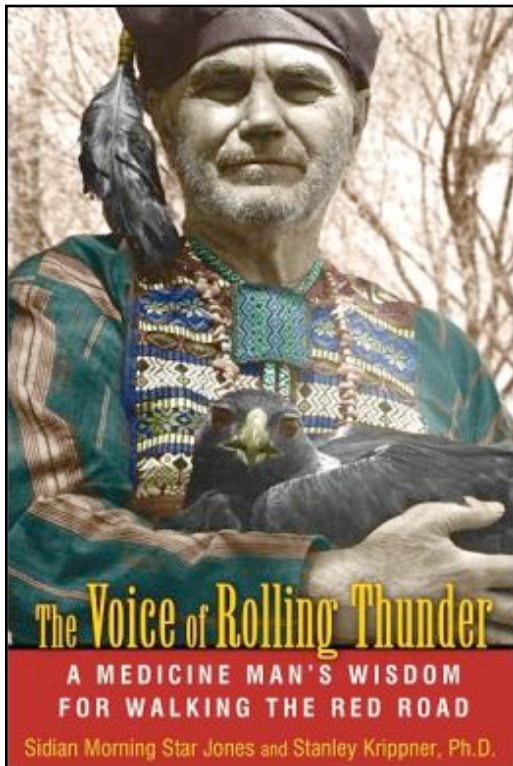
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## The Voice of Rolling Thunder: A Medicine Man's Wisdom for Walking the Red Road

Reviewed by Mark A. Schroll



**Title:** The Voice of Rolling Thunder:  
A Medicine Man's Wisdom for Walking the Road  
**Authors:** Sidian Morning Star Jones &  
Stanley Krippner  
**ISBN:** 9781591431336  
**Publisher:** Bear & Company/Inner Traditions  
**Price:** \$20.00/£16.99

What constitutes healing? Is it as simple as the patient's belief in the abilities of the healer; and as a consequence of this belief is the patient's immune system and/or our powers of self-healing activated? If this is in fact what healing is all about then shamanism is such a belief system and a pathway to healing. Provided this assessment holds true, at the very least shamans and medicine men (such as Rolling Thunder) are skilled in diagnosing the psychological needs of their patients to initiate a process of healing; leaving us with the question, are psi abilities involved in this healing? (See Walsh, 2007, pp. 223-234). This is one of the many unanswered questions about shamanism, and in particular

Rolling Thunder's legendary accomplishments. Those interested in learning more will find several accounts of anomalous healing, psychic ability, and other unusual aspects of Rolling Thunder's life in Sidian Morning Star Jones and Stanley Krippner's book, *The Voice of Rolling Thunder*.

### The Mist Wolf: An Account by Stephan A. Schwartz

In chapter 3 Schwartz recalls a healing ceremony he witnessed at the Association for Research and Enlightenment (ARE) that Rolling Thunder conducted to treat a young boy. During Rolling Thunder's ceremony Schwartz observed "a white, mist-like form" that coalesced into the figure of a wolf, and remained for 30 minutes until it finally dissipated (p. 45). Moments later Schwartz and other observers inspected the wound of the boy and found it was completely healed. After a short break Rolling Thunder began a second healing session for another boy; the mist appeared again, yet never fully formed into an image. After four attempts, Rolling Thunder announced that he was unable to heal the second boy.

Commenting on Schwartz's account, Krippner suggests Rolling Thunder's (RT's) "ritual may have provided the stimulus for the boy's self-healing mechanisms to kick in, releasing the bodily chemicals that are part of the immune system" (p. 49). Nevertheless this does not explain the "mist wolf" figure Schwartz witnessed, which remains an unsolved anomaly. Several other accounts of Rolling Thunder's healing abilities are described in this chapter, as well as throughout this book. In addition to providing us with accounts of RT's healing abilities, the book includes valuable diagnostic concepts woven throughout Krippner's commentaries to assist us in the assessment of anomalous phenomena. Many readers will enjoy reading about Rolling Thunder's entertaining magical mystery tour (in-

cluding his association with former Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart), whereas anthropologists who read this book will learn useful ethnographic skills applicable to future studies.

### **Environmental Awareness and Activism**

Those of us interested in practical applications of shamanism will find solidarity with Rolling Thunder's discussion of electronic pollution (p. 17), as well as his passionate message calling for humankind's responsibility to the Earth (p. 80). Emphasizing this concern Krippner recalls a 1972 lecture at the University of New Mexico he gave with Alan Watts and RT. During this lecture RT reflected on the importance of humankind's awareness of our co-evolution with nature, which received nodding approval from Watts (p. 80). (See Watts, 1970, 1972). In chapter 6 Krippner elaborates on this co-evolutionary perspective, telling us: "There are spirits in a landscape, and this 'spirit of place' is felt to be so strong that it enters not only the current inhabitants of a location but future occupants as well" (p. 84). (See also the work on sacred places in nature by James Swan, 1988, 1990, 2010).

### **Social Activism**

Throughout chapter 11 those with an interest in social activism will learn of RT's involvement in social justice, particularly as it relates to Native Americans and indigenous cultures worldwide. RT sought to cultivate a nurturing community in Carlin, Nevada (which is the focus of chapter 15), that he named "Meta Tantay," where he sought to heal the variety of cultural wounds associated with modern civilization. Both Meta Tantay and Rolling Thunder were an inspiration to Tom Laughlin, who produced and also starred in the films from the 1970s, *Billy Jack*, *The Trial of Billy Jack*, and *Billy Jack Goes to Washington*. In a scene in *The Trial of Billy Jack* that loosely reflects a shamanic vision quest, it is Rolling Thunder (as a stunt stand-in for Laughlin) who is actually bitten by rattlesnakes. In fact, reflecting on this and other instances, RT "claimed to have

gained the power of the diamondback rattlesnake in this process" (p. 305).

### **Emerging From the Shadow of Carlos Castaneda**

Finally nearly every time shamanism and indigenous healers are mentioned—just like the proverbial bad penny or object of scorn that keeps showing up—someone recalls for us the dubious legacy of Carlos Castaneda. This mention of Castaneda occurs (for better or worse) in several chapters throughout *The Voice of Rolling Thunder*. Carolyn Fireside tells us in her Foreword that: "Because the Castaneda books were of dubious authenticity, there was a need on the part of many spiritual seekers to encounter an actual native shaman in fact-to-face settings. Rolling Thunder met this need, especially in Europe, where Native Americans were considered to be more 'exotic' than they were in the United States" (p. xiii). The bizarre twist of fate is without the popularity of Castaneda we might not be learning about Rolling Thunder (see also Nevill Drury on this point, 1989, p. 89). In an article, "Castaneda's Controversy and Methodological Influences" Schroll pointed out:

[Stanley] Krippner believes [Douglass] Price-Williams' research provides clear evidence that Castaneda consistently and significantly 'borrowed ideas' from Douglas without ever asking and without acknowledging their source. But, in a strange ironic twist, if Krippner's suspicions prove to be true, then Price-Williams should be proud Castaneda chose to exploit him. Because the counterculture in 1968 was ripe for Castaneda's tales of a seemingly uptight middle-class Latino whose encounters with an old Mexican Indian unveiled a non-ordinary reality, a numinous state of consciousness, and corresponding way of life that provided a serious challenge to rational secular science. (Schroll, 2010, p. 4)

Moreover, it is an equally important point to make:

I think Price-Williams will understand where this statement is coming from, it was more believable to a rebel generation for Castaneda to tell these tales than to hear the message from a white establishment anthropologist. Considering the importance of raising both public and scientific awareness of shamanism, if Castaneda had not bestowed this discussion with his charisma, colleagues such as Michael Harner (1980, 1993) might have had to invent him. The double irony is it was a white establishment anthropologist who had some unique insights into the clash (that has been increasingly acknowledged) between the worldview of indigenous people and our scientific view of the world (p. 4). (See also Schroll & Greenwood, 2011).

Add to this the enduring confusion regarding shamanism and sorcery mentioned in Schroll 2010, and investigated in greater detail by Beyer 2009, and in Webb, Beyer & Krippner 2013. Likewise I hold the view that our scientific definition of reality is an obstacle to our reclaiming the mind of our prehistoric and pre-industrial ancestors; this assertion is worth further inquiry (Schroll, 2013).

In conclusion, there is always more that can be learned about shamanism in general and of the life of Rolling Thunder in particular. In that regard, I highly recommend *The Voice of Rolling Thunder* to those seeking to further the inquiry and understanding of the difficult path associated with the acquisition of such knowledge.

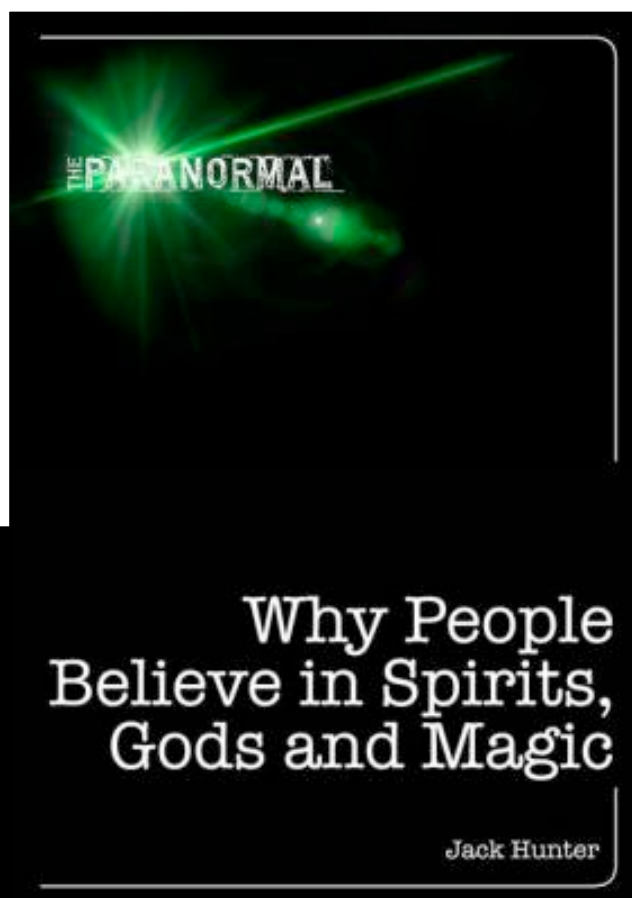
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### Biography

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### *Why People Believe in Spirits, Gods and Magic:*

An Introduction to the Anthropology of the Supernatural

E-Book available for Kindle, Nook, Kobo and other e-readers. For more information visit:

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This e-book attempts to explore the question of why and how people come to believe in spirits, gods and magic from a social anthropological perspective. Covering topics such as Shamanism & Spirit Possession, Witchcraft & Magic, Ghosts, Spirits, Gods & Demons, Ethnography & the Paranormal and Anthropology & Parapsychology, this ebook provides an overview of supernatural traditions and practices around the world. The author also explores anthropological interpretations of supernatural and spiritual experiences, including the paranormal experiences of anthropologists themselves, while engaged in fieldwork.

"Jack Hunter presents a thorough and well-integrated overview of social and behavioral scientific theories of the supernatural, and illuminates the significance of methodologies for studying such phenomena. Legitimizing the "possibilian" study of the "paranormal" continues the anthropological project of escaping from the ethnocentrism of discounting nondominant views and experiences."

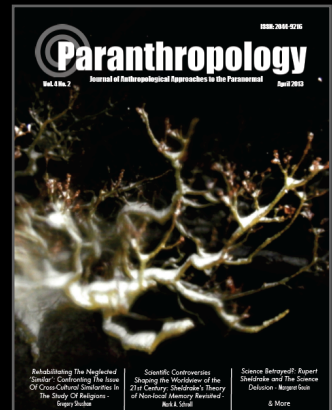
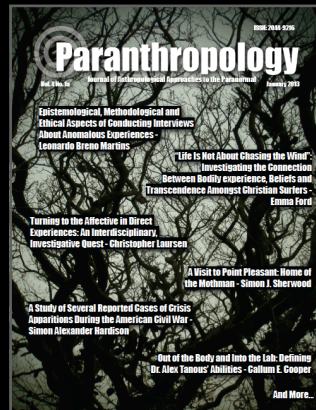
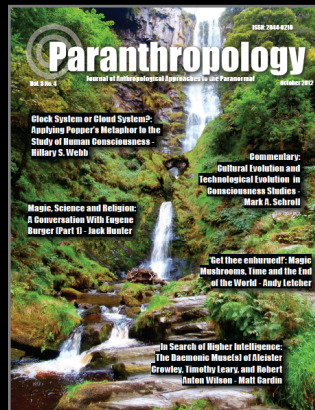
- Prof. Charles F. Emmons (Author of *Chinese Ghosts and ESP*, *Guided by Spirit*, and *Science and Spirit*)

"In clear, concise language Jack Hunter introduces the reader to some of the key theories, personalities and concepts in the anthropology of religion, particularly as they relate to notions of the supernatural. As Hunter points out, the term 'supernatural' is rather problematic, being based on Western presuppositions that there is a distinction between a natural and a supernatural order (often explicitly or implicitly regarded respectively as real and unreal), that is not shared by most peoples in most historical periods. Familiar topics such as witchcraft, shamanism and spirit possession are succinctly presented with the aid of historical and cross-cultural examples. The chief innovation of this Introduction, however, is the inclusion of a chapter on 'Ethnography and the Paranormal,' a subject Hunter is particularly well qualified to write about as founder and editor of the groundbreaking journal *Paranthropology*, and a co-founder of the Afterlife Research Centre."

- Dr. Fiona Bowie (Author of *The Anthropology of Religion*)



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