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Celebrating
a Centennial



| Mindfield

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From the Mindfield Team

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The centennial of the Institut Métapsychique International (IMI) is an event to celebrate. This institutional persistence is not a guarantee of prosperity or stability; it is primarily the victory of a struggle led by passionate people. It is also the outcome of the desire to keep alive a unique historical tradition of psi research.

This issue of *Mindfield* turns

to France, the country of Descartes, and the particular contexts it offers. Parapsychology - or *metapsychics* according to Nobel laureate Charles Richet's term - has experienced cycles of enthusiasm and marginalization. The articles presented here trace several moments of this story, shared between the past glory of the Roaring Twenties and the current activities of IMI.

Coincidentally, the annual convention of the Parapsychological Association is back in France for the third time in the 21st century, where the situation seems to evolve very slowly. A new generation is working to include parapsychology in their official research

agenda. For this generation, it is important to extend the studies of their predecessors while anticipating the obstacles they may encounter. Such a generation is born with the reading of Bertrand Meheust's masterly work *Somnambulisme et médiumnité* (1999) which reestablished the clandestine history of animal magnetism, hypnosis, psychical research with contemporary thinkers. This issue of *Mindfield* contributes to this direction, hoping to celebrate one day the bicentennial of IMI or other sister societies.

The Differences of Temperament Between English and French Researchers in the 1920s

The purpose of this article is to expose the differences of temperament between English and French researchers in the 1920s. For this purpose, I will use primary sources such as letters and speeches obtained from the archives of The Institut Métapsychique International (IMI) and official journals. These differences were evident after World War I (Evrard, 2016), during Rocco Santoliquido's exchange of letters prior to the foundation of the Institute and during the experiments with Eva Carriere (pseudonym of Marthe Béraud, 1886-1969) in the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and Bisson's letters.

The Backstage of the Foundation of the Institut Métapsychique International

At the end of World War I, Santoliquido, a public health official, sent a letter to Arnaud de Gramont, physicist and member of the French Academy of Sciences, to found the Institut *Métapsychique* International. Gramont's response was approval, only recommending the consultation of the great physiologist Charles Richet (Santoliquido, 1918a).

Santoliquido wrote to the industrialist Jean Meyer, a committed spirit, and the answer was that it would be impossible to create such an institution in Paris amid official hostility. Meyer said he



| by ANTONIO LEON

would be ready to do whatever it took, but Santoliquido should do what Gramont asked, that is, go to Richet's house in Paris. Santoliquido then went to Richet's house; however, it became clear in the conversation that he had an opposite point of view in regard to the creation of such an insi-

tute. Richet understood that the government would never admit such a thing. To put an end to the conversation, Richet asked Santoliquido to write a proposal anyway, so he could reflect upon it. Santoliquido then sent a letter directly to Richet, dated October 3, 1918 (Santoliquido, 1918a).

In the letter, Santoliquido expresses his conviction that it is the right moment to realize the great project so long dreamed of by the metapsychics (Lachapelle, 2005), that is, to found an international organization that will centralize everything related to psychical studies and will allow to address all related questions (Santoliquido, 1918a).

Santoliquido, persuasively, proposes the creation of an international organization while considering the difficulties of the task, and its importance, because it is such a vast undertaking. He states that the institution he has in mind would not have the purpose of replacing or rivaling national or local organizations. On the contrary, it would constitute a kind of federation, allowing the best yield of individual efforts and ensuring the joining of all good wishes (Santoliquido, 1918a).

Santoliquido also explained that there was a precursor in Paris to such an institute; that foundation, in his eyes, seemed destined to form the nucleus of the future Institut Métapsychique Internation-

al (Santoliquido, 1918a), was the laboratory of Gustave Geley, the one that was overseeing diverse experiences with Béraud (from December 10, 1917 to March 11, 1918) (Geley, 1924, p.196; and see below).

Santoliquido's final words in the letter presented an idealistic goal of the institute, a goal aimed at encouraging a thinking humanity for a new and superior phase in which peace prevails. This was implicitly an idealistic goal. These men had just gone through a world war, and many lost close relatives. There was a great thirst for peace in each one. But it wasn't only about peace; these men understood that by removing the veil of metapsychic phenomena, mankind could mature and evolve and enter a new, more evolved phase.

Richet, after reading the letter, expressed appreciation and asked permission to send the letter to the physicist Oliver Lodge in London for advice and guidance. Santoliquido authorized, therefore Lodge, after a few days, sent his reply (which was very similar to Richet's opinion), giving his contrary opinion. In his response, Lodge states that there was no doubt about the importance of research and work, and that both France and England would continue on the path of peace. However, he questioned whether it was time to undertake allied and interna-

On the English island, the various automatisms and mental activities were considered; the English were interested in those processes and the question of survival after physical death.

tional action. In his first argument, Lodge said that the genius of each nation had particular characteristics. The continent, that is the rest of Europe including France, saw the subject treated medically and psychophysically. On the English island, the various automatisms and mental activities were considered; the English were interested in those processes and the question of survival after physical death. Lodge claimed that the question of survival of the physical body was little explored by Latin people, arguing that they study these facts in such a manner that they didn't reach any conclusion, either in one way or another. For Lodge, French scientists cared little about problems of this nature. He also mentioned that not a single publisher allowed him to publish a French edition

of his book *Raymond or Life and Death*, a book named after his son who died in the war. After having abbreviated the original translation, Lodge submitted it to several publishers, one after another, for several months (Lodge, 1918).

It is evident through the words of Lodge, in his first argument, that there were two schools of metapsychic studies—the French school, aligned with objective metapsychics and material phenomena such as ectoplasm, and the English school, aligned with the metapsychic subjective, intellectual phenomena, and questions of life after death.

Lodge cited the antipathy that science, the Church, and the law have over metapsychic researches, maybe even paralyzing them. He concluded the best work would be individual and silent without attracting hostile attention and without having an aggressive stance [...]

In view of the above issues, Lodge was inclined to question the possibility of a combined action, understanding that it would be better for each country to continue its research in isolation. However, he emphasized with urgency the need to create a central organization, especially for finances (Lodge, 1918).

In his second argument, Lodge cited the antipathy that science, the Church, and the law have over metapsychic researches, maybe even paralyzing them. He concluded the best work would be individual and silent without attracting hostile attention and without having an aggressive stance (Lodge, 1918).

In his third argument, concerning the ideological content of Santoliquido in the sense of a transformation in humanity, Lodge stated that he did not know to what extent he wanted to hurry the intellectual movement that would transform the mentality of some individuals. Lodge believed in preaching patience and perseverance, instead of bursts of a strong and exuberant energy. Lodge thought the opportunity would come when a younger group had more freedom, could take in the issues with more ease, and that a consequence of their work had been to reduce opposition and gradually arouse public interest in the subject matter. The trials caused by the war facilitated an

opening of hearts to metapsychic facts, but he did not consider it an ideal condition for the lessons to happen in the public arena; he did not want to try to convince people against their will. Lodge understood that all progress was slow, but overall, slowness was beneficial. (Lodge, 1918).

In his fourth argument, he affirmed that there was no international institution that was carrying out important scientific work, except for the catalog and popularization of technical literature. Lodge knew that great societies had relations of friendship, or at least had before the war, but each was a national society; each carried out activities to the best of their abilities, but those activities had limitations (Lodge, 1918).

Finally, Lodge speculated that there would be a league of nations, and that there could be an alloy of scientific societies and universities in some way. But national units had to first exist and thrive and then be combined into international organizations (Lodge, 1918).

Santoliquido replied to Lodge's letter and sent his reply to Richet dated November 8, 1918 (Santoliquido, 1918b). Initially, Santoliquido presents two excerpts from Lodge's charter on which, in his opinion, one needed to meditate. The first passage is that in which Lodge exposes that the necessity of a central organization, especial-

National or local societies would fully maintain their autonomy and their characteristics. The Institute would simply centralize its research and endeavor to draw logical conclusions.

ly for the financial problem, was urgent, arguing that mediums, in order to assure their existence, were forced to work painfully at the expense of their faculties; additionally, they were subjected to police persecution. The second passage became the argument that the occasion will present itself, when a group of youngsters who had more freedom would confront the matter at hand.

Santoliquido questioned Richet about the two arguments, wondering if they would not really be an apology for the project and through those points, highlighted their need and their possibility. He revealed that, in truth, the main result of the central foundation would be to solve the problem of mediums, a primordial need and stone in the way of metapsychism. He argued that selected, educat-

ed and trained mediums could be exempt from the struggle for survival, being able to concentrate exclusively on their mediumship, if they place themselves at the disposal of local institutions or groups of researchers (Santoliquido, 1918b).

Santoliquido also explained that the recent foundation, by a generous patron in the Jean Meyer case of a laboratory of metapsychic studies, proved there was a remarkable increase in the interest in metapsychics among young and ardent scholars like Jean-Charles Roux, Stephen Chauvet, Georges Maingot and Geley, showing that the opportunity was prime for the then-present moment (Santoliquido, 1918b).

Lodge's letter contained objections and difficulties, but Santoliquido contrasted the four arguments with four counter-arguments. Lodge's argument about the differences between English and Latin temperament was not an obstacle to Santoliquido. Each would continue its evolution according to its nature. National or local societies would fully maintain their autonomy and their characteristics. The Institute would simply centralize its research and endeavor to draw logical conclusions. Santoliquido also showed that his proposal was that of a center of result and splendor and that it would fa-

cilitate the particular works and the contacts of the metapsychics around the whole world. It would provide metapsychists the means, the information, the possibility of investigations, and the long-term investigation. He ends by explaining that he would endeavor to carry out the synthesis and development of these studies (Santoliquido, 1918b).

The fear of exciting the opposition of metapsychism seemed exaggerated in the eyes of Santoliquido. He argued that, on one hand, if the indifference of scholars and official circles is very real, then on the other hand the hostility of the police does not exist in Paris (Santoliquido, 1918b).

Oliver Lodge's argument that he did not know of any example of an international society with useful work was countered by Santoliquido when he cited the International Institute of Public Hygiene and the fight against major epidemics (Santoliquido, 1918b).

Realizing that the conversations were taking longer and that precious time was being wasted, Santoliquido went to meet Jean Meyer in Beziers. He stayed three or four days in the city. Meyer's answer after the long conversation was emphatic; he said: "Marchez" (ie., "Let's go!") (Santoliquido, 1929).

Experiments with Eva Carriere at the Society for Psychical Research

Geley (1922) understands that the importance of the London sessions would be the definitive establishment of the bankruptcy of the methodology employed by the SPR for the study of physical mediumship, i.e., objective metapsychics.

It highlights the recognition in the face of the immensity of the service that the SPR provided to subjective, intellectual metapsychics. However, it relativizes the role of the SPR in the study of physical mediumship, as, for example, in research with ectoplasm. He understood that the same method was employed, based mainly on the details of the testimonies, but that as a method it was effective for intellectual mediumship not physical mediumship (Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 104).

The most resonant fault was that of the Cambridge sessions with Eusapia Palladino in 1895. Such a failure, for Geley, could have retarded the development of objective metapsychics in fifty years if it had not been offset by the constant success of sessions with the same medium anywhere else: in Naples, Milan, Warsaw, l'île Roubaud, and Paris (Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 104).

In his view, the SPR's attempt

with Béraud, undertaken in conditions reminiscent of those of Cambridge, naturally led to a non-negative but weak result. Any experiment with later physical mediumship was doomed if it did not radically change its methods (Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 104).

It is also important to show that this impartial study endeavored to establish that the failure of the London experiments was due to the use of this inadequate method, whereas the success of Béraud's previous observers was due in no small part to the fact that they were not bound by the habits of labor considered inviolable (Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 105).

As a second harmful condition, Geley cited a deplorable organization of the sessions that had the most nefarious influence. The sessions took place in a room, improvised for this purpose, at the headquarters of the Society that was a large building where several administrations coexisted. Geley pointed out that the Society's headquarters was basically a noisy building with the noises of the comings and goings of visitors and staff, the hooting of elevators, the telephone ringing, and doors knocking (Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 105).

A third damaging condition for Geley came from the mood of the experimenters. The SPR, in fact, had an understanding physical or objective mediumship that has become traditional in England-

against. The French metapsychics, who spoke to their colleagues in London, could do nothing more than to realize, without understanding, this singular state of mind, so contrary to their own. For the French, ectoplasm was the capital phenomenon of metapsychics. They understood ectoplasm as the resolution of the problems of substance, form, and individual and collective evolution, which was intended to clarify the prodigious mystery of life (Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 105).

There was clearly a difference of formation between the French and British Schools of metapsychics. The French School began the study of metapsychics by focusing on an ability to unravel objective

The French School began the study of metapsychics by focusing on an ability to unravel objective metapsychics through studying physical phenomena and ectoplasm; however, the same did not occur in the English School.

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During the London sessions, Juliette Bisson wrote a letter to Dr. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing on July 9, 1920 (in Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 106). She reported in the letter that the sessions continued, but that the good ones were few. She argued that the experimenters were hypnotized by the idea of trickery and fraud and that their conversations were only about these matters. She concluded that the subconscious undergoes counterattack, and the medium gets irritated and does not produce the phenomena anymore. So the result that they would get would not be good in their opinion.

In another letter in London, dated June 19, 1921, Mrs. Bisson described that the unconscious and conscious mentality of the experimenters was terrible (in Geley, 1922, n.2, p. 106). Because they were very suspicious and out of the idea of tricks and scams, they had nothing with them. On the other hand, the English experimenters complained about Mrs Bisson's goodwill, strongly denying all hostility and appealing her reports.

Bisson's letters were clear in affirming the hostile climate toward metapsychics in the English Society. She asserted that the British only thought of tricks and frauds and that such behavior

affected the medium, triggering weak results, showing Bisson the impossibility of experiments with ectoplasm in London in the 1920s.

Conclusion

The conflict between the English and French schools of metapsychics is evident. It had already been expressed before the foundation of IMI through the exchange of letters in which Sir Oliver Lodge advised against the creation of the Institute by citing, as one of the arguments, that the French paid close attention to objective metapsychics, namely materialization and ectoplasm, whereas the English understood as more relevant the subjective phenomena like the telepathy.

Such a difference of schools was again evidenced by Geley's statements in which he quotes that the SPR had a failed methodology for experiments with objective mediumship. This observation is very important and revealing, as well as the state of mind of the experimenters, contrary to objective and physical phenomena, according to Bisson's letters. It was a common understanding in England of the 1920s against the objective mediumship that the SPR absorbed back then.

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The Establishment of Metapsychics During the Roaring Twenties

The Emancipation of Metapsychics

“The chimera that we have liked to evoke for so long, by simply giving it the meaning of a beautiful dream, both consoling and vain, is being realized today. The Institute Métapsychique International (IMI) is founded.”

Dr. Gustave Geley (1865-1924) began the first meeting of the IMI of June 18, 1919 with these words. Geley, a famous medical doctor in the Annecy region of France, had abandoned his profession for “the demon of research,” and by 1895, he witnessed phenomena such as lucidity (clairvoyance), somnambulism, and premonitions. He recorded his observations in several works that were first published under the pseudonym of E. Gyel. Indeed, it

was not easy to mix one’s reputation with the so-called “occult sciences,” an expression that was often confused with “psychical research” (which had gained traction in the Anglo-Saxon world). There were several other attempts in France to develop an official institute that specialized in psychical research. The *Society of Physiological Psychology* had a brief life (1885-1893). The *Universal Society of Psychic Studies* never achieved great prestige. The greatest adventure was that of the *International Psychic Institute* (like the IMI except for the “meta”), which launched in great pomp in 1900 by the greatest scientists and amateurs of psychology of the time. Unfortunately, disappointment came quickly. The institute swiftly changed its name to *General Psychological*

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Institute and, under the iron fist of the physician and philosopher Pierre Janet (who was a professor at the College de France), diverted attention from its original objective, which was the study of the “psychic wonderful” (Brower, 2010). In 1905, frustrated Geley called for the creation of a new institute of psychical sciences that “would have the duty to be interested in all that, near or far, touches on Spiritualism” (Geley, 1905). That ambitious description was a premonitory promise for the future IMI.

The General Psychological Institute was considered by psychiatrists an ultimate treason and a huge waste, but it was not totally futile. The study of the medi-

um Eusapia Palladino began at the Institute in 1905 and, after three years of sessions guided by Pierre Curie, Henri Bergson, and Arsène d'Arsonval, an official report was released (Courtier, 1908). The authors were hesitant to draw conclusions to validate the phenomena around Palladino, a fact that seemed justified to some people and unjustified to others. But that moment sparked a meeting between psychology (then in search of academization) and psychical research. The future Nobel prize winner Charles Richet (1905) opted for the emancipation of this special science by giving it the name of "metapsychics" because he deemed it impossible to integrate metapsychics into the nascent psychology. He proposed the creation of a university chair position for a psychologist who specialized in the subject. But his request fell on deaf ears (IMI Archives, Box 3, File 8). Differences in perspectives among the Institute's members lead to a form of schism and saw metapsychics flourish in the private space rather than in public institutions.

Geley, Director of the Ideal Institute

Geley continued his introductory speech of June 18, 1919, admitting the immense joy of being "able to finally reach the goal of my life and devote all my time and all my strength to our science."

He thanked, by the work and the action, the patron who gave body to his "ideal Institute": Jean Meyer (1855-1931), industrialist of Swiss origin, and rich wine merchant of the region of Béziers. The combination of circumstances precipitating the genesis of the IMI deserves to be narrated here.

Meyer, as a fervent Spiritualist, used his fortune to revive Spiritualism in France. But he felt that something was missing in the cultural landscape: a society studying the spiritist phenomena in a scientific way. He discussed the matter with Gabriel Delanne in 1916, telling the latter that he was ready to finance it. Delanne, an engineer by training, was the best advocate for a scientific approach to Spiritualism. (He was also a collaborator of Richet.) But Delanne (who suffered from ataxia) also mentioned his ideas to his doctor who was none other than... Geley. A first meeting was organized and, after only two hours of conversation, Meyer entrusted Geley with the keys of a modest laboratory in a maid's room on Avenue Suffren in Paris. This was the location in which Marthe Béraud, starting in December 1917, was studied; the initial results of these meetings were communicated on January 28, 1918 in the prestigious Collège de France.

The presence of Geley in Paris owes nothing to chance. History joins the story here, where it is linked by the intervention of

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Rocco Santoliquido (1854-1930), an Italian doctor who had distinguished himself by curbing malaria in parts of Italy. He had political appointments working for public health and in the Red Cross League. After discovering spiritism in his family, Santoliquido's interest was piqued. He accidentally read a book by Geley in 1913 and then tried in vain to meet him. But when Italy entered World War I in 1915 on the side of the Triple Entente, Santoliquido was posted to Paris to preside over the *Allied Health Commission*. He had to choose a secretary (so he wouldn't have one imposed), and on December 11, 1915, Santoliquido proposed Geley, who was then assigned to southern Morocco. The two men had never met and knew each other only by their

correspondence! Geley even made an appointment to meet with his Italian colleague in a private place so as not to shame him for not recognizing him (Osty, 1930).

Santoliquido played a key role in the recognition of public utility that made the IMI a foundation. At the end of World War I, he took up the idea of an official federation of psychic societies - “a center of achievement and outreach”—and sent a circular to various renowned researchers and specified his project: “The institution I envision would not, of course, be designed to replace or compete with national or local organizations. On the contrary, it would constitute a kind of federation, allowing a better performance of special efforts and ensuring the union of all good will” (IMI Archives, Box 3, File 8).

*The press echoed the sentiment. In the *Mercure de France*, the IMI was presented as “the Institut Pasteur, in a way, of new research.” There were many hopes and dreams for the endeavor.*

At first, Santoliquido was met with a certain skepticism because some people found the creation of an international institute premature, given the hostility of the scientific communities toward psychic phenomena and the differences according to the country in approaches to investigating psychic phenomena. But Santoliquido eventually gathered enough support (including those of the former Minister Jules Roche and the State Councilor Ernest Meyer) and obtained the recognition of “public utility” on April 23, 1919. The designation meant the Institute could be sustained through donations and legacies.

Santoliquido agreed to be the first president of the IMI and didn't shirk from “the easy pretext of insufficient competence.” He asked at the inaugural meeting: “Who, moreover, would dare and could judge himself competent, when it comes to questions pertaining at the same time to all sciences, affecting all philosophies; whose human and social impacts may exceed all expectations? “It is surprising that the inaugural role of President did not fall to Richet, then Nobel laureate, who first occupied the position of Honorary President. (Richet was probably seduced by the expression “international metapsychics,” which flattered his vision of things.) But at last, there was a richly endowed institute with a library,

a conference room, two laboratories, and all the necessary equipment. However, Richet was not a Spiritist. If he agreed to support the project with all his authority, it was probably because it connected some of his faithful collaborators. Richet didn't want to put all his energy into a new institute set up by some disciples of Allan Kardec.

The press echoed the sentiment. In the *Mercure de France*, the IMI was presented as “the Institut Pasteur, in a way, of new research.” There were many hopes and dreams for the endeavor. The Spiritualists rejoiced, believing that Richet had finally joined their cause. Yet, many metapsychists waited to see what direction the work would take.

The Construction of the First Hour

Geley used Santoliquido's formula to describe his program: “As a center of achievement, the Institute must know, study, analyze, and synthesize everything that is interesting from a metapsychic point of view all over the world. As a center of outreach, it must observe and experiment, make known everywhere the result of its observations and experiments; offer isolated researchers as well as psychological studies societies selected but complete documentation.” The functions of an academic society were

thus turned toward the scientific community, the platform for the work. The IMI's principal goals were "the creation of laboratories, libraries, archives; popularizing our work through conferences and publications; the organization of thorough investigations wherever necessary."

Geley's project meant to continue the exploration of the physical phenomena of mediumship. "The question of mediums is closely linked to that of laboratories," he explained. "I will try to find and attach one or two selected topics. It is important to be able to offer them a situation that is both honorable and safe, which gives them complete security of

mind and allows them to devote themselves to the development of their faculties." Geley planned to immediately install an electric camera model of his design, which was able to take pictures quickly without changing the focus. The device created a long series of successive photographs. Since Marthe Béraud was no longer available at the time, a call for applications was organized. More than sixty mediums, many from a Polish background, approached within a year. One of them, known by the pseudonym Franek Kluski (Weaver, 2015), was able to exteriorize a physical substance (called "ectoplasm" by Richet) from his body. Controlled experiments showed that the ectoplasm was likely to take various animal or humanoid forms. It was invited to dive into heated paraffin, which caused it to leave behind (after dematerialization) an extremely thin glove; casts were immediately made from the "thin glove." The exceptional pieces entered the scientific heritage of the IMI in the winter of 1920.

The IMI built its reputation on its official publication, *Revue Metapsychique*, which absorbed and succeeded *Les Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, a journal that was launched by Richet and the ophthalmologist Xavier Dariex in 1891. *Revue Metapsychique* was "divided into two parts," details Geley: "an original part, accounting for our experiences

and observations; an analytical part devoted to the work of the other researchers, to the press review and the main publications made all over the world." Foreign researchers learned French to read the publication. The quality of the journal, exceptional from its launch, was due in particular to scientific journalist René Sudre, who became, in the space of a few years, a scholar of metapsychics and one of Geley's best theoreticians (Evrard, 2016). Regular lectures in Paris fed the columns of the *Revue* and attracted diverse public attention, and research that had been suspended by the Great War resumed. The publication of the book *La Télépathie, Recherches Expérimentales* by chemist René Warcollier (1881-1962) led to long-distance telepathy experiments between small groups of apprentice telepaths in Athens, New York, and Berlin, etc. Warcollier's research inspired later military uses of remote viewing.

The Quarrel of Ectoplasm

However, detractors attacked metapsychic activities from all sides. Some scientists, doctors, and curious lay people disqualified the value of the experiments carried out at the IMI and demanded independent replications from a legitimate authority. *L'Opinion* journalist Paul Heuzé convinced psychologist and physiologist

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Henri Piéron to lead a commission in the Sorbonne for the study of ectoplasm. But the commission did not uncover convincing phenomena—in fact, the occasional experimenters suggested that fraud explained all the phenomena without demonstrating those tricks. The commission was unscrupulous in its methods. It did not put in place the best conditions to promote the production of phenomena and it did not use metapsychists' methodologies of objectification (photographs, paraffine gloves, etc). The so-called “failures” of these inquiries in 1922 and 1923 contributed to the general discrediting of metapsychics (Lachapelle, 2011).

Geley was faced with what he interpreted as a campaign of discredit against metapsychics. While, in 1921, he chose to respond to negative newspaper articles with new experiments to emphasize the work versus agitate the controversy, at the end of 1922, he proposed to devote a year to a “counter-offensive through a demonstration work,” even though this affected the progress of his own research. Geley wanted to have Kluski (who produced ectoplasmic molds under controlled conditions) for the effort, but Kluski was wrinkled by the malicious remarks of critics and preferred to stay in Poland. So Geley turned to Jean Guzik, another professional Polish medium already well known to

It was work of Hugolian style that harangued his scientific colleagues; he wanted to achieve the recognition of the legitimacy of metapsychics in his lifetime.

psychists. But while Guzik was deemed capable of producing luminous phenomena and appearances of animals or human forms, he had been caught cheating several times. Geley's study was therefore set up with strict control conditions. The IMI laboratory ran at full speed with this experiment: 80 sessions in 1922 and 1923. More than 80 people more or less familiar with the metapsychics were invited to observe; then, thirty-five signed a joint account that was published in *Le Matin* June 7, 1923 (but a counting error made the report known as the *Manifesto of the 34*). The signatories included many doctors (mostly from the IMI), a few physicists, and no magicians.

However, the titles that accompanied their names made use of the argument of authority against the argument of authority. This confrontation on the experimental level was replicated literally:

Richet published his gigantic *Traité de métapsychique* in 1922. He used eight hundred pages to multiply the observations made by him and by others, proposing an effort of classification but without pushing too much speculation. It was work of Hugolian style that harangued his scientific colleagues; he wanted to achieve the recognition of the legitimacy of metapsychics in his lifetime. Several of his colleagues answered him, notably Pierre Janet, who tried to establish a definitive distance between psychology and Richet's “occult psycho-physiology.” The case against Villa Carmen is used against the latter, pretending to reveal that the famous Marthe Béraud (before taking the pseudonym of Eva Carrière) was already the main medium in the vaudevillesque and scandalous experimentation carried out by Richet and Delanne in Algiers in 1905. By reducing the nobelized physiologist to a gullible old man, without a balanced examination of this complex issue (Evrard, 2016), his detractors hoped to stifle his entire advocacy for metapsychics.

But the quarrel of ectoplasm was cut short after the tragic death of Geley in a plane crash on July 15, 1924. He was returning from Warsaw with new molds of ectoplasmic materializations. That day, the director of the IMI was in a hurry because he had an appointment on July 21 in London with Hope, a medium “skoto-

graph” (one who can make impressions on photographic plates through thought), someone Geley had been trying to study since 1919 and that he had suspected to be a cheater. The pilot of the plane, when he learned the origin of these molds, refused to leave with objects he considered as “devilish and evil.” A second pilot also ran away. Geley had to charter a special plane, but it crashed in the outskirts of Warsaw immediately after takeoff. When Geley’s body was removed from the debris of the aircraft, he was still holding the small suitcase that contained the fragments of proof obtained during his last experiments...

The Osty Program

On the death of Geley, the direction of the IMI fell to the doctor Eugène Osty (1874-1938), a man recognized for his brilliant work with various paranormal practitioners. His appointment came with a tightening of agnosticism specific to the scientific process. To the patron Jean Meyer, who urged him to accept the position, he asked:

What would you say if, one day, from the laboratory that you ask me to lead, came out studies of facts suggesting that the teachings of the *House of Spirites* are, in all or in part, illusory interpretations of facts produced exclusively by unknown powers of the

living? As far as I’m concerned, I can only consider to take the lead of the International Metapsychic Institute on the condition of a complete freedom of work and writings. (Osty, 1931, pp. 90-91)

Osty deployed a new phase in the history of the IMI, one that produced a discontinuity with the many speculations of Geley and the spiritism affirmed by Meyer. But it was not easy to get rid of this spiritist hold, evidenced by later events, such as the ousting of Sudre, a fierce opponent of Spiritualist theses. Djohar Si Ahmed (2014) sees in this rejection of Spiritualism the identification of a shameful moment which, through a long process of repression, became a *secret of origins* that caused various symptomatic behaviors.

Osty wanted to reorient the mission of the IMI. He believed that several years had already been devoted to proving the reality of metapsychic phenomena, and that after the demonstration, the time had come for experimentation and research into the psychological, physiological, and physical determinants associated with metapsychic phenomena, a place from which the most important discoveries for mankind should flow. It became a matter of understanding and explaining, of “closing the era of the sterile accumulation of facts incessantly reproduced

under the same conditions” (Osty, 1926, p. 5).

Osty devoted himself to subjects endowed with supernormal knowledge; they were much less rare than the producers of paranormal action on matter. This was a strategic maneuver designed to circumvent the adversity caused by the Sorbonne’s experiments. The “intellectual metapsychic” seemed to him to be the “healthy part” of the discipline, proper to *experimental study* rather than *inquiry*. More precisely, the new director proposed to limit research to a single form of supernormal knowledge: the one with a human as an object of hyper-knowledge—the target of the “metagnome.” The choice of *human target metagnomy* entails complexity because it posed methodological and theoretical challenges far more important than those associated with divination on playing cards (as

Osty deployed a new phase in the history of the IMI, one that produced a discontinuity with the many speculations of Geley and the spiritism affirmed by Meyer.

initiated by Richet forty years earlier). Osty inscribed himself with the same astonishment and sense of curiosity that led him to the metapsychic: understand how a man's psyche could penetrate that of another, without the commonly limiting obstacle of space and time. Osty had an expression that he used for some of his studies, but the expression can be applied to all his works: "At the confines of classical psychology and metapsychic psychology." He was sometimes successful in pioneering work on dermatoglyphism, body exits, trances, psychedelic substances, prodigious calculators, artistic psychology, and so on. His works captured the essence of what a metapsychic perspective brings to science.

Instead of shutting himself up in a scientific ivory tower, Osty opened the IMI. Under his leadership, the institute became a place accessible to the public in the heart of the Roaring Twenties. The director connected scholars and seers and generated mutual respect on both sides. People consulted him for all kinds of things, and he did not hesitate to make available his "culturalized metagnomes" to answer many challenges: the search for missing persons; collaboration in a police investigation; help with medical diagnosis, etc. The applications of such a faculty are potentially numerous!

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The Unknown Powers of the Mind

However, Osty did not forget to fulfill the scientific ambitions of the IMI:

The problem to be solved is, indeed, to render demonstrable, in a manner that must satisfy all scientific minds, *the control of matter by the mind*, and to discover the process by which the thinking function of the human being arrives—thus manifesting a supernatural knowledge of nature—to draw from a human organism and to manage outside of it energies that no physiologist, no physicist of today knows and can understand yet. It is, in short, the secret of the creative life that is sought about an individual paranormal power (Osty, 1932).

It took several years and the help of his son Marcel to design a device to use ultraviolet light to photograph phenomena that occurred in the dark. Osty used this method to catch several mediums who faked the ability to manifest physical phenomena - it is this reason that some people reproached Osty for his skepticism toward these category of phenomena! In 1926, the device was not yet ready when the new sessions with Guzik came to an end. It was only in 1930 that the famous sessions with the Austrian medium Rudi Schneider began.

The initial device became an automated detection system comprising variously oriented infrared rays produced by emitters and reflected by small mirrors to receivers containing a photocell. When one or more infrared rays were "cut off," an amplifier relayed a signal to a ringing tone which activated (simultaneously) a magnesium flash and two instant-trigger cameras (one with three stereoscopic views), so that the device could only reveal two things:

- a possible wandering hand or a possible fraudulent device, which are immediately caught in the bag;
- a hypothetical "substance," still unlisted, the density of which would gradually or suddenly "cut off" the field of observation.

From October 1930 to December 1931, thanks to the important financial effort of Meyer, Osty organized at the IMI a total of 90 sessions with Rudi Schneider. However, the many photos obtained do not show arms or substance! As Rudi prepared to return home to rest after thirteen unsuccessful sessions, the machine went off and photos were taken automatically while nothing visible seemed to be entering the field. The bell rung and an inspection showed no technical dysfunction or parasitic phenomenon. The triggers were even announced by the medium. More impressively, the occultations oscillated parallel to Schneider's breathing movements (which happened in a special trance obtained by an exceptional hyperventilation [between 200 and 300 breaths per minute, recorded by a pneumograph glued to his chest]). Occasionally, observers who were present noticed the "usual" phenomena, which included a misty fog and unexplained movements of objects in the dark. Osty thought he discovered a primordial form of influence of the mind on matter, an aspect of psychophysics that was the "first stage" of the materializing "process of energy" (Osty & Osty, 1932, p. 99), able to help them to understand the more complex forms of the ectoplasm.

The innovative and ingenious metapsychic Osty nevertheless faced mounting obstacles. The

first was the classic resistance of scientific circles and their members who took hold of so-called demonstrations of "Schneider's frauds" and undermined three years of experimental studies—even though the replications were successful in England in 1932. (Afterward, Osty was the first French guest to give the "Frederic W. H. Myers memorial reading" at the London SPR about these experiments.) The second obstacle was the loss of the IMI's financial income following the death of Jean Meyer in April 1931. The family of the latter felt completely wronged in the succession and brought a lawsuit against Meyer's secretary Hubert Forestier, who had been appointed manager for life of the *Society of Metapsychic Studies*. After more than a year of stormy legal procedures that exhausted Osty, the finances of the IMI were no longer sustainable. The research programs involving the salaries of psychics were ending, and the function of the IMI director reverted to a voluntary role. Osty was forced to resume his medical consultations after failing to convince new patrons, such as the Rockefeller Foundation, to support the IMI. He confided to one of his correspondents: "I fear that we are obliged to suspend for an indefinite time our awakening. And it's really unfortunate, because our hope was great to carry the investigation far enough. But one must know how to bow to the fancies of Destiny." (Letter from Osty to Gerda Wal-

A Society of Friends of IMI was founded in 1934 to serve as an interface with the curious metapsychic public; volunteers became entrusted with the tasks of organizing conferences and publications.

ther, December 26, 1931, Archives IGPP, 10/16, No. 14)

Exist Despite Everything

Due to the decline of its scientific activities and the death of several of its prestigious members (particularly Richet in 1935), the IMI developed a new form of internal organization. A *Society of Friends of IMI* was founded in 1934 to serve as an interface with the curious metapsychic public; volunteers became entrusted with the tasks of organizing conferences and publications. In 1937, the *Charles Richet Metapsychic Society* was created, which perpetuated the Richet's dinner-meetings (which had been happening monthly from 1913 till the time of his death). The Society had gathered around

twenty co-opted members, who functioned in part as an ante-chamber of the foundation and continued to give life to the field of metapsychics. The Society also held meetings and cordial exchanges; discussions on the international news of the field; and small events that included experiences “to see” in the presence of more or less accustomed subjects, but the World War II affected the Society’s activities. The “Ideal Institute” that had finally materialized was haunted with memories and nostalgia. Innovative works still found their place but the national and international appeal was less than in the previous decade (Evrard, 2010).

The situation of the 1930s was rather negative. No metapsychic phenomenon reached a supportive consensus among the scientific community. The limits of science were not yet fixed and incredible things were considered plausible. But lines of demarcation were slowly inscribed, placing metapsychic phenomena, like foils, always outside the scientific domain. The experiments remained known and produced by a small contingent of researchers, and it was this isolation that proved detrimental to them.

Metapsychic research in France was no longer federated by the IMI at that time. New people took the floor, such as Nobel Prize winner Alexis Carrel (1873-1944), who led amateur studies on mediumship

and dowsing, making heterodox and controversial convictions in a widely read book, *Human, This Unknown* (Carrel, 1935).

Studies on dowsing occupy the discussions between the military (including members of the famous Polytechnic school), members of the clergy, and members of the Rationalist Union, a militant and apolitical association convinced of the central role of science in the future of human activities, which put emphasis on the denunciation of any form of thought or practice that deviated from the scientific right track (Lagrange, 2002). The metapsychists were momentarily removed from a debate where they could have brought their skills. This example foreshadowed other situations where the debate on the paranormal escaped the expertise of the metapsychists.

The IMI seemed to wall itself away in a deep silence, communicating only to a small audience. World War II completed the process and made the foundation mute, while seeing emerging new generations...

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Supernormal Knowledge: The Work of Eugène Osty

The celebration of the centenary of the Institute Métapsychique International (IMI) is an opportunity to remember the contributions of the individuals involved in the history of this unique organization, pioneers of psychical research in twentieth-century France. A particularly important one associated with the IMI during parts of the 1920s and 1930s was Eugène Osty. In this short article I would like to remind readers of *Mindfield* of some of the contributions of Osty to the study of ESP, work that has been forgotten by many today.

Eugène Osty

Eugène Osty (1874-1938) was a French physician who left medical practice to devote himself to psychical research (on Osty see Evrard, 2016, Chapter 8, and Villanueva, 2001). He became director of the IMI in 1924 following the sudden death of its previous director, Gustave Geley (1865-1924). His activities in psychical research were covered by the press (e.g., Ratel, 1926), and were formally reported in books and in the *Revue Métapsychique*, IMI's journal. In his initial research program for IMI he



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called for an abandonment of accumulation of facts to emphasize instead explorations concerned with the understanding of psychic functioning (Osty, 1926b).

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Osty and
Supernormal
Knowledge

Osty is best known for his systematic discussions of the features and psychology of supernormal knowledge in gifted individuals (e.g., Osty, 1913, 1922, 1926a), some of which was published before he was affiliated with the IMI.

His book *Lucidité et Intuition* (1913) illustrates his interest in single-subject studies, the features of lucidity, and his psychological approach. In his view lucidity was the subconscious perception of information from the thoughts of others. Hypnosis created in Mme M. a special state, with “sort of a new sense, endo-cerebral, that allows her to perceive the thoughts of others . .

. During hypnosis . . . this sensibility makes lucidity permanent” (p. 18), but is diminished by fatigue.

There was a first stage of lucid hallucinations (imagery) in which Mme. M. mainly saw visual images. These could be veridical, corresponding to a target person or place, or symbolic, consisting of a “mental elaboration of sensations and cannot be normally evoked other than by the symbolic form of a word” (p. 25). In the second stage the conscious mind of Mme. M. perceived and interpreted the images, an example being: “I see a large expanse of water . . . , I hear the sounds of waves, it is the sea . . .” (p. 26). But sometimes she just verbalized the identity of the target without details.

Osty discussed many other topics in *Lucidité et Intuition* in relation to other individuals. These included the following: lucid perceptions about somatic states, relationships, and the future, psychometry, the variety of “lucid mentalities,” professional psychics, lucidity and sex, the specialization of lucid talents, and the various manifestations of imagery in lucidity.

In his book *La Connaissance Supra-Normale* (1922) Osty continued to study gifted subjects. Osty used the term “metagnomy,” proposed by Boirac (1917, p. 224), as well as supernormal knowledge. He included in his book discussions of the source of the information perceived, the range

of targets involved, errors in the process, and the role of mental imagery, dissociation, and the unconscious in the production of veridical perceptions. This book was translated as *Supernormal Faculties of Man* (1923), which I use in the discussion below.

According to Osty the general process of supernormal knowledge was as follows: “As soon as the metagnomic sensitive ceases to think in the ordinary way and his special faculty comes into operation, his psychic activity is transformed. A latent intelligence comes into action, and the apparent functions of conscious and subconscious thought reverse their parts. The subconscious modality of the psychism is liberated from the conscious modality, and seems to become sensitive to influence from the transcendental plane of other psychisms; and the conscious, abandoning the directive function, becomes a spectator, whether it merely registers supernormal information already completely expressed in spoken words or by automatic writing, or whether it has to interpret the artifices of mental representation” (Osty, 1923, p. 206).

One of the most interesting aspects of the book was his discussions of errors. Metagnomy, he wrote, “presents itself more or less infected by error” (p. 205). According to Osty the sources of error came from the defective functioning of the subject’s

psychism, or from outside influences from the target person or the experimenter. The first could involve the simple fact that the psychic was not sensitive to psychic information, or only partially so. The psychic's subconscious, Osty argued, could produce much fabrication, that is, invention that will naturally result in false information, or in veridical information mixed with purely imaginal one.

The mind of the psychic, Osty argued, could also modify psychic perceptions for various reasons, such as false assumptions, or failure to interpret the content of the mentation. Then there was

“There is not, as in the hypnotic state of ordinary persons, a diminution of consciousness which may extend to vanishing point, but only a rupture of the functional synergy between the conscious and subconscious planes of thought, transposing their activity”

also the possibility of psychic influences from the mind of others that introduced mistakes based on false beliefs or wrong information.

Osty also returned in this book to the importance of mental dissociation. “There is not, as in the hypnotic state of ordinary persons, a diminution of consciousness which may extend to vanishing point, but only a rupture of the functional synergy between the conscious and subconscious planes of thought, transposing their activity” (p. 119). In his view: “This functional dissociation of psychic activities is a necessary condition for metagnomic faculty to come into action . . . The dissociation of psychic functions takes place according to modalities which vary with mental conditions” (pp. 119-120).

Many of the above-mentioned topics were discussed by Osty in a later study of psychic Pascal Forthuny (1872-1962, whose real name was Georges Léopold Cochet), *Une Faculté de Connaissance Supra-Normale* (Osty, 1926a; I am using the Spanish translation, Osty, 1926/n.d.). The book is divided in four chapters in which Osty discussed Forthuny's life before he developed his psychic gifts, the appearance and development of metagnomy, Forthuny's public seances at the IMI, and what Osty learned from Forthuny's gifts.

Details about the public meetings sponsored by the IMI, where

people would come to receive readings by Forthuny, form an important part of the book. Forthuny entered into a light trance while giving readings. To induce this he attempted to stop his thoughts while looking at some point in the room or at a person, and waited for images to provide him with information. Osty wrote that: “The psychism of Mr. Forthuny . . . uses most of the sensory modalities representative of internal thought. To make conscious the paranormal information acquired, almost all the categories of the imaginal psychodynamism come to play, in succession, superimposing or intermixing” (p. 208). This included visual and other sensory modalities, and emotions, remembrances, and apparent motor and verbal automatisms.

On occasion Forthuny saw letters on a wall or in the air that corresponded to names of people and places. In one instance, “over the head of one of the persons in the public and as an extension of him, he saw outlined over the wall a capital [letter] B” (p. 200). The person in question did not corroborate the relevance of the letter and Forthuny, remembering a wine merchant he knew, said he was being told (apparently hearing a voice), about a wine merchant in the South. The target person acknowledged knowing such a person and admitted the relevance of the letter B. “F. saw again in the wall a capital B to which it was

added then the small letter o” (p. 201). The merchant in question was named Bonnefoy.

Displacement effects were also observed. Forthuny perceived information that was not about the target person but, in the case of public demonstration, about persons sitting in front, behind or next to that person. Also, sometimes it seemed that the information came from the memory record of the target person, and it generally referred to fragments of their life.

The visual impressions varied much. Some changed like the “projection of a cinematographic film; others are like a painting of motionless content; in some moments it has the forms, movements and color of life; in others it is . . . black and white” (p. 210). The images appeared in front of Forthuny, sometimes on top or close to people he was giving readings to.

Forthuny’s, and other psychics, showed, according to Osty, three stages. “In the first phase paranormal contact takes place with reality independently of what is conscious . . . In the second phase paranormal knowledge, already elaborated, is transformed in the brain of the metagnome into the ordinary modalities representative of internal thought . . . [In the third phase] the intellectual function called conscience intervenes, figuring out the sense of the mental images that take place” (p. 191).

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In addition to a cerebral unconscious, Osty thought metagnomy involved a transcendental part of the unconscious mind.

Other Work

Osty continued to write about supernormal knowledge in various articles. This included the diagnosis of disease (Osty, 1929), long term premonitions (Osty, 1936b), and chance, fatalities and coincidences (Osty, 1937).

He was also involved in many activities behind the scene to organize psychical research as a scientific specialty, to make the field more systematic and professional,

a topic explored by Lachapelle (2011) using archival materials at the IMI. In addition to his administrative duties at IMI, his public lectures, and other contributions, Osty also wrote about many topics during his career in psychical research. This included mediumistic paintings (Osty, 1928), out-of-body experiences (Osty, 1930), haunted houses (Osty, 1936a) and physical mediumship (Osty & Osty, 1931-1932).

Concluding Remarks

Although this is not the place to discuss in detail critiques of Osty’s work, it is important to notice that, while his work about supernormal knowledge was well received in some quarters (e.g., Romeyer, 1924; Tischner, 1927), some of it, such as that reported in *La Connaissance Supra-Normale*, was considered problematic in terms of reporting style, that is, lack of details regarding the conditions in which the observations were made (Schiller, 1924; for a later view see Gauld, 1982, p. 133). According to French psychologist Henri Piéron (1881-1964) the book about Forthuny (Osty, 1926a) was weak in terms of establishing the facts. In his view, Osty’s writing lacked “the scientific rigor which would make them incontestable” (Piéron, 1926, p. 874). This may have contributed in part to the neglect of Osty’s work with

While this is an important point, we should not neglect Osty's rich qualitative analyses which go beyond issues of evidentiality and have potentially important insights about the nature of mentation, veridical and not.

French sensitives shown by some later authors.

While this is an important point, we should not neglect Osty's rich qualitative analyses which go beyond issues of evidentiality and have potentially important insights about the nature of mentation, veridical and not. His attempts to explore the phenomenology of lucidity based on the experience of his sensitives could guide new studies today, and perhaps it could be considered in relation to more recent psychological ideas about ESP functioning (Carpenter, 2012).

Regardless of this, there is no doubt that Eugène Osty's work,

of which I have discussed only a few aspects in this short article, was of great importance both to the development of the IMI, and psychical research in France.

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Interview with Mario Varvoglis

Mario P. Varvoglis PhD is a parapsychologist and President of the Institut Métapsychique International (IMI) in Paris. His research includes experimental studies of ESP using the Ganzfeld procedure, and of micro-PK using random event generators (REG). He is a past President of Parapsychological Association (2001-2002).

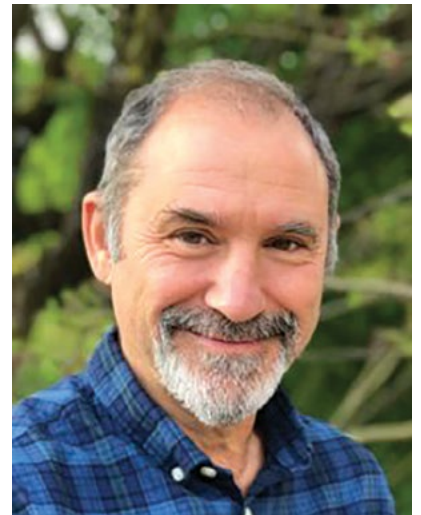
by RENAUD EVRARD

First question – what is the IMI today?

Well, one might say that the IMI is a work-in-progress. It has been a work-in-progress for hundred years, and still is. Basically, the Institute brings together several trends in the field, experimental research being just one of those. We have a great interest in theoretical issues, and of course much of what we do is geared toward educating the general public – conferences, relations with the media, and so forth. The IMI is essentially its Board members, so its focus obviously reflects different interests and priorities. With someone like

Bertrand Méheust, you have a lot of emphasis on history, on philosophy, on the politics of parapsychology. Someone like Peter Bancel is interested in meta-analytic approaches, theory and models. So what I'm saying is that the IMI is not a single thing, with a centralized policy and research program, although we all do share some common values and perspectives on psi.

You are describing the IMI like the work of the current members of the Board of directors. Maybe this is a little reductive?



I was mostly giving a snapshot of what's happening at the IMI today. Of course, if you want to adopt a very general perspective, a fair summary would be to say that the main objective,

over the past 20 years, has been to put the Institute back on the map, both locally and internationally. I think we have succeeded, to some modest extent, to become the reference for French parapsychology - a reference for the general public, for journalists, for researchers who want to know what's really happening in the field and contribute.

What is the latest research done by the IMI?

The two most recent research projects are the Selfield project and the Entanglement experiment. The Selfield is a precognition-oriented research protocol (see our article in *Journal of Parapsychology*, vol. 83(1)). Its broader goal is the development of a protocol that stabilizes psi effects while allowing for flexibility in experimental design so that different questions about psi can be addressed experimen-

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tally. The Entanglement experiment is a microPK project that explores human influence on quantum systems. This latter project, led by physicist Peter Bancel, investigates how intentionality might interact with entangled photons. The question at the heart of this challenging experiment is whether psi effects are ultimately compatible with quantum physics, or whether they imply that quantum physics is somehow incomplete when consciousness and psi are considered.

We also have a number of exploratory projects. A very interesting approach initiated by IMI board member Jean-Paul Bailly is like a modern take on the Ouija board. It explores the possibility of unconscious processes in a group psi context. Several individuals sitting together pose questions to a fictitious entity; each person is connected to a plethysmograph and the random variations in heart rates collectively determine the sequence of words that emerges, selected from a database. The idea is to see whether some meaningful sentences will emerge, addressing the question asked. It might take us a step toward better understanding group processes in psi, in a manner reminiscent of the Batchelder or 'Phillip' sittings.

What were the latest significant events for the IMI, outside experimental research, during the last ten years?

A number of things. One was the creation of an association, the Amis de l'IMI (or A-IMI - the friends of IMI) opening the Institute's workings to a larger public, for example by organizing conferences and workshops. Another major event was the creation of the IMI Group of students in 2003 by Paul-Louis Rabeyron and Thomas Rabeyron. It contributed, indirectly, to the renewal of academic interest in parapsychology.

Of course, we've also consistently sought to develop our network with French scientists that are outside our field, and in 2010, just 9 years ago hosted the PA annual convention.

We've also participated in a number of exhibitions exploring the interface between psychological research and art. We have collaborated with Andreas Fischer of Freiburg's IGPP, but also with figures in the French art & cultural scene, such as Bruno Decharme, Pascal Pique and Gérard Audinet of the Maison de Victor Hugo.

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What difficulties has the IMI encountered in the past few years and today?

The major difficulty is running an institute on a purely volunteer basis. It's very complicated to get anything long term done, to have a real systematic program. In a way, it is a miracle we're still around! I'm happy we have been able to undertake several formal or exploratory research projects, that we have a good Board of directors and the support of the A-IMI – all that's very positive. But the difficulty for us is continuity. For example, we are in the paradoxical situation of being able to construct original and interesting approaches to test psi, but mostly this is done without any funding, so we quickly discover we don't have the resources to run them.

Besides this, a key difficulty is getting bright, young people coming in. The average age on the IMI Board is pretty high and climbing. Of course, we're not alone here, other psychical societies have a similar problem. We need to renew our membership, to get fresh blood into the field.

And what about the general reception of metapsychics?

That's a long-term issue, it has always been. Especially in France. But I must say that in the past few years, we haven't had too many direct confrontations with skeptics, especially the irrational breed. Maybe it's that our communication is improving, or that have done nothing particularly provocative or just that we're below their radar. But I don't really think they've just forgotten about us, because we are certainly more visible than in the past, through general public articles, TV-shows, and so on. Maybe things are evolving, and the general climate is becoming more receptive to psi. There are a number of signs pointing to that.

What are the ambitions and projects for the future of the IMI?

That's the big question, isn't it? The first project is to find another President...

No, seriously... One possible direction is a shift in our research approach. When I arrived at the IMI, 21 years ago, I was still in the universalist paradigm for research, working with large number of unselected participants and aiming for modest effects. But, over the course of the years, both I and other members of the IMI have become convinced that the payoff is better in an "elitist" approach. So one ambition, for sure, is to be more selective and find a few good participants to work with, intensively. I don't necessarily mean working with "psi-gifted" subjects, but rather focusing on cohorts that show promise, like good hypnotic subjects or experienced meditators.

Another direction is to be more responsive to the public's interest in the cultural and artistic aspects of metapsychics. We are often approached by museums, curators, or artists, who want to collaborate with us, and bring forth the cultural, rather than scientific facets of metapsychics. I think it's a legitimate strategy for raising awareness and interest in our field – easier to digest and less provocative.

Finally, I hope we will see a growing ambition for theoretical, as opposed to experimental re-

search. Historically, the IMI played a role here, and it's consistent with a general trend in European parapsychology. This year we're co-organizing a theory workshop with Dick Bierman, just before the PA Convention, and I hope this will be just the first of a series of encounters that promote theoretical developments in the field.

One of the objectives is to survive, isn't it?

Yes, of course, the survival issue is there, all the time. Though, having witnessed the IMI's survival for the past 20 years, I must say I'm more optimistic than before. The IMI is certainly in a better financial situation than in its recent history. Maybe we'll manage another 100 years after all! Still, running an institute through volunteers does not bode well for long term survival. And if we want to go beyond mere survival, we really need funds for full-time researchers and administrators...

What are your relations with some partners, academic or not, in France and abroad?

The best relations are clearly with people and institutions abroad, like the Bial foundation, IONS,

Dick Bierman in Holland, the IGPP... Peter Bancel, who is our most active researcher, is definitely growing our network with many specialists in Europe. There are good possibilities there.

Within France, the picture is more mixed, but I do hope that in the coming years we'll develop links and even collaborative projects with individuals in an academic setting. One clear-cut avenue here is collaborating with some past members of the IMI group of students, who have now gone on to academic posts, like yourself and Thomas Rabeyron. You both now hold academic positions in clinical psychology, in the University of Lorraine (Nancy). This is very promising for French parapsychology, especially in your capacity to supervise doctoral students. I do hope some of your students will go beyond "the psychology of parapsychology", and conduct some real psi research, but in any case, this is an extremely encouraging development.

It is also a fruit of the IMI...

Yes, it is basically thanks to the IMI's student group that a number of young adults sustained an active interest in psi for several years. This was a major contribution of the IMI, and especially of those who created and sustained

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the student group like father and son Rabeyrons and yourself. It's really too bad that the student group no longer exists. But it's great that it contributed, if only indirectly, to the re-emergence of academic interest in psi. Hopefully students will be able to collaborate with the IMI and use our resources to conduct studies, do literature searches, and so forth.

And what about your links with newcomers in the field, like the Institut for Research on Extraordinary Experiences (IN-REES), and other societies doing things around the paranormal?

Well, I think that with the IN-REES, in particular, the gap is pretty wide. Basically it's an organization that is geared

toward communication for the general public with magazines, conferences, TV shows and such. Its coverage is quite a bit broader than ours, and focuses mainly on wellbeing, on the one hand, and the question of the afterlife on the other. It's positive and looks to give people hope and a sense of meaning, but rather different than a source of information or research.

Iris, "school of the intuition," is another organization in France touching on the paranormal, and is a bit closer to the IMI in terms of its positioning. Its director Alexis Champion was an IMI member (and briefly its Director). Their orientation is more commercial with a goal to train people in intuition and in remote viewing applications. The IMI remains the only private parapsychological research center in France that is clearly dedicated to a scientific approach.

It's a hard conclusion after 100 years, that the IMI is still the only one.

Yes, that's not so great. Iris has a lot of potential, but their financial strategy orients their activities more towards general public applications – such as intuition and creativity training. I do think, how-

ever, that they have real promise in the research area if they decide to go that route.

How would you summarize your contribution to the IMI over the past twenty years IMI?

Hmmm, I'm probably not the best to do that... I guess our main achievement is to have helped resurrect the Institute. For a variety of reasons, it was on the way down when I was invited to take on its presidency, and I do think I helped get it back on its feet. But, of course, not alone. In fact, I think my main contribution was to look to bring together all those in France who had something to say in parapsychology – to federate the vital forces of the field that were rather dispersed at the time.

You had the role of bringing people together.

Yes, that was important. And so was linking French parapsychology with international research. During its first three decades, starting in the 1920s, the IMI was a prominent player on the international scene, but far less so after the 1950s. Coming from the US, and having many friends and

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colleagues in the PA, it was quite natural for me to look to situate the IMI in a more international network.

And my last and hardest question: do you think it is still worth it keeping the IMI as it is for another century – as keepers of an old heritage, a scientific society with limited means and activities?

There are different answers to that. In a way, some would argue that parapsychology will succeed when there is no such thing as parapsychology anymore. When psi phenomena have become part of normal science. In that sense,

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you could say that the IMI will have succeeded its mission when the topics it deals with have been integrated into universities and official research centers. A pragmatic vision of success, if a bit sad.

On the other hand, I think there is something to be said about history and meaningfulness: the existence of the IMI is significant in terms of identity. A bit like with the Parapsychological Association, that gives a focus, a history, a shared identity, for those addressing psi phenomena.

But the PA is discussing changing its name. Similarly, "Metapsychics" is not a name with a clear meaning for people, who often confuse it with "metaphysics"...

Yes, I agree. Again, the only thing I can say is the issue is complex and that's why we see the same debate coming up in the field regularly. The word "parapsychology" is often criticized and nobody really likes it. Dean Radin has a full article on this in the *Journal of Parapsychology*. But separate a field from a word that carries its history and identity is far from easy.

Every journalist that contacts the IMI wants to see the ectoplasmic molds...

Indeed. Which brings me back to your question – whether it's worth keeping the IMI and other such institutions alive. Is it a good idea to rid ourselves of our roots, the macro-phenomena that got everybody excited about psychical research, over a century ago? If parapsychology becomes absorbed in other fields, like the neurosciences

or physics, if it mutates to the study of some microscopic neural structure like the microtubules, or some physical curiosity like advanced waves, I think the link to the big epistemological and ontological questions will disappear. Of course, reductionism may indeed be 'right' and we may ultimately find that we can deconstruct all psi to microphysical or microbiological events. But for now, I think it's important to sustain our attention to phenomena that are particularly challenging to current paradigms, including ectoplasm, levitation, poltergeists, and the best data in line with the survivalist hypothesis. In this sense, the early work of the IMI, the SPR and other centers of psychical research should not be abandoned prematurely: it gives clues about the social and cultural contexts in which "mega-psi" emerges, and keeps us from jumping to simplistic theoretical conclusions about the nature of the phenomena.

The Library of Hauntings

Previously published by Philippe Baudouin (2019).
La bibliothèque des hantises. Bouclard, 1, 4-23.

“May a creature full of deaths be living? I was a kind of giant library full of deaths, of sinister prodigies, of surroundings events that I didn’t control.” Giorgio Manganeli, *A et B* (1975)

Seen from the street, only a discreet rusty plate indicates its existence: The Institut Métapsy-chique International (IMI) receives visitors “only by appointment.” Access to the archives of French parapsychology is on merit. And it is clear that time strengthens this challenge. The effect that this place has on me never varies: the first wave of apprehension always follows the feverish expectation as I go from the metro station to the imposing facade of the rue de l’Aqueduc, where I receive the authorization to enter this place.

The antechamber of the “meta-psychists” is reminiscent in some

ways of the narthex of the first basilicas—the vestibule, located at the entrance of the sacred building, was originally intended to keep the possessed and heretics away from the faithful. I reach the archives room behind the antechamber. The thick layer of dust that covers the old manuscripts of the IMI gives me the image of a chamber of wonders that decades of researchers miraculously saved from a forgotten century. The classification of the hundreds of books and other documents that populate the walls seems to have been entrusted to Charles Fort¹, the author of the famous *Book of the the Damned*: books with improbable labels like “telepathy,” “possessions,” “haunted houses,” “hypnosis,” “UFOs,” and

¹ The American writer Charles H. Fort (1874-1932) spent most of his life in the journals and publications of his day, listing all kinds of bizarre events in order to conceive of what he saw as a “sanatorium of exaggerated coincidences.”



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| by PHILIPPE BAUDOUIN

Philippe Baudouin is a radio broadcaster, and a philosopher working on the archeology of the radio. He published an essay about Thomas Edison’s interest in psychical research (in Edison, 2015), and another about Émile Tizané, a gendarme who made investigation on hauntings (Baudouin, 2016).

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“poltergeist” adorn the shelves. I am moved by this improbable arrangement, but it is the sobriety of the place that strikes the me above all. No trace here of pentacles or two-headed fetuses bathed in formaldehyde. Pity.

Chronicle of an Ordinary Haunting

Only a woman’s voice disturbs the serenity of the place. Jocelyne, the secretary, is in charge of the hotline. She is the only employee of the IMI. Every day she receives several calls from people in distress who, often shocked, seek



answers to the bizarre phenomena they have experienced. With her glasses and her disillusioned air, Jocelyne makes me think of Janine Melnitz, the hotline operator of Ghostbusters. Her daily life is quite a paranormal banality because of the large sample of extraordinary stories she has to deal with.

To relay the requests for information to the IMI’s psychological listening unit, Jocelyne establishes a first diagnosis and attempts, for each case, to check the small boxes on the contact form: telepathy, clairvoyance, premonition, or contact with dead people. But most of the time, the incoming calls have nothing to do with the paranormal. A few minutes of discussion are usually enough for Jocelyne to recognize the real reason for the call: very often, people who contact her suffer from mental disorders or are under the influence of psychotropic

drugs. But in spite of this, some of these testimonies still encourage her to believe in the objective possibility of these phenomena.

The library and the stories it contains are, moreover, the material evidence supporting such a stance. As she likes to remind people, Jocelyne is an heiress in a long line of secretaries whose role as protectress has always been decisive for the preservation of archives. The exemplary commitment of Fanny Galloy—the first to occupy the position in 1925—seems to have profoundly influenced those who follow in the role. It is to her that we owe the survival of the documentary collection under the Occupation, during which the psychical research activities of the IMI were closely watched by the German authorities. Jocelyne’s daily work is to keep the soul of the place alive.

A Cabinet of Supernatural Curiosities

Here I am, once again, busy rummaging through the innumerable boxes piled up in the closets of the IMI. I tirelessly engage in the same ritual, hoping on every occasion to make new discoveries, like I have done from the beginning of my research devoted to the relationships maintained by the pioneers of telecommunication techniques with the occult sciences.

The IMI is celebrating 100 years of existence this year. The treasures in this library still bear the traces of the struggles and conflicts that were necessary for its official recognition on April 23, 1919. The decree signed that day by Raymond Poincaré, then president of the Republic of France, granted the community of metapsychists the coveted status of “foundation recognized of public utility.” The efforts French researchers had made since the end of the nineteenth century to try to extract hypnosis and other controversial phenomena from the field of superstitions were rewarded (albeit nearly forty years after the creation of the Society for Psychical Research in London). These French researchers could finally claim to be *scientific*, like their peers in the field of physics, chemistry, and biology. The quest for scientific legitimacy has always been accompanied by a certain aversion to different forms of belief,

as IMI’s slogan emphasizes: “The paranormal, we do not believe in it. We study it.” However, the IMI would not be what it is today without the financial support of Jean Meyer, their rich Spiritist patron, who especially endowed the institute with a real laboratory that was entirely dedicated to the study of unexplained phenomena.

The omnipresence of texts of spiritualistic obedience among the thousands of volumes gathered here recalls the heavy moral debt of the IMI toward the doctrine of Allan Kardec. I must admit that

The boxes are real machines to travel in time. We see images of the mediums following each other in front of Parisians in need of thrill: the trances of the Austrian Rudi Schneider (1908-1957), whose climaxes of crisis were accompanied by uncontrollable jolts and sometimes even ejaculations;

reading such books has always been synonymous for me with deep boredom. Fortunately, there are some exceptions to the rule. The one published in 1916 by Léon Chevreuil on the survival of the soul is a good example. Jules Bois (1894, p. 7) designated such texts under the pretty name of “trinkets of sanctuary” because their main quality resided, according to him, in the astonishing strength of resistance that they could oppose to the ambient skepticism. This little jewel of Occultist literature, soberly titled *We Do Not Die*, offers to those who seize a delicious mixture of esoteric discourse, experimental psychology, and poetry: “It is not because of the functions of the liver and the spleen that we have the love of truth, of good and of beauty, which arouses indignation, and which gives vent to enthusiasm; these come from psychical forces,” writes Chevreuil. “These forces exist so much that, in the history of humanity, they have always triumphed over the satanic forces of matter, they are the ones who won the Battle of the Marne.” If Chevreuil has since fallen into anonymity, the author of this book was, it should be remembered, one of the first winners of the prestigious Fanny-Emden Award, implemented by the Academy of Sciences to reward research aimed at analyzing “suggestion, hypnotism, and in general all the physiological actions that can be exercised at a distance by the human organism.”



Alongside these old grimoires attract my attention, but so do other boxes, including wooden boxes. I recognize them: they contain the impressive collection of stereoscopic plates devoted to the mediumistic phenomena. The first three decades of existence of the IMI are here and I cannot help myself, each time I come, to contemplate the images.

The boxes are real machines to travel in time. We see images of the mediums following each other in front of Parisians in need of thrill: the trances of the Austrian Rudi Schneider (1908-1957), whose climaxes of crisis were accompanied by uncontrollable jolts and sometimes even ejaculations; ectoplasms emerging from the nose and vagina of Marthe Béraud (1886-1969); or even those extraordinary animals that Polish Jean Guzik (1876-1928) was show-

ing during his sessions. Before me are images of a bygone era where mediums willingly lent themselves to the game of scientists to prove their so-called “abilities.” If, in the aftermath of World War I, such experiments responded to a heavy social demand toward exploring the departed, it goes without saying that they also served as an outlet that enabled all kinds of impulses and perversions, care of the implemented devices. Submission techniques as well as the ingenuity of the scientists rivaled some whims of thinly veiled sexual domination. Mediums were stripped, subjected to extensive gynecological examinations, and forced to swallow emetics and laxatives to avoid any risk of concealment of objects. While some experimenters of the time thought it necessary to wrap the hands and feet of their subjects with ropes, others, more

zealous, did not hesitate to fix a necklace around the neck of their guinea pigs who were connected to one of the walls of the room—this was done to avoid any suspicious movement during the experiment. Hindered and bound, the medium was then placed in the heart of a device close to bondage and other sadomasochistic games. Freaky.

Charles Richet, a Metapsychic Monster

Wedge behind their glass pane of a frame, faces are watching me. These are the fathers of French metapsychics. They keep an eye on the place they helped create in the aftermath of World War I. (The library alone contains six thousand works!) The austere man in the center, proudly displaying his English brushed mustaches, is Charles Richet (1850-1935), one of the first presidents of the institute. He received the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for his study of anaphylaxis in 1913, and he coined the terms “ectoplasm.” Richet also created the word “metapsychics” because he wanted a word to encompass a vast and diverse field of research: telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, telekinesis, miraculous healings, and survival of the soul after death and its various post mortem manifestations.

So much for the laurels. A quick glance at his political writings is

enough to dispel the enthusiasm that this explorer of the margins can arouse. Behind the varnish of the painting, another face is revealed, thus delivering a less brilliant image of the scientist. In the year of his appointment as honorary president of the IMI, Richet took the lead of the French Society of Eugenics, convinced that his commitment to “improvement of the race” could bear fruit. In *The Stupid Man*, he did not hesitate to assert that “Negroes” were apart from “white humanity” and “still, even in the midst of Whites, to live a vegetative existence, without anything produce only carbonic acid and urea,” thus proving their inferiority to “squirrels and monkeys in the hierarchy of intelligence” (Richet, 1919a, p. 9). In many respects, Richet’s eugenics bears the imprint of boundless abjection: “After the elimination of the inferior races, the first step in the path of selection is the elimination of the abnormal,” he wrote. “I’m going to be called a monster because I prefer healthy kids to crazy kids, and I do not see any social need to keep kids up.” (Richet, 1919b, p. 163) The question of eugenics and Richet is obviously a topic sensitive to the IMI, but that’s not to say it’s taboo. The austere look of other grumpy people hanging on the walls of the library also reminds me of this.

The other faces include the astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), keen on Spiritual-

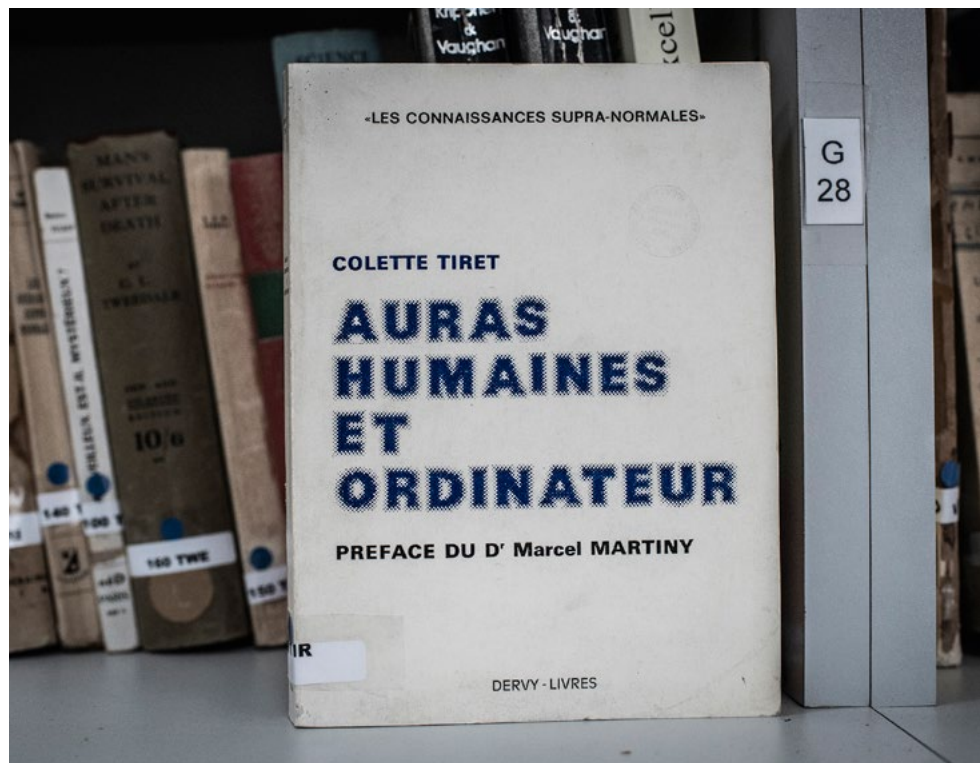
ism; the biologist Rémy Chauvin (1913-2009) who, parallel to his courses at the Sorbonne, conducted research in the field of ufology; the chemist René Warcollier (1881-1962), whose telepathic experiments carried out from the 1950s inspired Americans and the famous Stargate military program, designed to study the possible applications of remote viewing; and the doctor Gustave Geley (1868-1924), first director of the IMI.

The Ectoplasm Factory

Most representatives of French metapsychics (the possible exception is Flammarion and his famous *Popular Astronomy*, which sold over a hundred thousand copies when it was published in 1879) belong to the story of the “vanquished.” Repressed, forgotten, despised: the mistrust of these men

“A library is first and foremost a place populated by ghosts, almost faceless inhabitants, eyes downcast,” notes Arlette Farge in one of her texts.

in the place of academic science has earned them removal from official memory. The case of Gustave Geley, one work of his I hold in my hands, is a striking example. Nearly a century after its publication, who still reads his treatise *Ectoplasmy and Clairvoyance*? Geley was undoubtedly, alongside Charles Richet, one of the greatest specialists in “ectoplasmic materi-





alizations.” The whitish ectoplasms presented themselves in a light and consistent appearance, stringy, like a piece of cloth that could have been shredded.

According to the observations of the German physician Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862-1929), ectoplasm’s sticky and milky texture could give rise to various figures ranging from a simple vaporous cloud to a human face. Fascinated by these strange materializations, Geley organized at IMI a series of experiments with Polish medium Franek Kluski (1873-1943), reputed to be one of the greatest

specialists in the field. The strictest controls were put in place for the occasion: access to the room had been locked, a red light was on to detect any suspicious movement and the hands of the medium were held permanently by a controller on each side to avoid any fraudulent manipulation. It is in these strict and rigorous observation conditions that luminous forms with a human appearance were observed. During one of the sessions, Geley had the idea to place in the center of the room a tub containing a thick layer of paraffin floating on the surface of

electrically heated water; then he ordered the “entities” to plunge their hands into the burning wax: “They were illuminated by luminous points placed at the digital extremities. They walked slowly before our eyes, plunged into the tub, dabbled for a moment, always came out bright, then finally came to deposit the mold, still hot, against one of my hands” (Geley, 1924, p. 243), he notes in his report. By pouring plaster into the thin pockets of paraffin, Geley says that he obtained curious molds. The molds have since been stored in a safe and are today the pride

of the IMI. Small in size, similar to those of a child, these “hands,” which I have had the chance to contemplate several times, surprisingly present features of wear similar to adult hands. As Geley recalls in his book, these objects were entrusted to Edmond Bayle, then director of the forensic identification service at the Paris police headquarters, for an anthropometric examination. The impressions found on the plasters were compared to those of Kluski and Geley without any identification being established. The way these molds formed remains unexplained to this day.

Vertigo of the Archive

Is it the anguishing atmosphere of the place or the evocative power of the books that make me feel like something else is being played out at the IMI? It's as if the library of the institute exercises a secret influence over me, directing the slightest of my actions, the least of my thoughts, and then condemning my mind to wander like a specter in a haunted house. “A library is first and foremost a place populated by ghosts, almost faceless inhabitants, eyes down-cast,” notes Arlette Farge in one of her texts. Without being aware of it, the silence and the reverence which reigns in a reading room impose on the bodies of its visitors a formidable discipline: “Body



Among the outsiders that the IMI has in publications is the case of Yvonne Duplessis which occupies, like that of Léon Couette, a place of first order.

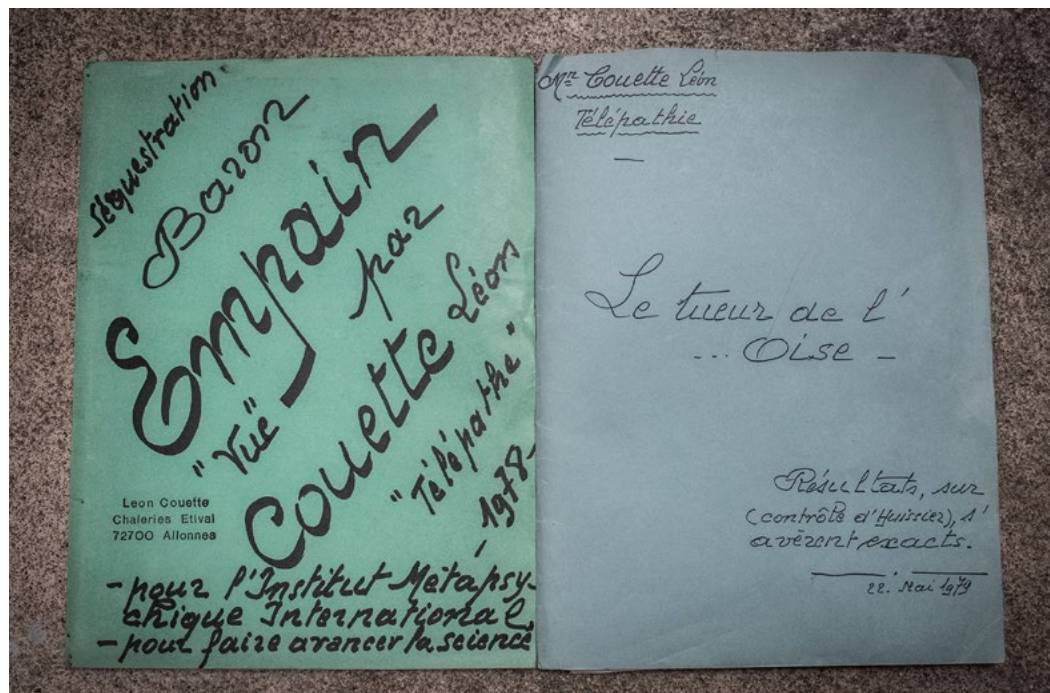
seemingly appeased, body without monstration, body bent, everything indicates that the game of science can be organized only by having dominated the body, having removed the expression and the gestures" (Farge, 2003). This almost prison-like vision of a body devoted to reading, wholly subject to the authority of a space that requires it to be sedated and immobilized, must not be made forgotten, as if the reader were in another equally confusing dimension. Every reading room is in itself a border post. The point of passage to the unknown which it authorizes crossing. "And when he passed the bridge, the ghosts came to meet him," reads one of the headings of Murnau's film, *Nosferatu*. We cross the metaphorical threshold of the library of metapsychists like we cross the Styx of the Ancients, the river that separates, in Greek mythology, the world of the living from that

of the dead. I believe that there is no better way than this one to describe the experience that the visitor experiences in contact with the books of the institute. Georges Didi-Huberman is right to say that there is a "vertigo of the archive" (Didi-Huberman, 1998, p. 14).

Since I regularly attend the IMI library, the vertigo is a familiar feeling. Often, I like to think that all the manuscripts are living beings. That their manipulation can then resuscitate the forms of life they contain, the same ones that, frozen in their little paper coffins, implore the visitor to awaken them from too long a sleep. The books of the IMI are literally magnetic. When I make physical contact with them, I often have the feeling of reconnecting with a back-world that silence would

otherwise obscure. A soul-filled back-world to which our usual senses would have hitherto denied us access. "There are a lot of people in the [library] room, but we do not feel them," said Rilke. "They are in the books. Sometimes they move between the leaves, like men who sleep, and turn between two dreams" (Rilke, 1966, p. 40).

Reading can therefore be understood as a personal experience of fantasy. When I sit at a desk, I become, so to speak, my own specter. To seize the spirit of words, to lend appearance to the characters are so many operations that can take place only after having abandoned, a little bit, any personal concern to live. Perhaps it would be more judicious to speak of hallucinatory experience in this respect, the very one spoken of by Jules Michelet





when he mentioned his first visit to the National Archives: “in the apparent silence of these galleries, [...] there was a movement, a murmur that was not death. These papers, these parchments, left there since a long time, did not ask for anything better than to come back to the day. These papers are not papers, but lives of men, provinces, peoples [...]. All lived and spoke, they surrounded the author of an army with a hundred languages [...]. Gently, gentlemen the dead, let’s go by order, please [...]. And as I blew on their dust, I saw them

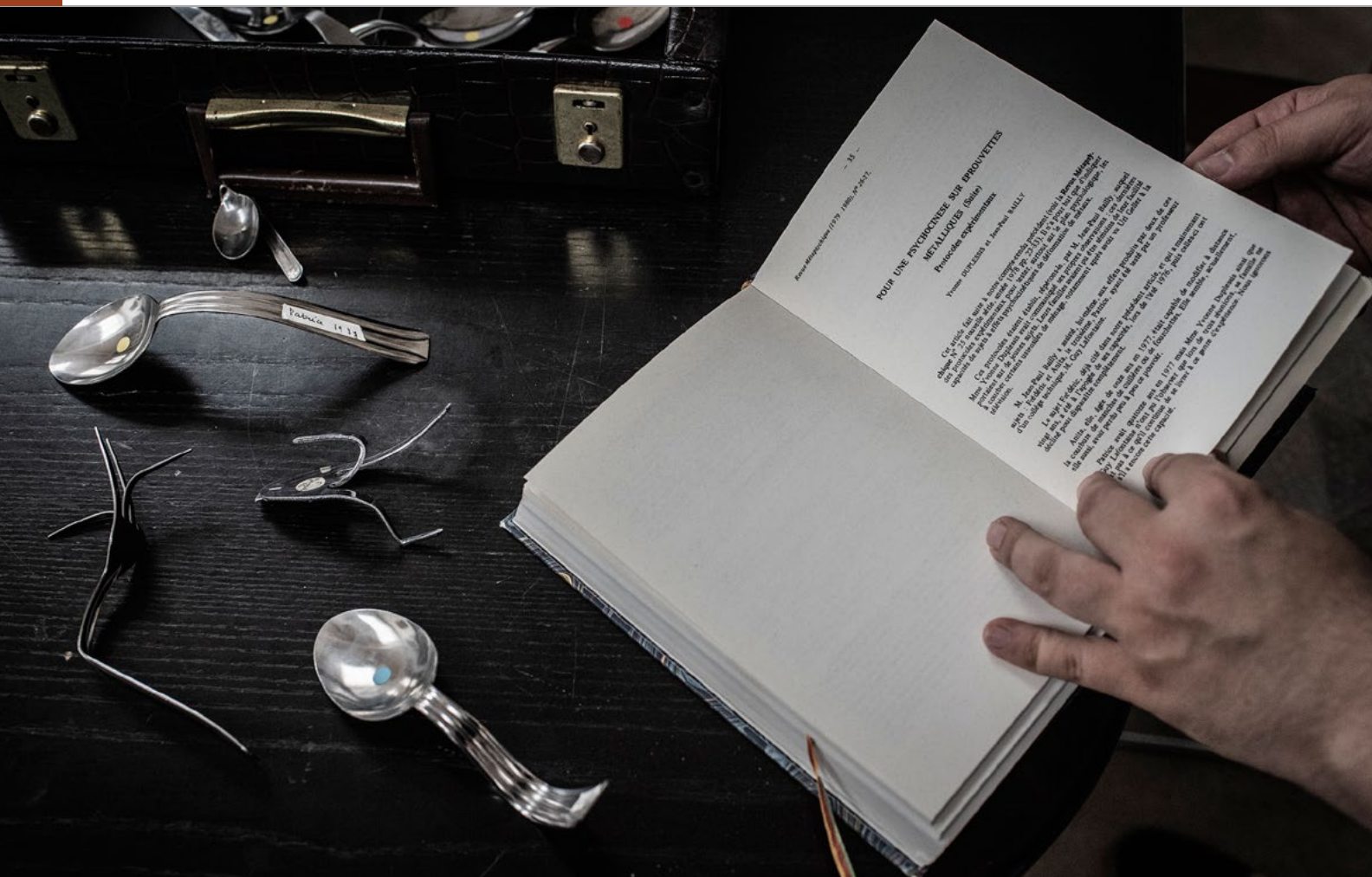
rise. They were shooting from the sepulcher that’s holding their hand, as in Michelangelo’s Last Judgment, or in the Dance of the Dead” (Michelet, 1974, p. 613-614).

Twisted Spirits

In many ways, the IMI’s archives are reminiscent of The Brautigan Library, an institution founded in 1990 by Todd Lockwood in the small town of Burlington, Vermont (USA), where the collection comprises manuscripts rejected by publishers, unpublished works,

and most of the time, non-publishable works. Literary fools, bizarre books, whimsical treatises: these are as many accidents of literature as aborted books, or disowned by the world of publishing, who rub shoulders there.

The name of the place was chosen in tribute to the writer Richard Brautigan and his book entitled *The Abortion*, in which was described a similar museum of errors. Like The Brautigan Library, the IMI library offers its visitors an astonishing collection of literary incongruities and pseudoscientific



curiosities.

The self-edited books and other small magazines in the library of the IMI are probably the best surprises. *Human Auras and Computer* is precisely one of these nuggets. Published in 1976, it is one of the strange works that we owe to Colette Tiret. In the aftermath of World War II, this passionate parapsychologist created, with the help of her husband magistrate, the Society of Psychical Studies of Marseille. Fervent defenders of the Spiritist doctrine, the Tiret couple were convinced that the human soul survived death. In 1947, they

had published *The Invisible World Speaks to You*, a sort of romanticized account of the sittings in which an alleged entity named Albién had manifested and then delivered prophecies to its guests. Colette Tiret continued her work after the death of her husband; she researched (during the 1970s) the links between machines and the afterlife, convinced that some radiation unknown to humans (the auras) could, under certain conditions, appear on computer screens. It was during the same period that the private investigator Léon Couette contacted the IMI to offer his

members his “telepathic” services. This curious character claimed to be able to penetrate through mere force of thought the mind of an individual, criminal or victim, and then draw exploitable clues. During 1978, he thus communicated in writing the “visions” obtained in connection with several criminal cases, including the “killer of the Oise” (a case that became famous). As can be seen in the numerous letters still preserved by the IMI, the proximity between the descriptions Couette made of the killer and the reality is most disturbing. Systematically filing the result of

Whether it's Geley's ectoplasmic molds, Couette's telepathic investigations or even Duplessis' psychokinetic experiments, these extraordinary archives recall how much science is inseparable from failure.

his “investigations” with a bailiff, Couette was convinced of his quasi-divine mission, which only future generations would be able to recognize one day the interest and relevance.

Among the outsiders that the IMI has in publications is the case of Yvonne Duplessis which occupies, like that of Léon Couette, a place of first order. In 1976, she led experiments on the phenomenon of psychokinesis that was claimed to be produced by three teenagers. The medium Uri Geller had managed to bend different objects by the mere force of the will, and these children had surprised their entourage by producing similar phenomena. Duplessis secured agreement of the teenagers' families, and then



subjected the young teenagers to a series of tests in which they were simply asked to reproduce the famous bendings. Amazing results were then obtained: the kitchen utensils planned for the needs of the experiment gradually bent, sometimes revealing complex shapes as can still be seen on the forks and other cutlery that the IMI possesses. Whether it was copper, stainless steel, or steel, nothing seemed to resist to the “psychic force” of the young prodigies. Duplessis pursued the research until the late 1970s because one teenager was reputed to be a particularly successful subject. Duplessis designed new research protocols, then used photography. The young subject was equipped with a Polaroid camera without flash and placed in a dark room to test his ability to make impres-

sions on the film in the absence of any light. He was then asked to reproduce the target image he had previously viewed. There are thirty photographs currently held at IMI, and we can distinguish curious evanescent forms that let us glimpse a Calvary, a bicycle, animals, and a sun. These many traces are, according to parapsychologists, testament to the action of the mind exerting effects on matter.

The books and documents that make up the library of the IMI are far more, I believe, than mere objects of extravagance and fantastical beliefs. The books and documents are the vestiges of aberrant phenomena, the fossils of an unknown civilization, buried in the depths of the unconscious, and reading them brings them back to life in a certain way. Whether it's Geley's ectoplas-

mic molds, Couette's telepathic investigations or even Duplessis' psychokinetic experiments, these extraordinary archives recall how much science is inseparable from failure. Benjamin Franklin said that "the history of humanity's errors" was "more precious than that of his discoveries," situations of failure giving the soul "the space to expand, to make proof of his boundless faculties and all his beautiful extravagances and absurdities" (Franklin, 1784, p. 17-18). There are many examples of this in the innumerable documents housed in the library of metapsychists. The contents are on the margins of scientific knowledge, and they frame official science in their own way, revealing through their aberrations the anxieties surrounding scientific theories. Far from wanting to denounce the supposed hermetism of scientific knowledge, they express a wish to perfect it, and thus perhaps leave a glimpse of a form of hidden wisdom in them. For these same reasons, they can also be seen as "works," in the full sense of the term, and in their own way compose a veritable "cabinet of supernatural curiosities" worthy of aesthetic interest. These archives, marked by a sometimes disconcerting dramatic intensity, display the features of an authentic machine to travel in time that replaces the reader in the position of the witness of a differ-

ent era, plunged into the penumbra of scientific thought that lives in IMI's rooms of experimentation. Bizarre for some, frightening for others, they retain, more than ever, their power of suggestion and never stop, for that, to challenge us. The frightful, said Rilke, is "what, deprived of help, wants us to help him." On reflection, these books and other objects that make this place an authentic "library of hauntings" seem, behind their monstrous ornaments, they are asking of us such a rescue. Moreover, they renew the vow formerly formulated by the author of the *Letters to a Young Poet* when he spoke about the imperative duty of man to face the unknown and not to isolate himself in "some safe place from the shore." You have to learn to make yourself available to the "river of infinite possibilities," said Rilke. "It is basically the only courage we demand of us : to be brave towards what, coming to us, is the most bizarre, the most surprising, the most inexplicable. That men have been cowardly has caused infinite harm to life; the lived experiences that we call 'apparitions,' all that we call 'the spirit world,' death, all this, which is so closely related to us, has found itself, by the daily resistance, so well pushed out of life that the senses that allowed its seizure have withered. Only the one who is ready for anything, and does not exclude anything,

not even the most enigmatic, will live the relationship with someone else as a living thing, and will exhaust his own existence" (Rilke, 1996, p. 70-72).

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Relevant

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

In a relatively short period of time we were again able to find quite a few recent publications that are relevant to the field.

The growing number of scientific articles that are published on paranormal subjects increasingly reflect the large popular interest in the parapsychological domain.

In this installment of *Mindfield's* bibliographic column we present 72 new titles that appeared in 61 different mainstream journals. Some journals provided several articles. Most titles were obtained from *Religions* (5), and *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice* (3). Two relevant studies appeared in each of the following journals: *Anthropology of Consciousness*, *Journal of Religion and Health*, *Social Compass*, *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* and *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses*. The grand total of articles in this series of bibliographies hereby reaches 1985.

A few themes showed up more often than others in the selected references: We found twelve studies about dissociation, trance mediumship or possession; eight

historical studies of the paranormal and seven on near-death experiences.

Bibliographic input from our colleagues Alejandro Parra and Thomas Rabeyron are appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. As always we request members to forward relevant recent articles to mauricevanluijtelaa4@outlook.com or evrardrenaud@gmail.com

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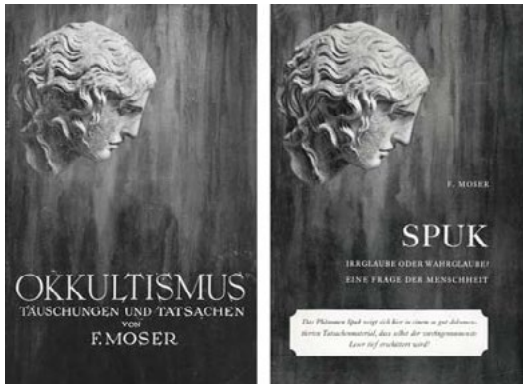
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Fanny Moser Award



Description: Dr. Fanny Moser (1872–1953) was one of the first women to study medicine and natural sciences in Freiburg, Zurich and Munich. She received her doctorate in 1902 with a zoological thesis. In 1914, she took part in a mediumistic séance and witnessed a spectacular table levitation that shattered her scientific world view. In the following decades, supported by a unique source collection and research library, Fanny Moser undertook a critical examination and reappraisal of the entire field of Mesmerism, Hypnotism, Spiritism, Occultism and early parapsychological research up to the 1930s, which led to the publication of her opus magnum *Okkultismus – Täuschungen und Tatsachen* (München, 1935, Reprint 1977). Together with her second major volume *Spuk – Irrglaube oder Wahrglaube? Eine Frage der Menschheit* (Zürich, 1950; Reprint 1977), published in 1950, Fanny Moser bequeathed – from a historical point of view – two groundbreaking works on German-language parapsychological research.



In her will, Fanny Moser decided to create a foundation to establish and secure research in the tradition of her two works. She assigned this task to the pioneer of academic parapsychological research after the Second World War, the Freiburg professor of psychology Hans Bender (1907–1991), and to the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene e.V (IGPP) founded by him in 1950. Fanny Moser thus became the IGPP's first patron, and her legacy enabled a part of the Institute's research and counseling work to be carried out in a modest

way for decades. The testamentary decree also stipulated that a prize should be awarded regularly for the "best work" on the research topics she herself had studied. This prize was awarded for the first time in 1982; Eberhard Bauer (IGPP Freiburg) is the only winner to date. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the IGPP in 2020, the testamentary decree is to be fully enacted. The Fanny Moser Award is endowed with 3,000 euros and is to be awarded regularly every three years.

Requirement: The prize is to be awarded to a scientifically published work (including outstanding qualification work). The publication must be explicitly related to Fanny Moser's research on paranormal and anomalistic experiences and phenomena. The subject can be empirical-experimental, theoretical-conceptual, clinical-therapeutic, natural scientific, art historical, cultural scientific, social scientific or historical. The publication of the work should not have taken place more than three years ago and should document an outstanding academic achievement.

Modalities: Proposals and applications must be sent to the jury by email by **15 January 2020**. They should contain the following documents: a copy of the scientific work to be considered, a letter of application and a curriculum vitae. The award ceremony is expected to take place in Freiburg in May 2020.

Email: Fanny-Moser-Preis@igpp.de

Internet: <http://www.igpp.de>

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