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Presenting the First Issue of Mindfield

Etzel Cardeña, Editor



From left to right: Daryl Bem, Etzel Cardeña, Stephen Braude, Arthur Hastings, Julie Beischel, and Wendy Cousins taken at the 52nd Annual PA Meeting in Seattle.

You hold in your virtual (or real) hands the first issue of *Mindfield: The Bulletin of the Parapsychological Association*, which replaces the *PA e-Newsletter*. The changes from a newsletter (which mostly provides news) to a bulletin (that also includes substantial articles) follows the move to offer PA members more services and content for their annual dues. The title is of course a game of words about how our area of study relates to both the mind, conscious or unconscious, and how such study requires the courage to traverse a field full of conceptual mines, avoiding mindless “pseudoskeptical” or “believer” traps.

This number includes first contributions to what will be recurring columns in *Mindfield*. It starts with a column from our president, David Luke. Charley (Carlitos) Tart initiates a series on Reflections by some of our most distinguished elders about their careers and our field. Caroline Watt, from the Koestler Parapsychology Unit, describes an important parapsychology laboratory. Gerd M. Hovelmann calls for parapsychology to become more multidisciplinary, an idea that was also central to the vision of the later Robert Morris and one that I fully endorse. Gerd provides a bibliography of some recent articles that should be of interest to many if not most of us. A special feature

is the article that summarizes the thought-provoking and brilliant presentation by the invited speaker to our meeting, Donald Hoffman, Professor in the Department of Cognitive Science at the University of California, Irvine. On the basis of recent findings in perception and evolutionary modeling he challenges the perspective that consciousness is caused by neural processes. For those interested in reading more about the problems with a materialist position of consciousness I recommend also the impressive book *The Irreducible Mind* by E. Kelly et al.

Admittedly biased having been president then, I nonetheless think that the PA Meeting at Seattle was excellent (and I received a number of comments to that effect). There were many attendants from the Seattle community and I hope that future PA meetings will make efforts to reach out to the interested local community, besides the “usual suspects.” Thanks to Program Chair, John Palmer, Executive Secretary Annalisa Ventola, Arrangements Chair Leila Kozak, and the people assisting them (Susie DeMarinis and Alison Easter); all the arrangements ran like a Swiss clock and the program contained fascinating presentation on a variety of topics. They included a panel on the contributions of the late Gertrude Schmeidler, practical applications of psi, conscious and non-conscious processes and psi, the relationship between contemporary physics and psi, some of my thoughts on what parapsychology could learn from the developments in hypnosis (and recall that the first important committee of the SPR focused on mesmerism), and many more. I invite you, if you have not already done so, to download the 2009 Convention Abstracts from the members-only Parapsychological Association website at parapsych.clubexpress.com.

I trust that your promenades through this and future *Mindfields* will be safe, and leave you unscathed and more enthusiastic about the endless possibilities within our fascinating area of inquiry.

53rd Annual Parapsychological Association Convention

**Enclos Rey - Paris, France
July 22, 2010 - July 25, 2010**



Program Chair: Dr. Nicola Holt

Arrangements Chair: Dr. Mario P. Varvoglis

Local Host: Institut Métapsychique International

L'Enclos Rey, a convent situated in the Parisian 15th sector, will be the site of the 2010 PA convention. The convent features a 6000 meter garden within its walls, and can accommodate overnight guests at budget rates. With its urban location, there are many hotels, restaurants, and sight-seeing activities within walking distance of Enclos Rey.

The first day of the convention will be a public-friendly event hosted by IMI, featuring introductory parapsychology lectures in French (with English translation). The IMI day will be followed by three days of PA convention activities.

Further information about the convention will soon be available at www.parapsych.org

From the PA President

David Luke

Thank you to all the members who voted during the recent election. Alongside Stephan Schwartz, Gerd Hövelmann and John Palmer (the new Secretary), whom I would like to welcome, I have now joined the board. I would like to thank the outgoing Etzel Cardeña, Daryl Bem, Chris Roe and Caroline Watt for their excellent work. There have also been a few other role changes. After several years of highly able stewardship of both the PA website and the PA Newsletter, Rick Berger is handing over editorship of this new look Bulletin to Etzel Cardeña, and the new webmaster is Jeremy Parnell who will be updating and expanding the website in the coming months. My thanks to Rick Berger for all his hard work over the years and for

his continued work as a director. Furthermore, Harvey Irwin takes over from Dean Radin as Chair of the Gants Committee, so many thanks to Dean for his work and welcome Harvey.

Taking up my first position on the board I was pleasantly surprised to find how active the directors are, communicating and working everyday to run and continually improve the PA for the benefit of its members and the field itself. So it's not just a great honour but a serious challenge to take hold of the fast moving and purposeful Presidential baton that has been passed to me by Prof. Cardeña, and I look forward to serving my two years in office, rather than the previous one. Initially I'll be continuing with some of the pro-

jects begun by the previous incumbents, such as expanding the Association's membership by encouraging new members to join, especially students. And emulating the Past President I would like to invite you all to help in this recruitment drive by promoting the PA amongst your colleagues and students as a professional organisation that can both benefit them and help to strengthen and develop our field of research. I will also be introducing a number of new initiatives, for which I will be soliciting the genius, creativity and opinion of the members at various points. I hope that our new online voting system and discussion forums will facilitate this important collective contribution. Onwards and upwards!



Dr. David Luke
2009-2011 PA President

Check Your Email Spam Filters for PA News and Announcements

It has come to the PA office's attention that many of our emails about important news and announcements are being filtered from members'/affiliates' email accounts and/or winding up in their spam folders. Please take a moment to check your filters and make sure that emails from mailer@mail2.clubexpress.com are going to your inbox.

If you are using a university or business address for PA communications, your email administrator may be filtering out our emails automatically. If that is the case, consider updating your PA profile information with your personal email address, or ask your email administrator to allow emails from the IP Address 208.66.171.70 and domain mail2.clubexpress.com. Questions? Contact the executive secretary at business@parapsych.org.

New PA Web 2.0 Tools

The PA is now employing an RSS feed to deliver its breaking news. RSS stands for 'really simple syndication' and it's a convenient way to share information at multiple web locations simultaneously. Now you can use your favorite RSS reader (i.e. Google Reader, Bloglines, etc.) to keep up with what's happening with the association via <http://www.parapsych.org/breaking-news.rss>, or you can find the news directly at our site at <http://www.parapsych.org/breaking-news.html>. These links will keep you up-to-date on PA news, calls for papers, convention news, calls for volunteers, fundraising efforts, PA members in the news, and other exciting developments in the field.

The PA has also established a presence on Facebook and Twitter. You can follow us via the following links:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Parapsychological-Association/108610488481>

<http://twitter.com/parapsych>

2009 Board and Business Meetings Summary

(based on the minutes from 2008-2009 PA Secretary Caroline Watt)

1) PARE grants were awarded to 3 individuals: David Marcusson-Clavertz to conduct research on hypnosis, ganzfeld, and psi, Carlos Alvarado to develop a questionnaire on OBEs, and Juan Corbetta for research on the history of spiritualism. Gilbert Roller grants were awarded to Peter Mulacz and Stephen Braude to conduct research on macro-PK with a sitter group in Austria, and to Rachel Browning for EVP research on a sitter group in Australia.

2) During 2008-2009, various decisions were taken including:

- a) Setting up a network of international liaisons.
- b) Creating a student representative position.
- c) Changing award procedures so that there is greater accountability.
- d) Discontinuing the practice of having proceedings with full papers to encourage wider publication of research findings
- e) Expanding membership categories to make them more accessible.
- f) Making office procedures more modern and agile.
- g) Establishing closer links with the SPR by having reduced fees for members of both societies

3) Although financially the PA continues to have more revenues than expenses, the membership base should be greatly expanded.

During the business meeting, a number of these issues were discussed, within the framework of making the PA both more professional and more accessible.

A fuller description of these and other points are accessible in the 2009 minutes, which are available at our members-only site at parapsych.clubexpress.com under 'PA Docs'.

Member News

1) Stan Krippner gave several presentations at the American Psychological Association Annual Meeting, and he chaired the symposium (which included a contribution by Bill Roll) The Neurobiology of Psychics and Mediums, discussed by Debbie Joffe Ellis, widow of the famed psychologist (and critic of psychical research) Albert Ellis.

2) Wendy Cousins co-organized the UK Skeptics Conference *Things that go bump in the brain: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Paranormal and Anomalous Experience*, which included presentations by her, Chris French, and Chris Roe among others. The abstracts are available online at <http://www.ukskeptics.com/documents/MuncasterAbstracts.pdf>

Please send notice of
important personal news, profes-
sional achievements, etc. to the
Editor at
etzel.cardena@psychology.lu.se

2009 New PA Members, Affiliates and Students

Full Members:

Ian Hume
Leila Kozak (former associate)
David Luke (former student)
Diana Powell
Michele Dinicastro
Peter Sturrock (former associate)

Associate Members:

Rachel Cooper
Julia Mossbridge
Jon Taylor

Affiliates:

Edward Deak
Enrique Diaz
Robert Ginsberg
Nuzhat Haneef
David Jespersen
Jane Katra
Sylvia Klimczak
Bertha Legra
George Matthias
Neil McNeil
Andrew Nowak
Eric Ouellet
Jeremy Parnell
Sibele Pilato
Stephanie Rowland
Roberto Schwarz
Mário P. Simões
Steven Volk
Patrick Weymouth
David Wheeler
Sally Wilson
David Wimberly
Yvonne Wollersten
Robert Young

Students:

Brandon Fenton
Cristobal Fernandez
Rebecca Griebel
Ilya Gutierrez
Robert Ham
Ma Jun
Jashpreet Kaur
David Marcusson-Clavertz
Alessandro Martinisi
Stacy McGurk
Karen Metcalf
Edward Modestino
Maria Sanders
David Smith
Melissa Tierney
Dru Verbal
Tien van Vleet

2010 Election Update

The Bylaws of the Parapsychological Association have been revised to reflect changes in the time table for annual elections. In 2010, Mario Varvoglis will be stepping down from his role as Vice-President, and Rick Berger, Roger Nelson, Stefan Schmidt, and Jim Carpenter will be stepping down from the Board.

On or before January 20th, the Election Committee will issue a call to all Full Members inviting them to nominate candidates for the board and Vice-President using the polling area of our members-only site at parapsych.clubexpress.com. You may nominate yourself or others (after receiving their approval to do so). Attached to the call for nominations will be a list of eligible members. **If you would like your name removed from this list, please contact the PA office by January 3rd.**

Nominations will be closed by February 20th. Two weeks after the close of nominations (around March 7th), the Election Committee shall prepare the final ballot. Annual elections will take place at the polling area of the members-only site, but members who request paper ballots during renewals will be sent one. **Please indicate in your renewal notice if you would like a paper ballot.** Elections will close after four weeks (around April 7th).

These changes in the timing of elections will allow time for newly elected board members to submit a paper and make travel arrangements for the annual convention. Board members receive travel reimbursements of up to \$345 for domestic travel and up to \$575 for overseas travel.

Nature and Consciousness

Donald D. Hoffman

What is the place of consciousness in nature? The standard view in science is that consciousness arrived late and will exit early. Nearly fourteen billion years ago, the Big Bang launched a universe replete with spacetime, matter and fields, but devoid of life or consciousness. On earth, life emerged less than four billion years ago, and consciousness sometime after that. Within the next five billion years, any flickers of consciousness that persist on earth will be snuffed out as the sun expands into a red giant, boiling away earth's water and atmosphere and, possibly, incinerating it in toto. Any flickers that exist elsewhere in the universe will be snuffed out a few billion years later, probably by a Big Rip in which all matter is torn apart by dark energy.

The standard view is that consciousness has a biological basis. Within the standard view, there are two main camps. Reductionists claim that consciousness and conscious experiences are *identical* to certain physical or functional processes of the brain. Emergentists claim that consciousness and conscious experiences *emerge* from physical or functional processes of the brain, but are not identical to these processes.

Neither camp has produced a bona fide scientific theory. There are, of course, hypotheses on offer. Perhaps, for instance, what is critical for conscious experiences are neuronal microtubules with special quantum properties, or re-entrant thalamo-cortical loops with certain informational properties, or a system of neurons that can act as a global clearing house. But, in each case, a miracle is needed at the critical step where consciousness appears. No one knows how to make the key move, from neural activity to conscious experience, without invoking, tacitly or explicitly, a miracle. This utter lack of plausible ideas for exorcising the miracle is well known and much discussed, often being referred to as the "hard problem" of consciousness.

The standard view is that the hard problem will be resolved as further empirical research, particularly into the

neural correlates of consciousness, uncovers critical facts and inspires new theoretical ideas. This is a defensible view, with precedents in its favor, such as the demystification of life that followed the discovery of the double-helical structure of DNA.

But the hard problem might instead be a symptom of a false assumption in the standard view. I suggest that this is indeed the case and propose, on evolutionary grounds, that a key false assumption is this: Consciousness has a biological basis.

My proposal is based on an analysis of the evolution of perception using the tools of evolutionary game theory. To understand this analysis, a brief background on current theories of perception

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using the tools of evolutionary game theory. To understand this analysis, a brief background on current theories of perception is helpful.

It is now well understood in the cognitive and neural sciences that perception is not just a passive record of an objective world, but is instead an active process of construction. Human vision, for instance, constructs all the colors, shapes, depths, motions and objects that we see. Research in computational vision has, in the last three decades, developed mathematical and computational models of this constructive process that are sufficiently precise to be implemented in working computer-vision systems.

The thesis that perception is construction is now widely accepted. But in addition,

a second, stronger, thesis is also widely accepted: Perception is *reconstruction*. The idea is that our perceptual constructions estimate true properties of the real world. The colors, shapes, depths and motions that we see are the best estimates that our visual systems can construct of the true colors, shapes, depths and motions in the environment.

The argument typically given for this stronger thesis is evolutionary: Natural selection favors those who see more truly. More accurate perceptions are more fit; we are the offspring of those who happened to see more truly.

This argument has *prima facie* plausibility, but, of course, must be subjected to the normal process of scientific testing. One appropriate and powerful way to test it is provided by the tools of evolutionary game theory. Within a computer simulation, we can create a variety of artificial environments and a variety of perceptual strategies that compete for resources in those environments, we can let these strategies compete for thousands of generations and then see if, in fact, truer perception confers a selective advantage.

In general, it doesn't. Quite often a simple perceptual heuristic, one that does not see the truth but instead uses simple tricks, will drive true perception to extinction. This might be surprising, until one recognizes that information is not free. For every bit of information that perception gleans about the environment there is a cost in time and energy. In evolution, the race is to the swift and frugal. Slower perceptions make one easier prey; more complex perceptions require more calories to compute, calories for which one must forage and kill.

Natural selection shapes perception to be a collection of fast and cheap tricks that happen to work in some niche. Truth is too slow and expensive a strategy and, should it happen to arise, is quickly driven to extinction. A humorous example of the strategies that confer survival is given by the jewel beetle *Julodimorpha backewelli*. Male beetles have a simple perceptual heuristic for finding

females: look for their wing casings, which are brown, glossy and dimpled. As it happens, glossy brown beer bottles, with dimples for a better grip, appeal to this heuristic more powerfully than do real female beetles. The result is that the males forsake the females and swarm the beer bottles, attempting to copulate. Their perceptual heuristic worked well in their niche for millennia; the introduction of beer bottles into their niche foiled the heuristic and threatened to drive the species extinct.

The computer desktop, with its windows interface, is a useful analogy for the kind of perception that confers survival. A blue, rectangular icon in the lower right corner of the screen represents a file, but the file itself is not blue, rectangular or in the lower right corner of the computer. The icon is useful even though it is not true; its color, shape and position are not true reports of the color, shape and position of the file. Indeed, the icon is useful, in part, because it is not true. The icon is there to hide the truth, to hide the complexity of diodes, resistors, and magnetic fields.

Perception is like a user interface. It is useful in part because it hides the truth. We see the results of this throughout biological nature in the forms of mimicry, camouflage and supernormal stimuli.

Spacetime is the desktop of the user interface of *Homo sapiens*. Objects in spacetime are among the icons of this interface. Colors, textures, shapes, smells, sounds and pitches are among the properties of these icons. This desktop and its icons are useful, in part, because they are not true. They are

tricks that let *Homo sapiens* survive long enough to reproduce. Perception is construction, but it is not reconstruction.

Perhaps less intuitively, the brain and its neurons, are also among the icons of our interface. They are the result of simple perceptual tricks, shaped by natural selection, that hide the truth. Neurons are the symbols *Homo sapiens* happens to use; they are not estimates of the true structures and causes in nature. Neurons resemble objective reality as much as a blue rectangular icon resembles a file; which is to say, not at all.

So the assumption that consciousness has a biological basis is false. Neurons are no more responsible for the appearance of consciousness than a blue rectangular icon is responsible for the existence of a file. Seen in this light, the hard problem of consciousness becomes an artifact of a false assumption.

This false assumption is a special case of a much larger, and widely held, false assumption: Objects in spacetime have causal powers.

Objects in spacetime appear to us as they do because of the way *Homo sapiens* happens to be shaped by natural selection to see. Objects and their properties do not reveal the true structures and causes in nature. Objects are simply icons employed in our user interface.

This interface theory invites the following question: If that train speeding down the tracks is simply an icon of your user interface, why don't you step in front of it?

The answer is that I won't step in front of

the train for the same reason that I won't carelessly drag a file icon to the trash can. Although I don't take the file icon *literally* (the file is not blue or rectangular), I do take it *seriously*. Dragging the icon to the trash has real consequences; I could lose many hours of work. Similarly, our perceptual icons have been shaped by natural selection to facilitate our survival: A panther icon is a good cue to run, a cliff icon a good cue to stand back. We had better take these icons seriously. But we need not take them literally.

It is natural to worry, at this point, that the argument here leads inevitably to skepticism, i.e., to the conclusion that humans can know nothing about objective reality. It doesn't. It merely discards a particularly simplistic theory of perception and reality, a theory that says our perceptions substantially resemble objective reality. The skeptic might be right; it is well known that skeptical arguments cannot be logically refuted. But the interface theory of perception does not entail skepticism, nor does it entail ignoring the data of neuroscience. It allows science to proceed with the normal cycle of hypothesis and experiment to refine its theories of the relation between perception and reality. Discarding a particularly simplistic theory is, in this regard, good progress.

As this progress continues, we will find new frameworks within which to address our first question: What is the place of consciousness in nature?



Donald Hoffman, PhD, Professor of Cognitive Sciences at the University of California, Irvine, delivered the J.B. Rhine Address at the banquet of the 52nd Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association at the University of Washington in Seattle. His talk, titled *Consciousness and the Interface Theory of Perception* presented a non-materialist solution to the mind-body problem. More information about Dr. Hoffman's research and activities can be found at his personal website:

<http://www.cogsci.uci.edu/personnel/hoffman/hoffman.html>

Acknowledgement: Dr. Hoffman thanks Julia Mossbridge for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

Reflections: How I Got Into Parapsychology

Charles T. Tart

To my conscious knowledge, two major forces brought me into parapsychology. The earliest was my childhood religion, Lutheranism. My parents weren't religious but my maternal grandmother, who lived in the apartment downstairs from us, was very much so. Grandmothers, as so many of you personally know, are sources of unconditional love, so she took me to Sunday School and church, and what was good enough for her was good enough for me! I was quite devout as a child and early teenager.

The second major force was science. As early as I can remember I loved everything connected with science, and by the time I was a teenager I was very widely read, including a lot of "adult" books. I had my basement chemical and electrical laboratory, became a radio ham and built my own equipment, and wanted to be a scientist or engineer. Studying electronics and radio on my own, I was able to pass government tests and get a First Class Radiotelephone license, empowering me to operate commercial radio stations.

The teenage years are a time of starting to question what you've been taught and to think for yourself. I became aware, as most idealistic teens do, of the seeming hypocrisy of adults, those church people were not living what they preached! Worse yet, I knew now enough science to realize that most, if not all, religious ideas and beliefs were quite nonsensical from the point of view of science, just old superstitions. How could I reconcile this with the deep religious feelings that had begun in my childhood?

From an adult perspective, I know many teenagers go through similar conflicts between science and religion. A common "resolution" is

"I know many teenagers go through ...conflicts between science and religion. A common 'resolution' is to go to one extreme or the other: religion is all nonsense and materialistic science is right, or religion is the ultimate truth and science can be ignored when it's inconvenient."

to go to one extreme or the other: religion is all nonsense and materialistic science is right, or religion is the ultimate truth and science can be ignored when it's inconvenient. I put "resolution" in quotes, for as a psychologist I see this extremism as usually an incomplete and often psychologically costly way of dealing with the conflict, too much suppression of parts of our nature are involved.

Luckily my extensive reading – the Trenton city library was my second "home" – had included many older books on psychical research and parapsychology. I realized that many intelligent people had gone through conflicts similar to mine, and the founders of the Society for Psychical Research had come up with a brilliant idea. Instead of a wholesale rejection of all religion and spirituality and adoption of Materialism in whatever form was then scientifically fashionable, why not apply the methods of science, the insistence on accurate data collection, logical theorizing, testing of theories, and full and honest sharing of data and theory, to the phenomena of religion and spirituality? Why not examine and refine the data and devise more adequate theories? I was inspired by this idea, and it has been the central theme of my professional work and personal life ever since. Look at the data of spirituality (my preference is for individual spirituality rather than the group psychology of religion), see how to observe it more accurately, create and test theories about it, share these with colleagues, and slowly work our way toward a spirituality based on observable facts.

My first formal parapsychological experiment was a study of hypnotic suggestion as a (hoped for) way of producing out-of-body experiences (OBEs) while I was a sophomore at MIT, studying electrical engineering. Looking back it wasn't bad for a teenager, although I didn't have an objective way of evaluating the data (nor did the field as a whole). I didn't formally write the results up until many years later (Tart, C., 1998, Six studies of out-of-the-body experiences. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 17, No. 2, 73-99), by which time I had carried out five others studies of OBEs.



While at MIT I met other students interested in parapsychology and we formed a student club to talk about it and ask speakers to lecture us. One of those speakers was Andrija Puharich, whom Eileen Garrett, world-famous medium and head of the Parapsychology Foundation, had told me about. Here was a physician researcher who not only claimed to have a way of making telepathy work better or to shield it, he was doing it with electrical devices: Faraday Cages. What could be more intriguing to students of electrical engineering and physics?

Some of us visited Puharich's laboratory in Maine and thought his work seemed basically sound. He gave a lecture on his findings at MIT for our club, and I was intrigued enough – and needed the money! – to ask him for a summer job. So I saw some of his research up close for three months in 1957.

I was young and naïve, so didn't fully realize that, in spite of being rejected by mainstream science, the few parapsychologists around did not all band together in a friendly way to present a united front. There was a parapsychological establishment, centered in J. B. Rhine's laboratory at Duke, and Puharich was definitely not part of that establishment: he was a "bad boy." I

had already met Rhine when he came to lecture in Boston several times and corresponded with him. I wanted to switch from electrical engineering to psychology, to prepare for a career in parapsychology. MIT had no psychology programs, but Rhine helped me transfer to Duke as a psychology major, and he had indicated he would find a part-time job for me in his laboratory. Once I spent the summer working for Puharich, though, Rhine decided I did not have sufficient discrimination to make a scientific parapsychologist. The promised job disappeared: indeed, I was, a friend told me, put on the list of people to be discouraged from visiting Rhine's lab. I was a "bad boy" now myself, in a very minor way. (Above is a photo of me at Puharich's Maine laboratory, the Round Table Foundation).

Still an idealistic young man, I was naturally miffed over this treatment, although, as I matured, I realized I would have acted the same way as Rhine in a similar situation. If I had devoted my life to making a case for my field based on very careful, methodologically sophisticated research, I would discourage wild young people from getting involved and undermining my work with questionable work of their own. And just to tie up these beginning threads, Puharich became even more of a "bad boy" to the parapsychological establishment by getting involved with things like UFO studies, while I became a part of that establishment. Puharich eventually got too far out for me, but it's a shame that his basic findings that Faraday cages may amplify or shield psi have been ignored, as they may be a key to a major advance in getting reliable psi in our work. As far as I know, I'm the only one who did even a partial replication study of his work (Tart, C., 1988, Effects of electrical shielding on GESP performance. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 82, 129-146).

On the other hand, J. B. Rhine had given a talk to the entering university women and invited any of them who were interested in parapsychology to visit his lab. So there I was looking at books in the Parapsychology Laboratory's library (I did not accept Rhine's ban) when this beautiful young woman came in and asked if I believed in ESP. More than 50 years of marriage later, Judy tells me I still use the same response I did with her way back then, that's it's not a matter of belief, it's a matter of evidence... So Rhine was the proximate cause of far more happiness than unhappiness for me, and he did decide after another 20 years or so that I had enough discrimination to make a parapsychologist....and the next 50 years were quite interesting....

About the Koestler Parapsychology Unit

Caroline Watt



The Koestler Parapsychology Unit (KPU) is a research group based in the Psychology Department at the University of Edinburgh. Established in 1985, it consists of academic staff and postgraduate students who teach and research various aspects of parapsychology, including: the possible existence of psychic ability; belief in the paranormal; the psychology of anomalous experiences; pseudo-psychic deception and self-deception; and, the social and historical relevance of parapsychology. The staff are full members of the Psychology Department, so are active in everyday teaching and management as well as more parapsychological work.

KPU History

Parapsychology has been part of the University of Edinburgh since the appointment in 1962 of the late Dr John Beloff as a lecturer in the Department of Psychology. John researched and taught parapsychology at Edinburgh until his retirement in 1985, though he maintained his connections with parapsychology and the department for another two decades. Many of Beloff's graduate students are still active in the field today. Indeed, he played an important role in bringing the Koestler Bequest to Edinburgh.

The noted writer Arthur Koestler and his wife Cynthia in their Wills bequeathed their entire estate for the establishment of a Chair of Parapsychology at a British University. The declared intention was to further scien-

tific research into "...the capacity attributed to some individuals to interact with their environment by means other than the recognised sensory and motor channels". Most likely due to Beloff's responsible approach to studying parapsychology, from the outset Edinburgh University was keen to host the Koestler Chair. John Beloff was appointed to the selection panel and was influential in ensuring that the appointment went to Robert Morris, an American widely respected by fellow parapsychologists and critics.

Robert Morris was Koestler Professor of Parapsychology from December 1985 until his death in August 2004 aged only 62. He recruited additional staff and research students to form the Koestler Parapsychology Unit. Over nearly two decades as Koestler Professor, Morris supervised over 100 undergraduate student projects, and over 30 postgraduate students, many of whom have gone on to establish research units and teach parapsychology at other higher education institutions. During that time he also served as president of the Psychology section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, showing that Morris succeeded in his avowed aim to integrate parapsychology with the wider academic community.

KPU Staff and Activities

Dr Peter Lamont (Lecturer) joined the KPU in 1996 with a background in history and magic (he was a winner of the Dalziel Prize for British History and President of the Edinburgh Magic Circle). He has written three books and many articles on the history and psychology of magic and the paranormal. He teaches an undergraduate course on the history of unorthodox psychology, and has also recently created the new MSc in History and Theory of Psychology. His current research interests include the history of unorthodox psychological phenomena and the discursive psychology of beliefs about the paranormal – see the publication list below for some examples of this work.

Koestler Parapsychology Lab (Continued)

Dr Caroline Watt (Senior Lecturer) is a founding member (in 1986) of the KPU, and a former president of the PA. In 2007 she co-authored the fifth edition of the leading international textbook *An Introduction to Parapsychology*. In 2008 she designed and launched a popular new online Introduction to Parapsychology course. She also teaches an undergraduate Parapsychology course. Her research interests include: individual differences in belief in the paranormal; the measurement and aetiology of paranormal belief; the effect on health and well-being of consulting with unorthodox practitioners such as alleged psychic healers and spiritualist mediums (see reference list below). Currently Caroline is supervising four PhD students, with two new students expected to join in 2010.

Dr Ian Tierney (Honorary Research Fellow). Ian is a clinical psychologist who has had a 20+ year association with the KPU, advising individuals who are distressed by their paranormal experiences. He is also active in researching and in communicating good practice concerning clinical aspects of parapsychology. Caroline and Ian are currently working together on a Bial-funded grant that investigates the Model of Pragmatic information in relation to spontaneous cases of the RSPK-type. This is an ambitious project involving collaboration with around 40 parapsychology research groups and individuals across Europe. Hence, we've called it 'Europsi'!

Representative Publications

IRWIN, H. J., & WATT, C. A. (2007). *An introduction to parapsychology*. Fifth edition. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Visit the KPU Website at:

www.koestler-parapsychology.psy.ed.ac.uk



Lamont, P. (2005). *The first psychic*. London: Little, Brown.

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Lamont, P. (2007). Paranormal belief and the avowal of prior scepticism. *Theory and Psychology*, 17, 681-696.

Watt, C., & Ramakers, P. (2003). Experimenter effects with a remote facilitation of attention focusing task: A study with multiple believer and disbeliever experimenters. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 67, 99-116.

Watt, C., Watson, S., & Wilson, L. (2007). Cognitive and psychological mediators of anxiety: Evidence from a study of paranormal belief and perceived childhood control. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42, 335-343.

Wiseman, R., & Watt, C. (2004). Measuring superstitious belief: Why lucky charms matter. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37, 1533-1541.

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Public Scholars Needed at Wikipedia

Annalisa Ventola

Have you searched the term 'parapsychology' at Google lately? The number one result you'll get is the Wikipedia article on the topic, and you might not like how it reads. Search the terms *ganzfeld*, *remote viewing*, *Parapsychological Association*, or *Charles Honorton* and you'll get similar results. The popularity of Wikipedia means that its editors are defining our field in this digital age, and unfortunately they are not representing us well.

Because Wikipedia is the encyclopedia "that anyone can edit", the PA is putting together a team of public scholars to help build and maintain accurate and well-referenced Wikipedia articles on topics that are important to all of us. Polished and balanced articles on controversial topics cannot be maintained by the efforts of just one or two people. It takes the combined efforts of many knowledgeable editors to effect real changes at Wikipedia.

The PA is prepared to support such an effort. We have created a space within Wikipedia where people interested in improving parapsychology-related articles can gather to organize their efforts, learn the basics of wiki-editing, and reference important Wikipedia guidelines. We have also created a special forum at the PA members-only site where team members can discuss Wikipedia issues privately.

In order for our efforts to be successful, we need 12 or more volunteers who can commit to actively editing at Wikipedia at least once a week. Volunteers will have the opportunity to learn more about the field, while engaging in public scholarship alongside like-minded individuals, some of whom have been active researchers for decades. If you have a couple of hours per week to volunteer for this important project, please email the Executive Secretary at business@parapsych.org for further information.

Invitation to Join the Society for Psychological Research (SPR) at Reduced Fees!

From the SPR

In recognition of the shared goals and close ties between the Society for Psychological Research (SPR) and the Parapsychological Association (PA), as embodied in the joint conference held in Winchester, England in 2008, we would like to offer PA members the opportunity to join the SPR at a discounted rate; persons who are members of both organisations will receive a 10% discount for both. This discount only applies to forthcoming dues and cannot be claimed retrospectively. The SPR is not specifically oriented to professional parapsychologists but it offers a wide range of attractions to both academics and non-academics, nicely complementing those already provided by the PA.

- 1) Members of the Society receive a quarterly *Journal*, containing accounts of the latest work in the field as well as book reviews and correspondence. In addition, they receive the quarterly *Paranormal Review*, which includes feature articles on recent research, accounts of field investigations, articles by members about their own psychic experiences, abstracts from recent parapsychological literature, reports on conferences and a diary listing forthcoming events. The *Proceedings* of the Society is also sent to members occasionally; these contain papers too long to fit into the *Journal*. All these publications are included in SPR membership or are available as a separate subscription.
- 2) The Society's library is one of the most comprehensive collections in the world to cover psychical research and related topics. It contains over six thousand volumes, plus all the major series of journals dealing with psychical research. Through this library, members can gain access to the full content of SPR's publications from the very first issues to the present day, as well as a number of rare out-of-print classic texts. It also contains extensive **archives** of material built up during the life of the Society, now housed mainly at the Cambridge University Library. The Society also has for sale a number of **books** not widely available through popular booksellers.
- 3) Although foreign members may not be able to take advantage of the library, the full text of all past *Journals* and *Proceedings* and issues of *Paranormal Review* (and its predecessor *Psychical Researcher*) are available for members via the **Online Library**. This also contains a themed Abstracts Catalogue, with all the abstracts of all *Journal* papers since 1884. Access to online collections of other psychical research/parapsychology journals is also available to members at a special discount via the Library of Exploratory Science (Lexscien).
- 4) The Society organizes regular lectures, study days and an annual international conference. Members can attend the lectures for free and other **events** at a reduced rate, with the opportunity of meeting each other and taking part in discussions. Although foreign members may not be able to take advantage of this, they can still obtain recordings of the Society's lectures and Study Days for free either as tapes or eventually perhaps as website downloads.
- 5) The Society encourages research in parapsychology by offering small grants via the Research Endowment Fund and the Gwen Tate Survival Fund.



To apply to join the SPR or to find out more about the organization, please go to <http://www.spr.ac.uk> or <mailto:secretary@spr.ac.uk> or write to: The Secretary, Society for Psychological Research, 49 Marloes Road, Kensington, London W8 6LA, UK. If you are a member of both organisations please contact the Business Manager, Annalisa Ventola by email at Business@parapsych.org or by post at the Parapsychological Association, Inc., PO Box 24173, Columbus, OH 43224, USA to receive your discount.

Articles Relevant to Parapsychology in Journals of Various Fields

Gerd H. Hövelmann



Introduction

Parapsychologists sometimes complain that the outside scientific world ignores (or at least shows no real interest in) the manifold empirical and theoretical questions that form the subject matter of their field. This, however, is not exactly an adequate representation of the facts. It is not only that virtually all of those who are active in parapsychological research and theory building themselves have backgrounds in a branch (and often several branches) of the academic curriculum. Rather, in many scientific areas there in fact seems to be much greater interest in the work of parapsychologists, or at least in questions relevant to parapsychology, than may be apparent to a casual observer. This is documented by a surprising, almost unwieldy number of pertinent articles in the periodical literature. The apparently wide-spread scientific interest and the multidisciplinary character of parapsychology that this literature reflects are assets the Parapsychological Association and its members have hardly ever attempted to utilize to their own advantage.

This seems at least partly due to the fact that PA members often are not sufficiently aware of the numerous studies in the technical literature of many established disciplines in the sciences and humanities that bear some obvious relevance to the work of parapsychologists. Some of the respective authors from a great variety of

scientific fields even have looked at the parapsychological literature, while others haven't done so to any significant degree. In any case, there can be no doubt that there are quite a few areas of mutual interest across various fields that might serve to establish fruitful relationships between parapsychologists and other scientists. Desirable contacts between parapsychologists and scientists from other fields, of course, can only be meaningfully established on the level of individual researchers from all potentially interested areas rather than on the level of organizations. However, a minimum prerequisite for this is that parapsychologists become actually aware of and acquaint themselves with the wealth of relevant studies that in fact exist in other fields. Some kind of bibliographic guide that tries to keep track of the many studies in other fields that are of possible relevance to parapsychology is desirable, so that PA members realize what areas of mutual interest there are, and where.

Therefore, we are establishing this column of Mindfield to present sample references to publications of parapsychological relevance in a variety of scientific fields that might easily escape the attention of the PA membership. It starts on the next page with a bibliography of 50 selected relevant references to publications in the refereed periodical literature of various fields. These articles all are of fairly recent date. Most were published between the years 2005 and 2009 and thus are indicative of correspondingly recent interest in the respective fields. Please note that being listed here does not imply any kind of endorsement of the results or the views expressed in the respective articles.

This selection—which, given the actual number of pertinent sources, cannot be more than a small and inevitably idiosyncratic one—is restricted to journal articles (so no books or book chapters will be included) and, at least for the time being, to sources in the English language. For good measure, I also have included a few articles that were actually written by members of the PA (see entries for Greyson, Haraldsson, and a couple of others) and published in somewhat remote peri-

odicals in established scientific fields that arguably would not be routinely seen or easily detected by PA members.

I would like to invite other PA members to join in with hints to pertinent recent articles they may be aware of. Please feel free to send full bibliographic references (and, preferably, copies or PDFs of the full articles) for future installments of this column to the present author (at hoevelmann.communication@kmpx.de).

“...in many scientific areas there in fact seems to be much greater interest in the work of parapsychologists, or at least in questions relevant to parapsychology, than may be apparent to a casual observer.”

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Kane Hall, University of Washington - site of the convention



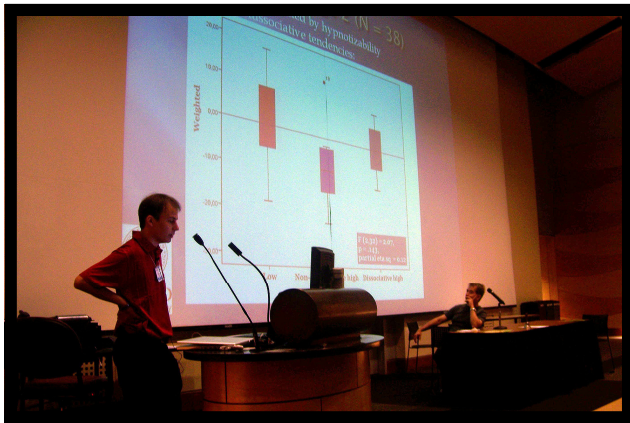
The view from the balconies of the dorm rooms on campus



From left to right: Dean Radin, Alison Easter, Annalisa Ventola, and Leila Kozak making preparations for registration (photo by Susie Demarinis-Radin)



Dean Radin and Julie Beischel chatting during the Thursday evening registration and welcoming reception (photo by Susie Demarinis-Radin)



Recipient of the Robert Morris Student Travel Grant, David Marcusson-Clavertz presenting a paper with Etzel Cardeña chairing the session.

Photos from the
52nd Annual PA
Convention
Seattle, WA
August 2009



Ruth Ann Reinsel discussing the late Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler's contributions to parapsychology.

Panel on *Education in Parapsychology*, picturing (from left to right) William Everist, Charles Tart, Arthur Hastings, and Loyd Auerbach



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View from the campus of the University of Washington, site of the 52nd Annual Meeting of the Parapsychological Association (photo by Annalisa Ventola)

The Future of *Mindfield*

We hope that you have enjoyed this first issue of *Mindfield*. Future issues will be available to all PA members/affiliates in electronic form. However, when you renew your dues for 2010, you will have the option to purchase print copies of our quarterly bulletin for \$15 per year.

Volunteers are needed for future issues of *Mindfield*. We're looking for contributing authors, reviewers, graphic artists, and a design editor. If you are interested in contributing your talents to this new publication, please email the editor at Etzel.Cardena@psychology.lu.se to inquire about a potential contribution. The editor reserves the right to accept or not any submission.