

NOTE: A SHORTHAND TERM FOR “PSYCHOPRAXIA”

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When Robert H. Thouless and B. P. Wiesner (1947) suggested the 23rd letter of the Greek alphabet—“psi”—to denote so-called “paranormal” phenomena, the suggestion fell on fertile ground, and “psi” is now perhaps the premier term in all of parapsychology, constantly being used as a noun or adjective (though admittedly it has never caught on among the general public).

Thouless and Wiesner divided psi (ψ) into two categories: psi-gamma (ψ_γ) for mental phenomena and psi-kappa (ψ_κ) for physical phenomena. Despite the advantage of a certain desirable neutrality, these two terms never caught on but rather were, we suggest, simply overshadowed and crowded out by the more famous Rhinean terms “ESP” and “psychokinesis”; “ESP” enjoys currency also among most of the general public, though the meaning of “psychokinesis” is still a mystery to most laypeople.

The senior author has been at pains to conceptualize psi as being a unitary phenomenon, to the extent that he rejects “ESP” and “psychokinesis.” In their place he suggests the word and process “psychopraxia” (“the self achieving”) to refer to transactions between the self and its own mind and body (endosomatic) and the self and the external environment (exosomatic). To say “psychopraxia” and leave it at that is, strictly speaking, insufficient, since it should rightly be qualified as endosomatic or exosomatic.

However, it is a huge understatement to say that the monosyllabic word “psi” is much shorter than the unwieldy expression “exosomatic psychopraxia.” Moreover, “psi” has a long history, which we acknowledge. But it would be unfortunate indeed if the entire theory of psychopraxia (Thalbourne, 2004, 2005) were rejected *simply* on the grounds that “psi” (and not “psychopraxia”) is the briefer term in parapsychological discourse.

In the circumstances, and initially as a form of shorthand, the second author proposed a Thouless-Wiesner type neologism which at first the first author did not accept (Thalbourne, 2005, p. 200) but which he is now seriously reconsidering. That term is “psi-pi” (ψ_π), which neatly abbreviates the letters of the word “psychopraxia” and retains the hallowed term “psi” while suggesting a π relation between the self and its own mind and body (endogenous psi-pi) and between the self and the external environment (exogenous psi-pi), just as Thouless and Wiesner suggested a “gamma-relation” and a “kappa-relation” between these entities. The pi-relation would imply the hypothesis that the same “self achieving” process

operates both endogenously and exogenously, no matter whether in mental contexts or in physical contexts.

We intend to use the term “psi-pi” in our future studies in the hope that its partial familiarity and relative brevity will make it considerably more attractive to parapsychologists.

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