

EDITORIAL

On Archetypes, Psi, and Poltergeists – A Philosophical Review and an Update on the 21st Century Poltergeist

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When we perceive the world around us, our expectations and previous experiences shape our observations. When we hear a siren, we expect to see a fire engine, but we would not be surprised to see a police vehicle or ambulance because those are associated with the same sound. We would be surprised to encounter a small bicycle with a siren mounted on the handlebars when that sound rings through our mind. Jung (1919) identified archetypes as instinctual patterns of expectation that are commonly recognized by all humans, but he also acknowledged the role that prior experience has in generating patterns of expectation in our minds. It is unlikely that humans have a common archetype for a bicycle, but if we live in a neighborhood where bicycles with sirens are the norm, we may develop an experiential expectation of this image.

Our expectations often influence our perceptions of the physical world, but they also influence the construction of our thought processes. Our understanding of the world is causally based, mostly designed by our observations of the physical events and how they seem to arise from previous events. For example, when we see a ball bouncing down a driveway, we immediately look to see who threw the ball. There is an expectation that a bounding ball would be set in motion by a causal event that would proceed the movement, like a child throwing or kicking the ball. We would not assume that the ball would move on its own since we expect that the movement was initiated by something that caused the movement to begin.

These patterns of anticipation or expectations of causality allow us to easily adapt to the world around us and to navigate our environment efficiently. Stanford's (1974) Psi Mediated Instrumental Response (PIMR) model incorporated psi into cognitive processing and provided a utility for the use of psi in our daily activities. When weighing our options, Stanford recognizes that we will use every resource available to resolve our situation most effectively. By acknowledging that psi is available to us at all times, Stanford proposes that we would use information obtained by ESP just as we would use any other information available to address our needs. Carpenter (2004) expanded on this theory in his First Sight Model of Psi by describing ESP as the primary source of information in our decision-making process. Information obtained by extra-sensory means guides our choice of archetype or experiential pattern and provides additional information to determine which perceptions should become conscious and which should remain hidden in the shadows of the subconscious.

These models discuss psi information as a tool to help guide our thought processes, make better

decisions, and find more efficient ways to reach our goals, but what if the information obtained by ESP is actually not obtained at all but is actually present at all times? What if the experiential patterns that we have created mask the true source of the information and lead us to apply causal patterns that are flawed and biased? This could not only affect our current perception of the situation, but also contribute to the development of subsequent experience-based patterns based on a flawed foundational premise. To continue our previous example, when we expect to see a fire engine, we might miss the odd situation where a bicycle is passing which not only could create a dangerous situation for the cyclist, but also could also cause us to misinterpret this event and those that follow.

There is little argument that humans are pattern seeking beings and that this evolutionary trait has been extremely beneficial to our success as a species. Might this highly valued trait be the exact lens that limits our ability to see the world clearly? Might the expectations of a world ruled by physical causalities tempt us to not only miss the events that fall outside of our historical experiences but also limit our explorations into events that do not fit the model of a causal worldview?

Changing expectations

When I consider that our model of the world influences our perceptions, I begin to wonder if changing that model might impact our passive perceptions, and our expectations of what is possible. Individuals raised in environments where paranormal activity and psi events are considered commonplace may become more likely to recognize these events. Their acceptance of this type of activity, e.g., nonlocal knowing or knowledge of future events, may lead them to practice these skills and even become successful at purposely inducing them.

If we consider belief and exposure to psi as a transient psychological state, we may be able to design a study to explore how an environment conducive to psi would affect an individual's performance on a psi task. This is exactly what Lange, Laythe, and Houran (2023) did in their examination of what they call the *enchantment-psi loop*. They led people through an activity that demonstrated paranormal events and provided evidence to support psi, and then they explored whether their exposure to this stimulus would generate a psychological state that would impact the results of a simple ESP test. These results were compared to the scores of people who were shown a skeptical video that questioned whether psi was possible. Their results were mixed, but the study design directly addresses the question of how our view of the world can affect psi performance as a transient psychological state rather than an unchanging personality characteristic.

But not all experiences will lead to more acceptance of psi and the paranormal. Some people are negatively reinforced to dismiss psi events as fantasy or wishful thinking. Storm (2023) presents a study to explore whether nonbelievers can be encouraged to be more noncompliant in a card-guessing task. Using a model that has rarely been discussed in published literature, he purposely encouraged nonbelievers to attempt to miss their target, leaving us with a question of whether they were truly demonstrating psi-missing or just another form of psi that agreed with their dominant worldview.

These articles attempt to create an artificial laboratory environment to explore the effects of cognitive patterns and expectation on the performance of psi tasks. But what about events that occur in our daily lives?

A Changed World

The events of 2020 affected nearly every person on the planet. Due to the global pandemic, we were forced into isolation and the normal patterns of behavior were not only broken but also called into question. How important is it to meet with people in the same physical location? Can we manage activities from a distance? Technology was recognized by many people as a lifeline to the world instead of being relegated to being a tool of necessity. Even very personal activities like visits to the doctor were reimagined as remote video sessions that would be effective in nearly every situation. Everyone had their normal patterns broken, and we began forming new experiential patterns that would allow us to navigate the changed world. When we are in periods of transformation and creatively seeking new patterns to guide our behavior, our previous physical and psychological habits are set aside to allow us to see through the unconscious veneer of expectation to better understand the underlying archetypes and collective instincts that are the foundation for our beliefs, psychology, and subsequently, our behavior.

During the quarantine, many people found themselves in close quarters with just a few people, often family, and there was a significant period of adjustment and anxiety. The expectations of their daily lives changed, and things that were previously commonplace were called into question. For a period of time, there was no such thing as normal behavior as we all adjusted to the changes in the social dynamics and our means of survival.

A field investigation described by Auerbach, Hedva, Solfvin, and Williams (2023) involves a detailed investigation of poltergeist activity within a family in the Silicon Valley area of California, USA. Because personal visits were impossible, this investigation involved video conferences with family members where detailed descriptions of phenomena were gathered, but more importantly, a licensed clinical psychologist, Hedva, provided online counselling sessions for the family members to assist their understanding of the experiences and to help provide a method to reduce or eliminate the unwanted activity.

It seems likely that the experiences described as poltergeist type phenomena may not have manifested and likely would not have been noticed if there was no change in lifestyle due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When the activities of daily life were interrupted and patterns of behavior were broken, this family began to make new observation and form new patterns. It is during this stage of flux and variation that the activity began and was recognized by the family members.

A virtual field investigation of this type is unusual, but there were many unusual activities occurring during quarantine. This article provides a guide for future phenomena that cannot easily be investigated in person, but it also provides some wonderful insights into the type of virtual counseling that would be useful when encountering similar activities.

Update on the 21st Century Poltergeist

In the late Fall of 2013, the Rhine Research Center was contacted by a medical professional who was approached by a family about unusual activity surrounding their 11-year-old son. The family had compiled a list of 31 distinct events that seemed to indicate electrical disturbances or malfunctioning technologies around the young boy. The medical doctor did a complete examination of the boy and found nothing

physical that might indicate an illness or physical disorder, so he contacted the Rhine to determine if we would be able to help the young boy and his family to understand the phenomena.

In early 2014, William Joines and I began an investigation into the reported activity. During our visit to the family home, we noticed episodes of electronic poltergeist phenomena (EPD) including malfunctioning phones, a smoke alarm and appliances that were spontaneously triggered, computers that malfunctioned in his presence, and a printer that would behave erratically, but only when the young boy was trying to print a document. A full list of reported and observed phenomena is available in Kruth & Joines (2016).

The family and the young boy expressed a strong desire to eliminate the disturbances because they were both disruptive and expensive. Electronic devices were breaking and sometimes required extensive repairs if they could be repaired at all. Through consultations with psychologists, paranormal investigators, and a person who had previously had similar experiences, we designed an approach to reduce the destructive nature of the activity. The primary strategy was to provide the family with tools to recognize the types of activities that might trigger these events and to give them a way to reduce the disruptive impact of these activities on the young boy that seemed to be the agent of the activity.

The family was introduced to some simple relaxation techniques that included breathing exercises and visualizations to induce a calm and quiet mind. The young boy was also taught to become mindful of his feelings and the thoughts might trigger the electrical disturbances. Through a combination of mindfulness and relaxation, the young boy quickly learned to control his emotions and reduce his anxiety by focusing and visualizing a calm environment.

Within a few days, the electrical disturbances stopped, and the family was relieved. Unfortunately, about two months later a change in the family dynamic introduced new stresses into their lives, and for about 10 days the disturbances returned, accompanied by very loud banging noises and knocking. After once again applying the relaxation techniques, the disturbances began to subside, and when the family crisis was resolved, the events stopped once again.

Recent update

In May of 2023, nine years after the initial investigation began, I contacted the family to get an update on the status of the young boy and the events that had been so disruptive in the past. The young boy's grandmother described the boy as an intelligent and well-adjusted young man who was attending college to study meteorology. Since our initial investigation, there were no further reports of electrical disturbances, and he regularly uses technology and complex electronics in his studies.

He is a very religious and ethical young man who does a great deal of volunteer work in the local community. His chosen area of study creates opportunities for travel, and though he had been raised in a rural area, he thrives in a city environment. Besides his community work, his social life has been rather limited due to his passion for meteorology and his involvement in events related to his passion.

Despite the typical pressures that come with teenage years and young adulthood, he has never

reported any further electronic disturbances. In fact, while speaking with his grandmother, she counted 4 computers in the house that are the tools that he uses to monitor the weather and make forecasts of future weather events. Apparently, he has overcome any problems that were previously activating issues with electronic devices, and if he was the poltergeist agent 9 years ago, he is now able to control these events.

Evolution of Poltergeist Investigations

Our explorations of poltergeist activities have evolved over the years from the loose, journalistic style described in the book *The Elusive Force* (review by Kruth, 2023), to the predominance of electrical phenomena (Kruth & Joines, 2016), to a modern, virtual field investigation (Auerbach, et. al., 2023). I am encouraged by the evolution towards investigations that put people first rather than isolating the unusual activity as the primary focus of the investigation. Unexplainable events can induce anguish and confusion, and it is the responsibility of a compassionate parapsychologist to first address the needs of the experiencers while maintaining a clear vision of the phenomena under investigation. Our ethics as investigators define our approach, and more modern field investigations must recognize the impact that these events and the subsequent investigation has on the experiencers so that we may better serve them.

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