

I Second that Emotion: Looking at Psi in Psychotherapy and Daily Life

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Reviews of: *Psi in Psychotherapy: Conventional & Nonconventional Healing of Mental Illness* by Alex Tanous, Elaine Schwinge, and Andrew F. Banbrick. White Crow Books, 2019. Pp. xxix + 184. \$17.99. ISBN978-1-78677-087-5

Sensitive Soul: The Unseen Role of Emotion in Extraordinary States by Michael A. Jawer. Foreword by Christine Simmonds-Moore. Park Street Press, 2020. Pp. xiii + 242. \$16.99. ISBN978-1-64411-082-9

These two recently published books will interest readers looking at relationships between psychology and psi. They illuminate corners of our field not often the focus of laboratory experiments. *Psi in Psychotherapy*, published in 2019 but written several decades earlier, is mostly about psi in therapeutic contexts. *Sensitive Soul* examines psi and other anomalous experiences through the lens of human emotion, using recent findings from numerous sources.

Psi in Psychotherapy has a foreword by parapsychologists Collum E. Cooper and Stanley Krippner. They emphasize that clinical approaches to parapsychology are usually concerned with the impact of anomalous experiences on individuals rather than on investigating the mechanisms involved (p. xviii). This book, however, has a different approach. It documents the work of well-known psychic Alex Tanous when he worked with clinicians to help their clients.

His technique was threefold. After looking at the client's aura, he gave general insights to the clinician and patient. The clinician initiated or enhanced therapy methods based on these insights. Ultimately, the client's progress was reviewed by the psychic, clinician, and client. Tanous felt that the healer's attitude was essential to the healing process, which came not from him but from his connection to universal consciousness. He also looked past the client's memories and traumas to what he saw as genetic and inherited consciousness. To some degree, this resembles recent epigenetic findings described by Jawer (p. 96).

Tanous also did physical healing, which he saw connected to both human psychology and spiritual consciousness. More recent writings by Larry Dossey and other physicians present similar viewpoints. Tanous reports sending healing energy into the ill person, whose symptoms were exacerbated within a short period of time, frequently mimicking final disease stages. Then, "the healing switches within the person are activated and the disease turns on itself, thereby giving way to recovery" (p. 49).

Tanous' family supported the development of his abilities, first demonstrated in childhood. He points out that psychics were prominent diviners and healers in early societies before the western Age of Reason. Today, we can see how recent interest in shamanism and alternative healing encourages re-discovery of these earlier methods and roles. Tanous was tested in laboratory settings and shown to be in altered states when involved in psychic or healing activities. Some tests included OBE manifestations.

The importance of Tanous' work is described by a recent reader (Gebelein, 2020):

The roots of people's psychological problems are usually discovered through traditional methods but also by psychic psychotherapists, without telling their clients or professional colleagues. Alex Tanous, in collaboration with psychotherapists, brought it into the open with clients' permissions. Without this, it would be a trespass, an invasion of privacy. He presents psychic abilities to the professional community as a valid way to detect sources of psychological problems, in the face of prejudices they might have against the existence or value of such abilities. Tanous was tested and received high scores. That should be a basic criterion for any psychic attempting the same. I found the case histories interesting, good examples of how psychic insights can help uncover psychological mysteries. Endorsed by many experts in parapsychology, this book also needs to be recognized by experts within psychotherapy, for making a major contribution to their discipline.

Adrian Parker points out in his afterword that Tanous employed universal conditions for change—empathy, acceptance, and genuineness in relating to the patient (p. 143). While some results could be ascribed to a placebo effect, that can also be a positive healing force needing further research. As stated in the book's postscript, "If psi in psychotherapy is to take its place as a viable alternative approach in the healing of one's psyche, it needs to be tested on a large scale under strict scientific conditions" (p. 136). The volume ends with a bibliography of recent relevant works, compiled by psychologist Jim Carpenter, and an index. This previously unpublished manuscript, enhanced by contemporary researchers' comments, deserves a place in the libraries of those interested in all types of psychological and physical healing.

Our second book, *Sensitive Soul*, examines a number of psychological or mental anomalies, the common thread being heightened physical and emotional sensitivity. These anomalies include savants, child prodigies, children who remember past lives, people with autism spectrum or posttraumatic stress disorders, and people with synesthetic or psychic experiences. A section also covers emotional sensitivities noticed in mammals such as elephants, monkeys, whales, and dolphins.

Jawer has the interesting hypothesis that we might all be born synesthetes or autistic, but perception usually becomes more discrete as neural connections mature. Some parapsychologists have similar theories about psi abilities, since (at least in western societies) spontaneous cases in children seem to peak before age seven (Ehrenwald, 1972). In adults, reports of acute sensory perception can resemble psi. Jawer describes someone who can hear transmissions from a turned-off radio and accurately discuss the program presented (p. 67). Is this heightened hearing or a psychic ability?

His discussion of boundary thinness, transliminality, and synesthesia merit attention from parapsychologists. People with these traits often do better than others on tests of psychic ability, although not everyone doing well on psi tests necessarily has all these traits. Jawer also has interesting hypotheses related to past life memories, ghosts, and near-death experiences, describing heightened emotion as binding most of these experiences together.

He reports on Jim Tucker's tally of 2,500 cases of children who recall past lives, where 70% of these involved violent death (p. 108). Jawer hypothesizes that in sudden and violent situations, a vortex of emotional energy develops, with nowhere to go when the person dies. He suggests that the stage is set for anomalous conveyance of experience and personality, where a person may "effectively impart the essentials of his or her bodily and emotional experience to someone else removed in space and time." One is not reborn but is instead "managing to convey what is most characteristic and intensively *felt* to some new 'home' – at least for a time" (p. 179).

For Jawer, birthmarks and phobias of the deceased shown in interviewed children or adults could be explained by the human ability to create boils, rope marks, stigmata and other physical manifestations under hypnosis or other altered states. These might be created to resemble the person's anomalous memories. An alternative hypothesis, not mentioned by Jawer, is that a child who already has an unusual birthmark or physical configuration might reach out and absorb the feelings and thoughts of someone deceased whose experiences explain this marking.

As for ghosts, he points out that in people near death, electrical signatures of consciousness can often exceed waking state levels. As with sudden death, he asks where this energy goes, stating that what appear to be ghosts are often examples of energy left from a trauma (19). Additionally, ghosts might be unintentional OBEs or leftover energy from the living. He gives an example of how new residents of a house picked up on daily habitual movements of someone who used to live there but now lived elsewhere (p. 69).

Jawer discusses near death experiences (NDEs) in the context of survivors' heightened sensitivities. He mentions that interviews with over three thousand people indicate that close to 80 percent experience major changes afterward, including: synesthesia; unusual sensitivity to light, sound, and electricity; increased allergies; vivid dreams; heightened creativity and aesthetic appreciation; enhanced intuition; and an uptick in psychic experiences (p. 25). For Jawer, these characteristics can be explained by thinning boundaries, due to neurobiological upheaval and profound alterations of consciousness and emotion. Thin-boundary people are sensitive and open, apprehending connections and commonalities more than distinctions and separations (p. 27). In relation to psi, they appear to score well in testing situations.

As stated in Christine Simmonds-Moore's foreword, Jawer finds relationships and connectivity highly important ingredients in our relationship to the world and the information within it (p. xii). Telepathy is reconceptualized as a form of extended empathy, with exceptional experiences a property of intense emotion, in both humans and animals. For parapsychologists, looking at anomalous experiences from this viewpoint has many advantages. It builds bridges to areas of mainstream science, putting the work we do in a larger framework.

Looking at emotion from a parapsychological standpoint, however, various experiments could be mentioned. For instance, Daryl Bem's presentiment work uses targets with positive or negative emotional impact (p. 407). Nevertheless, this book is worth reading for fresh insights, even if it asks more questions than it answers. Highly readable, it includes extensive footnotes, a bibliography, and an index, all allowing further exploration.

The book also includes quotes from contemporary and past researchers and thinkers who have examined the place of emotion in human life. To end with Michael Jawer himself: "Two propositions... The first is that feelings can endure and be conveyed beyond anything we can conventionally explain. The second is that human beings—and other sentient creatures as well—are connected by emotion in a more than human, more than temporal, and more than strictly physical world" (p. 180).

References

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