

Editorial

Back to the Future in Parapsychology: What Changed, What Didn't?

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In 1935, Joseph B. Rhine started the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University; a little over 85 years later, we can examine how far we've come. Unfortunately, we're still underfunded, beset by skeptics, and judged by higher research standards than applied to other fields. Younger researchers still find it hard to map career paths in parapsychology; we don't yet have an overarching theory of what psi is and how it functions. Yet it would be a mistake to deny what we've gained since 1935. In this issue of the *Journal of Parapsychology*, some papers look back in order to assess the present, so that we can continue moving forward.

A major advance came in 1969, when the American Association for the Advancement of Science included the Parapsychological Association as a member organization. Terms coined by J. B. Rhine have become standard, but we still discuss whether we should call our field parapsychology. Paul Smith addresses this in his paper, "What's in a Name?"

Inevitably, we continue dealing with skeptics. In his review of Chris Chambers' *The 7 Deadly Sins of Psychology: A Manifesto for Reforming the Culture of Scientific Practice*, Chris Roe shows how criticism of social science research in general is often applied disproportionately to parapsychology. Yet parapsychologists are often more careful than researchers in other disciplines because of how our work is viewed.

In this issue we also have Graham Watkins' obituary of the notorious skeptic Randi, who kept moving the goalposts of proof. To be fair, Randi also publicized the field and uncovered some fraudulent psychics. We continued to develop even tighter experimental designs and controls. As the saying goes, "Caesar's wife needs to be above suspicion."

In reviewing Stephen E. Braude's *Dangerous Pursuits: Mediumship, Mind, and Music*, Kenneth Turner discusses, among other subjects, Braude's perspective on his career in parapsychology. Our researchers often encounter difficulties with academic politics and funding, resulting in some of them no longer being active in parapsychology. Nevertheless, those now in other fields who acquired knowledge of ours can enhance the growth and reach of our community.

I reviewed two books addressing issues of interest to therapists and others: *Psi in Psychotherapy, Conventional & Nonconventional Healing of Mental Illness*; and *Sensitive Soul, The Unseen Role of Emotion in Extraordinary States*. People often ask about practical applications of psi. The first book, by psychic Alex Tanous and therapists Elaine Schwinge and Andrew F. Bambrick, discusses how information obtained by psi can be used in therapeutic settings. It includes comments from Callum E. Cooper, Stanley Krippner, and Adrian Parker, and a bibliography by James Carpenter. The second, with a foreword by Christine Simmonds-Moore, discusses psi in relation to other anomalous states, a perspective that could lead to new research. In addition, our field can be helpful to therapists whose clients have had psychic and other anomalous experiences.

Because of research I did on children's psi, I was glad to include the paper by Brian Laythe, James Houran and Cindy Little, about a subject not often examined: "The Ghostly Character of Childhood Imaginary Companions: An Empirical Study of Online Accounts." They use methodology not available in the time of J. B. Rhine or that of many researchers who tested children in schools and other settings.

In this issue, we have two papers dealing with theories of psi. Looking back at work done in 1979, Edwin C. May presents a paper on "A Random Number Generator Experiment: The Origin of DAT." While not everyone agrees with Data Augmentation Theory – Is there really no such thing as PK? Does all psi really come down to precognition? – knowing its history is valuable to any discussion of it.

In "ESP Contributes to the Unconscious Formation of Preferences," James Carpenter, et al. ask what personality traits, targets, and methods enhance ESP results. They regard this study as a beginning for finding the place of extrasensory processes within unconscious thought. Carpenter's First Sight theory builds on Rex Stanford's Psi Mediated Instrumental Response (PMIR) theory initiated in the 1970s.

The issue also includes obituaries for two well-known parapsychologists; Larry Dossey writes about Lawrence Le Shan and James G. Matlock about Erlendur Haraldsson. The work of these researchers remains significant in the history of our field. As the poet T. S. Eliot said in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, "...the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past." We interpret the past from our present standpoint while we gain from the work of those who preceded us. For all the difficulties still with us, we are part of a community that continues to develop. The *Journal of Parapsychology*, which began in 1937, is flourishing in 2021. I consider it an honor and privilege to serve as Interim Editor for this issue.