

THE POSSIBLE FUTURE OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY WITH SOME HELP FROM REGRESSION TO THE HYPNOTIC PAST¹

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When from our present advanced standpoint we look back upon the past stages of human thought, whether it be scientific thought or theological thought, we are amazed that a universe which appears to us of so vast and mysterious a complication should ever have seemed to any one so little and plain a thing. (James, 1896, p. 327)

In 1882, the SPR was founded to investigate “that large body of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical, and spiritualistic,” and to do so “in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned enquiry which has enabled Science to solve so many problems” (Gauld, 1968, p. 137). Since then, the scientific acceptance of hypnosis (partly based on “mesmerism”) and that of parapsychology have diverged widely. Nonetheless, many threads link hypnotic and ostensible psi phenomena and experiences both in the past and the present. One shows a consistent positive correlation between hypnotizability (the ability to respond to suggestions in a hypnotic context) and reports of anomalous experiences (some of which specifically refer to potential psi phenomena) (Pekala & Cardena, 2000). That these reports are not just the product of faulty reasoning or strange beliefs is supported by meta-analyses in which a hypnotic procedure was found to be associated with higher scoring than a control comparison (Schechter, 1984; Stanford & Stein, 1994, Van de Castle, 1969), and by a recent study (Tressoldi & Del Prete, 2007). Besides the fact that hypnotizability is related to higher reports of psi experiences and beliefs, hypnosis involves a number of elements that may make the appearance or recognition of psi phenomena more likely, including: (a) an inward focus (Honorton, 1977), (b) a reduction of critical, evaluative thinking (Cardena & Spiegel, 1991), and (c) spontaneous experiences of transcendence during “deep hypnosis” (Cardena, 2005).

It is also relevant to discuss briefly the small to modest positive correlation between hypnotizability and dissociative tendencies (e.g., Butler & Bryant, 1997). This correlation hides the fact that whereas low hypnotizables very rarely manifest dissociation, a subset of high

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hypnotizables is very dissociative (Putnam, Helmers, Horowitz, & Trickett, 1995). Dissociation refers to phenomena in which there is an absence of integration in psychological processes that are normally associated, as in the case of memory or identity, and/or to alterations of consciousness characterized by a sense of disconnection with the self or the environment (Cardena, 1994). Dissociative tendencies are related more strongly to psi experiences and beliefs than hypnotizability (Pekala & Cardena, 2000). Also, dissociative phenomena such as mediumship, in which there may be a sense of disconnection with motor activity or with the individual's ordinary sense of identity, have had close connections to psi phenomena throughout history (Cardena, 1998; Gauld, 1986). Furthermore, a recent study in our lab suggests that the relationship between hypnotizability and psi abilities may be mediated by dissociative tendencies (Cardena, Marcusson-Clavertz, & Wasmuth, 2009).

Coming back to hypnosis and psi, a very long history binds them together. Shamanism, traceable to the Paleolithic era has been related to potential psi phenomena such as DMILS and includes techniques akin to hypnosis (Cardena & Krippner, 2010). Although many shamanic performances involve what might be called trickery in order to bring about a change in the client, anthropologists have observed what might be ostensible psi phenomena in the context of traditional healing (Kelly & Locke, 2009). Probably the first written reference to hypnotic techniques is the Leyden Demotic Magical Papyrus, which describes eye and attention fixation techniques, interestingly enough in the context of trying to predict future events! The papyrus dates to around the third century BCE, although some sections can be traced to about 1000 years earlier (Griffith & Thompson, 1974/1904). Much closer to our time, reports of mesmerism or animal magnetism, initiated at the end of the 18th Century and which would eventually morph itself into what we currently call hypnosis, abound with descriptions of ostensible psi phenomena, including telepathy, clairvoyance of illnesses, hypnosis at a distance, and so forth (e.g., Crabtree, 1988; Dingwall, 1967–1968). Consistent with this possible link, part of the theoretical underpinning that in the late 18th century Franz Anton Mesmer gave to his theory, undergirded by both his notion of planetary influences and magnetism of his time, is quite congenial to psi phenomena. In one of his principles, Mesmer states that animal magnetism can take place at a remote distance, without the need of any intermediary substance (Hull, 1933), an idea that nowadays may be called *nonlocal*. After Mesmer's disciple, the Marquis de Puységur, changed the manifestations and understanding of mesmeric phenomena, the beginning of a new vision of the mind started to emerge, one in which a hidden self, accessible through hypnosis, has greater knowledge about the individual and the world (Ellenberger, 1970). Some of this knowledge, for instance about future events, would be consistent with psi phenomena.

Many if not most of the descriptions about what previously passed as mesmerically/hypnotically induced psi phenomena would not pass current methodological muster. For instance, in most (but not all) observations there was almost no control for information that might be conveyed nonverbally. Yet, there are fairly meticulous descriptions of some events, such as apparent GESP feats associated with the hypnotized Alexis Didier, that were convincing not only to the foremost magician/mentalists of the time, Houdin, but remain as difficult to explain through conventional mechanisms now as then (Gauld, 1992). With regard to those observations, Dingwall's (1967–1968) conclusion seems appropriate: "an attitude of suspended judgment both as regards the past and the present is perhaps the most judicial" (V. 1, p. 297).

The link between potential psi phenomena and hypnosis remained strong through the beginning of the 20th century. It is worth remembering that many of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research and the scientific study of psi phenomena (e.g., Gurney, James, Myers) spent a considerable amount of their time learning about, discussing, and researching hypnosis and related phenomena (Gauld, 1968). Yet if we see the current status and prestige of hypnosis as compared with that of parapsychology, it is evident that the conjoint twins separated and have followed quite distinct paths. Hypnosis is not at the cusp of "respectable" topics in the behavioral sciences, yet it has shed away the poisonous cloak that still covers parapsychology. Mainstream psychological and medical journals publish articles about hypnosis without complaints, research is funded by mainstream agencies and is carried out in some top universities such as Stanford, Harvard, or the University of London, and hypnosis has been recognized as an empirically validated treatment for a number of conditions (Lynn, Kirsch, Barabasz, Cardeña, & Patterson, 2000). Although of course there is also charlatanry and fraud around hypnosis, as happens with parapsychology, it seems to have secured a foothold in academia and clinical practice (psychology, medicine, and dentistry) and has been recognized by major psychological and medical organizations in the US and the UK, among other countries. In what remains of this paper, I will propose that the hypnosis field has used some strategies that have helped it have a better outcome than has been so far the case with parapsychology. In what follows I do not imply that hypnosis has been perfect on the points discussed or that parapsychology has not engaged with them at times, but rather that the longer and more consistent use by hypnosis of these strategies helps explain in part its greater success.

Before that, it is worth using a couple of citations to show that similar kinds of problems to the ones that parapsychology continues to struggle with nowadays also haunted hypnosis just a few decades ago. The great French psychologists Binet and Féré wrote that: "The problem of hypnotism bristles with difficulties.... Although nothing is more simple than the invention of dramatic experiments ... it is on the other hand very difficult

... to find the true formula of the experiment which will give its results with convincing accuracy” (Hull, 1933, p. vii). And despite the fact that the great neurologist Jean Martin Charcot had brought hypnosis out of academic darkness, things had not greatly improved some 50 years later. The eminent psychologist Clark L. Hull wrote about hypnosis: “... the inherent difficulty of the problems involved, the fundamental elusiveness of the phenomena, and the consequent subtlety in the experimental controls. These difficulties are so great that to enter seriously on a program of investigation in this field ... is almost to court scientific disaster” (1933, p. 403). To understand some of the reasons that explain the greater success of hypnosis, we need to do a little hypnotic regression into the past, so sit comfortably, breathe deeply, and notice how the calendar starts going backwards in time ...

A LONG HISTORY OF CREATIVE METHODOLOGY AND PROGRAMMATIC RESEARCH

The first divergence is that hypnosis has had a longer and continued history of good research methodology. Already in 1784, the Royal Commission’s study of animal magnetism, which included such personalities as Benjamin Franklin, the great chemist Lavoisier, and others, used inventive control designs. The most famous experiment tested whether a *sensitive* 12-year-old boy could distinguish between “magnetized” and nonmagnetized trees at Franklin’s estate at Passy. This was also probably the first example of a *blind* control insofar as the boy used a blindfold. The fact that the boy reacted strongly to the nonmagnetized trees supported the commissioners’ report that the effect of animal magnetism was produced by *imagination* rather than by some magnetic fluid (Crabtree, 1993). I have seen films of parapsychology research two centuries later that did not use even basic controls for potential sensory leakage, although, of course, the best research in parapsychology uses good experimental controls.

Even more relevant may be the long history of programmatic research carried out in hypnosis. Hull’s research with his affiliates resulted in 32 publications and additional internal reports, not to mention his suggestion for an additional 102 studies that should be carried out (Hull, 1993). Closer to our time, T. X. Barber (1995) and Ernest Hilgard (1968) also conducted dozens if not hundreds of studies that helped give the field much greater credence. In parapsychology, with few exceptions such as the successful but unfortunately too brief program of Chuck Honorton, many psi researchers tend to jump from one topic to the next, as Watt (2005) pointed out earlier, disregarding the fact that in other disciplines investigating a complex issue does require many studies, each one trying to build on previous ones.

HYPNOSIS AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY ARE TRANSDISCIPLINARY TOPICS, NOT DISCIPLINES

The late Bob Morris spoke for the integration of parapsychology into more mainstream disciplines such as psychology, and a number of his

students at the University of Edinburgh continue to research psi phenomena in various universities. Although perhaps necessary at the time, it is unfortunate that we have been burdened with the term “parapsychology” with its exclusive referent to psychology and its implication of a discipline as such. Going further than that integration is the proposal that research on psi phenomena requires expertise from various areas, certainly psychology, but also physics, biology, sociology, history, and magic, to name a few, and is thus a transdisciplinary subject rather than an independent discipline. In the same way that no academic or professional in the health sciences takes seriously a “doctorate” in hypnology, people who obtained a doctorate in parapsychology have found themselves in a professional *cul-de-sac*. The principles of good scientific research and thinking can be learned in the traditional disciplines and can then, with appropriate changes (e.g., methodology in parapsychology typically requires more safeguards than those found in, say, traditional psychology), be applied to study psi. On the other hand, there are areas in which parapsychology has not followed what are considered professional standards in mainstream disciplines. For instance, until the PA Board voted recently not to have full papers as Proceedings, a common practice for many researchers had been to only publish in these Proceedings the results of their work. I became acutely aware of this problem when I wrote a paper referring to a number of interesting studies, all of which had only been published in that form, something that does not happen in mainstream science.

FIRST ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY IN ANOTHER TOPIC

As much as we might deplore the bias in academia against parapsychology, it is probably here to stay at least for the foreseeable future. After learning good scientific thinking and methodology, which will be of great use in psi research, it also makes strategic sense to become an expert in a less controversial (and hopefully related) topic. Before I became a graduate student, I recall that Charley Tart advised all potential applicants the same thing, and after all these years I can vouch for it. I am quite certain that because a number of colleagues respect my work in other areas (e.g., dissociation, hypnosis), when they hear that I also do work in psi they at least are willing to hear more about it than if they lacked a previous vision of me as a competent researcher and theoretician. Hypnosis has partly differed from parapsychology in that some of its most important contributors first became world-recognized experts in different topics. Hull, one of the most influential psychologists of all time, wrote his dissertation on concept formation before doing any work on hypnosis and was one of the most important psychologists of his time. Something very similar can be said of Ernest Hilgard, who first became a foremost learning psychologist before he started his decades-long work on hypnosis. T. X. Barber, another important figure in hypnosis, was at least as well known as a methodologist

as he was as a hypnosis researcher, and so on. Unfortunately, besides Daryl Bem and a few others, not many researchers can claim a broad recognition independently of their psi work.

WELCOME THE HONEST CRITIC

From at least the beginning of animal magnetism, hypnosis has been a very contentious phenomenon. Already at the time of Mesmer there was a conflict between those who believed that the explanation lay on some kind of substance (i.e., animal magnetism) versus those who promulgated more mundane explanations such as imagination and emotional fervor. Even after the animal magnetism explanation was discredited, other contentious debates continued among those who promulgated the idea that hypnosis implied psychopathology (e.g., Charcot) versus those who thought it was based on suggestion, and more recently the debate has centered on whether hypnotic phenomena entail a special state of consciousness or not (e.g., Kirsch & Lynn, 1995). These debates have been very healthy for the topic. For instance, the work by T. X. Barber clearly showed that many phenomena that had been assumed to be the exclusive province of hypnosis could also be effected through different mechanisms such as strong social encouragement, which did not prevent the same Barber some years later from proposing a theory of hypnosis based on fantasy proneness or dissociativity as basic processes in two of three subgroups of highly hypnotizable individuals (Barber, 1999).

Despite the vehemence with which some of these hypnosis positions have been held, I have never heard someone in hypnosis state that those who held a different view should be ostracized or somehow excluded from the field. I have had a different experience in parapsychology where even in a discussion among the Board of Directors it was explicitly stated that those who doubt the “objective” validity of psi phenomena should not be members of the Parapsychological Association, besides various other comments in PA conferences condemning in harsh terms those who do not toe the line, and some books in the field that do not even mention reasonable criticisms of the positions they espouse. Of course I am not defending those who report dishonestly their research or that of others, but those who are not as persuaded by the evidence as some of us are. They should be treated as the loyal opposition in our endeavor to get a grasp on this difficult area; honest brokers such as Marcello Truzzi can help the field enormously.

Consistent with the demonization of the “opposition” is the acquiescence of behavior by “insiders” that would not be tolerated otherwise. Alas, I have experienced personally unprofessional and boorish behavior from people within parapsychology that I have not seen in other areas (psychology, anthropology, psychiatry). This may have partly to do with a sense that given the marginal status of parapsychology people that

hold the *right* view within the field should be tolerated no matter what, whereas those outside are by definition enemies who should be kept out. At the beginning of the SPR, the contribution of skeptics such as Podmore showed that it was not just a partisan club. In recent history, one of the high points in psi research occurred when a proponent and a critic worked together on guidelines for ganzfeld research (Hyman & Honorton, 1986). On professional and ethical grounds, the field should encourage more collaborations and greater dialogue with those who hold a different perspective than ours, as long as they are ethical, honest, and respectful.

RESEARCH PROCESS

I will now move to what are more research process oriented issues. The first one is that discrepant findings in hypnosis have sometimes been clarified because the level of descriptive specificity about the procedures used allowed the detection of subtle but important differences. A good example is the apparent inconsistent finding that hypnotic suggestions to not detect a stimulus seemed to both increase and decrease the P300 (i.e., a brain response occurring around 300 ms after stimulus presentation). This discrepancy was resolved when the two different suggestions were compared. One stated that the person would not be able to smell anything at all (which produced an increase in P300 since participants might have been surprised to find out that they could smell something). The other one, instead, suggested the blocking of a stimulus by imaging an alternative one (i.e., a cardboard box) and produced a decrease in P300, probably because of the alternate imagery suggested (Spiegel & Barabasz, 1988). In contrast, sometimes in the psi literature information about specific phrasing or other procedural issues lacks this type of specificity; paradoxically the most important lack refers to those aspects that most of us think undergird psi phenomena: consciousness and relationship. For instance, in all of the ganzfeld literature there is almost no information on the moods and states of consciousness that participants experienced during the procedure. Also, other than the few studies directly evaluating whether people emotionally close perform better than strangers, there is almost no information on the sense of emotional closeness between each experimenter and each participant, despite the literature showing the importance of emotions in psi processes (for a review see Cardeña, 2008). It is the case that this absence pervades most of the behavioral sciences, but here is an opportunity where parapsychology could lead rather than follow mainstream methodology.

With respect to consideration of psychological variables, oftentimes psi research seems to disregard the individual differences literature in psychology, and experiments are conducted without obtaining much information about personality and cognitive traits and processes that could

illuminate the different effects obtained. Although an older literature had found that personality traits generally did not seem to predict success in psi tasks (Palmer, 1977), there are reasons to revisit this issue. One of them is the finding that interactions (the joint action of two or more variables) of traits by traits by situations often explain greater variance than looking at main effects alone. It is also the case that the same procedure may have opposite experiential and brain effects depending on the predisposition of the person. We found precisely this in a study of the neurophenomenology of hypnosis in which a hypnotic procedure produced distinctly different phenomenological and brain effects depending on the level of hypnotizability (Cardeña, Lehmann, Jönsson, Terhune, & Faber, 2007).

A couple of unusual examples in the psi literature suggest how a failure to look at interactions might hide significant effects. A study on PK found that high or low personal liability had significant effects on machinery, depending on the high or low liability of the latter (Holt & Roe, 2006). Similarly, in a recent study we found that whereas hypnotizability alone did not seem to be significantly associated with a precognitive test, hypnotizability in interaction with low dissociativity evidenced a significant psi effect (Cardeña et al., 2009; see also Cardeña, 2006).

We also have evidence that some groups may score much better than others (e.g., Schlitz & Honorton, 1992), but need much more research on what specific processes, under which specific situations, and for which specific groups may be psi conducive. For instance, Carpenter (2004) discovered that self-transcendent experiences in the ganzfeld are related to psi scoring, yet this kind of work is almost nonexistent in the field. If indeed at least a number, if not most, of psi researchers have decided to ask process questions rather than just to try to obtain significant results in a psi study, it behooves us to conduct programmatic research that looks at what types of experiences and cognitive processes, in what personality traits, and under what conditions are psi conducive.

The evaluation of precise variable interactions leads directly to a greater regard for individual differences and the thorough analysis of individual cases. This approach may reveal meaningful patterns, whether they are generalizable to other individuals or not, and has already served psychology, medicine, and neurology remarkably well (e.g., Ramachandran & Blakeslee, 1999). Despite the initial, and regretfully almost forgotten nowadays, interest by the early psi researchers on a thorough investigation of gifted individuals such as the medium Mrs. Piper, current parapsychology has mostly followed the trend of conservative psychology to almost exclusively focus on aggregate, nomothetic approaches, although they are not generalizable for one, many, or all members of the group (Bakan, 1967). This approach is questionable even for the natural sciences. One of the most eminent biologists of our time, Richard Lewontin (1994), describes biology in terms of a historical enterprise because of the complexities of the variables involved and the importance of random events, and criticizes

the facile acceptance of control/prediction as the foremost models of the natural sciences.

Although hypnosis has partly suffered from an over reliance on the nomothetic approach, it has learned that some phenomena are manifested only by particular individuals even among composite groups such as “high hypnotizables” (Terhune, Cardeña, & Lindgren, submitted for publication). With regard to psi, it seems that we cannot learn much more from general samples with few if any especially talented individuals, and under the very low motivation found in an experiment as compared with a “crisis” event. Parapsychology could consider using the strategy that hypnosis does of screening large groups of people to then concentrate on the few exceptional ones that manifest interesting phenomena such as positive or negative hallucinations, or to target groups likely to have these individuals, as shown recently in a study with meditators (Roney-Dougal & Solvin, 2006). The PEAR lab data also obtained far more impressive results with some very gifted individuals than with unselected groups at large (Dunne & Jahn, 2005). As Jessica Utts (1996) has mentioned, it is easier to find the rare talented remote viewer than to train untalented ones, yet parapsychology to a large degree keeps looking for the key where there is light (i.e., studying unselected groups of undergraduate volunteers), rather than where it fell, to use the Sufi parable.

To better understand exceptional individuals also requires that unusual performances be investigated further after the original data collection. It is a truism nowadays that hypnosis does not enhance physical performance beyond conventional methods, yet there are examples in the literature that challenge this notion. Johnson and Kramer (1961) described the case of “Charles,” whom they further studied after his performance during a group study went well beyond what researchers had expected. He was asked to bench-press a 47-lb barbell. In prestudy, he could do 130 reps, but under hypnosis he could do 180, 230, 333 and 390 reps, whereas a comparison weight lifter could only achieve 90, 94, 92 and 92 reps. The lesson here would be that psi experiments should *not* end when the group data are collected, but remain open for the investigation of individuals who perform noticeably better or worse than chance. It is the case that sometimes participants who have scored significantly in one run will not do so in the next (cf. Wallach, Kohls, Stillfried, Hinterberger, & Schmidt, 2009), but that is also what we have seen when researching even the most talented mediums, who have days “on” and “off.” Before concluding that psi phenomena by their nature cannot be replicated (cf. Wallach et al., 2009), I think that testing potentially talented individuals not only once or twice, but many times, while measuring their phenomenology and perhaps also their physiology is indispensable. Also, some meta-analyses such as that of psi and dreams show a level of replicability that compares well with that of various areas in psychology and other disciplines (e.g., Sherwood & Roe, 2003).

DEVELOPING A MEASURE OF PSI TALENT

The success of hypnosis research lies to a large degree in its ability to evaluate individuals as to their level of hypnotizability. Although not perfect (Woody, Barnier, & McConkey, 2005), measures of hypnotizability, developed through a decades-long process, have successfully identified those who respond to hypnotic suggestions and tend to report spontaneous anomalous experiences from those who do not, allowing for various psychological and neurocognitive studies comparing those high and low in hypnotizability. Nothing remotely like that exists in the psi field. It could be that by its very nature psi is so elusive that it is not possible to evaluate this ability. I want to propose, however, that such a conclusion is premature. In hypnosis it took many decades to produce valid and reliable measures of hypnotizability, and I do not think that such a concerted effort has occurred in parapsychology. Only by following some of the suggestions mentioned here, such as engaging in a long-term, collaborative program of study to try to create such measures by looking at traits but also traits by traits by context interactions will we be justified to conclude at some point whether a measure of psi abilities can actually be developed or not. We already know that some traits are clearly associated with reports of psi beliefs and experiences (e.g., dissociation, hypnotizability, transliminality; see Cardeña & Terhune, 2008), and a program of studies evaluating those who are high in these traits is a reasonable first step in this search. There are tantalizing reports here and there of people who are much better psi performers, but I do not believe that there has been a long-term, systematic effort to find out what differentiates them from others. There is hardly a potentially more rewarding task for the field than this, although I imagine that it will take a concerted effort from a number of researchers and a certain amount of years.

PRACTICAL BENEFITS

As with the discussion of a measure of ability, this is another topic that will demand considerable effort and ingenuity. One of the reasons that hypnosis has gained such traction is that there is growing evidence that hypnotic techniques are empirically supported techniques to treat various medical/psychological ailments. Thus, while academics continued to debate whether hypnosis was scientific or not, many people found out that it helped them with their problems. Without a question, the search for practical uses for psi has been more problematic because of its elusive and sometimes maddeningly contradictory effects, but the field should not give up prematurely on this search. One potential but mostly unresearched area is the study of individuals that make their living out of their apparent or real psi abilities, such as dowsers, mediums, and so on. Controlled research with these individuals seems to show that they may be effective (e.g., Beischel &

Schwartz, 2007), but more needs to be done to document if and how they may help the layperson. A promising development is the interest in what the study of anomalous experiences and the differentiation between what is pathological and what is only unusual may offer to clinical work (Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000), while also helping provide responsible and informed professional guidelines to avoid the misinformation and quackery that can plague clinical applications in both hypnosis and parapsychology.

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

Hypnosis has been partly defined as a special kind of social interaction between two individuals (Kihlstrom, 1985), but the same thing should be said of experiments in general. In this area, generally both hypnosis and psi research have mostly suffered from the same problem, that of abstracting the researcher out of the experiment as if the latter had no effect (cf. Rosenthal, 1966). This practice, copied from the hard sciences, may be justifiable when dealing with the interaction of the experimenter and an apparatus (and even here it is arguable; Morris, 1986), but is indefensible when describing events occurring within a social system. Even if indeed the hypnotizability of the individual may be more important than that of the hypnotist, the latter will probably have an effect by, for instance, modeling what the person may experience (Cardena, Terhune, Lööf, & Buratti, 2009). Thus it is difficult to understand why information is not obtained from the experimenter as well as from the participant, and this happens despite the literature suggesting that experimenters have an effect on psi research, whether through ordinary psychological means, through their own psi, or a combination of both (Smith, 2003). Nonetheless, only one parapsychology journal that I approached (this one) agreed that there should be some information about the experimenter(s) in research articles, whereas two other ones (*Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* and the *European Journal of Parapsychology*) did not.

REORIENTING TO THE PRESENT

After this survey of different topics, you can now take a deep breath and start seeing the calendar advance to the present ...

I do not expect readers to agree with all the suggestions I have listed here, but if there is even only one that a researcher agrees with, I hope that s/he will implement it. Unless retired, I think that it is up to each one of us to evaluate how we may achieve further progress in the field, and this does not imply at all that the sense of excitement in this area should be sacrificed. It does demand, however, that researchers agreeing with even one of my suggestions stop complaining about the poor state of the field and work on developing these or other strategies, and reach out better to the public at large and other academics who are open minded.

That the study of psi phenomena presents enormous challenges is not news. James had already seen this: “These experiences have three characters in common: they are capricious, discontinuous, and not easily controlled; they require peculiar persons for their production; their significance seems to be wholly for personal life” (James, 1896, p. 325). I will finish these thoughts with the implications of psi for the personal and communal life. Although the possibility of psi phenomena is by no means a prerequisite for a deep regard for other sentient beings and the environment that supports us all (after all, we are interconnected in various other ways than through ostensible psi phenomena), it is a strong reinforcement for an altruistic ethic. All the choices we make have ethical implications. For instance, instead of spending time reading (and writing this article), we could have done something for the millions of sentient beings that are slaughtered or brutalized in wars, brothels, slaughterhouses, and many private homes. Thus we need to reflect on what we choose to do or not to do. Although we may argue about the specific nature of psi phenomena, its possible connections (or not) with quantum mechanics, and so forth, it seems to me that if there is anything that psi suggests, it is that we are far more inter-related than we experience consciously (Wallach et al., 2009). Thus, a defense of the helpless (human and nonhuman) and a responsible stewardship of the environment should be an obvious outcome of acquaintanceship with parapsychology, because protecting and caring for others is, in a very wonderful way, also a selfish act. If nothing else, this is a worthy enough gift from psi phenomena to all of us.

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