

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY (2ND ED.) by Michael A. Thalbourne. Charlottesville, VA: Puente Publications, 2003. Pp. xvii + 153. \$23.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-9634501-5.

This book is highly recommended for anyone involved in the field of parapsychology. Both the seasoned researcher and the interested reader will find well-put definitions for both obscure and familiar terms. Although words are listed alphabetically, a browse through the glossary is also a miniature history lesson, as the definitions capture the field's development from its séance-attending origins to its statistical present.

Michael Thalbourne's original 1982 glossary quickly became a classic but is now out of print; the 2003 update has a total of over 1,000 terms, close to 300 of which were not in the first edition. Mostly, he includes words from research done in English, demystifying many acronyms and cross-referencing synonyms or related concepts.

A definition often mentions researchers or popularizers who first used specific terms. For instance, Charles Tart is given credit for popularizing the term "Altered State[s] of Consciousness (ASC)," which can refer to

... any waking state differing from that of the normal waking condition; of *parapsychological* interest as possibly psi-conducive states, they include dreaming, *hypnosis*, *trance*, *meditation* of the yoga or Zen tradition, the *hypnagogic*-like state induced by the *ganzfeld*, and drug-induced states. (p. 3)

Thalbourne states that he concentrates on defining a term's meaning rather than weighing evidence for and against the reality of the phenomena to which it refers. For this reason, not all terms listed refer to phenomena universally accepted by parapsychologists. Also, he does not debate the ethics of particular techniques. These were wise editorial decisions because he aimed for handbook length. The volume concludes with a reference section, a bibliography of source glossaries, and a name index.

The number of terms used or generated by the field of parapsychology may surprise even those familiar with its history. Ever since Frederic Myers first used the term “telepathy” in 1882, researchers have continued coining words to explain a growing body of phenomena. In the foreword, John Beloff points out that all scientific areas have their own specialized, technical terminology. If properly used, this terminology can serve as an aid to successful communication and clear thinking. For Beloff, the field of parapsychology definitely needed its own glossary, to distinguish between colloquial and technical usage, clarify older material, present different ways of defining the same phenomena, encourage consistency in the use of particular terms, and enhance understanding of psi phenomena.

He gives an interesting example of the difference between colloquial and technical usage in the term “clairvoyance.” Colloquially, “clairvoyance” often implies knowledge of the future, but in psychical research, a distinction has usually been made between “clairvoyance,” or information derived from an external physical source, and “precognition,” or information about the future. An example of one term superseding another is the current use of “psychokinesis” rather than “telekinesis.” And controversy can even surround terms as familiar as “extrasensory perception” and “parapsychology.” The growth of new terms testifies to the field’s continued vitality; expansion of specialized terminology, changes in usage, and controversy are all signs of a living, breathing field.

In his preface to the 1982 edition, Thalbourne mentions that up to that point, the most comprehensive glossary of terms was by Laura Dale and Rhea White, found in Benjamin B. Wolman’s (1977) *Handbook of Parapsychology*. Because the entire volume was expensive and hefty at nearly 1000 pages, he felt a need for a “handy” sort of handbook. His glossary most adequately met that need. The first edition addressed new terms used in parapsychology, such as “ganzfeld” and “remote viewing,” that developed in the 1970s. For the 2003 edition, along with listing additional developments such as the “autoganzfeld,” and acronyms such as DAT and DMILS, he draws from psychology and statistics for terms like “dissociation” and “meta-analysis.”

Thalbourne’s background is ideal for the task. After BA studies in philosophy, psychology, Latin and Classical Greek, he received a PhD in 1981 from the Department of Psychology at University of Edinburgh. His work there included experiments in extrasensory perception. These interests in both language and experimentation created the foundation for compiling the first edition of the book.

From this, the *Journal of Parapsychology* adopted a selection of basic terms for its own glossary, showing the value to the field of the original volume. Puente Publications, developed and managed by parapsychologist Nancy Zingrone, was an excellent vehicle for its republication. Carlos Alvarado became a critical reader of the updated manuscript. The

involvement of these three reputable parapsychologists ensured meticulous attention to detail and accuracy in the 2003 edition.

I must confess that I found the glossary fun to read as well as useful. Perhaps it says something about this reader's unusual tastes. Yet how many of us know the difference between ITC, IDS, and IPA? Could we come up with a quick definition of exopsychopraxia? haemograph? idiophany? nengraphy? panmnesia? psychobolic? psychorrhagic diathesis? I enjoyed developing a better parapsychological vocabulary from reading the glossary. In addition, some entries have a certain idiosyncratic charm. For instance, "jott," coined in 1991, an acronym standing for "just one of those things," refers to "discontinuities in the fabric of observed reality," or "an incident involving a jott." "Jottle" is then defined as "a jott manifesting as a displacement of location." Of course, these are the more exotic entries. The workaday terms used in the field are also well represented.

Without question, a field with over 100 years of burgeoning vocabulary requires a compilation that includes terms old and new from psychology, sociology, biology, physics, and statistics, derived from Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and the fertile minds of researchers. *A Glossary of Terms used in Parapsychology* is that book. I expect that it will need republication in another 20 years, but until then, this volume belongs on the library shelf of everyone working in or interested in the field of parapsychology.

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