

If the scholars are right, and the meanings assigned to both the signs of the zodiac and the planets are utterly arbitrary, without even a grain of truth, then the historical fact that in two thousand years these meanings have gone unchallenged stands as a psychological enigma too great to ignore (p. 81).

Well, yes, and indeed the scholars have not ignored it—as evidence, the fact that this book is being given serious attention in these pages. The psychological enigma, why people continue to believe in astrology, is a question which has puzzled them for almost as long as astrology itself has existed.

But implicit in West's statement is the suggestion that no proposition can survive for 2,000 years unless it is true, and this is patently not so. The truth of a proposition is less likely to ensure its survival than its convenience or its expediency. The teachings of the Christian church have survived for 2,000 years, though there are good reasons for questioning a great many of them. If they have survived more or less unchallenged to the present day, it is because they were useful or convenient for some.

Just as West is mistaken in thinking that his critics have ignored the enigma of astrology, so he seems to be unaware of the intense interest currently being taken in the inter-relationships operating in nature. On every side there are indications that informed inquirers are willing to contemplate possibilities which challenge accepted paradigms. The propositions of homeopathy, Sulman's work on weather-sensitivity, naturalists' findings in regard to sensitivity to sensory signals, work on allergies and electromagnetic radiation, these and many more are active research forays into what are still largely uncharted frontiers of reality. It is an area which may also yield some measure of confirmation for the celestial correlations which astrologers believe to exist.

But should any such correlations be found, they will not constitute an affirmation of West's mystical system. They will go to enlarge and enrich the ever-diversifying body of scientific knowledge, not to validate the Magic Art of Astrology.

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**Parapsychology: A Concise History** by John Beloff. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993, 330pp.

Parapsychology is not a discipline that can be accused of ignoring its history. Symptomatic of this circumstance is the fact that decades-old investigations

and experiments are still actively debated, both within parapsychology and between parapsychologists and their outside critics. The number of books and articles on the history of parapsychology also is quite large for a field of such size. However, the best historical treatises, such as Dingwall's *Modern Hypnotic Phenomena*, Gauld's *The Founders of Psychical Research* and Mauskopf and McVaugh's *The Elusive Science* cover circumscribed periods of the field's past. Thus, there is still room for a broader, competently written, history of parapsychology that is of reasonable length.

John Beloff, currently an Honorary Fellow in the Department of Psychology at the University of Edinburgh, is well equipped to write such a book. As one of parapsychology's most distinguished elder statesmen, he has lived through many of the events he writes about. He is a first-rate scholar whose interests in parapsychology encompass a broad spectrum of research, ranging from investigations of trance mediums to modern laboratory experiments using computers. He has a particularly strong interest in the philosophy of mind, and he is a leading defender of dualism, for which he sees psychic phenomena (to the degree they have been established) as providing decisive evidence.

One advantage of a concise global history is that it provides a clear sense of how a discipline evolves over time. This indeed is one of the strengths of Beloff's book. He identifies the origins of parapsychology with the natural and supernatural magical traditions of the Renaissance. Then in the 18th century came Mesmerism, a strictly naturalistic movement that later evolved into hypnotism and provided the first reasonably well-documented evidence of psychic phenomena in the trance state. Mesmerism, which arose in continental Europe, was followed in the 19th century by Spiritualism, a religious movement that sprung up primarily in Britain and the US. The Spiritualists adopted the highly unusual thesis that religious or spiritual claims are subject to empirical test, which attracted the interest of a number of prominent British intellectuals who wanted to reconcile their religious beliefs with Darwinism and the values of the Scientific Revolution. In 1882 these intellectuals founded the Society for Psychical Research, dedicated to studying various manifestations of psychic phenomena, particularly the claims of mental and psychic Spiritualist mediums. Beloff devotes considerable attention in the book to the controversies surrounding a number of these mediums: For reasons I don't quite understand two of them, Eusapia Palladino and Gladys Leonard, are singled out for special treatment in an appendix to Chapter 4, which is printed in small (eye-straining) type.

More attention than one usually finds in such histories is given to early ESP experiments in Britain, such as Guthrie's, but equally important experiments in the US. by Estabrooks and Coover receive only passing reference. A full chapter is then devoted to what Beloff calls the "Rhine revolution," which marked an abrupt shift from emphasis on survival research with mediums to more tightly controlled and statistically evaluated laboratory experiments modeled after experimental psychology and using volunteer subjects who had no pretensions of being in contact with the Great Beyond.

The final chapter, the longest in the book, summarizes "recent" research, from the 1950s to the present. The coverage of experimental research focuses on three major methodological paradigms of the period: free-response ESP techniques, in which subjects are not restricted to a limited number of responses as they are in card guessing, "micro-PK" research with electronic random-number generators (REGs), and "bio-PK" research, in which the targets are living systems. Also discussed are the controversies surrounding such special test subjects as Nina Kulagina, Ted Serios and Uri Geller. Survival research, which the Rhine revolution did not completely obliterate, is represented by studies of past life memories and near-death experiences. The discussion of "philosophical options" begins with the so-called "Observational Theory," which attempts to explain psi with reference to quantum mechanics and which introduced the paradoxical notion that PK targets are not really determined until they are observed by someone *after* they are generated. Other philosophical options addressed are Jung's synchronicity notion, and Beloff's own choice, "radical dualism." In one of the more intriguing paragraphs of the book, Beloff proposes that dualism could be falsified by showing that psi can occur between non-living systems (e.g. computers!) or between living systems that we could agree lack minds (e.g. plants).

Beloff's somewhat paradoxical orientation toward parapsychology comes through clearly in the book. He states at the outset that he accepts the evidence for psi, yet an underlying theme of the book seems to be how parapsychology has failed to make a credible case for psi to the broader scientific community. This latter attitude comes across most explicitly in the discussion of the Rhine revolution, but it is present throughout the text. I call Beloff's attitude paradoxical not because I find any logical contradictions, but because he projects a mixed attitude of progress and failure, of hope and despair.

Beloff is admirably even-handed in his discussion of the various sub-species of psi research, but indications of his apparent preferences still leak through. He treats the evidence from controversial special subjects such as Palladino and Serios more generously than most parapsychologists would, and he yearns nostalgically for the days when Spiritualist mediums were providing more high-powered phenomena than we find at present. I get the feeling he is less impressed with the more mundane laboratory procedures with unselected subjects that dominate contemporary parapsychology.

My only major criticism of the book, which also could be applied to many other such treatises, is the emphasis on "proof-oriented" research at the expense of "process-oriented" research, particularly in the discussion of the post-Rhinean period. To me, the most important departure from Rhine's paradigm, exemplified by at least some of his successors, was the deliberate effort not just to demonstrate psi one more time to a scientific audience repeatedly shown to be unmoved by such demonstration, but to determine what other variables psi correlates with, to make psi more reliable, and to understand how it works. (Beloff states that Rhine considered his own approach to be process-oriented, but a strong case can be made that it was really proof-oriented).

Beloff does not seem to appreciate this change in orientation. Genuine process-oriented studies, which in fact comprise the bulk of the contemporary research literature, are rarely acknowledged, and when they are acknowledged it is primarily in a proof-oriented context (for example, such and such a correlation provides new evidence for the existence of psi). I fear that the novice reader is likely to come away from the book with the impression that parapsychology is nothing but an interminable sequence of (ultimately abortive) attempts to demonstrate psi in some new context or with some new apparatus. If this is what the parapsychologists project in their own writings, critics can perhaps be forgiven for concluding that they have little interest in explaining their subject matter and that their research is not progressive.

A particularly unfortunate omission in this regard is Rex Stanford's Psi-Mediated Instrumental Response (PMIR) Model and the research it has inspired. Besides integrating psi with contemporary psychological theory, PMIR research is important as providing strong evidence for unintentional psi, which in turn lends considerable credibility to the experimenter-psi hypothesis, a topic Beloff mentions only briefly in the book. It is interesting in this connection that although Beloff explicitly rejects the Observational Theory (see above), he fails to point out that contemporaneous PK by the experimenter during the generation of targets provides a parsimonious alternative interpretation of much of the data claimed to support the theory.

The preceding expostulation on one of my pet peeves should not detract from an appreciation of the many positive qualities of Beloff's book. It is beautifully written and very well organized. With the one notable exception of Charles Honorton's REG experiment with the special subject Malcolm Bessent, I found the coverage of proof-oriented psi research to be quite comprehensive. Beloff packs a great deal of information into a small number of pages without making the reader feel overwhelmed or bored. I particularly enjoyed the biographical sketches of many of the researchers and special subjects. A full 25% of the text consists of footnotes that provide references for those who would like to pursue particular topics further.

As one who likes to think he knows parapsychology literature fairly well, I still found a number of new tidbits of information to store inside my cranium. I was particularly surprised to learn that the authors of *Phantasms of the Living*, who are generally considered to be the patron saints of spontaneous case research in parapsychology, are cited (in Beloff's words) as concluding that "in the nature of the case, spontaneous cases can never be conclusive" (p. 78). If someone had asked me before I read Beloff's book who I thought had expressed that sentiment, I would have guessed it was the quintessential experimentalist, J. B. Rhine.

Beloff's book is particularly appropriate for non-parapsychologist members of SSE who have a strong interest in anomalies, but lack the time to become experts in any but their own anomalistic specialty. It is substantial enough and sophisticated enough to satisfy their intellectual appetites without being te-

dious or requiring many hours of time. All things considered, Beloff has made a very useful contribution to the anomalies literature.

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**Science Frontiers: Some Anomalies and Curiosities of Nature** by William R. Corliss. Available from The Sourcebook Project, P. O. Box 107, Glen Arm MD 21057. 1994, 356 pp. \$18.95 (p). ISBN 915554-28-3.

William Corliss's work ought to be known to everyone interested in anomalies. He has published thousands of pages, in a couple of dozen volumes, of *extracts from science magazines and scientific journals* detailing phenomena that remain a challenge to currently accepted scientific theories. His Sourcebook Project also offers for sale a wide range of relevant books. Six times a year, those on the Project's mailing list get an announcement of new and staple books in stock, together with an issue of *Science Frontiers*, a pamphlet that contains intriguing items from current periodicals or newspapers or from correspondents. The present book consist of "about 1500 items . . . originally published in the first 86 issues of *Science Frontiers*." It ought to be snapped up by those—I am one of them—who discovered anomalies and Corliss only late in life and missed out on early years of *Science Frontiers*.

This book is divided into seven chapters: Archeology, Astronomy, Biology, Geology, Geophysics, Psychology, and "Chemistry, Physics, Math, Esoterica." By the very definition of anomalies, they cannot always be fitted into the categories of existing knowledge. So in this volume, the grab-bag "Esoterica" includes pieces about extraterrestrials and UFOs, but also "Miscellaneous Fortean" and "General Anomalistics," where one finds such delightful items as:

a house in Illinois where in 1988, sometimes under observation by police, blue flames emerged from wall sockets or vaporous hazes settled in, and finally the house was razed as the only cure;

in May 1991, the British Vehicle Licensing Agency announced that it would no longer issue plates with the numbers "666"—the Biblical Number of the Beast—because cars bearing such plates had been involved in too many accidents.

Under "General Anomalistics" there are also things of interest in the sociology of anomalistics: autobiographical accounts by such scientists ahead-of-their-colleagues as Tom Gold and Hannes Alfvén, or discussions of the signif-