

UFO occupants were from a time that is still to come. In that case they must avoid any close contact to the people who are born in a different time period, because all actions could influence future events and therefore undesired reactions to the chain of events for the occupants” (p. 157). The author seems to have overlooked a large and continually growing number of cases describing (a) nonhumanoid creatures and (b) narrative interviews with people from around the world who claim to hear occupants speak in no earthly language but with other strange utterances. He also invokes the well-known “categorical imperative” from science fiction that one race should not interfere with the development of another, even itself seen from the future.

These few difficulties notwithstanding, *Best UFO Cases—Europe* is a serious and positive contribution to the literature on a variety of UFO phenomena and is likely to remain so for many years to come. Its rather minor problems with English grammar, which is not the author’s native language, are far outweighed by its emphasis and clear presentation of hard data from Central Europe. Illobrand von Ludwiger is to be commended on collecting, translating, and presenting these data for the benefit of many others around the English-speaking world. The National Institute for Discovery Science is also to be commended for bringing this work into print.

Richard F. Haines  
325 Langton Avenue  
Los Altos, CA 94022

**The Last Laugh** by Raymond Moody. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 1999, paper. 210 pp.

This well-written and entertaining book bears the subtitle *A New Philosophy of Near-Death Experiences, Apparitions, and the Paranormal*. The author proclaims that this book is an obligatory addendum to his original celebrated work *Life After Life*. As such, it consists of the thoughts that commercial publishers edited out of his works in a 20-year period. Indeed, the author claims that the publishers over the years hacked out so much of his work that he does not recognize his work anymore. He objects, for example, to covers of books stamped with untruthful exclamations such as “Scientific Proof of Life After Death!” Although he objected in various ways to such extravagant claims about his work at the time, he felt it nonetheless was important to have the work published, especially because publishers were not interested in the work without the addition of such hype. These publisher’s tactics were a constant headache for Moody—and a continuing source of embarrassment. In fact, the author frequently claims in this book, and elsewhere, that the idea of proving by appeal to paranormal phenomena, scientific or otherwise, any form of life after death is a waste of time because it cannot, in his view, be done. He is emphatic, however, in insisting that it cannot be disproved either.

Moody's skepticism on this score embraces the view that one can neither prove nor disprove the existence of life after death by appeal to the paranormal, and this is the story he has not been able heretofore to defend in writing. As he says, "The publishers rake in the cash, and I'm the one left to answer the critic's objections—the very objections I had anticipated and resolved in the passages editors cut out of what I wrote, or altered" (viii). To that end, the author claims that, in issuing this book, he is declaring null and void *Life After Life*. He will accept responsibility for *Life After Life* only insofar as it is read and interpreted in the broader context provided by this new book.

By way of the implications of the subtitle of the book (*i.e.*, *A New Philosophy of Near-Death Experiences, Apparitions, and the Paranormal*), Moody declares early that this book challenges settled thinking about the supernatural and that it is, in fact, a secession from encrusted discussions on the paranormal. On this point, he is intent on dislodging three distinct sects of true believers who have long dominated learned discussion about these things, and he seeks to do as much by developing an alternative theory about the nature of the paranormal. The three distinct types of true believers are parapsychologists, members of CSICOP (*i.e.*, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.), and fundamental Christians.

After stating that it has been a grave mistake on the part of the media to typecast him as a parapsychologist, he proceeds to characterize parapsychologists as people who typically:

masquerade as scientists, alleging they can prove mind-reading, prophetic abilities or life after death by laboratory techniques or, more generally, by rational procedure. In fact, parapsychologists are pseudo-scientists, which means that they espouse a system of methods and assumptions they erroneously regard as scientific. (ix)

He classifies them with rhapsodists, pipe dreamers, lotus eaters, and wool gatherers; they are all pleasant enough, but their basic assumption is seriously in error. Their basic error, of course, is to think that there is some way of scientifically establishing their claims of the paranormal or of life after death based on the paranormal. He also thinks that those groups who think they have scientific proof of the falsity of the paranormal (groups such as those humanists who are members of CSICOP are equally problematic. Of them he says:

Many self-styled skeptics about the paranormal join a fringe social movement which advertises itself as a scientific organization while at the same time underhandedly representing itself as a para-law enforcement agency. Let me clarify, parenthetically, that I am not making this up!

The members of this social movement call themselves the sigh-cops.... For now, suffice it to say first, that sigh cops aren't skeptics but believers in a particular ideology about what knowledge is and how it is acquired, and second, that there are good reasons for believing that their ideology is mistaken.

*The Last Laugh* is an example of philosophical skepticism about the paranormal. I push skepticism far beyond the limits sigh-cops set for their inquiries. By comparison to mine, theirs is a weak-kneed and wimpy approach. (x)

In addition to the parapsychologists and the “sigh-cops” (both of whom are wrong for thinking that one can prove or disprove anything at all about the truth of paranormal experience), we have a third group of true believers, the fundamental Christians. This latter group, as one might expect, garner’s the lion’s share of Moody’s mirthful but deadly serious attack on true believers. Of this third bickering batch, he says:

They are the goshawful deadfannies, stiffs, bores, nuisances, uptight dogmatists, broken records, and wet blankets, the fundamentalist Christians, Religious Right, Bible Brigade, “JAY-zus”-Sayers, Brimfire and Hellstoners, Swaggartists, Falwellers, Bakker-Boosters, Pat Robertsonians, or whatever you would like to call them.

Moody claims that all three groups are full of nonsense and that *The Last Laugh* demolishes all three of these standard approaches to the paranormal and erects a better, more comprehensive and pragmatic system of thinking in their place. With regard to the latter, his positive approach is predicated on the thesis that while one can neither prove nor disprove any claims about the paranormal or life after death, the value of the paranormal and claims about it fall squarely into the realm of entertainment and that therefore, he advocates the view of “playful paranormalism.” Under this new view, the paranormal is not to be made the battleground in metaphysics, but to be enjoyed and played with joyfully for whatever it might inspire. Apart from whether the paranormal has any epistemic significance in seeking the truth about life after death, for Moody there is something inherently charming, entertaining, enchanting, and funny about it all, and we should not look for anything more in it than a source of fun and entertainment. More on this shortly.

The chapters of the book include the following: 1. The Experience of Dying; 2. Play and the Paranormal; 3. Breaking up the Logjam: Unriddleing the Controversy about the Paranormal; 4. Miracles, Meanings and Merriment; 5. Believing the Unbelievable Believably; 6. Knowing the Unknowable; 7. Classifying the Paranormal; 8. Justifying the Paranormal or Even the Study of It; 9. The Rhetoric of Dysbelief 10. The Only Way a Serious Study of the Paranormal Will be Legitimatized; 11. A Treasure Chest Waiting to Be Opened; 12. Coming Full Circle: Back to the Subject of Life After Life, 13. Having the Last Laugh.

At every turn in the book, Moody criticizes, for what seem to be altogether persuasive reasons, the mental set and practices of the “sigh-cops” and the fundamental Christians. Indeed, it is difficult not to smile when his psychological characterizations hit squarely on the target in expressing his thinly veiled disdain for the epistemic and outdated ideology parading itself as serious science in the practices of the “sigh-cops.” A serious critic of the book will note in passing the humorous ad hominem, but then again, Moody’s thesis is that ruling against ad hominem seems to presuppose we should take all this very seriously. That is, according to Moody, just the sort of thing we should not do

because it suggests that we are committed to a logical analysis of things in the interest of proving something about the metaphysical import of the paranormal. Moody has lost his patience with what he sees as a fundamentally worthless debate about the significance of the paranormal for understanding the nature of human nature. He laments the fact that this debate has actually detracted from a relaxed examination of, and participation in, the paranormal simply as a source of entertainment and edification. For example, when describing the role of the paranormal discourse *vis-a-vis* its epistemic import for understanding human nature, he declares himself a playful paranormalist, and says:

“Dysbelieving” about the paranormal is a pastime for shut-ins and stay-at-homes; it is the paranormal as seen from an armchair. Our society is caught up in what playful paranormalists categorize as a couch-potato model. Viewers sit passively on a sofa and watch television panel discussions about the paranormal. There are a couple of people on the panel who describe their own, personal paranormal experiences of perimortal visions, apparitions of the deceased, dreams that came true, or whatever. Then two or more “dysbelieving” experts slug it out before the cameras, pretending to explain what the paranormal experiences means, i.e. whether or not they “prove” life after death, precognition and so on. Viewers are supposed to make up their minds by evaluating what the panel of experients and “dysbelieving” experts say. “Dysbeliever” experts aren’t expected to be able to perform the paranormal, or to be able to enable others to experience the paranormal, as Ancient Greek experts were.

Playful paranormalists say, to change the study of the paranormal for the better, change the model of participation. Operating under the unific principle that the paranormal is entertainment, it is possible to symphonize anomalistic psychology, social history, and clinical know-how to enable people to have their own, first hand paranormal experiences. Then they will be in a better position to make up their minds about what such experiences mean. That would be to resolve the pivotal dilemma. (152 ff.)

It appears that Moody believes having one’s own paranormal experiences, and doing whatever is required to have them, will provide more illumination on their significance than any objective inquiry. This is not at all unlike the religious mystic’s claim that one cannot, by the light of reason alone, prove the existence of God. If one lives as the mystic does, however, then there is a good chance he or she will have the experience of God. In that experience, the need to prove the existence of God dissolves and passes as a juvenile, futile, and worthless activity. Of course, Moody does not say explicitly that one will know or see the metaphysical significance of the paranormal as a legitimate and reliable source of belief in some form of life after death. Nonetheless, I sometimes suspect it is implied in the thesis of playful paranormalism. In addition, it is not far removed from the epistemological thesis that there are some things we know and are justified in believing even when we cannot say precisely *what* we know or *how* we are justified in believing it. Whether one should accept this Wittgensteinian thesis or not is a long story not to be taken up in this limited space; but it is important to note that a number of philoso-

phers have argued the same basic view—if not about the experience of the paranormal, then at least about experience in general. In a continuing set of comments clearly revealing what playful paranormalism amounts to, he says:

Many of those who study the supernatural are chronically distressed because near-death experiences, ghosts, premonitions and the like are spontaneous and unpredictable happenings that cannot be reproduced under set conditions conducive to scientific examination. So investigators are reduced to sifting through a rubble of reports made sometime after the purportedly paranormal occurrences themselves – retrospective narratives the scientific skeptics belittle as anecdotes.

If visionary reunions with the departed, perimortal visions, or apparent foreseings of the future are what they purport to be, they would involve transaction between ordinary reality and what presumably would be other, alternate levels or dimensions of reality. Science has been extraordinarily successful in part, because of its steadfast and commendable determination to confine its deliberations to this ordinary reality in which we find ourselves. However, the performing arts routinely and reliably effect transactions between ordinary reality and intriguing alternate realities. Playgoers, moviegoers, and concertgoers, for example, regularly are transported, still in their seats, into seemingly different realms of being. They are made to feel that they are in the midst of an entirely different order of things. So by modeling themselves partly on the performing arts, playful paranormalists can entertain the prospect actually of reproducing experiences or phenomena that, when occurring spontaneously, often are deemed paranormal. (p. 153)

In the end, some of us are probably a bit more sanguine about scientific or empirical proof for some form of personal survival after death, even if we have not had such paranormal experiences. For that reason, we might remain difficult to persuade that there is no possible way to empirically confirm, via appeal to the paranormal, some form of personal survival after death. In other words, for those of us who agree with Moody's general characterizations of the three classes of true believer, there still may be some lingering suspicion that his new theory of the paranormal may be predicated on an assumption that needs a bit more persuasive defending, namely, that it is a waste of time try to prove empirically in any way that some essential aspect of human personality sometimes survives bodily death. His concept of "proof" could be discussed a bit more fully in this regard as well. Otherwise, the claim that it cannot be done could turn out to be another form of the "true believing" that Moody so richly criticizes.

Even so, the interesting epistemological point here may be that there is nothing logically contradictory between knowing that something is so by directly experiencing it and knowing that something is so because one has empirical proof of it. At any rate, readers should see nothing wrong with Moody's suggested playful paranormalism as a possible source of reliable belief formation. Nonetheless, the evidence for the reliability of such beliefs, if they are to be items of public knowledge rather than religious belief, require some empirical confirmation. In the absence of the latter, we could all agree that there are things some people know privately that other people do not know and cannot

be expected to know. This is so simply because some people have experiences that others do not have—and perhaps never will. But this is a long story for another time.

In sum, this book is a fun read intended for a literate and large audience. It is replete with wonderful insights and on-target assessments from a person whose original playful paranormalism has contributed so much to an important discussion on human nature, a discussion that might never have taken place so forcefully otherwise. For that, we should all be grateful—even if only for the book's entertainment value. Although one could disagree with Moody's major points, there is much to recommend in this book to anybody interested in the topic of the paranormal and the merits of discussions on it.

*Robert Almeder*  
*Department of Philosophy*  
*Georgia State University*  
*Atlanta, GA 30303*

**The Discovery of the Cold Fusion Phenomenon** by Hideo Kozima. Tokyo, Japan: Ohotake Shuppan, 1998. 370 pp. \$42.00 (in the USA). ISBN 4-87186-046-2.

Hideo Kozima's remarkable book is the first textbook describing cold fusion phenomena. With its more than 400 references and 70 diagrams of experimental results, thorough readers would have difficulty supporting the contention of university physicists that no such phenomenon exists.

The author is careful to explain in the introductory chapter how cold fusion is a term based on misunderstandings in early work. Many of the phenomena do not involve fusion, but reactions with neutrons and protons within the solid material in which most of the phenomena occur.

The book consists of 18 chapters. Only 10 of them explain experimental work. An usually large number of chapters, four in all, are about the author's theory and its detailed numerical application to the varied phenomena of so-called cold fusion: the neutrons, the tritium, the heat, and the gamma rays. (Incidentally, he does not mention x-ray emission from electrodes, which have been reliably reported.)

Kozima's idea—and ideas of this kind are at the cutting edge of present theories of cold fusion—is connected with neutrons inside the solid lattice. His contention is that there are trapped neutrons. They originate in the atmosphere by the interaction of cosmic rays with nitrogen. They arrive on a solid lattice at about  $10^2 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ sec}^{-1}$ , and thereafter they can take part in a large number of nuclear reactions inside the solid. In the later chapters, Kozima works out what would be the number of neutrons per cc to be consistent with the results that he examines and comes to the conclusion that, by and large, consistency is reached if the concentration of trapped neutrons is between  $10^8$  and  $10^{13}$  per cc.