

and your research deserves replication. Nothing succeeds without successors, and I hope that Sheldrake has them. With this book he may contribute more than new knowledge about animal behavior; he may show other deviant scientists how to become more persuasive to their conventional colleagues.

Ian Stevenson
Division of Personality Studies
Department of Psychiatric Medicine
University of Virginia Health System
Charlottesville, VA 22908

Contact the Other Side: Seven Methods for Afterlife Communication by Konstantinos. St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2001. 240 pp. ISBN 1-56718-377-8.

This is a most interesting book that covers the entire spectrum of afterlife communication in more detail and with more accuracy than any book written by a “believer” that I have previously encountered. Rather than being anecdotal, it provides detailed procedures for performing each of the communication methods. As a skeptic who has experimented with a number of these methods, I found the book fascinating and quite substantial.

The book begins on a cautionary note with a well-written chapter on “avoiding the cold reader.” It was interesting to note that while discoursing on the topic of magicians who, fearing litigation, refuse to publicly identify frauds professing to speak with the dead, Konstantinos extolls the courage of Penn and Teller (with whom he wholeheartedly agrees) in mocking and exposing cold readers, but ignores the primary victim of litigation from discredited psychics ... James Randi. A minor quibble, since the chapter is comprehensive and quite accurate.

The following chapters include a description of the afterlife and communication methods including detailed procedures for electronic voice phenomena (EVP—history, tape recording via microphone, broadcast static, and white noise), video, phone calls, CB-like communication using amplifiers (*Spirit-com*), computer generated messages and files, the séance, scrying, and direct mind contact.

The chapter describing the afterlife closely follows standard spiritualist beliefs, such as the existence of a temporary lower realm for flawed souls rather than eternal punishment in a hell and a summer realm where souls can create their own world using thoughts and can even experience sex ... although it is never “lust-filled” and “the need for sex goes away with time spent in the summer realm.” It seems that the religion-induced belief that lustful sex is bad dies hard. It is also from within the summer realm that most communications with the living arise. Souls also reincarnate from within the summer realm or can move on to more spiritual realms with the ultimate goal being a reunion

with the creator. Whether or not you believe in an afterlife, you will have to agree that if one exists, the afterlife described here is far more logical than the dogma espoused by most of the world's religions.

The following chapters are the "proof" of an afterlife based on communications with the dead. The first communication technique discussed is EVP, which takes up more than one-fourth of the book. Konstantinos shows a good understanding of the phenomenon, evidenced when he notes that "random spikes, peaks, and valleys in a noise source are the material that EVP use to form voices." Indeed, almost all noise sources are not pure random (white) noise but contain non-random components that can be extracted using filtering techniques. Whether the words thus produced are random garbage or voices from the dead is in the mind of the listener. My own experiments with this method, as well as all the examples that I have found on the Internet, indicate to me that EVP, when done using a proper source (i.e., avoiding radio bands or water pipe carried conversations) never produces long, coherent sentences that would serve as strong evidence for afterlife communication. The listener only hears a few disjointed words that are open to interpretation.

Similar to the evidence for survival of the personality provided by EVP, video and computer methods seem to be glowingly described in books such as this. However, when one looks at the real evidence as posted on websites maintained by proponents of the techniques, the evidence is nowhere near as substantial. It brings to mind fuzzy photos of UFOs, the Loch Ness Monster, and Bigfoot. George Meeks' *Spiricom*, which uses feedback loops with speakers and amplifiers for spirit communication, is mentioned by Konstantinos with the recommendation that the reader should look on the Internet for more information. I did and rather than finding detailed electronic circuitry and coherent descriptions, I found a rough, disjointed, and difficult-to-read diagram and no operational details. Perhaps it's trite but "where's the beef?"

Further chapters discuss the séance, Ouiji boards, scrying, and direct-mind communication. Historical aspects as well as detailed instructions for applying the methods are given. While Konstantinos goes too far in his conclusions based on the available evidence, at least he does it with a style, grace, and a modicum of scientific thought that is unusual in a book like this. I highly recommend it for believers, skeptics, and everyone in between as a starting place for an investigation of the afterlife, although it is likely that you will conclude, as did the British philosopher C.D. Broad that "one can only wait and see, or alternatively (which is no less likely) wait and not see." The quote is taken from what I consider to be the best documented study of survival: *This World or That: An Examination of Parapsychological Findings Suggestive of the Survival of Human Personality After Death* by William George Roll (Ph.D. Thesis, Lund 1989).

Michael Epstein

MS 8300

National Institute of Standards and Technology

Gaithersburg, MD 20899