

Proceedings of the Third Psi Meeting: Real-life Implications and Applications of Psi (*Atas do 3º Encontro Psi: Implicações e Aplicações da Psi*), by Fabio E. Silva, Carlos F. Grubhifer, Eliriam Brito, Sibebe Pilato, Silviane Muniz, Nadir M. Ganz (orgs.) Curitiba: FIE, 2006. 162 pp.

The Proceedings of the *Third Psi Meeting: Real-life Implications and Applications of Psi* consists of the publication of papers presented at the Psi convention held in Curitiba in the South of Brazil from April 21st to 23rd, 2006. The theme proposed was potentially controversial, especially since scientific studies of psi can be easily redirected from the scientific approach to practical applications, which may or may not be based on scientific knowledge. Fortunately, the majority of the published papers and roundtable discussions have resisted this "temptation" in a satisfactory way.

Among participants from several countries—Brazil, Argentina, Chile, USA, France, Israel, Japan, and Peru—there were invited speakers for four conferences, three roundtables, and paper presentations (accepted after an evaluation made by a scientific committee). The program also included a workshop on psi and prestidigitation.

In the paper titled "Brain Activity Guessing: Research by Functional Near-infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS)", the invited speakers from Japan, Hideyuki Kokubo and Mikio Yamamoto, present the correlation between fNIRS and the performance of experimental subjects in a multiple target experiment. They report that, at first, brain blood flow was measured while guessing a hidden figure in a forced-choice test. Spontaneous blood flow change often occurred at the temporal lobe, and awareness was slightly more activated at that time. Second, the cognitive process for human facial expressions was investigated. According to them, it is said that the Japanese are expressionless or vague compared with people of other cultures. Subjects tried to distinguish emotions of vague faces made by a Japanese actress. The task was relatively easy for Japanese while it was difficult for Chinese. Third, brain blood flow was measured while various experts were guessing about the diseased parts of the inside of the human body or for a small thing hidden in a dark box. Results show that brain activities of star psychics during clairvoyance were not similar to activities of other subjects. The characteristic activated area of star psychics was the prefrontal area although the guessing task required formulating visual images and many subjects showed activation of the right temporal lobe.

The paper "Seven Advanced Meditators in Ramtha's School of Enlightenment", written by Joan H. Hageman, Stanley Krippner, and Ian Wickramasekera, argues for a positive correlation between high hypnosis susceptibility and electrodermal reactivity, sympathetic increase with accelerated breathing meditation, and decreased sympathetic activation. And it suggests that the school's meditation style influenced sympathetic activation and self-perceived stress.

The three roundtables have interesting discussions about (a) implications and applications of psi phenomena in practical life; (b) the relation between

parapsychology and transpersonal psychology; and (c) the modified states of consciousness and reality.

The controversial subject matter along with the temptation to which we referred above strongly emerges during the discussion about the implications and applications of psi phenomena in practical life. While some participants propose practices for developing, cultivating, and applying psi in daily life, the Chilean psychologist Sérgio Schilling lucidly brings the discussion one step back, reminding us that psi may not even exist. Psi is a hypothesis that is still being tested, and we still do not have conclusive experimental results testifying to its existence. Schilling adds that an irrational necessity and prejudice exists in terms of the defense as well as the criticism of the existence of psi. Schilling is not denying the possibility of having practices based on psi, but he makes clear that assuming or denying psi as an established scientific fact is not only premature but also can be the result of pseudo-scientific posturing composed more by desires for the existence or nonexistence of it than empirical evidence for such conclusions.

In the first roundtable, the Brazilian engineer Jalmir Brelaz de Castro discusses the importance of culture in understanding the relationship between modified states of consciousness and reality. The importance given to the kind of reality that appears during alteration of consciousness will depend on culture. Brelaz de Castro points to how Western culture valorizes rationality and, so, alterations of consciousness can be interpreted as a sign of pathology. Benny Shanon from The Hebrew University and Steven Pritzker from Saybrook Graduate School remember William Crookes's pioneering and classical investigations of consciousness in his "Principles of Psychology" and continue the discussion mentioning more recent scientific perspectives. Shanon bases his perspective on Cognitive Psychology, while Pritzker dedicates his paper to the study of creativity, presenting the concept of creative flow, which suggests that non-conscious processes could be creative ones. The Brazilian engineer Carlos Alberto Tinoco discusses the implications of Physics today, especially for the development of recent theoretical and experimental studies in order to understand this subject.

When discussing parapsychology and transpersonal psychology, Stanley Krippner from Saybrook Graduate School presents both disciplines as being important contributors to the improvement of Western knowledge, which is usually limited for the privilege of rationality. The Brazilian psychologist André Pércia de Carvalho questions the risks inherent in defining broadly the object of studies and to the methodology used by transpersonal psychology. He argues that when the possibility of assuming psi as part of personal psychological life is open, there is a risk that many times transpersonal psychology will generalize conceptualizations and explanations with no experimental evidence, not to mention the assumptions based on supposed transcendental implications that supposed spontaneous psi phenomena would help to demonstrate. The Brazilian psychologist Célia Quadros Camargo from Faculdades Integradas Espírita

prefers to take this risk because she assumes that, for transpersonal psychology, consciousness would exist before, during, and after an individual's death. In this context of risks, Krippner proposes a balanced position: instead of strictly pointing to the differences between West and East, instead of opposing knowledge obtained from rationalism to that obtained by introspection, the ideal would be to integrate the opposite perspectives in a balanced way.

Among the presented papers we highlight four of them that we consider to be outstanding:

In "An exploratory study of the correlation between experiential and experimental psi using a brief questionnaire and a True Random Number Generator (TRNG) device computer", the biologist Waldo Mora and the psychologist Sergio Schilling, both from Chile, state that there are few studies concerning the possible relationship between the individual variability of psi and individual genotypic differences, and that there is scarce information about the comparison between spontaneous psi phenomena stories and experimental performances of these same subjects. After analyzing three nuclear families, their preliminary results do not reveal a correlation between data of everyday experience and experimental psi using random number generator (similarity = 7/16 individuals). According to the authors, this may be due to a poor psi questionnaire, a wrong experimental criterion to assign qualitative psi, experimental error, a very small sample, or some combination among these factors. On the other hand, simulations, experiences, and experiments delineate a big difference between clairvoyance and precognition, up to the point of the possibility that they may not be parts of a unique variable called psi.

In the paper "Dream Homes: When dreams seem to predict real estate sales", Stefan J. Kasian from Saybrook Graduate School presents an investigation with people who have allegedly dreamt future events specifically related to the purchase of properties (real estate) and have made decisions based on those dreams. These dreams appeared to inform, alert, inspire, and engage the dreamer to pursue a gratifying and meaningful housing opportunity. Because the dream images often resembled the property sold, such synchronistic experiences provided the dreamer with a sense of emotional confirmation to proceed with a particular real estate transaction. High mean scores compared to normative values were obtained from participants who have filled out the Absorption Scale of the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire ($p < .002$) and the Creative Personality Scale of the Adjective Check List ($p < .002$). In the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, participants' median figural test scores fell in the 90th percentile and verbal test scores fell in the 56th percentile. The study warrants further research by demonstrating how more subtle extraordinary ways of knowing can augment logical, rational decisions.

The paper "Is it possible to stimulate the anomalous experiences perception? An exploratory study with groups of dynamics" written by the Brazilian psychologist Fábio Eduardo da Silva from Centro Integrado de Parapsicologia Experimental of Faculdades Integradas Espírita outlines a research project that

is to be developed. The author intends to evaluate whether the anomalous transfer of information or energy could be obtained or improved by perception training and by experiencing psi-conductive factors, both procedures being conducted in groups. Phenomenological and experimental evaluations will be considered before and after the intervention. The phenomenological approach will both evaluate the coherence of the adopted theoretical constructs and collect new data. The experimental approach will use the Ganzfeld sensory deprivation technique to objectively evaluate the intervention's possible effects. The research question will be considered through the integration of these two approaches.

The paper "Distant healing intention to autistic patients: an exploratory study with psychological and physical variables" is authored by an international group comprised of Brazilians José Raimundo Facion from Faculdade Internacional de Curitiba; and Júlia Hein, Nadir Martins Ganz, Fabio Eduardo da Silva, and Magda Jaqueline da Silva from Faculdades Integradas Espirita; Chileans Sergio Schilling from Universidad Internacional SEK; and Waldo Mora from Universidad de Rancagua; the Peruvian Luis S. Espinoza Paul from Grupo de Estudios Parasicológicos del Peru; and the Japanese Hideyuki Kokubo from International Research Institute. It is a study in progress, despite the fact that the data had already been collected and was already being evaluated for presentation in another paper. The study intends to verify whether autistic patients would benefit from specialized treatment if psychic healers produced a healing intention at a distance. In this exploratory and double blind study, 10 psychic healers sent their intention of distant healing to five autistic patients (test group) during 25 days in November and December 2005. The psychic healers have only received a picture of the patients and did their practice in their natural environment. The patients (10 in total—5 in the control and 5 in the test group) were in a clinical environment and were systematically observed before (one month), during (one month), and after the distant healing intervention (4 months) by a psychologist. Their behavior was measured according to the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) among other instruments that were elaborated for this purpose. There was no contact between the patients and the healers, and there was a minimum contact between the two groups of researchers (patients' and healers' researchers). The patients' researchers took pictures of the patients and sent them inside sealed and non-identified envelopes to the healers' researchers who sent them randomly to the healers. Each healer worked at directing distant healing intention to one patient for five days. Each patient received distant healing intentions from two healers per day. During the first 20 days of distant healing intervention, the healers were free to choose the moment of their practices but in the last five days this moment was defined to permit all practices of distant healing intention to be made at the same time. Their hypothesis was that there would be some correlation between the patient's behavior and the healer's subjective report or practices. They also postulated that during the "healing practices", there would be an anomalous functioning in the

Orion RNG, which was placed close to the patients from one hour before to one hour after the distant healing intervention time. This study intended also to verify the possible effects of this distant healing in the test group in comparison to the control group. We hope to have access to the evaluation of data soon.

We consider the Third Psi Meeting: Real-life Implications and Applications of Psi superior to the previous ones not only in terms of quantity and quality of papers—which has improved in general—but also in consideration of the depth of discussions on such a difficult subject. We can say that Psi Meeting is, nowadays, one of the most important events in the field of psi research held in Latin America. The increasing quality of each edition permits us to wait for future conventions that are even more successful than the third one.

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From Shaman to Scientist: Essays on Humanity's Search for Spirits, by James Houran. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004. 286 pp. \$45.00 (paper). ISBN 0810850540.

From Shaman to Scientist begins by a preface by Richard Wiseman who has undertaken several studies on allegedly haunted locations in the UK. Wiseman notes that despite his certainty that the phenomena fall under the realm of normal scientific explanation, these phenomena are a fascination of, and passionately embraced by the general public. He suggests that ghost experiences can be insightfully revealing about the nature of human psychology. This sentiment is echoed by several writers throughout the volume. Wiseman also suggests that the fundamental questions about definitions, ways of exploring and ontological considerations regarding ghost phenomena can and should only be fully answered via the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches to their study. As editor, Houran has valiantly endeavoured to incorporate multidimensional perspectives to the study of ghost phenomena in this volume.