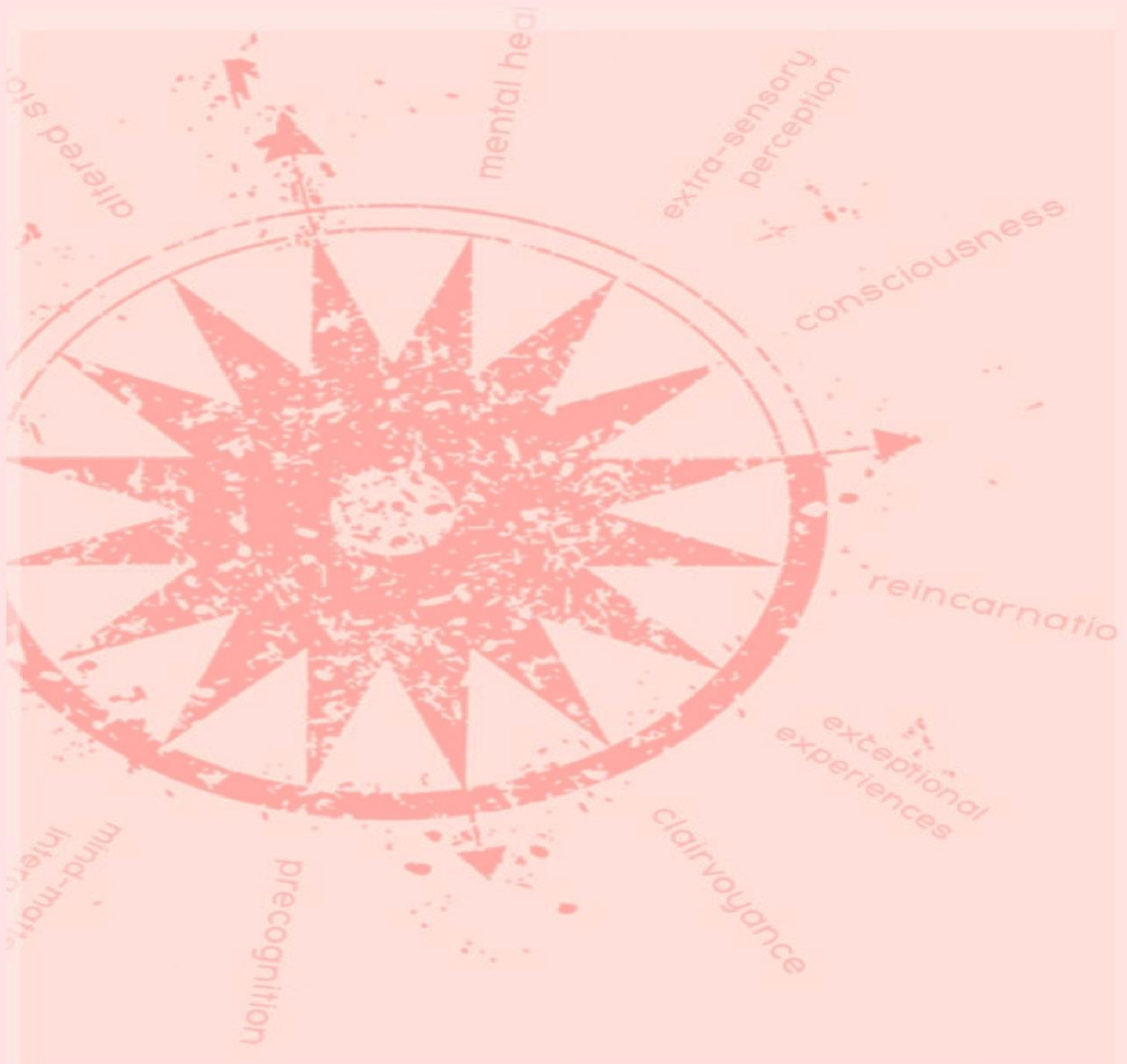


# Book of Abstracts



42nd International SPR  
Annual Conference

**Jurys Inn, Newcastle Upon Tyne - 21st to 23rd September 2018**



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## Introduction

This year's conference takes place in Newcastle Upon Tyne which is the northern regional capital playing host to four universities, if we include nearby Durham. Newcastle University does have a singular historical connection with psychical research: Gerhard Wassermann, a quantum physicist who became Reader in the Theory and Philosophy of Biology, invited J B Rhine to visit him in Newcastle. Wassermann was deeply interested in the subject and formulated a field theory of psychic phenomena, which is similar to the morphic fields theory of Rupert Sheldrake, one of the invited speakers at this conference.

All the invited speakers are currently making outstanding scientific and philosophical contributions and are recognised in their own field for these. These contributions are enabling us to reach a better understanding of consciousness and in doing so they take research into psychic phenomena into the worldview. The panel discussion will offer an opportunity to see if some consensus can be reached. What is already clear is that there is a shift occurring in science by recognising that there can never be a "theory of everything" without a theory of consciousness. The conventional reductionist view of humans is that we are nothing more than intelligent apes occupying an infinitesimal time period in a distant insignificant part of the universe. As the physician Larry Dossey asked, who would then believe such an ape's theory of everything? Besides humility, something big appears to be missing and this has to do with altered states of consciousness and psi - the main focus of this conference.

The conference follows the usual tradition of being an optimal mixture of university-based experimental research and the active investigations of spontaneous phenomena. They are arranged according to the themes of Consciousness, Near Death Experiences, Cross Cultural and Historical Aspects, Experimental Studies of Psi, and Investigations of Mediumship. The conference is also internationally represented with speakers from England, Scotland, Germany, Holland, Iceland and Sweden.

This year, in an effort reduce costs, and thereby to attract a wider participation, we have no formal dinners or receptions, but Newcastle is known for its pubs and parties. And for those who want to escape city life, I recommend the Northumbrian coast - 30 miles of largely deserted beaches. So, enjoy these opportunities.

Prof. Adrian Parker  
Chairman of the Conference Programme Committee

# Research Projects That I Would Carry Out if I Had the Millions Needed

Adrian Parker

Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg

In the year 2003 the Swedish entrepreneur Dag Landvik, inventor of Tempur Mattress, stated publicly he would support university parapsychology with 100 million Swedish crowns, then worth about 9 million pounds (Landvik, 2003). Unfortunately, the controversy over an endowed professorship being established at Lund University revealed that their interest lay entirely in the money and they hoped to avoid parapsychology, so this offer was forthwith forfeited.

For many established fields this is not such an extraordinary sum, but it is one that which would clearly make a clear and decisive difference to this field. Although the field lacks now the credibility that would attract more major donors of this calibre, it is still an erstwhile exercise to view promising areas for future funded research should the situation change.

Many authorities recognise the need for a plausible theory rather than more evidence for psi. Walter von Lucadou's theory known as the **Model of Pragmatic Information** is singular in parapsychology by providing such a comprehensive theory of the wide range of psychic phenomena (von Lucadou, 2017). However, the unproven major assumption is that quantum effects can occur at a human social level. The theory is currently being tested using matrices of measurements to get around hypothesised the replication blockage and if these are successful the theory would deserve a major research backing and publicity. Until a major theory gains support, the emphasis has to be on simpler hypotheses.

In contrast to the approach dominant in UK parapsychology, the focus would be on *special states and special participants*. The attempt to "normalise" psi can mean that we have been missed several opportunities in working with apparently gifted individuals.

**Twin Telepathy Research:** This might be a way of finding gifted participants and the writings of Guy Lyon Playfair have been undoubtedly inspirational to research on this topic (Playfair, 2002; Parker & Jensen, 2012; Brusewitz et al, 2016).

**The Shift in State Hypothesis:** This is the notion that strong shifts in the state of consciousness are associated with psi. The hypothesis was first proposed in 1966 by the psychologist Gardner Murphy and later taken up in experimental work by (Honorton et al, 1973; Parker, 1976; Palmer et al, 1977, Harley & Sargent, 1980, Parker, 2004). What seems methodologically important is measuring the changes as they happen in the altered state rather than by post experiment inquiry (by calling out a point on a numerical scale previously learned by the participant or by an analysis of the recorded verbalised thought processes).

**Shared states of Consciousness:** The notion to be tested here is that by having both the receiver and sender in the same state of consciousness we can explore psi based alternative realities. The proposal gained Charley Tart the 1972 publication in *Science* on the need for *state specific sciences* but since then little else has been published on the topic other than anecdotes - with the exception of mutual *lucid dream states* (Waggoner, 2009, pp 219-220; Waggoner & McCready, 2017).

**Mediumship:** Although there is some promising preliminary work on the neuropsychology of mediumship and possession amongst mediums (Hageman et al 2010) it would be of interest to compare the physiology of mediums in trance and channelling with that of actors when they are engaged in role play. Given that the use of mediums for the forensic tasks appears to have been at least on some occasions highly successful (Lyons & Truzzi, 1992) this area may offer some opportunities to explore possible differential predictions concerning the agency or source behind the communications.

**Near Death Experiences:** If there is no perfusion then a flat-line EEG occurs at around 15-20 sec following cardiac arrest. The duration of survival following cardiac arrest is now greatly extended for those exposed to hypothermia - so long as CPR is maintained. The question is: do patients with long periods of cardiac arrest but with minimum perfusion still report the same classical and detailed form of NDEs?

It would be valuable to collate and compare what is recalled in these states where brain activity is severely impaired or believed to be in abeyance (Kelly, 2018; Thornard et al, 2013; Verville et al, 2015). The comparison with NDEs could even be extended to a comparison with psychedelic experiences (Luke, 2017).

**Thought-forms:** Veteran psychical researcher, Tony Cornell, remarked that there was some basic phenomenon that was being missed. Could this be the production of thoughtforms - a form of independent mental activity representing the unconscious or conscious needs and described in various other cultures as the tulpa, the pooka and the djinn? Thoughtforms in combination with psi would explain many of the enigmas in poltergeist phenomena, apparitional experiences and medium communications (Puhle & Parker, 2018).

Martin Johnson continually revised his predictions for when the supposed research breakthrough would occur because of increases in globalisation and the economic steering of research at universities, which in his opinion disfavoured university parapsychology. Would any of the above lead to this breakthrough? Very possibly not, but any advance with these areas would highlight psi as attribute of consciousness and the current interest in consciousness provides the long sought after opening.

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# Dreams as Doors of Perception

Annekatriin Puhle

Paranormal experiences are most frequently reported as occurring in dreams. An overview is presented here of a variety of unusual dream experiences, including those featuring apparent ESP. This is illustrated with examples taken from my personal collection of cases and from my own dream records.

The collection suggests that there are not only the classical "ESP dreams" but also other (somewhat neglected) types of dreams. For example: dreams beyond the perception of normal space and time; lucid dreams with seemingly psychokinetic influences on penetrating matter; dreams with apparent reincarnation memories; dreams suggesting communication with the deceased individuals; and dreams of extended consciousness. Many so-called "light experiences" fall within the latter category. In addition, there are dreams with composite entities, and also so-called shared dreams, i.e. dreams, which are shared by multiple consciousnesses.

Taken together, all these experiences suggest that there may be many streams of consciousness in the same individual, with multidimensional connections to other individuals steering the content. The digital recording of dreams together with the use of word searches, could reveal deeper meaningful connections in dreams. However, it is nearly impossible to assess the role of "chance" in these connections.

## Understanding Psi by a Model that Unites Consciousness, Mind and Matter

Simon X. Duan

Metacomputics Labs, UK

The idea of the universe might be a computer simulation, is taken increasingly seriously by scientists, philosophers and technology leaders. However, before a real theory can be developed some basic questions need to be answered:

- Where does it come from?
- What is it made of?
- How is it built?
- What are its properties?
- Who is the programmer?

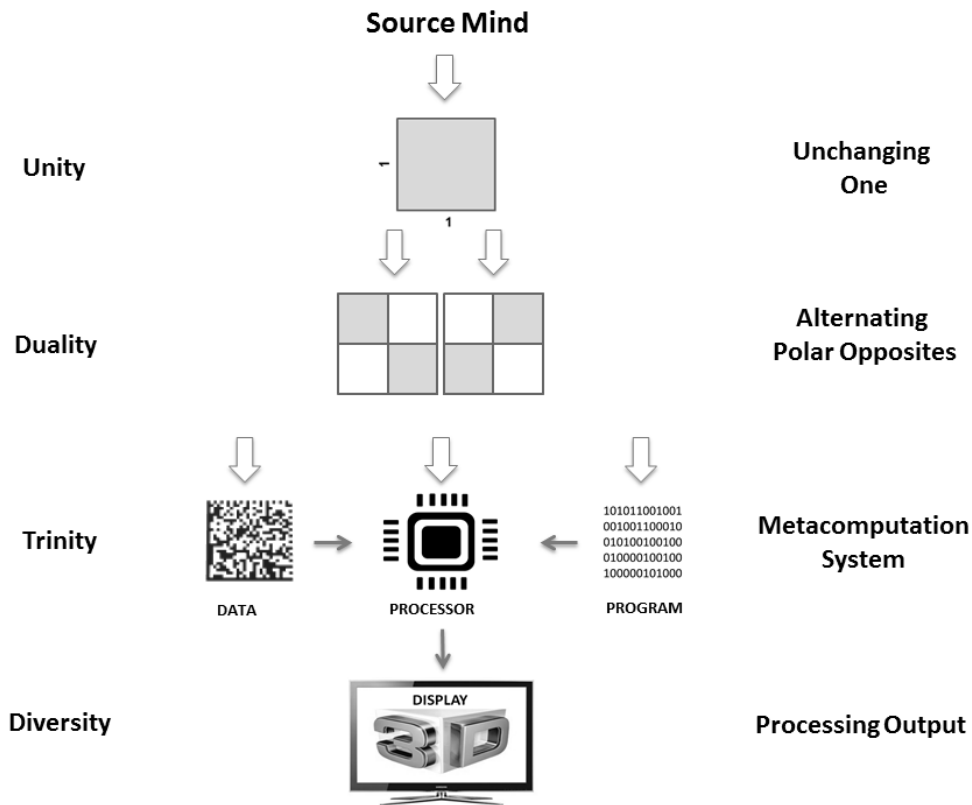
The answers come in the form the called "Metacomputics Model". As it is presented here the operating computer is assumed to exist in the Platonic realm. The physical universe and all its contents are then formed by the processing output of this Platonic computer.

According to the Metacomputics Model, consciousness itself exists as the fundamental and irreducible basis to the universe. It is defined as the abstract power to conceive, to perceive, and to be self-aware. The content of the universe comes into existence from consciousness via the computational processes of the Platonic computer which is itself is made by, of, with, and from Consciousness.

One advantage of this model is that it serves bridge between the views of the world as the state of non-duality and of duality. It gives us also an intellectual understanding of the origin of time and space. It provides a means of understanding the creation of the apparent material universe from consciousness through a computation process.

Through the convergence of computation theories and metaphysics the proposed model clarifies a range of important concepts and phenomena that cannot be explained by existing accepted theories. These include consciousness, mind, time, space, matter, energy, language, experience, perception, thought, feeling, emotion, sensation and action.

The talk will show that Metacomputics model can be applied to explain psi-phenomena in terms of alteration of the "programs" through a form of human-machine interaction by psychic individuals.



In collaboration with researchers around the world, Metacomputics model is being applied to develop innovative healing and healthcare, learning and personal development, new materials and processes, clean energy generation and artificial intelligence.

Further details on [www.metacomputics.com](http://www.metacomputics.com)

## “I was Absolutely Petrified...” Negative Anomalous Experiences During Bereavement

Mia Jakeman & Callum E. Cooper  
University of Northampton

Sensing the presence of a deceased loved one is a common phenomenon, with approximately 50% of individuals reporting them (Rees, 1971, 2010). There has been a great deal of research conducted surrounding the variety of anomalous experiences reported during bereavement, and their positive nature and impact on the bereavement process (see Cooper, Roe & Mitchell, 2015; Cooper, 2017; Gurney with Myers, 1889). However, there is very little research surrounding why a minority of individual report negative experiences. Parker (2004) discovered that 1 out of 12 people interviewed about their experiences claimed them to negative, Rees (2010) reported 6% of people finding their experiences unpleasant (N=293), and Cooper (2017) found 2% expressing negative outcomes (N=50). Clearly the figures are low, but why are they low? And, what is the long-term impact of these experiences on bereavement and recovery?

An interpretative phenomenological analysis approach was taken to explore such experiences in greater detail (see Storey, 2016), with in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted (N=4, females, mean age: 45.5). A total of 5 super-ordinate themes were generated from the data (with sub-themes), which



included: 'from the deceased's perspective' (experiment perspectives of the deceased's views and behaviour); 'continued bonds' (see Klass & Steffen, 2018); 'bereavement process' (the therapeutic benefits of anomalous experiences); 'judgment' (experiencing stigma from talking to people about such experiences); 'emotional reactions' (how and why the experiences were seen as negative).

It appeared that even though all bereaved individuals reported negative experiences, all of them reported positive benefits. The anomalous experiences – as previous research has found – supported and facilitated the gap of loss, which helped all experiencers overcome not only the initial loss, but any negative emotional reactions from experience. The research has helped contribute to the clinical parapsychology literature surrounding death and bereavement and further our understanding of what may happen in those few negative instances reported. However, given such a small sample of people were interviewed, there is much scope to continue this line of inquiry.

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# Therapeutic Approaches Towards Near-Death Experiences

Erika Annabelle Pratte

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This paper presents the preliminary results of the first phase of a doctoral research project that explores life and well-being after a near-death experience (NDE) via a questionnaire. Furthermore, this questionnaire investigates how people have integrated their NDE healthily or not-so-healthily, and if professional mental health services were sought, how that experience helped or hindered integration. *Integration* can be operationally defined as organising and accepting an experience into one's life so that he or she can maintain health and well-being. This questionnaire utilised 71 open and closed questions; the platform on which the questionnaire was presented was Qualtrics ([www.tinyurl.com/NDESurvey](http://www.tinyurl.com/NDESurvey)). Thus far, 50 near-death experiencers have participated in the survey. The survey is set to close at the end of June and analysis will begin shortly thereafter, with completion at the end of August.

This doctoral project is a mixed methods approach with Study I as a survey with both qualitative and quantitative approaches and Study II involving interviews which will be analysed via interpretative phenomenological analysis. This project's goals are to

- Enable deeper understanding of the circumstances under which NDEs are not healthily integrated into the lives of those who experience them (i.e., experiences resulting in anxiety, depression, trauma, depersonalisation, etc.)
- Enable deeper understanding of how NDEs are healthily integrated into the personal narratives of those who experience them (and consequently, illuminate the factors that help adjustment (i.e., family support, prior spiritual views, etc.)

- Form a theory of clinical and therapeutic applications for counselors who have clients struggling to integrate NDEs

Study II will provide a more focused, in depth exploration of the factors that influence integration in Study I via interview. Personal narratives will be transcribed and then analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, psychological qualitative research with an idiographic focus, which means that it aims to offer insights into how a person, in a certain context, makes sense of a given phenomenon. Study II offers the ability to more closely work personal narratives and analyse specific cases. These studies will contribute to the formulation of a framework on which to build a theory on therapeutic approaches towards near-death experiences; from there (post-PhD), I will begin testing the applications to explore which therapeutic applications/techniques do indeed work, when, and why. Analysis for Study I will include both quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., correlation parametric measures, and potentially, abbreviated grounded theory). This research study will elucidate the phenomenological themes of poor integration post NDE and provide groundwork for further study into clinical and therapeutic approaches for counselors who have clients struggling to integrate NDEs. How the results of Study I will inform Study II will be discussed.

This doctoral project is funded by the Parapsychological Association PARE Award, the Parapsychology Foundation Eileen J. Garrett Scholarship, and the University of Northampton Dr. Mike Daniel Research Degree Scholarship.

## Invited Speaker

### Psychedelomancy: Precognition with Psychedelics

David Luke

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University of Greenwich, London

There is ample data available to indicate that psychedelic ESP (telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition) experiences are quite prevalent, as the traditional divinatory and shamanic use of psychedelic plants/fungi is widely reported in the historical, anthropological, and ethnobotanical record. Among the general public, surveys consistently indicate those reporting ESP experiences are significantly more likely to have used psychedelic substances, with more frequent use associated with a greater likelihood of an experience (Luke, 2012).

With regard to controlled research on the efficacy of psychedelics to induce ESP, there have been only 17 separately published experimental projects that have been conducted, mostly in the 1950-70s – primarily with LSD or psilocybin, but also with mescaline, marijuana, *Amanita muscaria*, and, recently, ayahuasca. Overall, few firm conclusions can be drawn concerning the induction of genuine ESP with psychedelics from those studies because of the lack of systematically controlled experiments, although, at best, the results suggest a promising line of enquiry. After a long hiatus research is now resuming with better methodology and this paper reports on 4 recent experiments by the author/speaker exploring precognition in controlled experiments following the ingestion of a psychedelic agent, specifically ayahuasca (N=20), 2 x San Pedro cactus (N=1), LSD (N=13), and DMT (N=9).

### Anomalous/Paranormal Experience in the Hospital Environment

Terence Palmer

Reports of supernatural experiences in hospitals by nurses and doctors are often presented as Anomalous/Paranormal Experiences (APE) and will include apparitions, odd coincidences, death-bed

visions and other anomalous phenomena. Some visions appear to be dead relatives of patients who have come to assist dying patients and give comfort to them through the dying process. Parapsychology researchers attempt to determine the relationship between such experiences and the psychological factors that may contribute to explaining them. For example, recent research investigated the correlation between certain types of perceptual experiences and nurses' job stress, proneness to hallucinations and psychological absorption. Such research is conducted from the perspective that supernatural experiences are hallucinations and are produced by the brain in response to stressors and proneness to cognitive misattribution. Current research into this area is therefore limited to attempts to explain such phenomena without considering the alternative hypothesis that spirits are real. Ethnographic research, by contrast, with the observation and collection of data from clinical case files on a day-to-day basis strongly suggests an alternative hypothesis. Patients presenting with a wide variety of emotional, psychological and psychosomatic problems are often found to be influenced by 'earthbound' spirits of the deceased who have attached themselves to the patient. An earthbound spirit is one that has not progressed to a spirit realm after the death of the physical body.

A wealth of evidence to support the theory that the spirit survives the death of the physical body has been accumulated by the Society for Psychical Research since 1882, and yet this evidence continues to be ignored, refuted or denied by medical science. Dialogue with earthbound spirits reveals that many of them were attracted to their living 'host' during a hospital visit or as an inpatient. Treating the attached spirit and the affected host is known as Spirit Release Therapy (SRT). A recent SRT training course in detecting and releasing earthbound spirits from a local hospital revealed several examples that are to be presented to conference. However, due to the fact that none of those engaged in the detection and release of these spirits had access to hospital patient records or death certificates, they could not be validated by external evidence.

Acknowledgement of the evidence for the ontological status of earthbound spirits has far-reaching implications. For example, nurses, doctors and other hospital staff who witness such phenomena could be better educated in how to deal with them, rather than be deemed to be 'under workload stress' or 'prone to hallucinations'. In addition, an understanding of the process of dying where the spirit leaves the body would no longer be regarded as something 'supernatural' or 'anomalous' or 'paranormal', but normal and natural in agreement with F.W.H. Myers' scientific framework of 'expanded naturalism'. If every hospital had a Soul Rescue Group or Spirit Release Circle then, should the hypothesis be supported with empirical evidence, perhaps much suffering could be alleviated for trapped earthbound spirits and their unsuspecting living hosts. Further research is needed in order to determine the validity or otherwise of this avenue of investigation into the occurrence of such phenomena.

## J.B. Priestley's *Man and Time* Letters: A Reanalysis

Chris A. Roe

Exceptional Experiences & Consciousness Studies Research Group  
University of Northampton, UK

The English playwright J.B. Priestley had a lifelong interest in man's relationship to time and this was a central theme in many of his most influential works, such as *An Inspector Calls* and *Time and the Conways*, in which the common-sense understanding of time passing inexorably from past to present to future is subverted in various ways. He explored this more directly in his book *Man and Time* (Priestley, 1964), which considers what science and anthropology have to say on the subject before focusing on spontaneous experiences that have suggested to the experienter that the past might not always be fixed and the future unknowable in the manner that is commonly believed.

When he was working on this book, Priestly appeared on the BBC television programme *Monitor* to talk about ongoing projects, at the end of which the interviewer, Huw Weldon, asked the audience to send Priestley "accounts of any experiences they had that appeared to challenge the conventional and 'common-sense' idea of Time". The programme was subsequently broadcast in New Zealand, and notices about Priestley's project appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph*, *Sunday Times*, *Radio Times*, and *Punch* (Price, 2014). The response to the appeal was substantial, and almost 1,500 letters survive, held in the

archives of the Society for Psychical Research at Cambridge University Library, and among Priestley's papers in Special Collections at the University of Bradford. Priestley devoted two chapters to the letters in *Man and Time* but did not subject them to systematic analysis. On this, he said "I offer no careful analysis, no exact figures. If without such treatment they cannot be accepted as evidence, then we shall have to do without evidence. To tell the truth, after they reached 1000 I stopped counting them, because this kind of activity bores me, and my secretary, after helping me with the first great rush, had other things to do. But I have read them all, with the exception of long screeds from obvious madmen, detailed accounts of books I had read myself, and letters from people who thought I was in need of a sermon" (p. 192).

In an effort to fill this gulf, other scholars have worked with the database. Matz (2012) quotes some of the cases as he links Priestley's thinking on the nature of time to the writings of J. W. Dunne, particularly *An Experiment with Time*. Matz summarises this position, stating "only our conscious selves are fixed to the present moment and compelled to follow the moving present inevitably toward death. Our dreaming selves are not, and they are the clue to an entirely different temporal framework. In dreams, a secondary consciousness transcends the present moment and ranges freely among past, present, and (most significantly) the future. Dreams that seem to predict the future actually perceive it, not through any paranormal magic but because the 'observer' that produces them, normally pegged to our conscious awareness, is free of it, free in sleep to see the future, which eludes us only because of the limitations of normal awareness" (p. 324).

Price (2014) offers a succinct summary of the project and situates it in terms of the perception of Priestley among the general public as one who was willing to challenge the establishment's prevailing worldview and was by virtue of his own personal experiences sympathetic to accounts of paranormal phenomena. Her analysis of Priestley's evaluation of cases focuses on gender bias and on notions of madness that are prompted by seemingly bizarre experiences rather than on the evidential status of the cases themselves. More recently, Peake (2018) has written in detail about Priestley's preoccupation with time, including two chapters on the *Man and Time* project in which he reproduces and comments on some of the letters in the database, including some that have not before been published. However, the selection and presentation of these examples is rather unsystematic and provides only a flavour of the types of experience volunteered.

Thus, there is scope to conduct a more rigorous content analysis of this material, following the model that I have previously applied to the Alister Hardy collection of letters. To this end, with the assistance of Dr Melvyn Willin who as archive officer for the SPR has oversight of their holdings at Cambridge University Library, I visited CUL from 6-8 December 2017 with Dr Simon Sherwood of the University of Derby. We were able to take copies of 1,058 letters that are stored there. On May 15-16, 2018, we visited the J.B. Priestley Archive in the Special Collections of the University of Bradford and took copies. Analysis of this substantial body of material is ongoing, using the content analysis method that I have previously applied to the Alister Hardy database of cases (Linnett & Roe, 2016; Roe & Linnett, 2017). In this presentation I will summarise the results of that analysis, comparing it with Priestley's initial impressions.

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# Proving the Paranormal by Prioritising the Poltergeist

John Fraser

The paper represents the current contribution in a series of work aimed at challenging and changing traditional attitudes to research on psychic phenomena (Parsons, 2016; Parsons, 2018). Here, I will address the issue of what the role of the SPR and other responsible bodies should take with respect to intervention in the "cry for help" spontaneous cases - by which I mean cases where *a resident or home owner is actively seeking a responsible body to intervene and research the cause of potentially paranormal events* (Parson, 2010). Poltergeist cases are obviously most relevant.

Up to 1949 the SPR had a full-time professional Research Officer with the potential to make an intervention in such cases. This reflected the serious way such cases had previously been investigated both by the SPR, Harry Price's National Laboratory for Psychical Research, and to some extent Nandor Fodor under the auspices of the 'International Institute for Psychical Research'. More recently with regards to the SPR, any such cases have been passed to a committees or groups of volunteers.

By its nature, any such committee's initiatives are likely to sporadic and ad hoc. Moreover, with the SPR investigations one has to bear in mind that there is no corporate view or consensus about which cases are considered to be authentic, false or a mixture - as the Enfield Poltergeist case illustrates. The great difficulty is having the right people there at the right time. This is a problem that not only exists in the SPR but amongst the whole of modern paranormal research in the UK in more modern times.

With so many conflicting priorities in the realm of the paranormal when it comes to poltergeist phenomena - is there anything particularly unique to prioritise? The following points are of particular note when it comes to this discussion:

1. ESP and related phenomena are investigated to some extent by University Parapsychology departments, while with various degrees of competence the 'traditional ghost' is investigated by numerous self-styled "paranormal investigation groups". With regards to the poltergeist there are few if any formal approaches and guidelines to use in the investigation. One has to turn Colin Wilson's text from 1981 to find a relevant publication. The current entry in Psi Encyclopaedia (on [www.spr.ac.uk](http://www.spr.ac.uk)) makes this point very clearly stating that: "Whilst funding is available for certain types of paranormal investigation - notably Psychokinesis and ESP experiments - such support is not readily available for field investigations." (Colvin, 2018)
2. As poltergeist activity is normally people-centred, then the standard of investigation has to by definition be of a high and consistent quality. It therefore needs a higher entry level of competence when it comes to investigations.

The key-point is that the 'traditional ghost' is surrounded by alternative psychological explanations, be they those of confirmation bias or misinterpretation of sounds or sights caused by expectation. Studies such as those by Laing and Huron (1996) have shown that expectation is a significant factor. However, poltergeist phenomena are much more objective and fit nicely into the 'fact or fraud criteria'. An object thrown by an unseen force is either paranormal or a very good conjuring trick! There is far less ambiguity in this type of phenomenon, and far less scope for psychological explanations.

It is often stated that a hindrance to poltergeist investigation is that "Poltergeist activity is very rare, and often lasts only a few days or weeks" (Colvin, 2018). However, I believe this can be shown to be incorrect – due to:

- a) Underreporting – as few established bodies to report it to
- b) Misdiagnosis of minor events possibly being put down as 'Just One of Those Things' (JOTTS)
- c) Lack of understanding of similar reports from other cultures. Noteworthy is the claim by Richard Sugg amongst others that "people in Greece, Romania, the Ukraine, Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Germany were (historically) terrorised by vampires which behaved like poltergeists" Alan Murdie has also identified historic cases in Columbia whose cause was claimed to be that of a 'Duende' (an elf or goblin), but in which the phenomena fits well with that of the poltergeist. This

also leads to significant 'similar fact' evidence which has a logical persuasive quality fully excepted in British Law. (Murdie, 2015).

The argument is that poltergeist phenomena are not rare, but they occur potentially worldwide and since they provide consistent apparently objective evidence, they are easier to prove or disprove without ambiguity. This lead naturally to the question can we therefore allocate and prioritise the appropriate resources in accordance with the need for greater expertise in poltergeist investigations? If so, where do we start this process?

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## Poltergeists and Possession

Alan Murdie

This presentation will discuss the complex transition between genuine poltergeist cases and those of possession, especially the claims of attributing phenomena to possession by the devil or evil spirits. It will also touch on the influences of cultural and subcultural norms on beliefs and behaviour and on the identification of mental disturbance.

## Parapsychology and Buddhism: Interviews with Vipassana Mediation Practitioners Across India

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There are two kinds of traditions known to parapsychologists – Western and Eastern. They are subdivided into a number of directions and schools. The pivotal difference between the mentioned approaches lays in their attitude to an individual. Parapsychology in Eastern tradition is an extended form of esotericism (a concept of science regarding secret knowledge that is based on mystical viewpoints), through which modern science attempts to reconcile parapsychology built primarily on super-sensible methods of cognition and the predominantly rationalistic ideology dominating in the contemporary world (Barash, 2017). According to Barash (2017), the purpose of Eastern tradition is to live in harmony with oneself and the surrounding world along with the fullest disclosure of one's abilities. It is the medicine of the body, mind, and soul requiring only persistent and independent work on oneself (Radin, 2009).

Aligning Eastern tradition to parapsychology, it is possible to mention that the combination of these components forces a person to look inside and focus on internal psi-conductive states rather than to explore those of others (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015). People living on East prefer working on their own condition to improve continuously and understand themselves better. In particular, raja yoga, bio-feedback, and some other Eastern techniques are utilized to concentrate on one's internal state and establish paranormal connections (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015). It is considered, therefore, that Eastern tradition is closer and more aware of parapsychological manifestations. Since such practices as meditation and breathing control exercises are familiar to the majority of Orientals, it becomes evident that Eastern scholars and practitioners are more likely to discover new opportunities and challenges in the field of psi-

related issues (Rao & Paranipe, 2015). This is in line with the idea that meditation is one of the main contributors to an unconscious display of psi powers.

Considering that psi-conductive efforts help a person to reveal his or her parapsychological capability, it is practiced to train children in East in special centres. May and Marwaha (2014) review the results of several studies and conclude that 47 % of children aged between six and 12 are trained to discover their psi ability by means of the qigong system. It presents special exercises aimed at breath control and energy reflection. McConnel claims that in spite of the widespread nature of qigong and the alternative medicine, the attitude of government is rather controversial (as cited in May & Marwaha, 2014). Another work by Dean Radin and Jong Shiah should also be mentioned, since it aligns West and East based on the intention involved treatment. Radin (2009) also emphasizes the increased attempts of Eastern scholars to investigate such Oriental concepts as religion and the alternative healing traditions from the point of parapsychology. It may be claimed that the study of psi-conductive states and techniques from the mentioned point of view sheds light on the essence, origin, and the role of psi-factors for a person and humanity in general. Ultimately, one may argue that both western and Eastern traditions tend to become more extensive and focused on international concerns rather than exclusively regional issues. As such, thought of aligning Eastern parapsychology, especially that of Buddhism with west will be fruitful.

The analysis of Pali canon's (Buddhist scripture of Theravada tradition) understanding of psychic powers was one of the main phases in my PhD research at the University of Northampton. The main categories and themes as found in the Pali canon lead me in understanding psi better. This analysis revealed the theme of merits or good deeds as the base for developing psychic powers. Based on this finding further evidence gathering was important with living examples of meditation practitioners. As such, I chose to interview 15 Vipassana meditators from India around Aurangabad, Mumbai, Nashik and Pune region of Maharashtra state. These interviewees are serious Vipassana meditation practitioners as taught by S. N. Goenka under the tradition of Sayagi U Ba Khin. My PhD research is being done on the Theravada Buddhist scriptures known as Pali canon. That's why the practitioners of Theravada tradition were chosen for interviewing purpose. The follower of this tradition is strictly expected to observe the five precepts and meditation routine of at least two hours daily sittings. The participants involved in the interviews were having at least 5 years of experience in this tradition. In the interview schedule I asked various questions ranging from their personal understanding of Buddhism and meditation to their personal experiences of psi. I used semi-structured interview method. Actual results are obtained through Thematic Analysis as guided by Broun and Clarke (2006).

The aim of this paper is to emphasize the relevance of the theme of merit as found previously in Pali canon scripture and interviews, which then can come into operation in psi experiments, along with the notion of Act of Truth. An Act of Truth or *Saccakiriya* (in Pali) is a concept of sharing past good deeds for an earnest wish by making a true speech. In all, the paper will justify the outcome of this analysis, that is, merit as the base for psychic powers.

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## Fantastic and (Almost) Unbelievable Phenomena in Old Reputable Sources. Is There Anything Comparable Since?

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Whereas there are some eight miracles of the non-healing type mentioned in the New Testament, another 28 miracles concern healing. There can be little doubt that these miracles played a crucial role in the

spread of Christianity. One can question if Christianity would have become a world religion without the miracles that are so prominently described in the New Testament.

Apart from healing, we find the creation of food (feeding the multitude), changing water into wine, and production of objects (fish with the coin in his mouth), calming the storm, light shining from Jesus and the cursing of the fig tree.

One miracle concerns the controlling of gravity, namely walking on water. It is reported in the gospels of Matthew 14:22-32, Mark 6:47-52 and John 6:16-21.

Have we in modern times experienced anything comparable to the non-healing type miracles reported about Jesus? We have some evidence for such productions/materializations in modern times in the case of Sathya Sai Baba. However, it must be added that all these phenomena can and have been duplicated by professional magicians.

This aside, we do not find in the history of psychic phenomena, any claims of direct walking on water apart from that of Jesus. On the other hand, we have abundant cases of levitations among saints such as Joseph of Copertino (see chapter on levitations of saints by Thurston) as well as among mediums (such as Indridason and Home).

Marco Polo (1254-1324) reports in his *Travels* about the banquets taking place at the palace of Kublai Khan, the great Emperor of China. At banquets his cups are set before him [on a great buffet] some ten paces from his table, and filled with wine, or other good spiced liquors. When the Emperor desires to drink, the Tibetan monks by the power of their enchantments cause the cups to move from their place without being touched by anybody, and to present themselves to the Emperor! This everyone present may witness, and there are often times more than 10,000 persons thus present. It is a truth and no lie, Marco Polo adds. Marco Polo's account of his stay with Emperor Kublai Khan is generally considered reliable.

Comparable cases - on a much smaller scale - from the physical mediumship of Indridi Indridason will be presented, such as when Sigmundur, one of Indridi's controls, was asked to move a hat from the head of a person to a nearby table. The hat disappeared from his head and appeared immediately on the table. When Sigmundur was asked to place the hat back on the person's head, that was immediately done. This was repeated immediately thereafter.

Modern psychical research has made it quite likely – or at least possible - that the observations of the writers of the New Testament and Marco Polo may in fact have taken place.

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## Uses of Media Technology in Precognition Research

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This paper focuses on the uses of media technology in precognition research, beginning with Edith Lyttelton's BBC radio broadcast when she was president of the SPR in 1934. Speaking about 'Premonition and Prevision' as part of a series entitled 'Enquiry into the Unknown', Lyttelton asked listeners to submit cases of precognition to the SPR via the BBC. She then used media networks, including newspapers, radio, cinema and the Selfridge's Information Bureau to corroborate and validate selected cases for



publication in her book *Some Cases of Prediction* (1937). Today, participants in precognition experiments are recruited using social media platforms, and their capacity to see the future is tested using YouTube videos as target materials. This practice forms part of the longer history of media verification of psi experience, as seen in the extensive use of newspaper obituaries by Myers, Gurney and Podmore to verify cases of crisis apparition for inclusion in *Phantasms of the Living* (1886).

I will present a brief historical survey of the many uses of mass media in precognition research over the past 150 years. We will glimpse the at times fraught relationship between psi researchers and media industries in terms of their conflicting priorities and agendas. I then offer a more focused comparison between Lyttelton's research in 1934 and Caroline Watt's recent research to compare their uses of media technology for precognition research eighty years apart. Have new media forms been able to bring us closer to the validation of precognition? Or have precognitive capacities and experiences found new ways to slip through the evolving web of media forms in which our lives are enmeshed? Do mass media forms play a different role in lab tests of psychic faculties, compared to the study of spontaneous cases? And has the use of media by parapsychologists to educate the public about scientific standards of evidence changed as the communication medium of choice has shifted from newspapers to wireless, television, and eventually the internet?

The emphasis here will be on the cultural history of precognition and the relations between evolving mass media forms and psi research. I will therefore be analysing the practices of psychic researchers and parapsychologists with respect to their engagement with the media and their adaptation of existing mass media forms as tools for research, outreach and education.

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## Invited Speaker

### Psi in Everyday Life

Rupert Sheldrake

Psi phenomena are often called 'paranormal', meaning 'beyond the normal'. But in fact they are normal, and indeed common, in humans and many other animal species. They include the sense of being stared at, or scopaeesthesia, which may well have evolved in the context of predator-prey relationships; telepathy between people and their pets, as in dogs that know when their owners are coming home; telepathy between mothers and babies; and telephone telepathy, experienced by the majority of the population. Precognitive dreams are surprisingly common, as are other forms of precognition and presentiment, even though they often go unrecognised. Once we acknowledge how normal psi phenomena are, they help us to recognise that our minds - and another animal minds - are extended both in space and time not only in exceptional situations, but also in everyday life.

Rupert Sheldrake, PhD is a biologist and author of more than 85 papers in scientific journals and 12 books, the most recent being *Science and Spiritual Practices*. He was a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge and a Research Fellow of the Royal Society. From 2005-2010 he was Director of the Perrott-Warrick Project, funded from Trinity College, Cambridge. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, California, and Schumacher College, in Devon. His web site is [www.sheldrake.org](http://www.sheldrake.org)

# Now See Hear! Detecting Being Watched or Listened to Via Extrasensory Means

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Many people have turned to see someone behind them due to a 'sense' they were being watched. Others have 'inexplicably' become aware of a conversation involving them, despite it being inaudible. There are many theoretical explanations for these events, one of which is that extrasensory awareness is evolutionarily advantageous, and therefore may have developed during an era in which danger was ever-present with survival depending on such capabilities. Evidence supporting the existence of extrasensory surveillance detection would have implications beyond purely scientific interest, yet the phenomena remains under-researched and may benefit from a fresh approach. New research being conducted at the University of Greenwich is examining not only the possible existence of 'psychic' detection – but also which measures best predict this ability should it exist.

The ability to detect attention has previously been restricted to the psychic staring effect, also known as *scopaesthesia* - a phenomenon in which people respond via non-conventional means to being the subject of another person's gaze (Sheldrake 2003). However, a new investigation has been furthering the research by incorporating the sense of being *heard* as well as seen, which we call *acoustesthesia*. The existence of these abilities was gauged in an initial experiment by the accuracy of participants' self-reports of being watched or listened to, physiological reactions determined by electrodermal activity (EDA) which measures the electrical conductance of the participant's skin to indicate arousal, and differences in their behaviour under varying conditions a) not under any surveillance (control group), b) whilst being watched, c) whilst being listened to, and d) whilst being watched *and* listened to.

Results of the self-reporting aspect of the experiment suggested that whilst the data appeared to initially show that participants were able to detect being watched and listened to, when reporting bias was accounted for, the results were not significantly different from control conditions. Similarly, the participants' EDA during the physiological reaction section of the experiment produced results that were not significant. However, there were very interesting and highly significant differences between conditions when analysing changes in behaviour. These differences were measured by participants' increase or decreases in response time when undertaking a cognitive task.

To test whether this outcome could be replicated, the experiment was repeated. This time, however, improvements and amendments were made to the methodology as the first experiment hinted at aspects which may have accounted for both significant and not significant results. Statistical power was improved by running more self-report trials to counteract the apparent reporting bias, and the EDA test was run in combination with the cognitive task that had previously yielded positive results to investigate the experimenters' developing theory that the ability to psychically detect being watched or listened to may be determined by the necessity to access such phenomena. And finally, to further test this idea, an ambitious field experiment was conducted to consider real-world implications.

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# Testing Precognition Using a Novel Computer Driving Game

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Despite its long history precognition research has seen a recent resurgence of interest with the development and use of modified implicit repetition priming type paradigms whereby participants are exposed to a prime *after* the main task. The aim is for the post-test prime to elicit a precognitive priming

effect. That is, exposure to a prime after the test phase influences performance on the *prior* test phase. Such modified paradigms have produced a range of effects across a number of research labs from around the world. However, the effects are not always consistent or robust. This means, as with much in the area of psychic research, the field remains at the 'proof oriented' stage of trying to show that a true effect has in fact been elicited.

Nevertheless, it may be possible to produce more robust effects by trying to ensure that participants are highly motivated to complete the task. Such motivation could take the form of adjusting the value of the activity or by changing the content of the activity to make it more enjoyable, or fun. Here we focused on the use of a novel computer game that we thought would make for an enjoyable and fun task. As such, we aimed to elicit a robust precognitive priming effect by utilising a task that would be perceived as inherently more fun and interesting than the traditional paradigms of recalling/recognising lists of words/images. This involved participants taking part in a computerised driving game based on the popular Formula 1 racing sport. This required all participants to initially complete a non-timed trial during which they drove a selected car around a specific race circuit in order to familiarise themselves with the equipment and task. Following this everyone then completed two timed trials during which they were told to drive the selected car around the track as fast as they possibly could. Once the timed trials were completed half of the participants then completed a further 3 timed practice trials with the same car and circuit. These post-test practice trials represented the *priming* phase. Our prediction was that these post-test priming trials would facilitate prior test performance. Our results showed that those participants who received the post-test practice trials completed the *previous* test trials in significantly less time compared to those who did not receive the post-test practice trials, indicating what we are referring to as a precognitive priming effect.

This finding adds to the growing body of literature showing that it is possible to elicit a precognitive effect in the sense that something an individual does in their *future* has the potential to influence their behaviour *now*. More needs to be done now to replicate this effect and explore the potential of this type of paradigm.

## Studying Mind-Matter Interaction Through Non-Local Entangled Correlations

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Based on the Model of Pragmatic Information (MPI) proposed by Walter von Lucadou (1994) and Generalised Quantum Theory (GQT) proposed by Atmanspacher, Römer and Walach (2002) a new paradigm for testing the psi hypothesis has been developed. Both the MPI and GQT approaches arise from a new theoretical model that defines parapsychological phenomena as non-local entanglement correlations. The new paradigm is called the Correlation Matrix Method (CMM). Lucadou & Walach have conducted several CMM studies claiming the results strongly support the psi hypothesis.

We replicated two independent studies successfully and presented the results at the SPR conference in 2017 (Flores et. al.). The present paper describes two more replications that were conducted to improve the method and clarify previous results. Namely, a new type of RNG ('TrueRNG3') was introduced to compare its results with the performance of the previous RNG. Also, a new method of analysis, a permutation method was introduced to improve the quality of the results found. The two replication studies also introduced a time estimation task as a measure of a key concept in the CMM: Organisational Closure (OC). It is predicted that those participants showing greater OC will show more positive performance on the psi task.

The new improvements resulted from the decision of an international consortium led by Harald Walach that gathered to jointly develop the CMM method.

The CMM experiment has been developed by Walter von Lucadou with three positive experimental studies that have now been replicated independently three times. It uses a random number generator that drives a fractal display on a computer screen. Participants are seated in front of the computer with the instruction to influence the direction of the fractal to grow or shrink, using their intention or will only. An

experiment consists of 9 runs with 3 different instructions to shrink or grow the fractal, or keep it stable. The experiment is moved forward by key-presses. Out of this set-up 5\*9 (45) physical variables and 5\*9 (45) psychological variables are created. For example, one psychological variable used is the number of right shift keyboard presses and the example of one physical variable is the mean voltage output of one channel from the random number generator. These 45\*45 variables are correlated across all experiments, yielding a correlation matrix with 2025 cells.

Two experimental replications now underway will have 100 participants each and data is collected exactly the same way in both. The difference between them is the moment participants are asked the question to measure participants' estimation of time. For the first study the question will be asked at the end of session 1 and for the second study participants will be asked the question at the end of the second session. The procedure is as follows:

- 1 - 100 participants of any age will be recruited to contribute two experimental sessions each.
- 2 - The type of RNG used will alternate between participants: - participant 1 will do the first session with the original (Markov-chain) random number generator that has been used in most previous CMM studies. This will be followed by a second session with the True RNG. Participant 2 will do the first experimental session with the True RNG and the second session with the Markov-chain RNG. And so on till the end.
- 3 - So for the comparison of RNGs, there will be 100 sessions in each RNG condition. Each participant will also report on their subjective time estimation as described above.
- 4 - The experiment is conducted in a face-to-face setting.
- 5 - To maximise potential organizational closure for every participant, each will be welcomed in a friendly way. They will be informed of all details of the study in a light/graceful way, by filling in a small questionnaire.
- 6 - Participant signs a consent form approved by the University of Edinburgh Ethics committee.

Non-parametric correlation coefficient Spearman's Rho will be calculated between psychological and physical variables across all variables and participants. Analysis will be performed by comparison of the data in the experimental matrix against expectation by chance and comparison against 10,000 control matrices that are generated by the analysis program running 10,000 times each variable using the data from each variable created during the experimental sessions.

**Conclusion:** Data is still being collected. Results will be presented at the conference.

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## Comparing Individual versus Group Judgments in a Dream ESP Study

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Many spontaneous psychic experiences involve altered states of consciousness (ASCs) in one form or another, and we have argued that this should again become a primary focus for parapsychology (e.g., Roe 2012). Ganzfeld and dream ESP research continue to produce significant results (Roe, 2015; Storm, Sherwood, Roe, Tressoldi, Rock, & Di Risio, 2017), but seem to have fallen out of favour, with the number of studies utilising ASCs having dwindled in recent times. The current experiment is part of our efforts to encourage a renewed interest in dream ESP research. Roe (2016) has described the suite of dream ESP studies that have been undertaken at the University of Northampton. In such studies, participants sleep at

home as normal but keep a dream diary. During the night a computer based at the CSAPP laboratory randomly selects a video from a pool of approximately 240 1-minute clips to serve as their target. The video is played repeatedly through the night by the computer, which is located in a locked and alarmed laboratory to preclude any possibility of accessing the material by normal means. In the morning the participant attends the laboratory and shares their dream diary content with an experimenter. A copy of the dream diary transcript is taken. The computer then presents the target and three decoy videos for the participant to compare with their dream content. The experimenter can facilitate this process since they are also blind to the identity of the target. Once all clips have been reviewed the participant gives similarity ratings that allow the clips to be rank ordered (with the one in first position most like their dream content and the one ranked fourth least like). Once these judgements are recorded the computer automatically reveals the actual target identity. Trials on which the target video was ranked in first place are called 'hits' and other trials are 'misses'; the likelihood of attaining a hit just by chance is 25%. The overall outcome from just these Northampton studies, involving a total of 183 trials with unselected subjects across 6 discrete experiments, was a 31% hit rate that was statistically significant (binomial  $p=.03$ ). Based on sum of ranks, the distribution of scores fell narrowly short of significance (SOR=433,  $z=1.59$ ,  $p=.055$ ).

One of our preferred dream ESP experimental approaches has been to adopt a repeated measures design in which, rather than have each of a large number of participants contribute just one trial (as is typical, for example, in ganzfeld studies), they instead contribute a number of trials in a manner similar to some of the most successful Maimonides experiments (for a review, see Roe & Sherwood, 2009). This overcomes one of the potential shortcomings of working with unselected subjects, namely that they require time to become familiar and comfortable with the procedure. They also afford participants the opportunity to notice salient features of their dream content as they become more familiar over time with its usual characteristics. While this restricts the potential to look at individual difference factors (such as belief, or personality factors) it better allows us to consider the effects of intra-subject variables such as mood, sleep quality, dream recall, and also qualities associated with the target material, such as emotional valence (positive versus negative) and intensity (strong versus mild). This design also allows us to explore the possible advantages of having more than one participant attempt to gain information about the same target by comparing individual judgements against ratings that are based on the group's collective judgements (Roe, Sherwood & Farrell, 2007; Roe, Sherwood, Luke & Farrell, 2002; Saunders, Roe, Gladstone, Grierson & Lomas, 2014; Sherwood, Roe, Simmonds & Biles, 2002). There is also scope to explore possible displacement effects, in which participants' dream imagery relates to decoys as well as to the target (Roe, Jones & Maddern, 2007) by having an independent judge give blind ratings against the target set and also a decoy set of clips.

In this study, five co-participants contribute to a series of 40 trials. All sleep at home as normal and keep a dream diary. The following morning, they attend a group session in which each person is invited to share their dream content. Participants then view the target clip and three decoys presented by the computer program in random order and each makes similarity judgements based on their own dream content. These ratings are discussed, and a consensus decision is also recorded based on a combination of individual ratings.

The study received university ethical approval and was pre-registered with the KPU registry. Data collection is ongoing and should be completed by mid-July. In this presentation we will summarise the study design and findings, focusing particularly on issues of consensus versus individual judging and possible displacement effects.

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We should like to thank the SPR Research Grants Committee for their kind support of this project.

## The Return and Continuing Presence of F. W. H. Myers

Trevor Hamilton

What criteria should be used to assess this material? What does it tell us about the possible nature of personal identity post-mortem? To what extent are the personality traits of life demonstrated? Are the physical characteristics of that individual in life accurately described? Is the educational and socio-economic status of the individual reflected in the communications? Are the main life events of the individual clearly outlined and referred to? Are the main opinions and interests of the individual identified? Are these demonstrated with sufficient precision to avoid the charge of being too vague and general? Are there any statements that capture the idiosyncratic essence of the personality purporting to communicate? Does the communicator interact with the sitters as an individual would in life and does she/he inhabit and reflect on their own experiences? Does she/he demonstrate a sense of purpose and urgency? Does she/he demonstrate a consistent and coherent personality over a period of time and across mediums? Is the putative communicator aware of their communications through other mediums? Is knowledge known only to the communicator demonstrated? Did the communication (s) occur and were recorded under conditions that ruled out fraud and were factual statements independently verified? Does she/he get things plain wrong in a way the living individual would not have? Can difficulties of communication ever be an adequate defence in such situations? What prior information had the medium (or theoretically might have had) about the purported communicator? Even if 'authentic' which hypothesis as to the source of the material (survival or living-agent psi) seems - given the conditions of the communication - the most persuasive?

These criteria are in no way exhaustive or particularly original but working through them with regard to the above-mentioned sources raises interesting issues of methodology. For example, what are the advantages and disadvantages of working from historical sources and phenomena? Are they still worth investigating? If the communication purports to be from a scholarly and literary communicator like Myers, how does one assess and verify the continuity of literary style pre and post mortem? Would a literature search reveal that other celebrated/scholarly/political/gifted people had been successfully 'channelled' and that there was a consistency of readings across channels? (See Jenkins and Winniger 2008; Leichtman 1992.)

The initial conclusions from this exercise will be presented at the conference and may have application for the investigation of a wide number of canonical cases in the literature of psychical research.

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## A Further Test of Mediumship to Showcase the Facilities at the AFC Research Laboratory

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At recent SPR conferences we have reported on an ongoing collaboration with the Arthur Findlay College that has led to the establishment of a permanent laboratory space at Stansted Hall (Roe, Bruton, Connelly, Saunders & Evenden, 2016). Last year we described an initial attempt to conduct research at the laboratory that focused on replicating an intriguing study conducted by Delorme and colleagues (2013) at the Institute of Noetic Sciences that combined (i) an experimental test of survival by asking mediums to provide accurate information about deceased persons, and (ii) an exploratory element in which EEG data were collected during experimental tests so as to identify markers of successful performance. To these elements we added a third that focused on gathering individual differences data via questionnaires that could be related to EEG data and to the production of accurate information about a deceased target person (Evenden, Saunders & Roe, 2017).

Our research took place with a cohort of Italian students attending a week-long residential programme at the College, organised so as to be able to work with groups of 10-12 over a number of hours. In practice, however, the focus of the sessions was educational, and it was difficult to capture reliable data in a controlled setting, particularly with a group who were not proficient in English and found the questionnaires difficult to understand even with the assistance of translators. Matters were further confounded when the EEG apparatus we had acquired developed a fault that could not be recovered. It was clear to us that investing in inexpensive EEG systems had been a false economy and that if we were to produce results in the future that would be sufficiently reliable and valid to be acceptable to the wider scientific community then we would need to invest in a more powerful system. With the kind support of the SPR's Survival Grants Committee, we have been able to acquire a SmartBCI wireless 24-channel EEG system (<http://www.novatecheeg.com/smartbci/>). This system appeals to us not only because it is of industry standard and has been used in published, peer reviewed experiments, but also because there is a UK-based supplier who will provide after-sales technical support should we encounter similar technical problems in the future.

We therefore planned to repeat the exercise during a residential week in January 2018 that was restricted to students who were proficient in English and so could complete our measures, and were sufficiently scientifically minded to be open to the possibility of participating in experimental work. We also added a qualitative component in organising small focus groups that focused on the participants' lived experiences of mediumship, what led them to mediumship, any perceived stigma surrounding this, and self-care, with a particular emphasis on trance mediumship. In this presentation we will give a summary of this latest study and make suggestions for further work.

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We should like to thank the SPR Survival Fund for their kind support of this project.

## Letters from Eileen

Trevor Hamilton

Eileen McAlpine (1926-1917) was a long-standing member of the College of Psychic Studies and it may be of interest to attendees at the SPR conference to learn of some of her experiences.

My publisher forwarded a complimentary letter (about my biography of F. W. H. Myers: Hamilton 2009) from one Eileen McAlpine. She was delighted, she stated, that I had dealt with the ‘creeps’ who had denigrated Myers in earlier years. That comment was typical of her direct, pungent, but considered style, as I increasingly became aware over the next few years. It led to an exchange of letters and telephone conversations which enriched my life, partly because of the interest of her personality, and partly because of the range and depth of her direct experience of the paranormal. Listening to her and reading her letters was like having a ringside seat at some of the most celebrated and significant paranormal phenomena of the last fifty years. In some ways she anticipated in her letters the remarkable, more systematic investigation into paranormal phenomena by Leslie Kean (2017) and the descriptions of those phenomena have been pretty consistent over time. But she was never credulous and warmly supported my criticisms of the more naïve Spiritualists in my short book on my personal investigation into mediumship (Hamilton 2012).

From the photos and information, I was sent by her friends, it seemed she had had a very comfortable middle-class upbringing in Surrey. She was the adopted child of a London bank manager and his wife who worked for Vogue magazine. These friends described Eileen as elegant, even glamorous in appearance. They also stated that she met Churchill and Eisenhower at the time of the Normandy landings while working for the Admiralty in a public relations capacity. She continued to work for the Admiralty after the Second World War. She married twice and both husbands pre-deceased her. After the death of her second husband, who was the Hon. Treasurer of the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain in Belgravia (one wonders what he would have made of the selling of the Belgravia site at well below its market value?) she bought a house in Sutton and from there was able conveniently to make regular visits to the College of Psychic Studies and the SAGB.

She met and had sessions with Albert Best, Leslie Flint, Colin Fry, Matthew Manning, Horace Leaf, Robin Foy and the Scole Group, and the legendary George Chapman, amongst others. She experienced almost the full range of psychic phenomena: mental and physical mediumship, the direct voice, healing and apports. She was a close friend of Neville Whyment famous for his involvement with Valiantine, the direct voice medium in the 1920s. Whyment (1931) was the Chinese expert who authenticated the ancient and sophisticated Chinese spoken by ‘Confucius’ at a Valiantine sitting in New York in the late 1920s. This last point was of particular fascination for me since Whyment’s account of his psychic experiences was one of the first books that I ever, as a young man, acquired on the paranormal. I found the story both outrageous but compelling and was delighted to hear from Eileen, on a number of occasions, that he never recanted his original position.

In her first letter in 2013 she told me how my Myers book had helped her through a difficult period of illness and also mentioned her own occasional astral projections and the appearance of her first husband to her after his death in 1953. ‘He was standing at the front door and seemed to be calling to me across a threshold “It’s so true that we live on!”’

That first letter ended ‘I wished you lived next door!’ This was typical of a warm and direct personality that I was increasingly to appreciate as I began to receive more letters from her.



Extracts from her letters will be read and commented on and possible issues for the further and wider experiencing, recording, disseminating and assessing such phenomena under sensible conditions will be explored: particularly the nature of 'discarnate' agency and identity (Noonan 2003) that this material raises.

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# Potential Psi-Conductive Imagery Perceived within Floatation Tanks: Results of a Pilot Study

Callum E. Cooper & David T. Saunders  
University of Northampton

This presentation follows on from last year's conference presentation by the same authors, where the revival of the use of floatation tanks in studies of psi was discussed. This method of sensory deprivation via floatation method was developed in the 1950s at the National Institute of Mental Health by the neuroscientist and physician John Lilly (1972, 1977). As part of his guest dinner speech to the Parapsychological Association in New York City (Lilly, 1969), he proposed that parapsychology should take advantage of such methods of sensory deprivation and the imagery they produce for the participant. He specifically proposed having a 'tank-to-tank' set up, in which you have a sender-receiver design, utilising randomly selected targets on which the sender focused.

It appears from extensive searches of the parapsychological literature that no one acted on this advice – at least not in any formal studies that were written up for publications, but some casual explorations have been conducted by Nicholls (2015) and Schwartz (2015). However, one pilot study did appear to surface carried out by Rogo (1980) and was published in *Research Letter*, which was a sister journal to the *European Journal of Parapsychology* and a product of the Parapsychology Laboratory, University of Utrecht. The pilot aimed to explore the usefulness of the tanks in parapsychological research and the inherent psi-conductive nature of the imagery. Using only three participants, and completing four trials, no significant findings were produced in the sum of rank scores between the imagery randomly selected and viewed by the sender, and the imagery and feelings reported in the tank. Only one participant in the tank reported imagery and had had previous experience with the ganzfeld. However, from what imagery was reported, there were no qualitative matches between that feedback and the target. It was concluded that participants must have prior experience in the tanks before taking part, otherwise the experience of floating becomes so distracting as a new and usual environment, that participants may lose sight of the task at hand altogether, as had happened in three of the four trials.

This paper will recap on the history and report on the findings of a series of 12 new trials that employed the floatation tanks and a sender-receiver setup. In brief, for each session, a video clip was viewed by DS while CC was in the floatation tank (Dalton clips, one target and three decoys per pool). Following all sessions, CC noted down his impressions and created drawings to represent what was experienced. Following all the trials, an independent judge rated the impressions against the clips, a rating process was also completed by CC for comparison. In testing the first hypothesis, the sum of ranks statistic for CC showed no significant effect ( $z=.03, p=.51$  one-tailed). In testing the second hypothesis, the sum of ranks statistic for the Independent judge also showed no significant effect ( $z=-.16, p=.44$  one-tailed). Although this pilot focused mainly on the statistical outcomes, important qualitative matches in the data were identified. It is concluded that several methodological issues need to be addressed, especially regarding data becoming lost during the trials when based purely on the participant's memory recall of the visions and sensations experienced. It is intended that these areas of improvement will be incorporated into a new experimental procedure for taking this study forward with a larger variety of participants involved, contributing single trials.

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## Testing Precognition and Altered State of Consciousness with Selected Participants in the Ganzfeld. A Pre-Registered Study

Caroline Watt, Emily Dawson, Alisdair Tullo, Abby Pooley & Holly Rice  
University of Edinburgh

Prospective meta-analysis is simply a meta-analysis whose inclusion/exclusion criteria and other key factors are specified *before* any studies have been conducted. At the 2016 SPR conference, Watt & Kennedy recommended prospective meta-analysis of pre-registered studies as a method to minimize questionable research practices and after-the-fact debate over how to interpret meta-analytic outcomes. We used ganzfeld ESP research as an example of an area that could benefit from the application of this technique. Although ganzfeld research seems to have gone out of fashion, we argue that it is premature to abandon this method, given that internal patterns seem to reliably indicate ways to boost the effect size. In particular, Storm, Tressoldi and di Risio (2010) and Baptista, Derakhshani and Tressoldi (2015) have identified that the greatest effect sizes in ganzfeld studies are associated with the use of selected participants.

The present study, conducted at the University of Edinburgh, was the first to contribute to a registration-based prospective meta-analysis of ganzfeld ESP studies (Watt, 2017a, b; Watt & Kennedy, 2016, 2017). In line with recommendations from Storm, Baptista and colleagues, we sought to maximise the anticipated psi effect size by selecting participants on one or more of the following criteria: self-reported creativity; prior psi experience or belief; practice of a mental discipline. Psi targets and decoys were short video clips randomly selected with replacement from a pool of 200. We employed an automated precognition design for simplicity and security, and to add to the small database of precognitive ganzfeld studies. The experiment was designed by CW and the computer program was written by AT. As well as predicting overall significant precognition task scoring, we tested the assumption that the ganzfeld method elicits a psi-conducive altered state of consciousness. Based on Cardeña and Marcusson-Clavertz's (2017) findings, we predicted that higher target similarity ratings (measured by session z-score) would be associated with greater evidence of ASC during the session, measured using the Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory, and a time estimation task.

**Procedure.** Three experimenters (ED, AP & HR) each conducted 20 trials. The participant reclined wearing a red eye-shield so that they perceived a uniform red visual field. Headphones first played a 9-minute progressive relaxation exercise, then played white noise for 25 minutes, during which time the participant reported their impressions aloud and these were recorded. After the impression period ended, the participant estimated the time duration of the session. The experimenter then reviewed the participant's impressions and, when ready for the judging phase, the experiment program was progressed to randomly select one target pool. The participant rated each target for similarity to their mentation on a 1-100 scale (where 1 = no correspondence). After the participant's ratings were submitted, the PCI was completed. Finally, when the participant was ready to view the conclusion of the session, the program was advanced and the precognitive target clip was randomly selected and played to the participant for feedback.

**Results.** Twenty-two direct hits were obtained out of 60 trials, corresponding to a statistically significant 36.67% hit-rate. Therefore, our hypothesis that the randomly selected future target would be identified to a greater than chance degree was supported. Contrary to prediction, no significant relationship was found between measures of ASC and session Z-scores. We conclude that further

ganzfeld ESP research is justified because previous extensive research with the ganzfeld has identified moderator variables that can optimise effect-size, and because the method maps on to common features of spontaneously reported paranormal experiences.

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## Invited Speaker

### The Nature of Consciousness

Bernardo Kastrup

In this talk, Dr Kastrup will argue for a worldview based on the primacy of consciousness - technically called 'idealism' - which seeks to explain the facts of nature more parsimoniously than materialism. This worldview also attempts to offer more explanatory power than materialism by circumventing the so-called 'hard problem of consciousness.' It can be summarised as follows: spatially unbound consciousness is nature's sole fundamental fact. We, as well as all other living organisms, are dissociated alters of this unbound consciousness. The universe we see around us is the extrinsic appearance of mental activity surrounding - but dissociated from - our alter. The living organisms we share the world with are the extrinsic appearances of other dissociated alters. This worldview also makes sense of the experimental refutation, in quantum mechanics, of the notion that the physical world exists independently of observation: although all physical aspects of nature are indeed observer-dependent and, therefore, private to each individual observer, we are all surrounded by a shared world of transpersonal mentation that isn't physical.

Insofar as this idealist worldview posits that everything unfolds in a single universal consciousness, it implies in the survival of consciousness - though not necessarily of personal identity - after physical death and opens the door to psi phenomena. Indeed, the main challenge of this worldview is to explain why psi phenomena aren't happening all the time.

## *Programme*

**FRIDAY 21st September**

14.00-14.30

**Registration**

**Introduction**

14.30-14.45 Chairman of the Conference Programme Committee: Adrian Parker

**Overview**

14.45-15.10 Adrian Parker

*Research Projects That I Would Carry Out if I Had the Millions Needed*

**Consciousness**

**Chair: Alan Murdie**

15.10-15.30 Annekatriin Puhle

*Dreams as Doors of Perception*

15.30-16.00 Simon Duan

*Understanding Psi by a Model that Unites Consciousness, Mind and Matter*

16.00-16.30

TEA/COFFEE

**NDEs and ADE**

**Chair: Jon Mannsåker**

16.30-17.00 Mia Jakeman & Callum E. Cooper

*"I Was Absolutely Petrified..." – Negative Anomalous Experiences During Bereavement*

17.00-17.30 Erika Annabelle Pratte

*Therapeutic Approaches Towards Near Death Experiences*

**Panel Discussion**

**Chair: Adrian Parker**

17.30-18.30 Bernard Carr, Bernardo Kastrup, David Luke & Rupert Sheldrake

*Psi and Consciousness?*

19.00-20.30

DINNER

**Invited Speaker**

20.30-21.30 David Luke

*Psychedelomancy: Precognition with Psychedelics*

**Spontaneous Psychic Experiences**

**Chair: David Vernon**

9.00 - 9.30 Terence Palmer  
*Anomalous Paranormal Experience in the Hospital Environment*

9.30 -10.00 Chris A. Roe  
*J. B. Priestley's Man and Time Letters: A Reanalysis*

10.00-10.30 John Fraser  
*Proving the Paranormal by Prioritising the Poltergeist*

10.30-11.00 TEA/COFFEE

11.00-11.30 Alan Murdie  
*Poltergeists and Possession*

**Cross Cultural & Historical Aspects**

**Chair: John Fraser**

11.30-12.00 Chetak Nangare *Parapsychology and Buddhism: Interviews with Vipassana Meditation Practitioners Across India*

12.00-12.30 Erlendur Haraldsson *Fantastic and (Almost) Unbelievable Phenomena in Old Reputable Sources: Is There Anything Comparable Since Then?*

12.30-14.00 LUNCH

14.00-14.30 kitt price  
*Uses of Media Technology in Precognition Research*

**Invited Speaker**

14.30-15.30 Rupert Sheldrake  
*Psi in Everyday Life*

**Experimental studies of Psi**

**Chair: Caroline Watt**

15.30-16.00 Ross Friday  
*Now See Hear! Detecting Being Watched or Listened to via Extrasensory Means*

16.00-16.30 TEA/COFFEE

16.30-17.00 David Vernon & Laura Ivencevic  
*Testing Precognition Using a Novel Computer Driving Game*

17.00-17.30 Ana Flores, Ian Tierney & Caroline Watt  
*Studying Mind-Matter Interaction Through Non-Local Entangled Correlations.*

17.30 -18.00 Chris A. Roe, Chetak Nangare & Johnny Ryan  
*Comparing Individual Versus Group Judgments in a Dream ESP Study*

18.00-20.00 DINNER

**SUNDAY 23rd September**

**Mediumship**

**Chair: Callum Cooper**

9.00- 9.30 Trevor Hamilton

*The Return and Continuing Presence of F. W. H. Myers*

9.30-10.00 David T. Saunders, Rachel Evenden & Chris A. Roe *A Further Test of Mediumship to Showcase the Facilities at the AFC Research Laboratory*

10.00-10.30 Trevor Hamilton

*Letters from Eileen*

10.30-11.00

TEA/COFFEE

**Altered States of Consciousness**

**Chair: Chris Roe**

11.00-11.30 Callum E. Cooper & David T. Saunders

*Potential Psi Conducive Imagery Perceived within Floatation Tanks*

11.30-12.00 Caroline Watt, Emily Dawson, Alisdair Tullo, Abby Pooley, Holly Rice

*Testing Precognition and Altered State of Consciousness with Selected Participants in the Ganzfeld. A Pre-Registered Study*

**Invited Speaker**

12.00-13.00 Bernardo Kastrup

*The Nature of Consciousness*

**Closing Remarks**

13.00-13.15 Chairman of the Conference Programme Committee: Adrian Parker & President of the Society: Chris Roe

13.15

LUNCH



altered states

mental health

extra-sensory perception

consciousness

reincarnation

exceptional experiences

clairvoyance

precognition

mind-matter interaction