

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thought Processes

Professor McDaniel's excellent review of *Neither Brain nor Ghost* (by W. T. Rockwell) and *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science* (by A. Chemero) in the Summer 2010 *JSE* (*JSE* 24(2):327–335, *Book Reviews*), brings to mind the simple but often overlooked rebuttal of any hypothesis tending to deny our ability to reason legitimately. This was well-expressed by the popular British philosopher C. E. M. Joad in his *Guide to Modern Thought* (London: Pan, 1948) at a time rife with accusations that our thought processes were merely rationalizations of our prejudices or unconscious desires. The proponents tended to forget that their own arguments would be subject to the same drawbacks, and thus were not worthy of serious consideration.

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Thoughts on the “Survival/Super-Psi” Argument

The Meiji Restoration, a chain of revolutionary events which led to modernization and Westernization of Japan, can be regarded as a surprisingly peaceful process considering the scale of the political, social, economical, and cultural changes it made, symbolized by the bloodless surrender of Edo Castle, the residence of the shogun and location of the shogunate in the Edo period (1603–1868). One of the crucial reasons for its success was that the leaders of the pro- and anti-shogunate factions shared the view that, with the impending threat of the foreign powers, they should cooperate and avoid a civil war for the sake of Japan.

Of course, history abounds with the opposite case where leaders of factions within a country, sticking to their positions, ended up with a civil war, which led to the destruction of the country they intended to save.

I often recall these historical “lessons” when I read the “survival/superpsi” argument in the *Journal* and in other places. Of course, the issue itself is of vital scientific importance, and such papers as Braude (1992) and Sudduth

(2009) among others have contributed greatly to deepen our understanding of the problem.

However, we should always be aware that the “outside world” is by and large critical of the very existence of psychic phenomena. It is well-illustrated by the late Professor Ian Stevenson’s reply to Professor Braude’s (1992) criticism:

Critics of this evidence have hitherto focused almost exclusively on its authenticity and have assailed its credibility at real or imagined points of weakness. It is encouraging to find oneself engaged in controversy over interpretation with an agreed assumption that the cases brought into the discussion actually occurred with satisfactory closeness to the reports we have of them. (Stevenson, 1992:145)

Taking into consideration the general attitude of the outside scientific communities at the present stage, it can be harmful to the development of the field to pay too much attention to the interpretation of the phenomena. I believe that we should spend more energy to accumulate well-established data showing that something paranormal does occur, as Kelly (2010) suggests for mediumship research.

In so doing, I also believe that adopting Visoni’s (2010) suggestion is promising which is originally proposed for the study of cases of the reincarnation type but can be extended to other types of research as well: Placing as much material as possible, such as audio and video recordings, on the Internet in order to generate more knowledge and interest among the scientific community.

I hope that the Society for Scientific Exploration website will be one such location where evidence for paranormal phenomena is accumulated so that the “outsiders” can get to know of their existence and examine their authenticity.

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Remarks on Eusapia Palladino

I would like to offer some comments regarding recent discussions of the medium Eusapia Palladino published in the *JSE*.

Antonio Giuditta (*JSE* 24(3):511, Fall 2010, *Historical Perspective*, The 1907 Psychokinetic Experiments of Professor Filippo Bottazzi) stated that Italian physiologist Filippo Bottazzi believed that the medium's physical phenomena were produced by the projection of anomalous limbs. While the author mentioned that there were precedents to this supposition, his discussion did not make it clear that such an idea was part of a wider theoretical model, the general assumption of which was that the phenomena of physical mediumship were produced by the emanation or projection of forces from the body of mediums (Alvarado, 2006). As I have argued before, Palladino's mediumship represents an important chapter in the history of ideas of mediumistic forces (Alvarado, 1993).

The literature about Palladino has observations of presumed materialized arms or shapes similar to those mentioned by Bottazzi (de Rochas, 1896:9,292, Morselli, 1908, Vol. 1:198,212, Venzano, 1907:100–101). Oliver Lodge (1894) wrote about "temporary prolongations" from Palladino's body. In his words:

I myself have been frequently touched by something which might most readily be described as such a prolongation or formation, and have sometimes seen such a thing while it was touching another person. But the effect on an observer is usually more as if the connecting link, if any, were invisible and intangible, or as if a portion of vital or directing energy had been detached, and were producing distant movements without any apparent connexion with the medium. (Lodge, 1894:335)

Perhaps this is similar to what others referred to as "an invisible prolongation of the organism of the medium" (Flammarion, 1907:423), and "ectoplasmic pseudopods" (Richet, 1922:562).

In another contribution to the *JSE*, Michael Grosso (*JSE* 24(4):705, *Essay/Review*, Reflections on Frederic Myers' Romantic Psychology, Winter 2010) rightly commented on how little interest some leading members of the Society for Psychical Research showed about the medium's personality. This neglect of the medium's psychology is particularly noticeable when compared to the writings of some other (continental) European authors (e.g., Morselli, 1908, Ochorowicz, 1896).

Unfortunately, there are no detailed full-length biographies of the medium. Interesting details about her private life were presented by Paola Lombroso (1907), the daughter of Cesare Lombroso, who interviewed the medium (see

also Miranda, 1918). Most of what we know about her comes from sections or works authored by psychical researchers such as Carrington (1909), de Rochas (1896), and Morselli (1908). The latter author also discussed topics such as the medium's confused recollections, as well as her poverty, hysterical symptoms, and mood swings (Morselli, 1908, Vol. 1:117,124,126–128,130–131, respectively), among other topics.

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