

EDITORIAL

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I had the opportunity recently to referee a submission to a clinical psychology journal that examined the apparent manifestation of ESP in the psychiatric setting. I'd been solicited for this chore, not simply because of my background in parapsychology, but also because of my earlier research into dissociative identity (multiple personality) disorder (e.g., Braude 1995, 1996, 1998). The submitted paper was not awful, and commendably the author apparently had done a considerable amount of reading of relevant works in parapsychology. Nevertheless, the paper had one glaring flaw, and that flaw reminded me of one of my long-standing concerns about the current state of parapsychological research. Moreover, it wouldn't surprise me if similar concerns can be raised in other areas of frontier science.

Although this paper had a reasonably extensive (and perhaps superficially impressive) bibliography, there was not a single mention of important work on the topic done in the mid- Twentieth Century—most notably, the work of Jule Eisenbud (e.g., Eisenbud 1946, 1970, 1992) and Jan Ehrenwald (e.g., Ehrenwald 1948, 1978). I found it astonishing that the author would presume to summarize the conceptual and empirical antecedents to the research described in the paper without reference to this material.

Of course, one would expect newcomers to psi research to have only a very limited understanding of prior work in that domain. However, this episode reminded me of many other occasions on which I've seen newcomers try to publish scholarly research in parapsychology without adequate preparation for the task. In fact, all too often parapsychological newcomers seem to think that the only qualification needed in order to do responsible psi research is to have a background in some area of mainstream science, as if there were no extensive parapsychological history of enlightening successes and failures, and no serious thinking about the conceptual foundations of parapsychology, that must be mastered first. As I and other chronologically challenged SSE members have often noted, we could certainly benefit from attracting new blood into our areas of interest. But we'd also like to avoid reinventing the wheel or simply repeating past mistakes.

But in a way, that kind of newcomer naïveté or hubris is understandable—if not exactly forgivable. Consider, where is an aspiring parapsychologist to go for the necessary background education? Only a handful of reputable universities offer competent programs in psi research. And no doubt some other areas of anomalistics are in the same boat—e.g., cryptozoology, UFO studies, and astrology, all of which have extensive histories. By contrast, someone wanting to forge a career in a mainstream science can easily enroll in a program that can prepare them to do decent research of their own.

So what can educated veteran psi researchers do to ensure that the rich history of prior work doesn't simply fall victim to the gnawing tooth of time? Unfortunately, Wikipedia has been hijacked by aggressive psi skeptics. However, the Society for Psychical Research has launched an online encyclopedia, to which I and some other SSE members have contributed, which (although its audience is presumably many times smaller than Wikipedia's) takes up some of that slack. Regular conferences can help as well—such as those of the SSE (Society for Scientific Exploration), PA (Parapsychological Association), and SPR (Society for Psychical Research). I'm not sure that other areas of frontier science enjoy anything like the level of professional competence and engagement one finds at these conferences.

Another strategy would be for the *JSE* to publish occasional review articles. We already have a Historical Perspectives section in which we survey (and sometimes resurrect) important early studies. Typically, these tend to focus on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century work—that is, research beginning slightly before or roughly around the time the SPR was formed. However, at the most recent SSE conference in Las Vegas, I was gratified to learn that many Council members would like to see the *JSE* publish review articles on more recent, and evidentially rich, areas of research. I support this initiative wholeheartedly and have already solicited some papers. I can tell you now that some survey articles will appear in due course. Moreover, if SSE members like the idea of including one or more survey-type presentations at subsequent conferences, I encourage them to make their wishes known to Council members, and perhaps open the matter for discussion at SSE conference business meetings.

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Beginning with this issue, I'm very pleased to welcome Harald Walach, Ph.D., to our team of Associate Editors. As many readers probably know, Harald works at the intersection of medicine, psychology, and

consciousness studies. He holds a double Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, and History and Theory of Science, and he's the author of 14 books and many articles and book chapters. He's also editor of the journal *Complementary Medicine Research*, and editor of the Springer book series "Neuroscience, Consciousness, Spirituality."

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Since this is the holiday season and an appropriate time for wallowing in *weltschmerz* and reflecting on the year that's coming to a close, I'd like once again to acknowledge and thank our dedicated and overworked team of Associate Editors and the many reviewers on whom we rely in vetting papers for inclusion in the *JSE*. As I've noted before, producing this *Journal* poses a distinctive challenge. Because the *JSE* deals with topics either shunned altogether or dealt with shabbily by more mainstream publications, the community of qualified readers for high-level peer review is quite small. Ideally, I'd prefer to have a larger team of Associate Editors, in order to lighten the editorial load for those who—perhaps inscrutably—continue to volunteer large chunks of time to shepherding submissions through our system. However, adding members to that team inevitably subtracts from the small pool of qualified referees. So I'm deeply grateful to my largely behind-the-scenes Associate Editors, who realize the need to maintain the high standard of scientific and scholarly excellence that's characterized the *JSE* since its inception, who recognize that there are only so many people on whom the *JSE* can rely, and who accordingly and generously donate their valuable time. I'm equally grateful to our many referees, many of whom we call upon over and over again, simply because they have expertise in the relevant areas of research, and because the number of people who have both that expertise and the relevant degree of open-mindedness about new ideas remains depressingly small.

I must also express my deep appreciation for the breathtaking efficiency, technical panache, and thorough understanding of the publishing business of our Managing Editor, Kathleen Erickson. Kathleen does it all, and she does it brilliantly. I'm sure *JSE*'s Associate Editors and referees agree with me on this. We benefit, time and again, from Kathleen's assistance, patience, and good nature. In fact, I've never met anyone who can issue a reminder with such a winning combination of grace and coercion.

—STEPHEN E. BRAUDE

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