Journal of Scientific Exploration, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 136–145, 2019 0892-3310/19

BOOK REVIEW

The Premonition Code: The Science of Precognition: How Sensing the Future Can Change Your Life by Theresa Cheung and Julia Mossbridge. London: Watkins, 2018. 256 pp. $16.61 (paper-back). ISBN: 9781786781611.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.31275/2019.1425

The Premonition Code is a warm, thought-provoking, introductory book for non-academic readers who are seeking to understand, explore, and even expand their own precognitive experiences. Its strength lies in the rich and moving anecdotal stories told by people from all walks of life, including several scientists, whose accounts of precognitive dreams and waking premonitions will certainly be familiar and comforting to those who have had similar experiences and felt alone, or even questioned their own sanity.

The Premonition Code is co-authored by Dr. Julia Mossbridge and Theresa Cheung. Mossbridge holds a doctorate in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Northwestern University and an MA in Neuroscience from the University of California at San Francisco. She is an Associate Professor in Integral and Transpersonal Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies and a Research Fellow at the Institute of Noetic Sciences. She is a co-author of *Transcendent Mind: Rethinking the Science of Consciousness*. Mossbridge has personally had precognitive dreams and other exceptional experiences throughout her life, and has recently begun studying remote viewing.

Theresa Cheung holds a Master's degree in Theology and English from Kings College, Cambridge. She has authored close to a dozen popular books, including metaphysical "encyclopedias" and collections of stories about topics such as life after death, the angelic realm, and visitations from deceased loved ones. While Cheung comes from a long line of psychics and spiritualists, she states here that she only recently became aware that formal research existed on extrasensory perception and precognition.

The Premonition Code provides a precursory exploration of mind-bending questions such as does the future influence the past? Can the future be changed through will and intent in the present? What actually is time? Why do some aspects of premonitions seem to play out and not others? And

what to do if someone has had a dream or vision of an impending disaster or a crime?

At the core of the book is the contention that readers should embrace their innate intuitive abilities by choosing to become a "positive precog," defined as a person who seeks to develop and utilize precognition for the betterment of their own life, and that of others. The authors offer their own "positive precog principles" using the acronym REACH, which stands for: Respect for the unknown, Ethics, Accuracy, Compassion, and Honesty (p. 80).

One of the book's strengths lies in helping the average reader to think more critically about their own experiences, through the use of a checklist of criteria that may help to distinguish between true premonitions and experiences steeped in confirmation bias. It gets one thinking about concepts related to time, space, and retrocausality, although the discussions around these topics—particularly in relation to what physicists, philosophers, and psychologists say—are simplistic.

Mossbridge and Cheung appear to be optimists who have chosen to emphasize the positive, while minimizing the very real negative aspects of precognition. The authors do cover some of the challenges that come with conscious foreknowledge of the future as it relates to causality, agency, and communication. However, these could have been explored much further, not only in defining the extent of these issues, but in offering more detailed coping mechanisms for readers who don't know how to proceed when they believe they have had, or will have, glimpses of an undesirable future. (If anyone doubts this is an issue, I'll point to a recent voicemail message that I received from a student who was sobbing uncontrollably after she had a premonition that her presently healthy boyfriend was about to pass away. While it would have been nice to be able to recommend this book to the caller, I could not find in it anything that would have provided clear direction or solace.)

The Premonition Code sets out to serve as a welcoming, easy-to-traverse bridge between the general public's focus on personal experiences and the realm of formal scientific experimentation. Unfortunately, once over that bridge, the reader is hard-pressed to find information of any real depth. As will be demonstrated below, the authors seem to want to protect their charges from becoming overwhelmed. Ironically, it is not at all the precognitive or intuitive-based information the authors feel they must protect their readership from—rather, it is the promised *science.*

In Search of the Science

The book opens with promises of "detailed scientific evidence for precognition" in Chapter 3. However, for the first 14 pages there the reader will

not find any mention of experimentation. Instead, more anecdotal stories are offered up, albeit intriguing ones, from the personal lives of scientists.

This leaves only three more pages for the promised evidence. Finally, the reader is greeted with a nicely illustrated example of the standard procedure of a typical "precognitive dreaming experiment with a single dreamer," followed by mention of results of two statistically significant dream ESP experiments with famed psychic subject Malcomb Bessent (Krippner, Ullman, & Honorton 1971). Words from Bessent's dream transcript ("authority figures") are compared to a description of the target photo ("police arresting people"), which was chosen only after the dream occurred and under double-blind conditions (p. 69). More examples like these, from the extensive bodies of dream ESP, ganzfeld, and remote viewing experiments, with actual sketches and corresponding photographs, would have really helped this chapter along.

Unfortunately, readers will find little description of individual experiments from here on out. This seems like a missed opportunity, given Cheung's ability for bringing personal anecdotes to life. Rather than banishing Bem's (2011) *Feeling the Future* experiments into the farthest reaches of the endnotes section, they could have crafted colorful accounts of participants being asked to watch pornographic video clips or studying for tests only *after* they had taken them.

Page 71 ends with a statement that there are some research methods that look for repeatability across the same subjects, while other methods seek to find single occurrences of precognition within multiple subjects. This entire collection of research is then presented as follows:

> That's primarily how Dr. Mossbridge, her colleagues, and many researchers before them have done things for decades. Instead of going through all the results from this way of testing precognition, here is a summary: there is statistically impressive evidence for both conscious and unconscious precognition, based on careful studies. (pp. 71–72)

The authors continue breezing through the formal literature, summarizing decades of presentiment experiments within two more paragraphs. Chapter 3 concludes with a statement that is suggestive of their behind-the-scenes negotiations, revealing who ultimately won this boxing match:

> Julia could spend a long time talking about all the elegant methods that have been developed over the years to test for precognition in the lab, but Theresa has reminded her that most readers are probably eager now to get to the next part—about how to improve your precognitive abilities and make any precognitive experiences you already have work for you. (p. 73)

If nothing else, these writers are succinct.

The above examples demonstrate how Cheung seems to constantly assert her author authority and even a supposed superiority over the reader, through assertions that she knows their preferences and what is best for them. This is exacerbated by the editor's stylistic decision to omit all within-text citations, replacing these with minuscule end notations, virtually invisible to readers over the age of 40. This then requires a constant flipping back and forth of pages in order to have any inkling of what, or whose work, is being referred to.

The Remote Viewing Connection

Before moving to Chapter 4, Dr. Mossbridge takes readers along to a Chinese restaurant, where she lunches with Dr. Edwin C. May, former director of the psycho-energetics program at SRI International/SIAC from 1986 through the mid-1990s. May (2018) recently published two of three volumes of archival materials from the now declassified U.S. government's clandestine remote viewing (AKA "psychic spy") programs, one of which was referred to as "Project Stargate."

According to Mossbridge, it is at this meeting that May agrees with her that the best evidence that remote viewing can be effective as a valuable information-gathering tool is in its longevity and continuous refunding. May shares with her an impressive presentation that includes an accounting of the number of government agencies (military and intelligence) that made use of trained remote viewers from 1972 through 1995, as well as the number of times these agencies returned for more information. In all, there were 19 agencies who sought out the services of these remote viewers, with the CIA returning no fewer than 41 times with "new missions," and another unnamed agency returning 172 times. Only 2 of the 19 agencies never returned (p. 88).

In this chapter, some of the use of remote-viewing–related terminology takes on a hazy hue, obscuring the intended meanings that are deeply rooted within this specific historical context. On page 88, Mossbridge and Cheung define remote viewing as "the ability to perceive information not currently available to the usual senses." However, this is just simply not the way the term "remote viewing" was intended to be used. Ingo Swann explained this in a 1993 interview for *Fate Magazine*:

> In 1971–1972 the term (remote viewing) was coined by myself and Dr. Janet Mitchell, at the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) in New York, in association with Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler and Dr. Karlis Osis. It was coined to define a particular kind of experiment, not a particular kind of psi

> ability. There is a substantial difference between coining a term to identify a type of ESP experiment and an ESP ability. It is very difficult to define an ESP ability, but it is not hard to identify an experiment. . . . I cannot, of course, control how people seek to use a term in the ways that they do. Meanings shift about and many use terms in different flip flop ways . . . (Swann 1993b)

Joe McMoneagle (1998) further defines the protocols that compose remote viewing. This includes blinding procedures of the viewer and monitoring the separation of roles among viewer, judge, project manager/researcher, and target selector (p. 24). Buchanan (2003), Smith (2015), and Williams (2017) offer similar definitions.

Throughout this chapter, the authors aptly draw parallels between remote viewing and precognition, although the discussion could have gone much further. Several remote viewers have written entire books on the subject of remote viewing, time, and the future. While McMoneagle (1998) gives excellent case examples with detailed sketches from his military days as a remote viewer, Swann (1973, 1993a) and Brown (2006) included extensive discussions of findings from their own formal experiments.

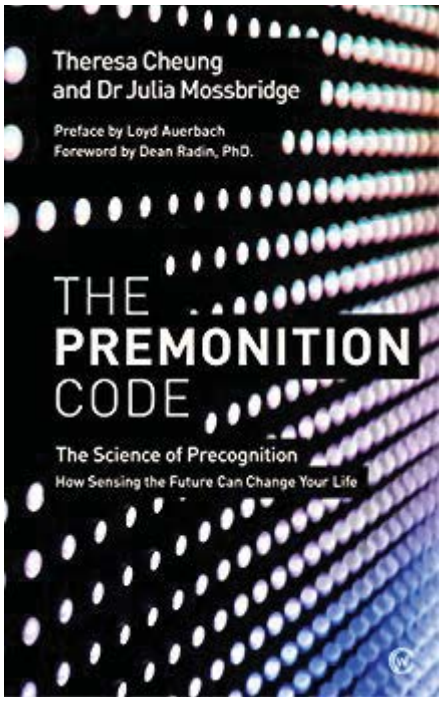
As the subheading "Remote viewing: Precognition by another name" (p. 87) suggests, the authors also repeatedly insist that remote viewing and precognition are one and the same thing, without providing a coherent argument for this. This contention would have undoubtedly been challenged by any remote viewer who has ever been tasked with describing a past event, or present location, or any researcher who ever gave them this tasking. Thankfully, there is no reason to have to engage in the debate because it appears that by the time the authors have reached the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section, they have backed away from this wobbly stance. On page 153 (Chapter 7), an imagined reader asks: "Am I right in thinking that remote viewing is precognition by a different name?", to which they reply: "Sort of! . . . It is—but only when no one knows the target ahead of time and the target is in the future." This raises the question: If they are going to back off from their earlier controversial contention, why didn't they just go back to where they first made it and do some simple rewriting?

"Controlled Precognition"— Controlled Remote Viewing Rebranded

Cheung reveals "The Positive Precog Training Programme" with a proclamation that Mossbridge finally offers a "controlled precognition training" which is a "scientifically sound way for anyone to practice the type of precognition that has been used for years in the US government" (p. 100). This is misleading as it makes it sound as if this is the first time anyone has

done this, which is absolutely not the case. At the top of page 102, they go on to write:

> . . . what we present here is drawn from anecdotal evidence collated by Theresa, scientific reports, casual discussions, training programmes (especially those by John Vivanco and Joe McMoneagle), and Dr Mossbridge's own experience in learning and using controlled precognition for practical use.



Many remote viewing aficionados will immediately recognize that what the authors are referring to as their own "controlled precognition" system is actually an abridged, partial replication of Prudence Calabrese's Trans-Dimensional System (TDS) which was already an adapted version of Ingo Swann's Controlled Remote Viewing methodology (CRV). This is their prerogative, as copyright law does not protect a method. However, the problem here is one of proper referencing per scientific standards. The authors have credited the wrong people. It is true that Mossbridge did study remote viewing with John Vivanco, Calabrese's former business partner, but he is not the creator of TDS. Meanwhile, Joe McMoneagle (1998) has been adamant for years via conference talks, email conversations, and online forum discussions that although he was "exposed" to Swann's methods at the start of his career, he does not have anything to do with controlled remote viewing methodology (Smith 2014a,b). Still, McMoneagle and many others do attribute their learning of "ideograms" to Swann, a concept that is at the core of Cheung and Mossbridge's new training system.

Swann's contracts with SRI, financed by various U.S. governmental agencies, specifically named him as a trainer of remote viewing during the period from 1980 to 1984. These contracts gave him proprietary rights over his own methods and all training materials, most of which are now available to the public in his archives housed at the University of West Georgia. Here is an excerpt taken directly from every one of his training contracts, which

were renewed about every three to six months (Swann 1980–1984):

> Consultant will provide services in the assessment of current program and program development; in proposal development; in experiments, and in report preparation. It is recognized that the Consultant brings to the Psychoenergetics Program a proprietary analysis technique, Controlled Remote Viewing, which shall remain his. The use of the CRV technique in the context of the SRI program shall take place only with the knowledge of the Consultant, and its proprietary status shall be noted.

In 1984, the military moved training efforts in-house, ending Swann's formal role as trainer. At this time, Swann's student, Major Paul Smith (1998), created new training materials from memory. This manual continues to be available and easily accessible online.

In the mid-1990s, when the remote viewing programs were finally defunded and disbanded, one of Ingo Swann's early students, Major Ed Dames, adapted and reworked CRV into a system he named *Technical Remote Viewing* (TRV). Then one of Dames' early students, Dr. Courtney Brown, started the Farsight Institute and rebranded both Swann's and Dames' systems into *Scientific Remote Viewing*. Years later, one of Brown's students, Prudence Calabrese, reworked and rebranded their systems into what went on to be known as *Trans-Dimensional Systems.* Calabrese then went on to teach John Vivanco (2016), which brings us back to Mossbridge, who recently received some training from Vivanco.

What the authors have done here, from pages 109 to 122, is to take Swann's and others' systems, and repackaged and rebranded them, without giving proper credit to the originators and authors of these systems.

In fact, neither Swann nor Calabrese, nor anyone else who has made any kind of a contribution to the very techniques that comprise the authors' "controlled precognition" methodology, are mentioned *anywhere* within the body of the book, or within the references section, or even within the recommended reading lists. This is despite the fact that there actually exist no less than a dozen books and several free resources on the web clearly outlining almost identical methodologies in a much more complete and comprehensive manner (Morehouse 2011, Noble 2013, Smith 2014a,b, Smith 2015, Knowles 2017). In the past year alone, a book by another student of Calabrese, and former training manager, Jon Knowles (2017), republished Calabrese's methodology in full, adding further explanations. She herself published it on a website of her own in 2002, which is still available online for free.

The Premonition Code authors have taken only the first part of the specific stage-based methodology (this would be stages one, two, and just

part of three in CRV methodology), despite the fact that the longtime CRV/TDS trainers and their materials assert that the bulk of the most useful and detailed information occurs within later stages, with the early stages used to establish basic site or target contact and where earlier analytic mistakes get worked out. Therefore, it would have been helpful for Cheung and Mossbridge to explain to readers that they were just giving very minimal instruction and then follow that with appropriate references to more complete guidebooks.

Making Money with Precognition—ARV Rebranded

Currently, the most active area of remote viewing research has to do with what is referred to by all involved as *Associative Remote Viewing*. While most articles on the subject take at least a few paragraphs—if not several pages—to present a review of the literature, the authors manage to sum up the entire body of ARV research in two sentences:

> Let's start with making a profit on financial markets such as the stock market. This chapter is not supposed to be full of scientific stuff, but Julia can't help but point out that making a profit on the stock market using controlled precognition is something that several researchers have examined—so it's on the mind of at least some scientists [footnote j].
>
> Now that we've got that out of the way . . . (p. 140)

Once again, the authors are doing confusing things with their terminology. First, it is very clear that in Chapter 5 the authors were referring to their specific new training methodology as "Controlled Precognition." Now in Chapter 6, they sometimes use this same exact term as a synonym for remote viewing activities in general. Elsewhere, they use their term to reference Associative Remote Viewing (ARV) studies, projects or activities, while completely avoiding use of the proper term. In fact, they never once use the term Associative Remote Viewing at all in this chapter, so that someone less familiar with this body of research would not really understand what they were talking about. The authors also continually refer to remote viewers as "positive precogs," which they defined earlier as one who adheres to their own REACH principles. Remote viewers probably would gladly embrace these principles, but they might object to having new labels pasted onto themselves and their activities from others without sound justification for doing so.

Evidence for using precognition to win money is set forth on page 141 by Marty Rosenblatt, CEO of the Applied Precognition Project (APP) and the Applied Precognition Project Institute (APPI). Mossbridge and Cheung write:

> . . . in the case of APPI . . . from the years 2015 to 2017 . . . the funds under management produced annualized returns of 63 per cent in 2015, 155 per cent in 2016, and 22 per cent in 2017. That's using all of their precogs—when just the best performers are included, annualized returns averaged 215 per cent. That doesn't tell us whether in the next year these numbers could go south, but it does tell us that there is a decent track record.

While Rosenblatt's success sounds quite encouraging, there are some glaring problems here. The most obvious is that the simple percentages are not descriptive enough to assess their accuracy or even meaning—they don't explain how many viewers, how many trials, how much was invested, or what methods were used.

Furthermore, in 2015, even while Rosenblatt was enjoying record profits, he was also very much not enjoying record losses as Project Firefly (a yearlong project involving a network of remote viewing groups contributing hundreds of predictions for the purposes of predicting foreign stock exchange moves) was wrapping up. However, there is no mention of this massive project that involved 60 volunteer remote viewers/investors and the loss of close to $60,000 (Katz, Grgić, & Fendley 2018). This raises the question: Why is this failed project, published in the *JSE* in early spring 2018, prior to the release of *The Premonition Code*, not presented right alongside Rosenblatt's self-reported successful series of trials? Also, why did the authors merely advise readers that a loss of investment could "possibly happen," when in fact it did happen, as cited above, and also in a much earlier project discussed in a paper by Targ et al. (1995) which was also published in the *JSE* as well?

In conclusion, Cheung and Mossbridge have written an interesting, inspirational, and somewhat informative book, but in a tone and manner and with a level of care that fails to meet the norms and standards of scientific writing. Yet, they have subtitled their book *The Science of Precognition*, and are promoting their book as if it was about science. This is prompting scientific journals such as the *JSE*, along with the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research (JSPR)*, to solicit reviews from writers who then find themselves in the highly awkward and unpleasant position of having to make less than positive statements about their own peer's presentation of the material, or lack thereof.

The Premonition Code will appeal to younger audiences who have had their own premonitory experiences and are seeking more insights into these or seeking to expand their intuitive skills set. It will alert them to the fact that this is a topic that the more legitimized and legitimizing factions of society, including scientists, governmental agencies, military, corporations, and even stock traders, have not only displayed an interest in, but invested in.

It directs readers to the *Premonition Code* website (www.premonitioncode.com), which offers further support, research, and practice opportunities free of charge, along with some references to more in-depth training programs and literary resources that the book itself does not include.

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