

## BOOK REVIEW

**The Science of Spirit: Parapsychology, Enlightenment and Evolution** by Luis Portela. Toplight Books, 2021. 1982 pp.

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When one sees an opening chapter entitled “From Science to Love,” it begs for further reading. After all, for most people these are incongruent terms that represent two seemingly opposite sides in a debate, logic and systematic evaluation vs. emotion. There have been many books written about the convergence of science and spirituality, and one cannot help but notice how some of today’s physicists are sounding more like spiritualists than scientists, but Dr. Portela uses this platform as wakeup call for humanity.

There is a brief discussion about some well-known enlightened beings in our history, including founders of today’s organized religions, and our progression from animism to polytheism, and eventually monotheism, but Portela astutely points out the role that science played in explaining natural phenomena. Our ancestors could not have imagined these discoveries, and it was science that moved us past idol worship to spiritual independence. The author is well-versed in the primary disciplines of research that suggest survival and devotes part of the book to discussions of the nature of consciousness, neuroscience, thought transmission, psychokinesis, near-death experiences, reincarnation, mediumship, and instrumental TransCommunication, but the overall message is clear that science can show us the road but changing the world paradigm starts with individual transformation. In the discussion of the neurosciences and parapsychology it is suggested that perhaps an adjustment to the scientific method is indicated by

putting more value on the anecdotal personal experiences that are so prevalent. In his discussion about a paradigm shift, Portola suggests that all people, including scientists and mediums, will understand more by first finding themselves through contemplation and reflection. It is only after we open to the subtle layers of consciousness that we can achieve the necessary balance needed to reach our objectives. The suggestion that scientists also need to contemplate and reflect upon the bigger picture seems contrary to the definition of science, but I suspect that Portola is correct.

Portola feels that the path to enlightenment begins with us all taking responsibility for our thoughts and actions. He reasons that we are mistaken in blaming our environment for our life conditions, as it is we who choose our circumstances based upon our overall need for growth. Instead of blaming others for our misfortunes, we need to take responsibility for our thoughts, our actions, and for what befalls us. This can come about only after we begin thinking of ourselves as particles of energy and balancing our physical lives with the universality of the non-physical realm, and the fundamental principles on which it is based.

The concept that we bring on both the good fortune and hardship that affect our physical lives is very difficult for many to grasp. Many among those who have lost loved ones, developed critical illnesses, or suffer from poverty and hunger are hard-pressed to accept the fact that they brought this upon themselves. It is more comforting to believe in fate, genetics, the environment, or the actions of others. Although I am certainly open to the possibility, the suggestion that I chose my parents, my environment, and the losses in my life is admittedly a hard pill to swallow. However, Portola urges us to examine our compliance with immutable universal laws and adjust accordingly. Great pleasure or suffering depends upon our recognition and adherence to unifying principles. We may suffer or rejoice in our personal lives, but our collective thoughts and actions also determine our direction on a global level. Emotional, mental, or physical suffering is often a catalyst for exploration and self-discovery, and Portola urges us to use our free will to seek the path of perfection. We do this by focusing on spiritual evolution instead of physical survival.

The author believes that we all tune in to spiritual networks that

can be negative or positive. Which network we gain access to depends upon the characteristics of our thoughts. We are attracted to networks that mirror our thoughts and, at the same time, repel the contrary signals. This is a universal concept that applies to both physical and non-physical environments.

Portola includes an interesting discussion on what is referred to as the Astral Body. He cites doctrines that defend the existence of a subtle body, with similar form to the physical body, that is made of an ethereal substance. Both the astral and physical bodies are animated by spirit, which provides the vibrations responsible for thought. The physical brain decodes and interprets the thoughts communicated by spirit to the astral body. The theory is that the astral body is molded by spirit and is the repository of memories, and this body can sometimes be seen by others and is reshaped into other forms once free from the physical body. The connection between the astral and physical bodies is often referred to as the “silver cord” which can stretch during an out-of-body experience and which breaks when the soul separates from its temporary housing at death. As Portola points out, the interesting part of this theory relates to people in a comatose state. Perhaps the cord partially breaks, disconnecting the brain but not the filaments to the heart. I find this theory intriguing, as it might explain why, when the brain apparatus is no longer functioning, the signals are still being received and possibly acknowledged.

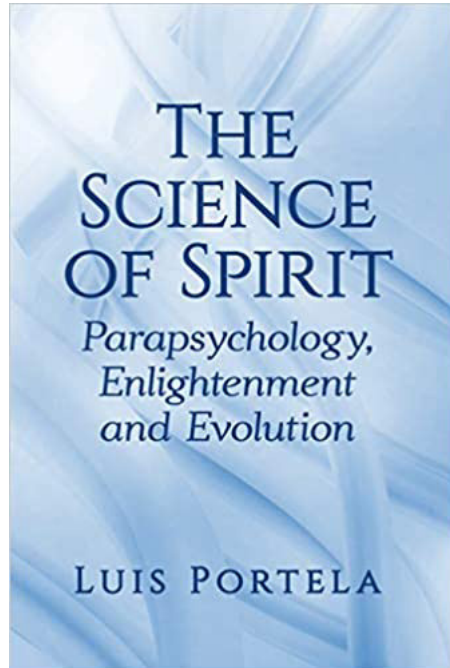
Acknowledging that some in the scientific community look askance at past life regression, Portola includes a chapter examining the practice. He points out that in regression therapy some patients describe scenes from both past and future lives, sometimes validated by evidence. This of course would be consistent with current research into the nature of time, specifically how remote viewers can see targets from the past, present, and future, as well as from psi research that shows both causal and retrocausal phenomena. Regarding receiving information about future events, it is suggested that chance does not exist. Our present conditions are purely the result of our past decisions and attitudes, and our future is something that we construct by our thoughts, actions, and free will. Everything we go through is caused by something that falls within our own responsibility. Try as I may, I struggle with the concept that there are no coincidences and that chance is out of the

equation. My own hypothesis is that some stuff just happens for no apparent reason, and the randomness is part of the design. This is seemingly a contradiction in terms, but it is not all that different from what Dr. Portela describes. How we react to the random stuff put before us, both good and bad, is how we progress.

The discussions about mediumship and intuition are interesting, especially the suggestion that intuition could be considered a form of mediumship. The author defines intuition as the “capacity of direct and

immediate knowledge, without recourse to reasoning or the sensory organs,” which essentially also defines mediumship if we specify that the information is coming from a discarnate source. Although people are encouraged to incorporate their intuitiveness in their daily lives, Portela wisely cautions against trusting intuition too much. Too much reliance on such information without some thoughtful analysis and contemplation can result in poor decisions and actions.

The author intersperses many pearls of wisdom throughout the book, all related. Some of my favorites include the observation that we have become used to living in lies as if they were truth, despite our hearts telling us otherwise. He urges us to become transparent in our thoughts and practice toward that end daily. He also believes that we reside in a non-judgmental universe, but we must be balanced and recognize that we alone are responsible for our actions. He urges a “vision beyond immediate interests, with a universal perspective, which offers a lucidity of appreciation of those who are not yet perfect and still in an evolutionary phase.” He describes happiness as expansive as it invigorates life, and sadness as constrictive and focused inward,



weakening the organism. He cautions that both have the power to destroy in excess. Discernment is described as the consciousness of being part of a whole, putting personal interests aside. To discern, one must reflect about what truly matters as one hears the voice of the whole. In discussing universal values, it is suggested that looking for someone else to help might be interfering with the lives of others. The wiser path would be to wait for people to come to you for assistance as they express their trust. The person seeking guidance will then listen, evaluate, and decide what is best for them.

Buying into the spiritual concepts expressed by Dr. Portela necessitates acceptance of some basic principles. Our thoughts and attitudes are governed by the immutable law of cause and effect, and we are always personally responsible for what happens to us. Everything has a reason and chance does not exist. We are on this Earth to learn, self-improve, and we have our own evolutionary trajectories.

The takeaway message from this book is that we can all be considered scientists during our physical lives. We absorb, examine, and contemplate a bigger picture as we seek meaning and purpose. Sometimes we change the direction of our lives as the result of personal experiences, some profound and some subtle, but they cause us to accept another level of reality as we move closer to a knowing state. We live in a world that often fosters the feeling of separateness, individuality, and materialism. Changing the paradigm to one of connectiveness and responsibility is no easy task, but one that Portela most definitely feels we are moving toward.