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Embodied Psi: The Next Turn in Parapsychology

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JAMES IN LUCK

Reading McClenon's article, I immediately realized that it is a perfect illustration of one of my early papers about evidence in parapsychology (Lucadou, 2000a). I called it the "Hans-in- Luck-Syndrome (HALS)": The usual classical criteria for scientific evidence are "effect-oriented". Experimental results of parapsychology seem unable to fulfill these requirements. One gets the impression that an erosion of evidence rather than an accumulation of evidence is taking place in parapsychology (Lucadou, 2022). This results in a discrepancy between personal and scientific evidence. A person who reports a paranormal experience gets the impression that the scientific description of it is inadequate and that the relevant aspects of the experiences are given away. A non-classical model for scientific evidence is "development oriented" instead of "effect oriented". It takes into account the inherent entanglement and embodiment (Barrett, 2011) of psychophysical systems and the fact that such systems have their own history (Lucadou, 2000b). In such systems, evidence cannot simply be accumulated because the conditions that produce evidence change during the development of the system. This is exactly what McClenon describes in his fascinating article.

He starts with Batcheldor's model and experimental approach as well as the Philip-experiments around the Canadian parapsychologist Iris Owen. However, from the point of view of the "Model of Pragmatic Information (MPI)" (Lucadou 2015a) and the "Generalized Quantum Theaoy (GQT)" (Atmanspacher et al. 2002, Lucadou et.al. 2007, Römer 2023) his psychological perspective is not enough.

BATCHELDOR'S TURN

If only psychological factors could be held responsible for the avoidance of a paranormal phenomenon, it would suffice to eliminate these factors. Indeed, it is widely assumed that the elusiveness of the phenomena is only an "irritating by-product" of unfavorable psychological conditions which should be eliminated. This is why authors of reports often simply neglect the remarkable elusiveness, upon which the astonished reader wonders why such massive phenomena were not "properly" investigated with all the technical facilities available to the experimental sciences. Not until such a reader requires more precise answers, is he informed that the phenomena behave in such an elusive way that they can hardly ever be properly objectified. Even after many years of effort, Batcheldor could not lay his hand on a single video recording of a paranormal phenomenon. In a letter to me, Batcheldor described a typical situation (Lucadou, 1995): "During an experiment we had switched on the infrared video camera when the table levitated. Although we thought the video recorder was running, we

did not feel inhibited and I believed we had achieved a success. When we played back the tape, however, it did not contain any images at all! We found out that a switch had been in a wrong position. The next time I carefully checked the position of all switches and, indeed, the table refused to levitate. So would it be possible,though difficult according to your theory, to acquire a detailed video recording of a levitation?"

According to the Model of Pragmatic Information (MPI), we should indeed assume that the psi effect remains elusive even when the psychological barriers have been eliminated, because every observation seeking confirmation prepares the system in such a way that its autonomy is restricted. In the situation described by Batcheldor, the psychological conditions were, in fact, favorable, and a levitation was observed. Nobody knew about an erroneously set switch, and it is difficult to understand why, after the correction of this mishap, the psychological situation would have changed so dramatically. According to the MPI, however, the position of that switch, which is of no importance for the psychological situation, is of fundamental importance. Because of the erroneous setting of the switch, the total system was objectively unable to make a recording of the phenomenon. In other words, any measurement or recording was impossible. The phenomenon could only occur because it was not completely objectifiable. A complete video recording would comprise more pragmatic information than the system was able to produce (see below). The subjective experience of the sitters, on the other hand, is "diffuse" enough to record the less voluminous or less reliable information about the phenomenon. The situation remains vague, the system is not completely prepared for reliability. Confirmation of the actual phenomena by means of a video recording is lacking. By resetting the switch, the structure of the complete system is altered to such a degree that the phenomenon cannot occur. Switching on an additional measuring apparatus changed the potentiality of the system in such a way that particular (complementary) measurements were prevented from taking place. It goes without saying that the above does not mean that the MPI considers any objective observation of psi phenomena absolutely impossible. This would represent an inadmissible immunization. One could summarize it as follows: less equipment may have produced more phenomena! It is necessary to adapt the objective conditions of observation to the phenomenon, in such a way that enables the observer to gather the optimum pragmatic information the system is able to produce. Without this adaptation, one throws away information. If no phenomenon occurs when a complete video recording is made, one apparently threw away too much information about the phenomenon: it does not occur any longer. If, on the other hand, a seance in darkness prevents the observer from separating trickery and real phenomena, then he has also thrown away too much information, because he does not know what he has observed. Where is the royal road between the Scylla of an observation and the Charybdis of a phenomenon without observation?

In answer to Batcheldor's letter, I suggested reducing the resolution of the method of observation, i.e., to defocus the video camera or to limit it to a documentation on audio tape only. In this sense, "less" would really be "more", because we would obtain an objective recording of the phenomenon, which would be less easy to interpret than a perfect documentation, because it contains lacunae. These are exactly the ambiguities resulting from an imperfect method of recording. Suppose that only noises are recorded, in which case the causes of the noise remain unclear. If a camera is out of focus, it reduces the possibility of determining the exact location of any phenomenon. This is not to say that lacunae in the documentation procedure should leave room for manipulations or fraud (for example, because one can no longer see any wires used for trickery). They should rather prevent the system from being prepared too unilaterally for reliability, so that it loses its autonomy. This method of recording reduces the pragmatic information and offers the experimenter less opportunities to utilize the phenomena in the sense of signal transfer. He has only a limited degree of control over the system. As the recording does not teach him exactly what is going on in the system, he cannot undertake any goal-directed actions. In the experiments Batcheldor performed till shortly before his death, he tried to utilize observations with differing degrees of resolution. He reported darkened sessions as well as the use of a fluorescent background panel, in front of which "cloths could materialize in the air". As predicted by our hypothesis, in front of a panel with a grid of fluorescent dots, these materialized objects (or whatever they were) remained visible for a longer period than in front of a panel completely covered by fluorescent paint. In rare cases (infrared) video recordings succeeded. In these cases, levitated objects were always in such a position that it was impossible to decide whether they were really levitated or only held in front of the camera. They seemed to have been put in a position that prevented the observer from finding out how the phenomenon came about. Batcheldor emphasizes that it would have been very difficult for the sitters to manipulate the object in this specific position, as they did not know what visual field was covered by the camera, which was not equipped with a viewfinder. These

manipulators could, therefore, easily have been detected. Batcheldor's impression is that the complete system "knew" exactly what was recorded by the camera and that one could only record a phenomenon if its cause remained hidden in darkness, so that it was impossible to decide whether a normal or a "paranormal" event had taken place. This is exactly the same as not being able to interpret the video recording. It contains less pragmatic information and prevents the experimenter from having complete control over the system or from making it reliable.

UNCERTAINTY

In general, the Model of Pragmatic Information (MPI) can be formulated in three main "laws": "First law of the MPI":

> Paranormal phenomena are non-local macroscopic entanglement (ME)-correlations in socio-psycho-physical, self-organizing, organizationally closed systems (Varela 1981), which are induced by the pragmatic information (Weizsäcker et.al. 1974), which creates the system (Lucadou, 2015a).

From the fundamental complementarity of structure and function, an uncertainty relation can be derived. This can further be applied to the concept of pragmatic information leading to the fundamental equation: $I = R * A = B * E = n * i$. This equation describes the partitioning (product) of reliability *R* and autonomy *A* of an organizationally closed system which interacts with its environment by the exchange of pragmatic information *I*. This exchange can be called a measurement. *B* describes the "confirmation" and *E* the "novelty" of the pragmatic information in the environmental system, i is the minimum action that the pragmatic information exerts on the specified system during a measurement.

The "Second law of the MPI" (Non-Transmission (NT)-axiom) restricts the effects of the first law:

> Any attempt to use a non-local correlation as a causal signal transfer makes the non-local ME-correlation vanish or change its effect in an unpredictable way. In sufficiently complex systems, global meta-observables can always be formed, which limits the direct measurement of entanglement correlations by the NTAxiom (Lucadou, 2015a).

The NT-axiom" (Lucadou et al. 2007) leads to a naturalistic explanation of decline-effects and the displacement-effects in parapsychology: Operationalizations of psi phenomena, which involve a preparation of the system in which the NT axiom can potentially be violated, weaken the correlations present in the system to such an extent that the operational criterion for its determination is no longer reached.

The second law of the MPI also plays a decisive role in spontaneous cases in parapsychology and can be expressed in the so-called "macroscopic uncertainty relation" of the MPI:

The effect size of paranormal phenomena is limited by the quality of their documentation:

> Effect size of a psi phenomenon * quality of its documentation < I

This applies to RSPK-phenomena as well as to sitter group experiments (Lucadou, Zahradnik 2004). This means that in such cases, no procedure can determine whether the cause of the occurrences is a psi effect, artifact, or manipulation. RSPK-phenomena cannot be described by a "consistent story" (Römer 2023, Chapter 5). McClenon emphasizes again and again that it is not possible to exclude causal artifacts.

The decline- and the displacement-effect is thus a compromise between the NT axiom and the tendency of the organizationally closed system to maintain the existing entanglement. The second law thus does not maintain that ME-correlations need to be weak or unstable. In general (e.g., in physics), it is difficult to isolate them experimentally, but they are "powerful" components of nature. In physics, they are necessary to stabilize matter, and in spontaneous cases in parapsychology and healing, it seems that their effect can be huge. As a metaphor one can compare the causal processes in nature with a dry sponge and the entanglement-correlations with liquid water. The dry sponge alone is not very helpful for cleaning, and neither is liquid water, but together, they serve a lot!

This feature is expressed in the "third law of the MPI":

> ME-correlations are ecologically stable and are limited only by the NT axiom. They are formed by causal processes, which in turn stabilize them. Potentially causal correlations reinforce entanglement (Lucadou, 2015a).

"Ecological stable" means that the self-organizing, organizationally closed system is in a steady state with its environment, in other words: *Psi is embodied in its envi-*

ronment.

There is not too much difference between the phenomena produced by physical mediums and by poltergeist phenomena. Both types of phenomena are difficult to observe and they are dependent upon the preparation of the system. There are also common aspects in their psychological description. In both cases, there is the dynamical process within a group, in which the interaction among its members is of fundamental importance, and even the "experimenter" can become a poltergeist agent, as McClenon shows in his report.

It is clear that we are still far from being able to say which phenomena in the area of macro- PK are possible or impossible, or to conclude why they are as they are and not different.

We simply do not have a clue how strong the "stochastic fluctuations" of a system can become and why they often seem so bizarre. After all, such a group represents a system with an immense degree of freedom and entanglement, and it comprises many levels of description. Even if properly controlled PK experiments with random generators yield so small a result that it is hardly detectable, it need not be small in real life too. However, a controlled experiment represents a very artificial, more or less sterile situation and Batcheldor and McClenon try to overcome this situation by introducing additional degrees of freedom and even causal processes.

IMPRESSIONS

In such a mixed situation, the use by McClenon of "Grounded Theory" to describe categories is, indeed, a very helpful tool. It could even be used a little bit further, as Frauke Zahradnik (2007) showed: According to the GQT, one could look for "global observables", which are responsible for ME-correlations in a system. They represent complementary descriptive categories. An important characteristic of a complementary descriptive category is that it cannot be derived from any of the given "local" categories of grounded theory but represents a seemingly subjective "impression" of the person who analyzes the situation: They form meta-observables, which nevertheless show a high inter-rater-reliability. As an example, the following observables may serve, which to some extent also play an important role in the description and assessment of McClenon's experiments:

Authenticity: Here, the subjective honesty of the precipitants of the sitter-group and their willingness to describe extensive details of their experience are assessed.

Anomaly: Here the degree of anomaly or "how paranormal" is the experience assessed, or the violation of "common sense principles".

Intensity of experience: The degree of impact of the unusual experience on the life of the person concerned. McClenon gives several examples.

THE TRICKY TRICKSTER

Finally, the MPI is able to solve the problem of the "trickster". McClenon writes: "The trickster marks a paradox. The phenomena reveal itself yet, when subjected to scrutiny, hides. Direct observation, and early attempts at video documentation, seemed to hinder pinwheel turning. ... The psi trickster makes experimental replication problematic. The phenomena sometimes seem to purposely violate expectations, refusing to reveal consistent patterns."

This is exactly what the second and third law of the MPI describes: The decline- and the displacement-effect is a compromise between the NT axiom and the tendency of the organizationally closed system to maintain the existing entanglement. It is not possible to distill psi from the experimental setting since it is embodied in the environment and situation of the whole group of "test-persons and experimenter", and it is not possible to distinguish in advance between causal and entanglement processes.

Until now, the Rhinean paradigm of parapsychology was on the search for a "psi-switch" - the holy grail (Lucadou, 2022), which should be a remedy for all problems and "never-ending youth". However, it must fail since the NT-axiom requires that whenever you believe that you can use it, it disappears or changes in an unpredictable way. Thus, the crucial point is that there is no anthropomorphic demon called "trickster" corrupting psi, if at all, the experimenter is the trickster, who tries to isolate psi from its embodiment. Or to put it into different words: Entanglement processes cannot be separated without loss from their causal environment. This could be the "next turn of parapsychology": Not to search for the "holy grail" of a purified psi but to describe and to investigate it in its natural embodiment, namely its interaction with real-world situations and its relation to real persons instead of seemingly "objective experimenters". This new turn of parapsychology includes the experimenter, as has already been demonstrated by Herb Mertz (2022) and now by the excellent approach of James McClenon.

Instead of its instability and elusiveness, it seems that psi does not love boundaries like "sterile experimental settings", or to cite the first verse of Robert Frost's poem:

Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall, That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it, And spills the upper boulders in the sun; And makes gaps even two can pass abreast. The work of hunters is another thing: (Frost, 1914, p. 11)

Let's say The work of tricksters is another thing: ... (see Nahm; 2014, 2016). The good news is that a new method of analysis has been developed that makes it possible to distinguish causal relationships from entanglement correlations retrospectively (Lucadou 2015b, 2024), but this is another story.

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