



**SPECIAL
SUBSECTION
TARGET ARTICLE
RESPONSE**

Reply to Commentaries on Putative Pinwheel PK

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SUBMITTED June 15, 2024
ACCEPTED June 18, 2024
PUBLISHED June 30, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.31275/20243471>

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I wish to thank Walter von Lucadou, Gerhard Mayer, and James Carpenter for their insightful comments. I respond by clarifying how my sociological methodology differs from traditional parapsychology.

Again, my experiments involved a 'participant observation' approach, where researchers immerse themselves in a particular social setting or group to monitor participants' behaviors, interactions, and opinions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). I also used grounded theory, i.e., an inductive strategy designed to gather qualitative data for hypothesis-testing and theory development. Resulting theories are 'grounded' in systematically collected and analyzed data. Grounded theory differs from standard deductive strategies that are common within parapsychology since it begins with fewer theoretical assumptions and allows greater methodological flexibility (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Grounded theory seems particularly appropriate for psychical research, which offers rich qualitative data but limited theory development. Within grounded theory, hypotheses, and associated theories, emerge as the research progresses.

Batchelor (Batchelor & Giesler, 1994) found that macro-PK, in his table-tipping groups, resisted full scientific verification. Lucadou interpreted Batchelor's results using a general quantum theory model. Although I cannot operationalize all their variables, my pinwheel study findings generally coincide with their hypotheses. I believe their theories are sufficiently flexible that they can be refined through grounded theory processes. Gerhard Mayer's analysis contributes to this endeavor. I concur with Mayer's ideas regarding theory synthesis, including Carpenter's (2012) work.

Gerhard Mayer expressed concerns regarding my research strategies: (1) My experiments did not begin with sufficiently controlled conditions, (2) They were not adequately systematic, and (3) They lacked clarity regarding theoretical models. Although these criticisms are valid using a traditional parapsychological perspective, grounded theory offers an alternate paradigm. Grounded theory suggests ignoring theories and hypotheses during early research phases. It advocates allowing hypotheses and methods to emerge 'organically' through data analysis. I argue that traditional parapsychological strategies, i.e., focusing on proving the reality of psi, actually thwart and distort psi. Laboratory psi differs qualitatively from the anomalous experiences reported by people in the general population. If we wish to understand psi, we should observe it in its natural state.

Criticisms, such as Mayer's, are often directed by skeptics toward parapsychologists. Skepticism is a norm within science. Critics request increased controls or more 'systemic' strategies (McClenon, 1984), but within Batchelor's model, skepticism thwarts psi. I will discuss an example of one of my 'unsystematic' strategies. In September 2020, after the pinwheel turning declined, I introduced a lighted candle to the



pinwheel environment. My hypothesis was that the candle would increase pinwheel turning through heat convection. According to Batcheldor's model, this should result in greater belief followed by increased pinwheel turning due to authentic PK. The pinwheels behaved in unexpected, erratic ways. During one experiment, the candle burned extremely brightly, its flame flickering as if there were a strong wind in the closed off room while the pinwheels remained almost still. During another experiment, the flame was completely tranquil while a pinwheel turned robustly. Another time, the candle closest to the candle flame remained still while a pinwheel farther away turned. I tried introducing a larger, hotter candle, but the pinwheel turning became even more erratic, a wavering back-and-forth that I regarded as an artifact. Over time, the pinwheel turning declined.

I am uncertain how to interpret these results. Perhaps a sentient entity is involved, but so far, all attempts to generate evidence supporting Spiritualist explanations have failed. It seems as if a 'psi trickster' is active (for recent discussions, see Drinkwater et al., 2019; Kennedy, 2024; Storm, 2023). The pinwheel phenomena seem to say: "We are real, but you can't control us. We don't fit your theories." After months of inconsistent results, and reduced pinwheel turning, I removed the candles. What does Mayer recommend? What 'system' explains these outcomes?

Other 'unsystematic' experiments included covering pinwheels with plastic domes, conducting experiments with no observers, covering cameras with plastic domes, and varying the degree of covering of a pinwheel in an inverted plastic dome. Many modifications generated unexpected outcomes and apparent trickster-like effects. During one experiment, the pinwheel inside an inverted plastic dome (open at the top) turned robustly while the other pinwheels remained still (Dec. 1, 2022). The turning was even more robust during non-experimental periods.

I speculate that the phenomena have sentient, contradictory, and dream-like qualities. Their behaviors may reflect our mental processes, but I do not think that our current psychological theories fully explain the observed outcomes (I concur with Lucadou about this). It is as if the pinwheels (1) Want to reveal themselves as sentient, (2) Want to hide their sentience, (3) Want to violate our expectations, and (4) Are aware of and responding to our emotions. I am open to suggestions regarding future experiments, but I will consult my working group before making decisions. Some participants resist skeptical suggestions as they want the phenomena to continue.

Many years ago, Mayer suggested that I read Lucadou's (Lucadou & Wald, 2014) work. I am grateful for this advice. Recently he suggested that I consider James

Carpenter's (2012) model — also good advice! Carpenter (2012) offered insights into generally hidden 'everyday' psi. He argues that psi is part of a preconscious process involving personal intentions using information beyond the senses. He argues that psi helps us to optimize our responses while hiding within every thought and action. In his comments, he noted possible methodological weaknesses in my pinwheel experiments, but chooses not to discuss these issues. I acknowledge that grounded theory involves innovative, untried strategies. Carpenter's (2024) discussion revealed the important impacts that psi experiences have on belief. Those who experience macro-PK do not require formal proof that psi is real. Their experiences compel belief. This is akin to Clarke (1995), for example, who found that people's belief in ghosts is often attributed to personal experience. This observation also coincides with survey results from a sample of elite American scientists (McClenon, 1984). Those reporting anomalous experiences were more likely to believe in ESP, while those claiming greater familiarity with the ESP literature tended to be more skeptical.

Carpenter's model describes physiological processes amenable to evolutionary selection. Physiologists may someday uncover hypothesized mechanisms. His discussion of skepticism is particularly interesting. He stated, "All of us almost all the time are psychologically stuffed with the presumption of the non-occurrence of psi. This is highly functional" (Carpenter, 2024, p. 331). This coincides with the Ritual Healing Theory (McClenon, 2002) argument that evolutionary processes shaped our consciousness and its capacity for anomalous experience. A more positive way of thinking about Batcheldor's 'fear of psi' is to re-label it as 'maintaining our consensual reality.' Although I have been unable to quantify 'affect' or 'emotion' through content analysis of my experiment conversation data, group members concur that our individual or collective emotions seem to affect pinwheel turning. This observation is in harmony with Carpenter's theory. Perhaps we can combine theoretical insights regarding the nature of consciousness, quantum processes, and psi's trickster qualities.

The online group PK experiment is an ongoing project. Originally, I hoped to devise a unifying story, parallel to the Philip Experiment, in which the group shaped a core narrative. I hoped that a fictional or Spiritualist narrative would help us to generate PK, but our group did not agree regarding emphasis on Spiritualist or secular orientations. This is parallel to our lack of theoretical consensus. Instead, I offer our lived, non-fiction story: *A group with psi-prone participants perceived collective PK through meeting regularly. The story continues. Since it happened to me, it can happen to you. It has been happening to*

people since the Paleolithic. Further experiments will provide insights regarding the degree that presuppositions and cultural factors shape outcomes.

My article offered a 'recipe' for experiencing ostensible group PK. I am reminded of a joke describing a recipe for making bear soup. The first instruction is: 'Find a bear.' This is a metaphor for psychological researchers. If we wish to understand psi, we need strategies for generating experiences. Perhaps we should avoid methods that thwart or distort psi. I am open to suggestions. I encourage people prone to PK experience to contact me.

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