

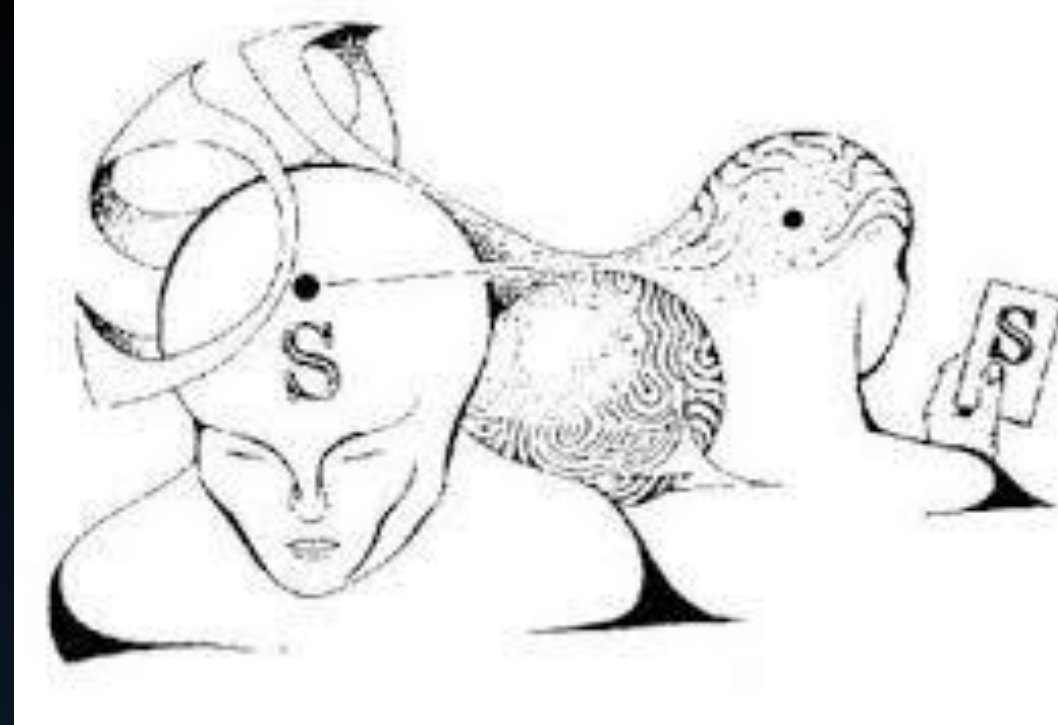
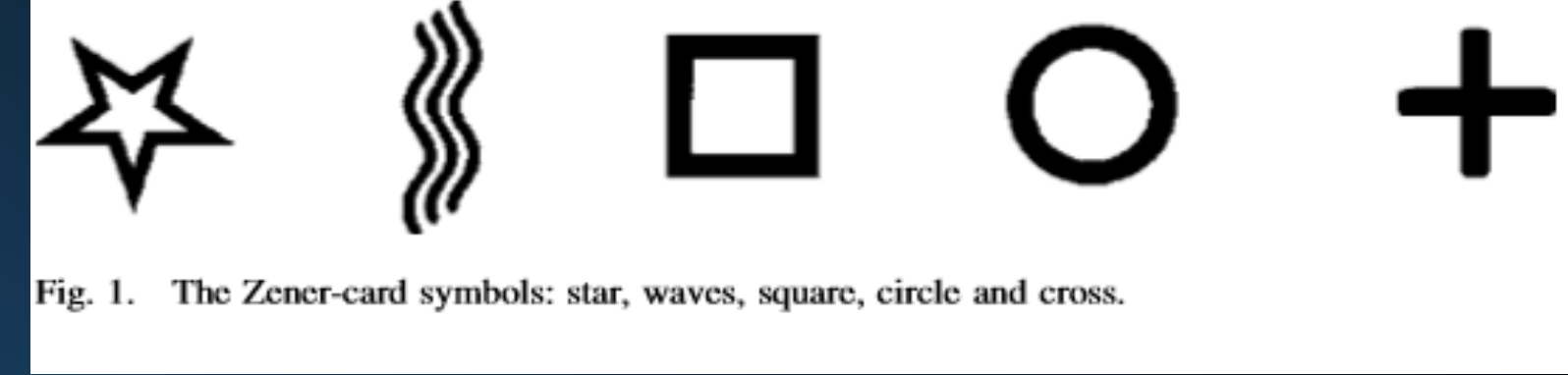


“It made me wonder at how limited we have become in our understanding of mystery...”

# Psychokinetic chicks, UFOs, reincarnation, and telepathic parrots?

## Exploring the psyche outside the box: An investigation of parapsychology

Janki Trivedi, Alexandra Greidanus, Ameilia McNish, Bianca Dublois, Brynelle Barrs, Charlene Kasongo, Daniel Woods, Dawson Strand, Deanna Kool, Janelle Krenz, Jessica Bron, Jessica Hewitt, Kaneesha Dion, Kenan Helgren, Ludivine Maniraguha, Owen Leeder, Ruby-Ann Van Egmond, & Christopher Peet



### What is Parapsychology?

“Parapsychology is the scientific study of experiences which, if they are as they seem to be, are in principle outside the realm of human capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists.” (Irwin, 1999) Parapsychology is the scientific study of interactions between living organisms and their external environment that seem to transcend the known physical laws of nature. These phenomena indicate operations of factors unknown to or unrecognized by orthodox science, popularly referred to as paranormal factors. There may be phenomena interpreted as paranormal but it might not be included in the research done by parapsychologists because, “the considerable majority of scientific parapsychologists would not concede as legitimate issues in the field.” These include phenomena such as “witch-craft, popular astrology, fairies, the Bermuda Triangle, numerology and Tarot readings, despite the common image of these matters as paranormal in the minds of the public and indeed many skeptics.” (Irwin, 1999) Parapsychologist reject these in part from political motives; to give serious consideration to the above phenomena would severely prejudice parapsychology’s already tenuous status as a science in the eyes of the rest of the scientific community.

#### History

Parapsychology as a discipline or field is traditionally considered to have begun in 1882) when the *Society for Psychical Research* was constituted. The Society began with the primary purpose of empirically debunking as false the many supernatural or “spiritualist” (paranormal) claims in circulation. This purpose has a pedigree stretching back to the Enlightenment: “the notion of testing the accuracy and authenticity of reported Parapsychological experiences emerged very slowly and writers in the 17th century such as Henry More and Joseph Glanvill showed themselves alert to the possibility of fraud, delusion, and unreliable observation in such cases.” (Irwin, 1999). Despite this lengthy effort, there remain a number of such phenomena that remain unexplained.

### METHOD: How to review a whole field of study?

For Parapsychology we proposed the following approach to gain a representative sample of research through a careful selection from one journal. We chose the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* founded in 1987 (it is contemporary; peer-reviewed; has online open access; offers a manageable number of issues and articles)

We used Charles Tart, the premier living parapsychologist. His 2009 book, “The End of Materialism” summarizes the field based on his 50 year career, providing a “control condition” for our careful selection. Tart identified five major areas that consistently showed reliable findings: the “Big Five”.

The “Big Five”: 1. Telepathy, 2. Precognition, 3. Clairvoyance (remote viewing), 4. Psychokinesis, & 5. Psychic healing

### RESULTS

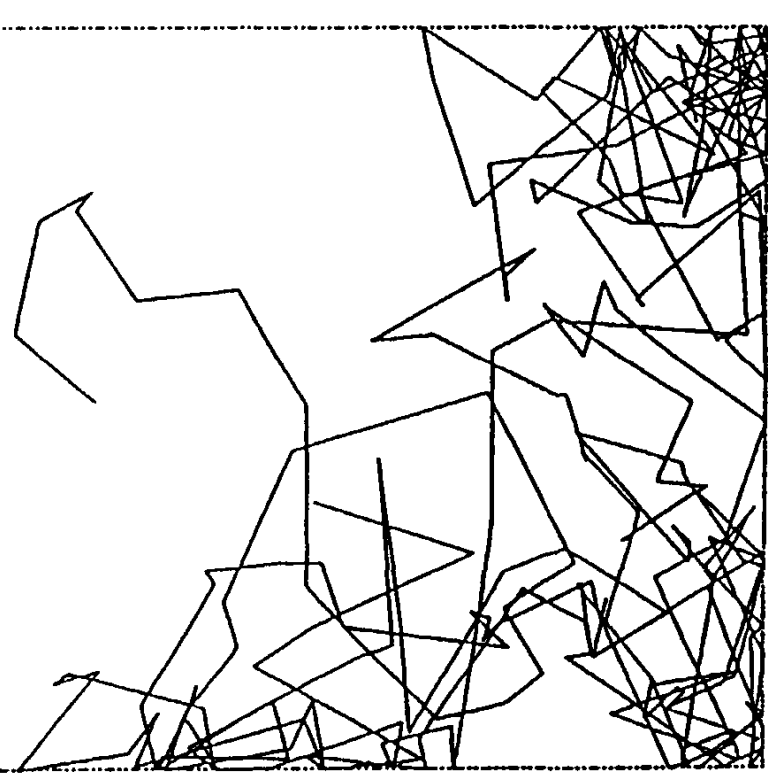
#### SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS :

- One study on psychokinetic chicks showed that a robot spent 71% of the time closer to the chicks, as compared to a control where the robot roamed randomly and spent 50% of its time in each half (across n=80 trials).
- Several studies have corroborated that children gave accurate information regarding past-life memories that appeared to have no possible empirical source within the children’s own lives.
- Another study found that some people are able to predict who is sending them an email before they read the email.
- Using brain scans and measuring pupillary response tests, researchers found that the body does not respond to regular stimulation when participants are experiencing an apparition.
- Some areas of research, such as the effect of positive intention on other living things (like plants, illnesses, bacteria) have consistently found significant results for a sustained period: “Although considered rather outré by mainstream research psychologists, the intentionality hypothesis [that the physical environment can be directly impacted by mental intent toward specific situational variables] has been a focus of sustained study for more than 50 years.” (Lai, Yuen, & Burchett, 2018, p. 694)

#### SIGNIFICANT FALSIFICATIONS:

- In some studies, children who claimed to have previous life memories were found to excel in cognitive function, with the researcher plausibly showing that the likelihood of them having increased fantastical thoughts, creating false memories, to be a more plausible explanation.
- Parapsychologists have demonstrated that between 80-85% of reported paranormal phenomena can be explained in much more “normal” psychological or physical terms. (Of course, that still leaves 15% unexplained paranormal phenomena remaining of parapsychological interest.)

Peoc’h (1995) was replicating with a slight variation an earlier study which found that when chicks were imprinted from birth with a robot, the robot spent “two and a half times longer on the half of the surface closer to the chicks” (p.224) by comparison to ~50% of the time in the control condition (random motion in confined area with no chicks present).



This variation added a candle to the top of the robot, hypothesizing the darkness-disliking chicks would want to attract the light. By comparison to the ~50% of time spent in the control condition, this study found that 71% of the time “the robot spent more time in the “chick half of its range” (p.226).

A Case of a Japanese Child with Past-Life Memories  
JSE 27.4 Case of a Japanese Child with Past Life Memories. Has numerous photos of 3 yr old boy Tomo peeling garlic the way he learned to in a past life, as well as drawings and using English lettering before he learned English.



Figure 1. A picture drawn by the subject.

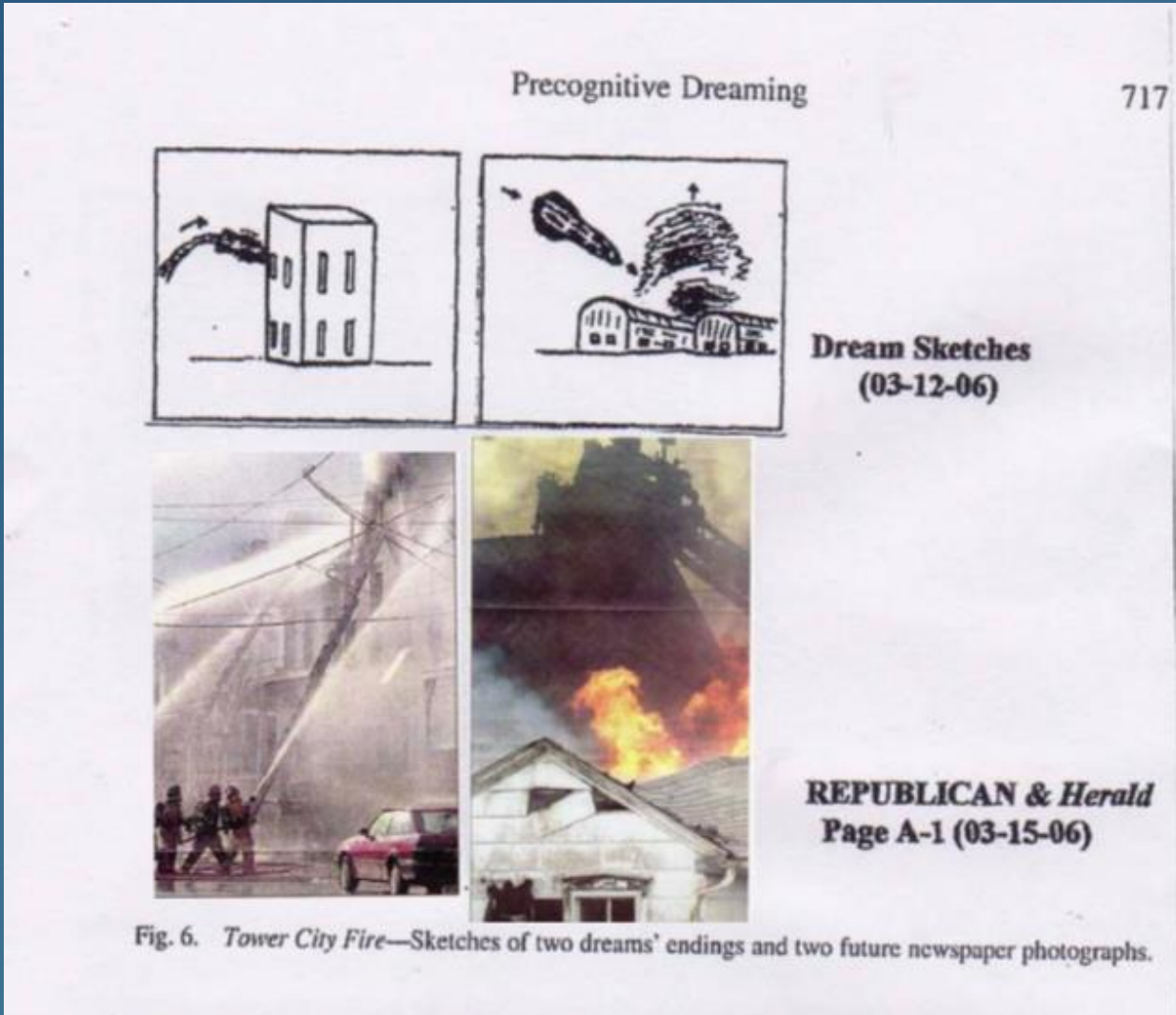


Fig. 6. Tower City Fire—Sketches of two dreams’ endings and two future newspaper photographs.

#### SIGNIFICANT FALSIFICATIONS: (continued)

- Gorbanev’s work seemingly demonstrated the negative effects of solar flares on the economy in an analysis of solar flare correlation with the effects of many economic activities (recession, unemployment, stock market crashes, etc.). However, Gorbanev unintentionally exaggerated this significance through not taking into consideration internal interaction effects and feedback mechanisms within the economic system as a whole, which more plausibly explains the negative pattern.

#### INTERESTING, BUT INCONCLUSIVE...

- Researchers tried to find out why there is a weight gain of 2-3 kg right after death by asphyxiating sheep and goats and seeing if the weight gain is explicable in terms of their last breath within a few minutes after death.
- Sleep paralysis and out-of-body experiences (OBE): there are definite documented effects in controlled environments of OBEs, but as yet no known explanation for why people experience an OBE while in sleep paralysis
- The phenomenon “Mars Effect” refers to a consistent and statistically significant tendency for champion athletes to have been born at the time of either the rise or the upper culmination of the planet Mars.

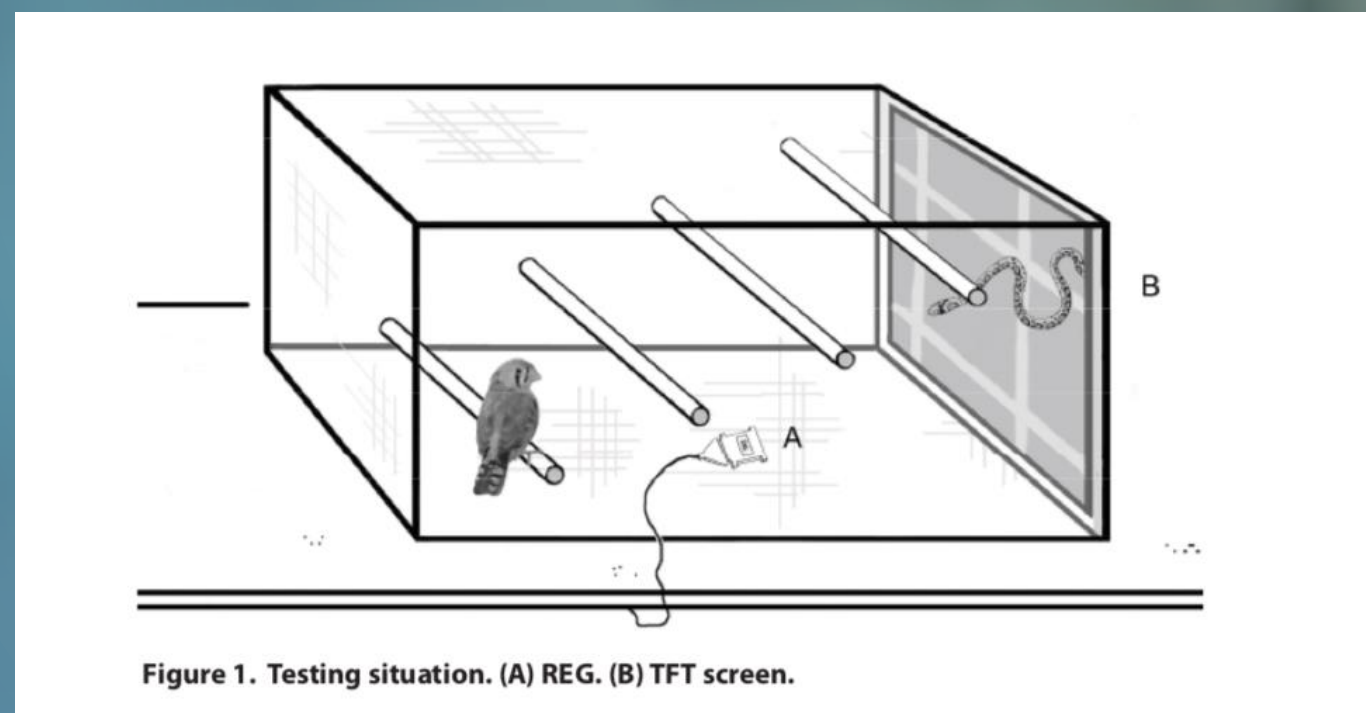


Figure 1. Testing situation. (A) REG. (B) TFT screen.

A PK Experiment with Zebra Finches and a Virtual Predator

When a snake image was portrayed on the screen, its display was dimmed through no discernable cause (other than the psychokinetic power of the zebra finch?) by comparison to a neutral screen control condition

“It is one of the ironies of contemporary scientific research that while many orthodox scientists decry investigations of anomalous phenomena, the standards of such research are frequently higher than those in conventional science.” (Matthews, 1999, p. 1)

#### METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- While many paranormal articles demonstrated strong methodology, and many were quite modest in their ambitions, a few were particularly vulnerable to bias. For example, in Ertel (2013), an experiment was conducted by a direct relative of the participants; Sheldrake & Morgana (2003) claimed significance for a telepathic parrot, despite peer criticism rejecting the statistical validity on which they based their claim.
- A review of paranormal healing practices found positive effects in 77 out of 131 studies, and concludes that “if paranormal healing were a medicine, it would be accepted on the basis of that evidence” (Snel & Van Der Sijde, 1995, p.210). In Thomas Kuhn’s terms, these findings appear as unexplained “anomalies” from the viewpoint of “normal science”; the paranormal healing evidence does not fit well within the “matrix of accepted theories” (Van Leeuwen, 1985, p.8).
- Pursuing this reflexive, critical line of thinking : Sturrock (2007) argues that the ordinary views of Physics, Consciousness, and (lack of) Intelligent Intervention cannot account for paranormal findings. Further, by holding theory as “absolute and immutable” (p.252), science becomes merely an instrument of enforcing dogma – naturalistic, not religious, but dogma nonetheless. Sturrock reasons further: “Hence, a major challenge in the study of anomalous phenomena is to identify the basic assumptions of our current “weltanschauung,” “world view,” or “model of reality” with which these [paranormal, or anomalous] phenomena are incompatible.” (pp. 252-3) Sturrock presents three “hidden” complementary assumptions that accompany the “ordinary”, explicit theses of scientific reasoning, which act as dogmatic axioms for a scientific worldview:
  1. Any topic which is incompatible with physical theory, as it is now known, is impossible.
  2. Consciousness is simply a brain activity.
  3. No “superior beings” have any influence, on events & developments on Earth.
- It seems to us these axioms are insightful for reflection on the integration of science and Christian faith commitments, too.

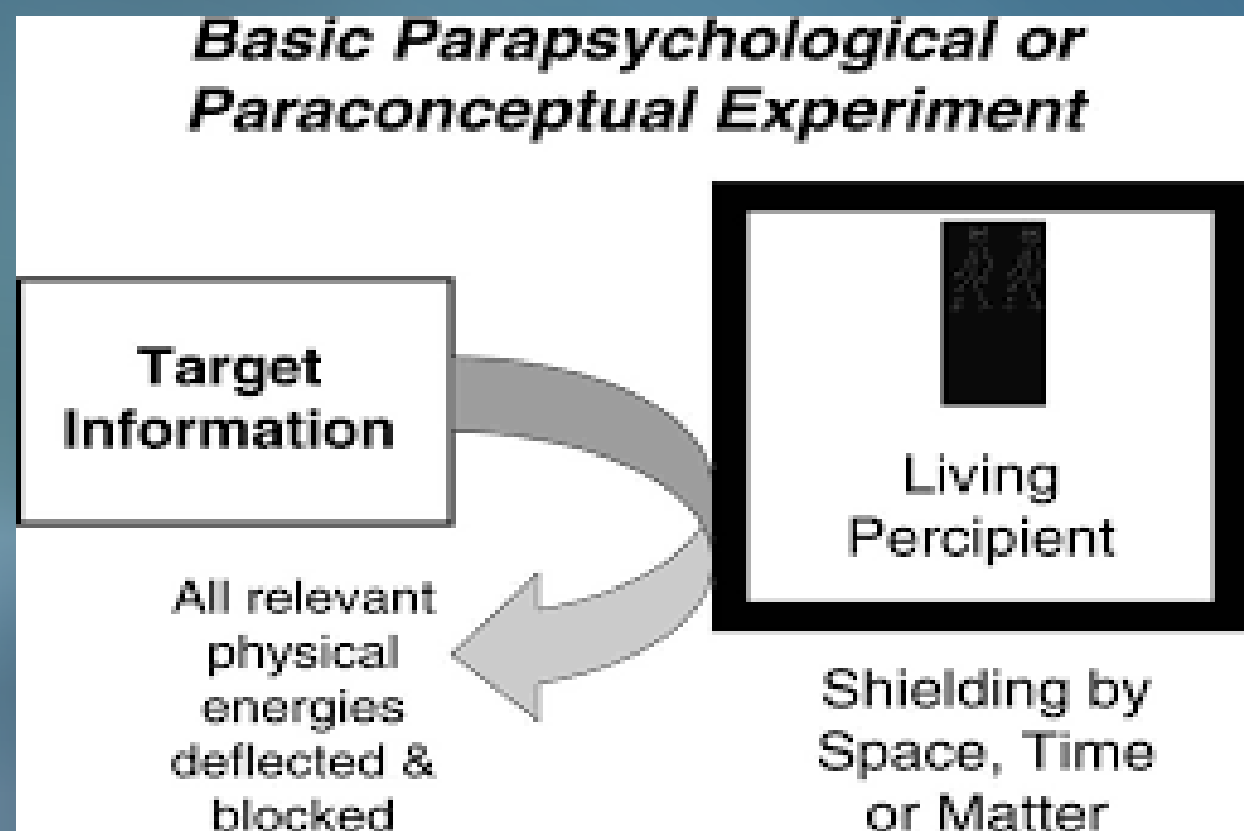
#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The authors would like to thank Bonita Bjornson, Senior Library Technician/Archivist at Simona Maaskant Library, for her assistance with the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*.

Graff, Dale. (2007). Explorations in Precognitive Dreaming. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 21, 4, pp. 707-722.

This study examined peoples’ dreams that were experienced as premonitory of future events; a sketch artist provided a drawing based on the dreamer’s description. Did corresponding images in newspapers within the next several days confirm these dreams as “precognition”?

Charles Tart (2009) here provides the basic format for a parapsychology experiment: to shield the “living percipient” from any possible physical interaction with the target, and to control all possible effects on the target other than the subject’s thought/intention to determine whether it is the latter that is the cause for effecting change in, or having knowledge about, the target.



Parapsychology has been established as a world-wide field of study.

Peer-reviewed journals include:

- Argentine Journal of Paranormal Psychology
- European Journal of Parapsychology
- Zeitschrift für Anomalistik (Germany)

Examples of organizations and centers:

- Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research
- L’institut Métaphysique International (France)
- Associazione Italiana Scientificadi Metapsichica (Italy)
- Austrian Society for Psychology and Border Areas of Science

Some websites:

- www.psychology.lu.se/Personal/e\_cardena/ overseen by Pr. Cardena (Sweden)
- www.hi.is/-erlendum/ overseen by Pr. E. Haraldsson (Iceland)

Miscellaneous:

- PSI-Mart.com, an online parapsychology bookstore
- publicparapsychology.blogspot.com/2006/12/mind-over-matter-study.html, an internet blog all about parapsychology available for the public

### DISCUSSION

- Overall, we were surprised to see an absence in phenomena that would be characteristic of religious experiences such as visions, hearing the voice of God, healings, demonic or spirit possessions, and waking up after being pronounced dead.
- Equally noticeable was the great extent of physics, astrophysics, and advanced statistical studies, seriously pursuing methodological, theoretical, and measurement & instrument refinement research (for detection purposes). (For example: one study proposed “retrotransposn” within the DNA as explanatory for “spiritual transfiguration” phenomena (such as glowing skin, the elongation of the body of Catholic saints, and claims of “bilocation” – occupying two places at same time) and was developing a genetics measure to test the hypothesis.
- Perhaps both are related to the composition of the Board of the *Society for Scientific Exploration*: composing many physicists and NASA-connected researchers. This perhaps also explains the great many UFO studies evident throughout the *Journal*!
- The lattermost also might explain another surprise in comparing the *Journal* to the Charles Tart “control” condition: although many did, these ultimately constituted a minority of studies dealing with the “Big Five” parapsychological phenomena. In short the *Journal* should not be taken as representative of “the field as a whole”, but rather as one particular branch of parapsychology, whose research and publication interests are biased toward the particular configuration of the Society and the Editorial Board at particular times.

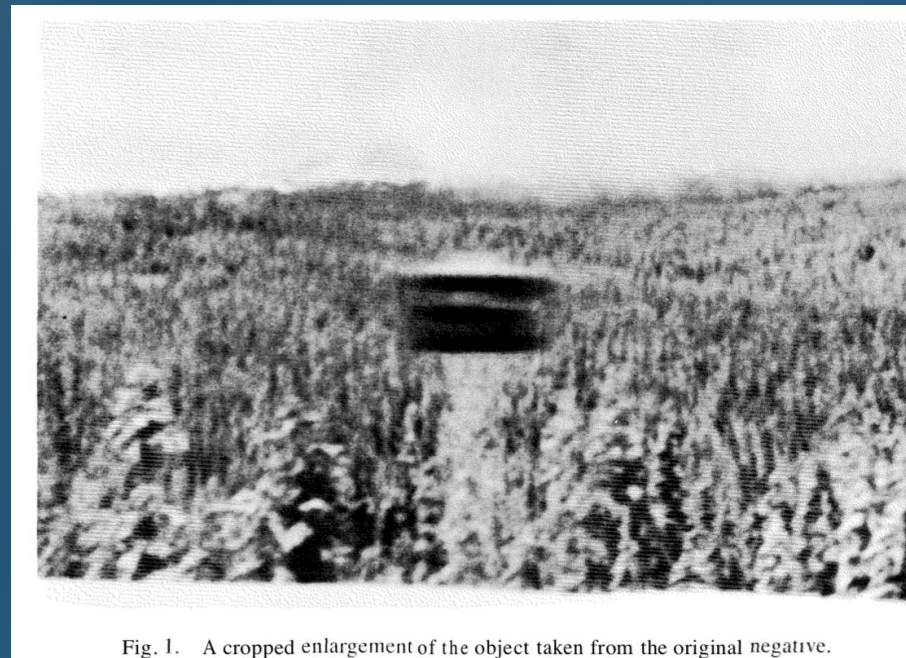


Fig. 1. A cropped enlargement of the object taken from the original negative.

The Willamette Pass Oregon UFO Photo Revisited: An Explanation

Numerous studies investigated carefully the photographic and witness credibility of UFO Sightings. Results? Remain inconclusive.

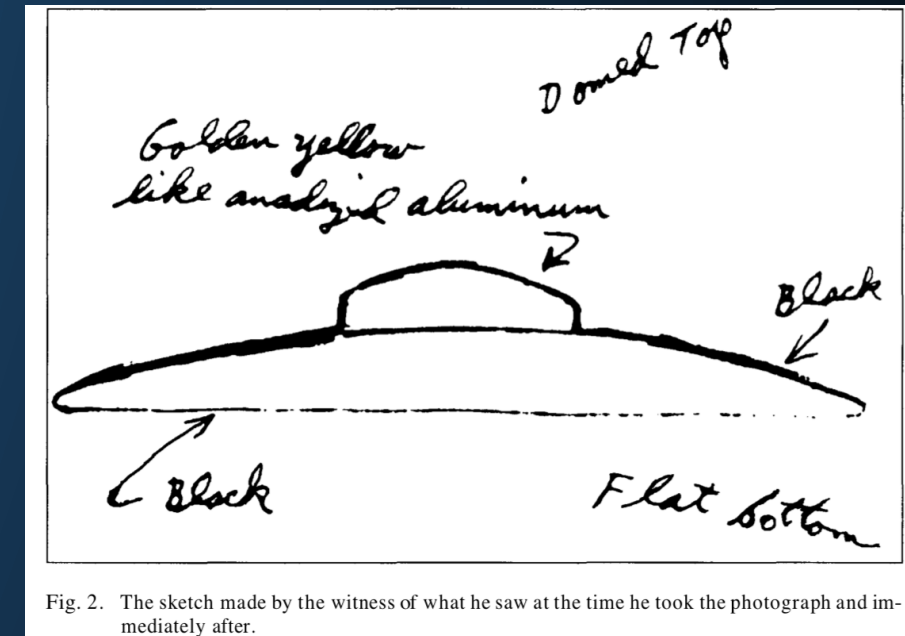
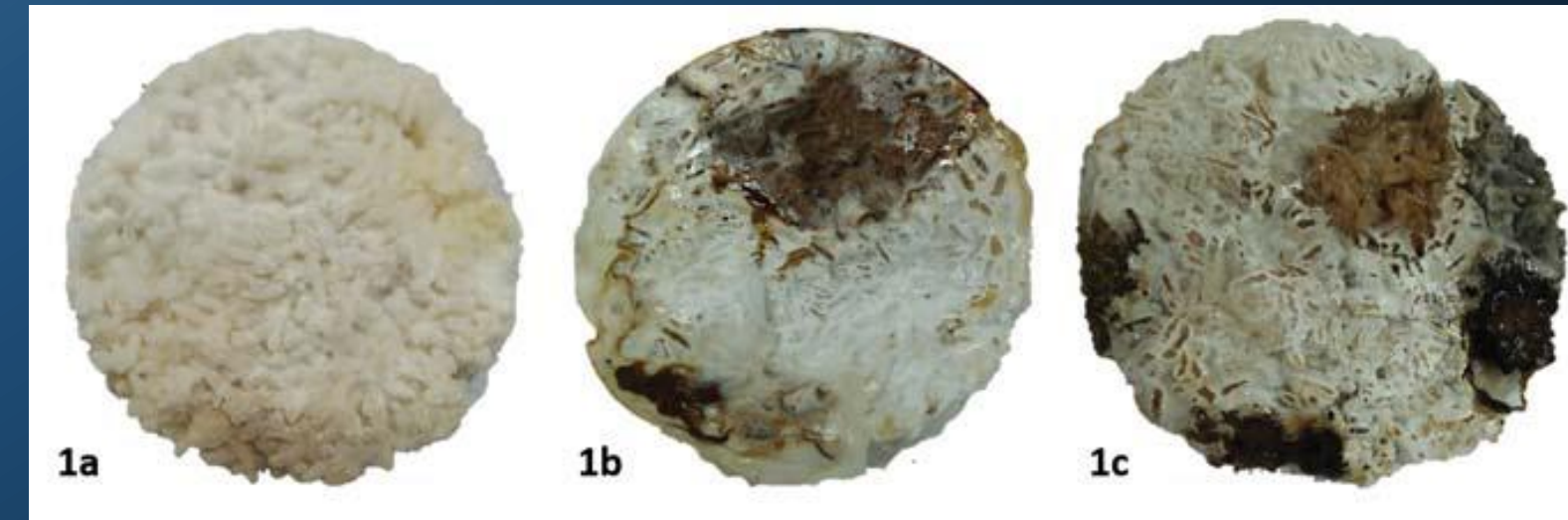


Fig. 2. The sketch made by the witness of what he saw at the time he took the photograph and its immediately after.

### CONCLUSION

- Much of the common perception, by laypersons and scientists alike, of parapsychology as quackery and pseudoscience is a false stereotype driven by ideology and not empirically founded
- Much of parapsychology is indeed “fringe” and questionable, compared to which the solid establishment of “normal science” is clearly advantageous, but to what extent this situation is because it is offbase in its assumptions vs. marginalized by professional scientific organizations is unclear
- Studying parapsychology affords a number of insights: as an ideal contemporary working example of Thomas Kuhn’s notion of “anomalies” outside “normal science”; as a reflection on the limitations of reductive science and the assumptions of a scientific worldview; as an instructive parallel to King’s efforts to integrate science and faith; and as a provocative, and sometimes fun, invitation to think outside the box : is the strange finding something just plain zany, or a genuine mystery?



Figures 1a, 1b, and 1c show the growth of microorganisms in positive intention, negative intention, and control (neutral/no intention) rice in selected samples, respectively, after 30 days of incubation at 27.5 °C. Interpretation: is that the positive intention rice. (Lai, Yuen, & Burchett, 2018)

#### REFERENCES

- Ertel, Suibert. (2013). Psi Effect or Sensory Leakage: Scrutinizing the Ball Selection Test. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 27, 3, pp. 387–391.
- Irwin, Harry. (1999). An introduction to parapsychology. McFarland.
- Lai, Alan, Yuen, Bonny, & Burchett, Richard. (2018). Human Mental Intentionality on the Aesthetics of Cooked Rice and Escherichia coli Growth. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 32, 4, p. 693–712.
- Matthews, J. (1999). Significance Levels for the Assessment of Anomalous Phenomena. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 13, 1, pp. 1–7.
- Peoc’h, R. (1995). Psychokinetic action of young chicks on the path of an illuminated source. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 9, 2, pp. 223–229.
- Sheldrake, R., & Morgana, A. (2003). Testing a Language-Using Parrot for Telepathy. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 17, 4, pp. 601–616.
- Snel, Frans, & VanDerSijde, Peter. (1995). The Effect of Paranormal Healing on Tumor Growth. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 9, 2, pp. 209–221.
- Sturrock, Peter. (2007). The Role of Anomalies in Scientific Research. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 21, 2, pp. 241–260.
- Tart, Charles. (2009). The end of materialism. New Harbinger Publications.
- Van Leeuwen, Mary Stewart. (1985). The Person in Psychology: A Contemporary Christian Appraisal. InterVarsity Press.