



The ESP Enigma:

The Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena

Literary Reviews

Kirkus Reviews, October 1, 2008

Neuroscientist Powell claims that psychic abilities can be validated by modern physics.

Human history is rich with mythology about extrasensory perception, most famously employed by the seers at the ancient oracle of Delphi, but its relationship to the brain remains unexplained. Is consciousness a surrounding force that we are capable of tapping into, or is it a result of the billions of synapse connections occurring in our brains? Can mere coincidence explain the vast number of Jung's "synchronicities," or is consciousness a virtual medium for universal interconnectivity? Powell's theory of consciousness seeks to resolve some of these mysteries. Einstein and Hawking, she reminds us, wrote about time being malleable, existing totally and simultaneously. This would explain prescient visions and telepathic instinct shared by loved ones during crises even when they're located far from each other. In easy-to-understand language, the author describes carefully controlled studies involving telekinesis, clairvoyance and precognition, presenting the results as evidence of the brain's latent psychic tendency. She also theorizes that dreams, near-death experiences and out-of-body sensations may be manifestations of our inherent ability to relax the constructs of three-dimensional perception. Perhaps even memory is an instance of our minds accessing outside psychic information from "all of space and time." Powell dubs this intertwined, inextricable relationship between the individual's internal world and the external world "the Mobius mind," named for its cyclical and symbiotic nature. This concept persists in Eastern religions, particularly Buddhism; meditation is one technique to reach a state of collective enlightenment. Particle physics, too, relies on underlying theories of resonance and symmetry, notes the author. She makes a persuasive argument that with the spectacular advances in particle physics will come a scientific revolution of thought, and with it a deeper understanding of the brain. Phenomenal brain abnormalities, such as the unexplained expertise of the savant, demonstrate



incredible feats of brainpower that can't be described or explained. A cogent argument offering many striking examples of the power and potential of the unconscious.

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Psychic power has had trouble gaining scientific respectability, but Powell makes a game effort to propose serious consideration of its existence. Powell, who has a medical degree soberly approaches the controversial subject, summarizing research in four areas of extrasensory perception: telepathy, psychokinesis, clairvoyance, and precognition. Powell provides many startling stories about premonitions and dreams that seemed to come true and acknowledges the dominance of anecdotal evidence in ESP research. Researchers have accordingly attempted to put things on the less subjective footing of controlled experiments. Powell discusses these frankly, noting statistical support for psychic abilities yielded by some trials or ambiguities in results, as the case may be, as in those obtained by CIA researchers on "remote viewing." Not about to compromise her credibility by claiming that mind power can levitate tables, Powell adheres to the possibility that human consciousness might affect matter at the quantum mechanical level. Incorporating Powell's knowledge of neuroscience, this work should appeal to those open to the idea that ESP exists. — **Gilbert Taylor**

The Daily Telegraph of London, Online, 3:03PM GMT 15 Mar 2010

The ESP Enigma: The Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena by Diane Hennacy Powell offers a 'science-based' look at psychic phenomena. In layman-friendly style, Dr. Diane Hennacy Powell, a practicing psychiatrist, neuroscientist, and contributor to the Institute of Noetic Sciences, posits that the world is in the middle of a paradigm shift in its understanding of consciousness. And it is in the new answers to the millennia-old questions about consciousness – what it really is, how it is created and where it exists – that the true bases for psychic phenomena are found.

Those answers are a no-brainer for Dr. Powell: "Consciousness has the properties of a force that can act upon the physical world both locally and remotely. If our consciousness is a fifth physical force, it also has a field. And like other fields, consciousness would exist both within and beyond its source." From that jumping-off point, Dr. Powell combs through decades of published studies, experiments, investigations by the CIA, anecdotal evidence of psychic



experiences, accounts of prophetic dreams, work by famous psychics such as Edgar Cayce, and the conclusions of Carl Jung and Albert Einstein on consciousness and the illusion of time.

The variety of her sources truly is impressive and with a direct, non-technical writing style Dr Powell keeps the reader wanting more. Indeed, the ESP Enigma may be as close as any scientist gets to producing a page turner on the bases for psychic phenomena.

Psychic phenomena appear to be real and a potential in everyone, Dr Powell concludes, and she places blame on Western culture's left-brained dominance for its failure to function more intuitively and psychically.

Using Albert Einstein's views on time and space as a basis for precognition, a letter of condolence to a friend's widow, written in 1955, the year of Einstein's own death, sets the stage: "Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That means nothing. People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past and present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."

Dr Powell maintains that many people have precognitive experiences – particularly through dreams – on a regular basis. Indeed, the studies she relies on reveal that some precognitive dreamers have saved their own lives by retrieving information from a future that already exists. How, you might ask? According to Dr. Powell, the human brain's "now" experience is like seeing one frame of a movie at a time even though the entire movie exists. The constant exercise of frame-by-frame free will can influence a future that already exists but within limits. Alternatively, knowing the future can influence the free will choices of the present. If this explanation doesn't completely click it may be because you're not able to think about space-time at the same abstract level as Einstein.

But Dr Powell must be given credit and attention for writing a truly engaging and informative book. And this psychiatrist, who also trained at the Institute of Psychiatry in London and served on the faculty of Harvard Medical School before going into private practice, can hardly be labelled a New Age loon. As she puts it, "[T]urning a blind eye to psychic phenomena is no more an option than refusing to believe that spacecraft landed on the moon simply because we cannot explain the physics that made such a feat possible." – **Rachel Ray**