



The ESP Enigma: The Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena

Diane Hennacy Powell

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A revolutionary scientific explanation of psychic phenomena and the nature of human consciousness.

Although much is now known about the brain, relatively little has been determined about where consciousness comes from: What is the source of the "I" in our internal monologue? How does something as nonmaterial as consciousness arise from something material like the brain? Dr. Diane Powell, a Johns Hopkins-trained neuroscientist, has brilliantly reassessed the meaning and nature of consciousness by exploring research on the workings of psychic phenomena.

Over the past few decades several well-designed and rigorously supervised experiments have documented the existence of telepathic interconnection, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis, and out-of-body experiences. Mainstream science has largely ignored these data because they all defy the traditional model of consciousness as being solely the product of brain chemistry.

Building from these experiments, Powell constructs a new theory of consciousness. Integrating concepts from physics, neuroscience, and other disciplines, she offers an insightful and intriguing explanation of ESP, provocatively claiming that the existence of psychic abilities expands our understanding and appreciation of consciousness. Psychic abilities are also consistent with findings in modern physics: For example, psychokinesis implies that consciousness is a type of force field, while precognition suggests that the past, present, and future exist concurrently.

Eye-opening in its conclusions and exciting in its implications, *The ESP Enigma* will challenge your preconceived notions and expand your mind.

The ESP Enigma: The Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena Details

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Zeb says

It's like one book I've been waiting for. Why not have a scientific approach to ESP and what not? It's time these things came out of the crazy corner to be taken seriously. I liked her approach and the conclusions; at times to many abbreviations, where the whole page seems littered with DNA and ESP and GKW and IDGI, the former two known to me, the latter :(god knows what and I don't get it :) But overall well written, great insight, clearly a bright mind . A feeling of brilliance I did not get in the "opposite" book by Susan Blackmore (who set out to find ESP and found nothing but disappointment) Highly recommended.

Sharon says

Written in lay language, the book is highly scientific and well researched. Readers will learn much about the brain and how it works, about consciousness and what is known about it so far, and about why a quiet movement is under way regarding understanding what is beyond the everyday in human existence. The author presents scientific evidence that psychic experiences are real and that at some level, our consciousness knows much about the universe that we don't reach in ordinary life -- but that we have the ability to touch some of it. It's fascinating. This is mind-expanding, no pun intended.

This book might not have crossed my radar except that I found it at my mother's home after she died, along with hoardes of books on angels and the afterlife. Brain research interests me but I didn't expect the science in this book. I'm glad I read it!

I found some of it hard to wrap my mind around, because we are taught so thoroughly to live in the present, physical life. Some of it is even hard for scientists to understand well, according to the author. Discussed is time-space and how it is one, the fact that the past, present, and future are all available to us but the only one we can change is the future, how various parts of the brain work (that's easy), how anomalies affect people, and the universe. If you haven't had a near death experience, an out of body experience, or some other form of psychic experience, this might be harder to grasp. For those who have glimpsed another realm, it's still hard but easy enough to know that it's there. I had the most trouble with time-space. It's against all we've known in our lives and yet, it's there. Perhaps hidden from us in abstract ways.

Like many scientific breakthroughs, there are detractors, but the proof is mounting. This book was a pleasant surprise to me.

Iroquois says

this is by far the best book on a scientific & holistic approach to psychic phenomena i've read. Dr. Powell completed her training in medicine, neurology, and psychiatry @ Johns Hopkins, and is a former member of Harvard Medical School faculty. She also serves part-time on a think-tank on consciousness @ the Salk

Institute, and her vast training is evident in her extraordinary explanation of ESP and it's relevance to physicists' theories of Nonlocality, String Theory, Chaos Theory, and Feedback and Synchrony. the idea of a holographic universe and the mobius mind model are the best explanations of time and space and ESP.

Desiree says

Research

What if our consciousness were capable of what is now viewed as pure science fiction? Could it be possible for each of us to have an extraordinary ability which has layed dormant in our genetic make up through out the evolutionary process? This book answers these questions and more in a compelling manner. I recommend it.

Justin says

This book attempts to be objective but falls short at least in its presentation. It says that results can't be reproduced by skeptics but shake that off. It also says that while identical twins failed a PSI test, non identical twins did not (I might have reversed this). They explain this with by saying that the extroversion of the passing twins helped their PSI. This sounds like a biased conclusion. Though it may not have been a biased conclusion the book does itself no justice when it did not present the results of experiments which support this conclusion (so I assume there were none as why else not mention this critical information).

On the other hand this book does have some potentially legit results. It also seems to be about as biased as other similar books.

There are not many better books but I would seek one of them out instead

Martin says

I loved this book! It is easily one of my top 5 favourite titles now.

My thoughts on the subject have been somewhat disorganized, though I do admit that I've always harboured a belief in ESP (in its many forms), Diane Powell's astute research and insight are inspiring to say the least. I did question some of her conclusions, as they seem to be more like authority arguments rather than logical hypotheses, but overall I have to say I agree with her.

I've even been inspired to think of and arrange some experiments of my own, and I intend to put some effort into the study of lucid dreaming as well.

I would say that any book, which possesses such passion and coherent thought, that can inspire a reader to act beyond a mere "hmm" at the last page, is a whopping success.

If you are even remotely interested in either ESP in its many forms, or in neurology / neurobiology, this is the book for you...highly recommended!

This book is a succinct collection of facts about ESP or extra-sensory perception, which includes telepathy, clairvoyance, prophetic dreams, Synesthesia[1] (which is an unendingly interesting subject all on its own) and even remote viewing. More than that though, it's a thorough and up-to-date discussion on the meaning of consciousness, tempered with the benefit of professional insight in neuroscience and psychology.

This is the book that has been missing from the cannon of information available on the psychic trades.

I've been quite clear in the past, in my public disdain for psychic charlatans, and I'm not about to change that position. All the while, I've harboured a nascent belief in the phenomena itself. Sort of a one percent-er rule, wherein the vast majority of people who would publicly (and for profit) claim that they possess an ineffable psychic ability (or some combination thereof) are more than likely full of proverbial bullshit, there are, to my mind, a small percentage of people in the general population who do indeed possess some undefined ability that bears more than a little scientific scrutiny. Though this scrutiny need not necessarily be to determine the level of bullshit involved, more so to determine how the process works, by what mechanism and ultimately, in what medium.

Powell draws some startling conclusions from her work and from the collective work of many, many scientists over the past 100 years or so. The most interesting may be (or one of the most interesting) her assessment of the phenomenon of consciousness. She discusses the two primary schools of thought regarding a definition of consciousness – monism vs. dualism – and presents a more abstracted vision of what consciousness might be (I'm particularly fond of the idea that consciousness is a subatomic field accessed by our minds, through a complex process of neurochemistry and synaptic function).

All of this intertwined with the most astute assessment of so much famous and relatively obscure scientific study of ESP phenomenon the world over. As I said in my earlier review: "I loved this book!"

Marie says

It's been awhile since I read this book, and it's been fairly well buried in my brain-attic, but I can dig out enough.

First, I liked this as a kind of reference book for authors and world-builders. Neuroscience certainly isn't my forte, but the technical aspects are accessible and the text is readable enough for the layperson. Powell doesn't seem to be a wholehearted 'believer,' either, she cites studies and maintains some skepticism. But this book more aims to legitimize paranormal scientific studies rather than investigate them, I still maintained rather more skepticism than the author.

But there are plenty of interesting ideas here: how it's possible 'brain power' may not be *entirely* limited to inside the skull (not in a woo-woo way, but more like 'why not?', since something measurable has been observed), or just how difficult it may be to study something that works on a level we can't see.

Overall, I found it interesting, without being especially earthshaking or compelling. But like I said, for authors it might be a good resource for extrapolation, if you want to write on the paranormal end of things.

I do remember one claim Powell made; in finding legitimate studies, she had to go to paranormal researchers and declassified documents from the CIA, and I thought—the former may be too invested, and if the latter declassified such studies, surely they're the ones that didn't work! It's the CIA, we all know they're keeping

the good stuff to themselves.

Rachel says

Great information to be had here! The author presents the material in a non-biased, informative, and yet, somehow, familiar way. Almost like you're having a conversation with a pal about a few articles they read.

Samer Chidiac says

It's not easy to explain cases and topics related to ESP... and to be able to find scientific meanings and arguments would be very difficult.... and yet here we are :)

The Book is well planned, and well written with enough explanation covering relatively a complex topic.

The low end is that at some points, the discussion went too technical that I lost focus, but then got back to the flow... (happened multiple times with me).

If you're into ESP... This book is really interesting for you!

Dewin Anguas Barnette says

Amazing book. I was "holy shit"-ing on every page. It took all of the seemingly separate ideas and theories that I have studied and went over them all in depth and revealed how they connect, and all in a "for dummies" language that I could understand with minimal headaches. Definite must read for all.

Michael Huang says

[First impression]

This is a deeply mixed book. On the one hand, it does a fantastic job compiling a lot of related ESP phenomena both in anecdotes and in meaningful statistics. Some sections (e.g. about autistic savants) are particularly well articulated that it is clear that ESP is worthy of investigation. On the other hand, the author appears overly zealous to present some completely unnecessary arm-chair pseudo-scientific conjectures to tie ESP to the cutting edge physics theory or findings.

Much like UFO, ESP is by design a neutral term. By definition, if we can not identify something flying, it is an unidentified flying object. If someone has clairvoyance, then that person possesses extra-sensory perception. Just like after the fact we can find information about said flying object and it thus is no longer unidentified, we may later discover a new modality of sensing (or information leakage) that accounts for ESP, then it is no longer "extra". Studying ESP is interesting. Anybody who rejects investigation into them is

either too busy or not open-minded enough — we get it. However, the author somehow finds the need to rattle off a whole chapter of jargon-chains (zero-point field, resonance, super string theory, Michelson-Morley experiment, dark matter, EPR non locality). And then, boom, we are all fundamentally in resonance with each other (including dead people) at the string level. Hence all ESP is understandable. You almost feel the “QED” popping out. The only connection between the described ESP and, say, super string theory is that vibration and resonances can be used to link the concepts linguistically and vaguely. This can be a source of inspiration and may even lead to some reasonable hypothesis. But put them in an authoritatively written form for lay reader is irresponsible and completely unnecessary.

About 1/3 of the book that attempts to put a “coherent theory” picture on ESP can and should be removed. And instantly a much better book will emerge.

VampAmber says

Where as most books on ESP and other psychic phenomenon tend to come off as new age-y and short on facts and research, this book tried to figure out if it was possible through scientific research. I absolutely loved it, even if there were some bits that I didn't completely understand (I don't really know much of anything about physics, so some of it was hard for me to follow). Definitely a great book for skeptics to read, because it tries to prove psychic phenomenon the way you would prove any other scientific theory, and it does a great job of it, as well.

Ben says

Begins with a great overview of the basic theories of consciousness and then surveys and reflects on the research related to various types of psychic phenomena. Hennacy Powell is respectful of her scientific roots and training but takes a refreshingly open tone. This is a well-thought and sincerely written argument that considers and pulls in a wide range of the best research on this topic. I found it entertaining and easy to finish. The only thing keeping it from the five star mark was the lack of verve to the narrative. Felt just a little bit cautious in a literary sense. Otherwise recommended.

Jeff says

Finally a book about psi phenomena for those who haven't necessarily drunk the kool-aid. The subtitle of this book says it all - "The Scientific Case For Psychic Phenomena". Yes, this book is science, more than any other book I've ever seen on the 'pseudo-sciences'. Studies are quoted, complete with pointing out their shortcomings. This is a book for skeptics, but probably not for absolute poo-poo-ers of psi-phenomena. And for the believers there's information that you'll find fascinating.

The author seems to be a skeptical believer who wants to take psi phenomena into the realm of science-proper, and pulls in facts from biology including brain physiology, as well as quantum theory and more basic physics to point the way for the case to be made for the validity of these phenomena.

But it's not one of those hippy-dippy-loose-with-the-facts books that are so common in the genre. Make no mistake, this book is science first and foremost. Yes a scientist who is reaching perhaps to try to find how to

make a case for psi phenomena, but by virtue of the fact that she sticks to the facts, she makes a compelling case.

Eric says

The whole parapsychology subject is fascinating to me. It's so easy to just dismiss it entirely on one hand, which is still my default position more or less. But on the other, you keep hearing about scientific studies that show some kind of psychic phenomenon. It just seems like something more needs to be explained; something interesting is going on. A lot of this goes back to consciousness and the fact that no one knows what consciousness is. The whole subject is extremely interesting.

So I was really looking forward to reading this book. Based on the title, I thought it would get into all the details of the best scientific research for psi phenomena. But I was pretty disappointed. The author addressed the bigger areas of psi and briefly discussed some of the research in the first half. But the research discussion was super basic, no helpful details. The second half of the book was pretty lame. The author would talk about speculative aspects of physics, like string theory. Then she would discuss a speculation on the speculation, like vibrational resonance that results from string theory. And THEN she would say that the speculation on the speculation hinted at a possible theory for psychic phenomena. It was just kind of dumb, really. That's not a scientific case at all.

I wanted this book to be really good and informative, but it just wasn't. Oh well. This is the first book I've read on the subject. I'll keep reading...
