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DREAMTIME

M A G A Z I N E



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International
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Kemeny,

Scholars on the Psi Frontier



Cynthia Pearson

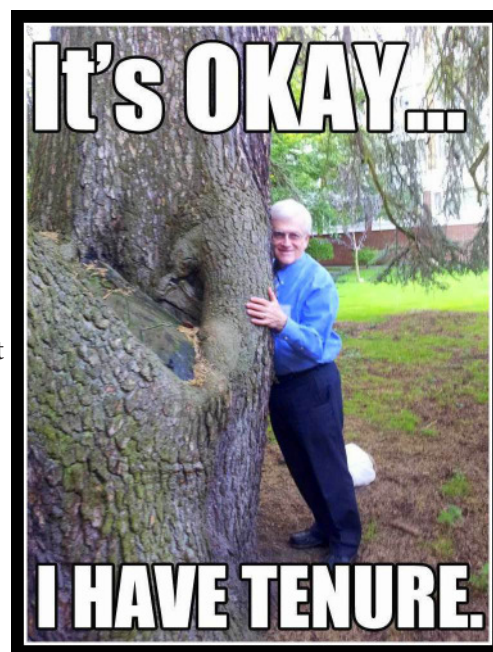
Back in 2002, when a handful of IASD members began planning the first PsiberDreaming Conference, new ground was being broken in several ways. Not only was the idea of holding a conference online still new, but devoting a conference to the subject of psi was a big leap. Those of us who experience psi dreaming—precognition, telepathy, remote viewing (formerly known as clairvoyance), mutual dreams or other curious phenomena—were accustomed to feeling marginalized, especially by academics. But at our own conference, we could sidestep those who regarded our interests as nonsensical, heretical or worse. We could work and play together freely.

But in fact, the PsiberDreaming Conference wouldn't have happened without the IASD scholars and scientists who did bravely stick up for the validity of psi experiences. And in recent years, I have been delighted to discover other academics approaching psi with the same openness and sense of inquiry. Here are some books that have come out since that first PsiberDreaming Conference that I believe any psi dreamer would benefit from reading.

Science and Spirit: Exploring the Limits of Consciousness
by Charles F. Emmons and Penelope Emmons
(Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2012)

A sociology professor at Gettysburg College, Charles F. Emmons did his graduate work in China studying mediums—important figures in a culture that reveres ancestors and relies on their guidance. Eventually he studied mediumship himself and sometimes writes with his wife Penelope, a practicing medium. Here he addresses approaches to the understanding of psi from the standpoint of “how we think we know what we think we know.” With chapters like “Skepticism, Ridicule and Smart-Ass Journalism,” and “There’s Nothing Like an Experience,” he opens the door to “the central concept of this book, frames.” Emmons then provides a broad spectrum of ideas, theorists and psi phenomena to be framed, all while circling the nature and limits of consciousness.

Although many academics may avoid exploring psi rather than risk professional ridicule, Emmons writes like a man who has nothing to fear. Along with his many anecdotes and citations, I enjoyed his sense of amusement, nicely demonstrated by his tree-hugging picture on the web:



Sourced with permission from Professor
Charles F. Emmons
[http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/Everyday Spirituality](http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/Everyday_Spirituality)

Extraordinary Knowing: Science, Skepticism and the Inexplicable Powers of the Mind
by Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer (New York: Bantam 2007)

A clinician and professor, Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer's world turned upside down when her daughter's stolen harp was located after many weeks by a dowser 2000 miles away. How could she frame such an astonishing experience? This book retraces her quest for ways to think about psi. Her training and education in psychoanalysis serves as an on-ramp to a network of researchers, healers, historians, dreamers and others, and there is a lot of food for thought here. I especially appreciated her chapter on dreams, where I learned of Freud's claim that “any study of the human mind that excluded dream telepathy was incomplete”; that the EEG was invented “for the purpose of studying the relationship between brainwaves and telepathy”; and, upon summarizing the dream telepathy studies at Maimonides,

discussing the challenges of designing any experiment in “anomalous cognition.” Mayer is both candid and scholarly, and very readable. If you have skeptics in your life, this is the book to put in their hands.

Like many others, Mayer speculates that quantum mechanics may lead to a better understanding of psi, even as she notes that many physicists disapprove of non-physicists ascribing psi to quantum mechanics. This book was released in 2007, two years after the author died in 2005. It appears that in the decade that has passed since then, the inclination of non-physicists to apply quantum concepts to psi experience has only grown.

Consciousness Beyond Life: The Science of the Near-Death Experience
by Pim van Lommel (New York: Harper Collins, 2010)

This book includes the usual case histories covered in most Near Death Experience (NDE) books, but then ventures far beyond. Van Lommel, a Dutch cardiologist, brings his scientific chops to bear, speculating that quantum mechanics, and especially nonlocality, can explain the nature of the NDE. If you’ve never tried to read about quantum mechanics, you could do worse than to put yourself in the good doctor’s hands. He devotes the second half of the book to comparing classical and quantum physics, and then outlining the principles of quantum mechanics that are so mysterious and compelling: particle wave complementarity, entanglement, and nonlocality. His writing is clear and economical, with plenty of citations for the curious or skeptical.

And then we’re off to the races, as

he delineates theories of consciousness, and the prospect that it is “nonlocal and the origin or foundation of everything.” He proposes that the brain functions “as a relay station receiving part of the overall consciousness and part of our memories . . . in the form of . . . magnetic waves.” Then he offers three theories of the transition of nonlocal consciousness to the physical brain. Although some of this is technical, a layperson can follow it—though she may have to read some passages twice.

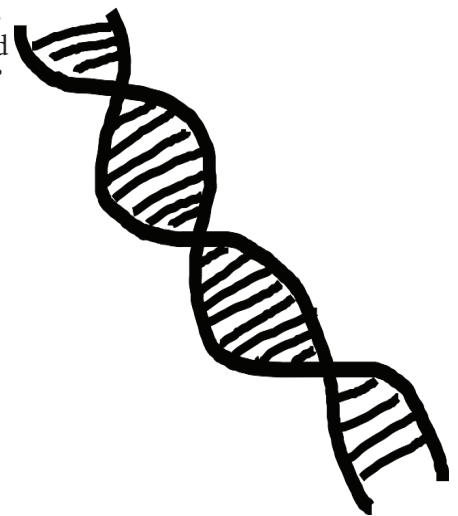
From here van Lommel moves to speculation concerning DNA—specifically the 95 percent that has been labelled “junk DNA” because no one has figured out what it’s for. Van Lommel suggests that it “plays a significant role between nonlocal consciousness and the body, thus enabling each individual cell to function as interface.” A wild ride gets wilder as he proposes theories of just how these functions may operate. Ultimately, he concludes, NDEs—as well as dreams—emanate from endless nonlocal consciousness.

Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred by Jeffrey Kripal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Professor of Philosophy and Religious Thought at Rice University, Jeffrey Kripal offers a study of the recent history of psi by focusing on four men who have made substantial contributions to research into paranormal phenomena. Suggesting that their work represents “an untapped source of insight into the sacred,” Kripal covers the careers of Frederic Myers, 19th century founder of the American Society of Psychical Research; Charles Fort, 20th century journalist and humorist; Jacques Vallee, astronomer, computer scientist and UFO researcher; and, Bertrand Méheust, sociologist and philosopher. What Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer stumbles upon, Jeffrey Kripal embraces with an eye to creating “what the field researcher calls ‘unbounded paranormal conditions’ . . . where—to speak very precisely now—really, really weird shit happens.” And so he does.

Like Emmons, Mayer and von Lommel, Kripal offers many reports, examples and anecdotes of psi experiences. But rather than just convince us with this evidence, he hopes to change the way we think and write about it. Of J.B. Rhine’s paranormal studies at Duke, Kripal notes, “Bored sophomores staring at abstract shapes on playing cards is no way to elicit psychical phenomena.” He compares those studies to “telepathic dreams announcing the death of a loved one. Such dreams are not objects behaving properly in an ordered mechanistic way . . . They are *communications* transmitting *meaning* to *subjects* for . . . [a] profound emotional need.” Thus, we are transported from the frame of natural science to that of the humanities,” of *meaning* and . . . *interpretation*.”

He writes that the four authors that he profiles have written about “seemingly impossible things,” and by providing plausible reasons why we should



consider them, may serve to make them more possible. Kripal admits feeling personally baffled by much of the diverse and fantastical happenings that he has researched, but comes to agree with one historian of occultism “that reality as we are taught to understand it accounts for only a fraction of the ultimate reality which lies just beyond our immediate senses.”

To summarize all that Kripal lays before us—including not only history and religion but also philosophy, science and popular culture—would be really impossible. But despite a bit of ponderous academic language at the outset, I found Kripal’s accounts of way-crazy events—loaded with citations reflecting incisive research—to be engaging, fun and exciting. For dreamers whose journals provide plenty of reasons to know that psi experiences are not only possible but commonplace, watching Kripal breach the barricades of conventional thinking will be a treat.

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This year will mark the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of the PsiberDreaming Conference, and these books indicate to me that some astute and knowledgeable settlers have been joining us here on the psi frontier. Perhaps, in a nonlocal way, we have helped to make this happen by exploring and learning openly among ourselves and enjoying our psi, instead of engaging in endless debates with skeptics. As Emmons notes in conclusion, “. . . the rebel in me likes to challenge the smuggies in mainstream academe who make the rules about what questions should be asked in science. Science should always ask questions about everything.”

**Cynthia Pearson** inaugurated and hosts the Precognitive Dream Contest of the PsiberDreaming Conference. A summary of targets and hits can be viewed at [dreamjournalist.com](http://dreamjournalist.com). She has chaired many “Long Term Journal Keeping” panels and is the author of several books, including *Dreaming the Dead*, a mystery concerning the study of dreams.



TUNING IN TO THE FREQUENCY

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Tuning In to the Frequency invites these ideas and more to IASD's 15th annual PsiberDreaming Conference, as once again we tune in to one another around the world and beyond.



[HTTP://WWW.ASDREAMS.ORG/PSI2016](http://www.asdreams.org/psi2016)

# DREAMTIME

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