

# Parapsychology – Part I

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## WHAT IS PARAPSYCHOLOGY?

I want to talk a bit about what parapsychology is and isn't, and a bit about its history. A lot of people don't understand what parapsychology really is, and it's really a very simple, limited field. Parapsychology looks at how consciousness can interact with other minds and the world around it, and how it might survive the death of the body. So, basically you're talking about ESP, mind over matter (which parapsychologists call psychokinesis), and the survival of bodily death. And that's it. We don't study UFOs. We don't study Bigfoot. We don't study demons. We don't study a lot of stuff. It is just a very limited field.

Most people feel the field of Parapsychology was actually started in 1882, with the formation of the Society for Psychical Research in London. And even from the beginning, it was an interdisciplinary field, attracting top physicists, chemists, biologists, engineers, philosophers, and others. And that's still true of parapsychology today. There are actually very few parapsychologists who are actually trained in parapsychology—and that's, of course, because there are very few places where you can actually study it. Right now the University of Edinburgh, in Scotland, and the University of the Utrecht are about the only places where I think you can currently get graduate level degrees in the field. Only about 25 parapsychologists have doctorate degrees in the subject, and I'm one of them. So, when you talk to parapsychologists, you're often talking to people who have a lot of expertise in other areas. Physicists right now are especially interested in parapsychology, because it fits in very well with quantum theory.

In the 1930s, J.B. Rhine brought parapsychology out of the séance parlor and into the laboratory at Duke University. A lot of people think of J.B. Rhine as one of the leading lights in the field, and many still think of Duke in association with parapsychology, even though that connection was severed several decades ago. So, if you go to Duke and say you want to know more about parapsychology, they're going to go, "We haven't a clue." However, the Rhine Research Center ([www.rhine.org](http://www.rhine.org)) is still situated in that town, and puts out the *Journal of Parapsychology*.

The Parapsychological Association, which is an international organization, was formed in 1957. It was admitted to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1969. Why is this important? A lot of people don't think of parapsychology as any different from running

out to the woods to look for Bigfoot. There's actually been over 125 years of formal research in the field—much of it double blind, controlled research. And, in fact, it was actually a parapsychologist who invented the double blind technique, now considered the gold standard for research. People ignore, of course, the fact that if ESP exists, there is no such thing as a “blind” technique where the experimenter or subject doesn't know what's going on, but we try.

## WHO ARE THE REAL PARAPSYCHOLOGISTS?

Right now there's probably about 400 parapsychologists in the world. About 300 of them belong to the Parapsychological Association, which lists its members online and has some really good resource materials. I really recommend their website. It's [www.parapsych.org](http://www.parapsych.org). It has a lot of articles and a complete member index (including some dead members, making us rather unique among organizations) and our websites. Most of us post our journal articles online since it's hard to get access to this material through normal means.

The Parapsychological Association has a multi-tiered level of membership. Virtually anyone can be a student affiliate. If you're a student anywhere, you can join the Parapsychological Association. In order to be an Associate member, you do have to be nominated by at least two full members, and have demonstrated some kind of knowledge or interest in the field. To be a full member of the Parapsychological Association you have to have been an Associate Member for several years, have a doctorate degree, and continued to have published in the field. So, when you're talking to a full member, you're talking to someone who knows the research and has added to it.

I mention this because all the time on television shows you see people referring to themselves as parapsychologists. And they aren't. Most of the time you're lucky if they write or collect ghost stories, or maybe they're a paranormal enthusiast. I would really recommend that if you have any questions about what people are saying that you look them up on the Parapsychological Association website at [www.parapsych.org](http://www.parapsych.org). Three-quarters of all true parapsychologists will be there. And by “true parapsychologist” I mean someone who knows, and is able to quote from, the formal research in the field. If they aren't listed on the website, you could probably ask any of us who are there about the person—is this person real? Because we're such a small field that we all know each other, by name if not by face.

Parapsychology is a very personal business. It benefits the field, too, because we're always doing little sidewalk consults with each other. We can contact a biologist and a chemist, a psychologist and a physicist and all these different people. You can get a lot of different takes; a lot of different ways of looking at a topic. But we do have specialties. If you're talking about ghosts, not every parapsychologist knows about them. Those who do include Loyd Auerbach, William Roll, William Everist, Dean Radin, Andy Nichols, Jerry Solfvin, Gertrude Schmeidler. I've gotten dragged into it through Loyd. So, there's quite a few of us that do it, but it's not like every member. You can't just ask any parapsychologist about hauntings and get good answers about it. They may know a little about it, but mostly they're going to know their specialty. I may be a little bit unusual in that I have a bit wider interests, or perhaps a broader range, than many in the field. My areas of specialty are psychokinesis—which is mind over matter—and experiential research (what the experience of things is like for people who do it). I started out by looking at the experience of mind over matter, indirectly looked at ESP, and then got into survival research by looking at what the experience is like for those in the afterlife. And that all got me into studying place memory, so I wrote some journal articles on that, too.

One of the big misconceptions about parapsychologists is that they are psychic. A lot of parapsychologists have a little bit of psychic ability, but not a lot. I can think of fewer than would fit on one hand those who have significant psychic ability. I think the longer you're in the field, the more your psychic ability may develop, and it could be the same for those of you who are into ghost investigations. There's something about being in or around this energy that seems to open people up.

## BASIC TERMS AND IDEAS

I also want to talk about some basic terms and why they might matter to you (see definitions at the end of this talk). Everybody has psychic abilities. Everyone. It's universal. Even skeptics! It's a matter of how you use your psychic abilities. Skeptics will actually use their psychic abilities to fail psychic tests far greater than you can fail them by random chance. Give them a pack of Zenar (ESP) cards. If they get none of them right, when they're supposed to guess one in five correctly simply by random chance, then they're proving psychic abilities exist because they're using their ESP to deliberately fail. It's one of my favorite studies.



I mention it because some of you may be having psychic experiences yourselves. There are ways that you can maximize picking up on accurate

psychic information. One of them is that *Altered States of Consciousness (ASC)* are very important to these experiences. We all do ASC all the time, no drugs required. We do road hypnosis, dreaming, sleeping, when you're tired, on the cusp of sleep. Some of us also meditate or experience trance as part of hypnosis. These states are important because they can make you more psychic. It's nice to take advantage of that. If you are staying overnight, I think part of why you get more stuff isn't because there's more ghost activity at night, but because you're tired and enter a psychically open state. You're more apt to pick up on what's already happening. If you start doing meditation, that may also open you up a little.

I won't talk about EVP because that's the next talk.

An interesting effect that we're seeing is the *Experimenter Effect*. Who the experimenter is will effect whether you get results. It doesn't seem to relate to whether someone is just being sloppy in their technique or whether someone is actually cheating. What it instead seems to relate to is that they're either better at eliciting the psychic abilities of their study participants (either by making them more comfortable, more relaxed, or willing to do this), or are using their own psychic abilities to make their experiments succeed. They did a really neat study with a profound skeptic and a psi believer where they worked together on the same study. They used the same group of subjects. They used the same laboratory facilities. They used the same research design and data analysis. One got good results, the other got zip. So, it's a major effect and something that you'll see parapsychologists all talking about and worried about. Because now they're wondering, "If I don't get results, is it my fault?"

An earlier talk briefly mentioned the *Focusing Effect* that is seen, for example, in poltergeist cases. This is where a certain object gets affected all the time. Whether it's a ghost or a human being you'll see one thing is a favorite target. You might always see a certain figurine go flying. It tells you a lot about who or what is doing the psychokinesis. When you're doing a poltergeist investigation you're like a newspaper reporter, looking at the who, what, where, when, and why. When you have an item being focused on, that object is personally meaningful in some way. It's a clue. You get to be a detective and figure out why.

Another effect you'll hear us talk about is the *Induction Effect*, also known as the *Gellar Effect*. This is where somebody who has seen someone else do mind over matter, can then do it. Gellar used to do TV shows where he would bend spoons, and people would call in from home and say "I had spoons bend at home! They were in my drawer!" And some of those were probably bent ahead of time, and weren't noticed, but it seems to be a very

real effect that if you see someone else do it, and you realize it's possible, then you can then do it yourself.

Jack Houck, who was an Aerospace Engineer who started spoon bending parties, took advantage of this.

He has an 85% success rate if you go to one of his spoon bending parties. Everybody is excited. Everybody is happy. You see him starting to bend. You see others starting to bend. And then you can bend. Again, there's some cases where people may be getting excited and using brute strength, but there are a lot of cases where they are bending things that they couldn't bend normally—such as a brittle hacksaw blade that would just break or crack rather than bend. You can't bend it by force.



I want to mention briefly *Micro PK* and *Macro PK*. Micro PK has two definitions, if you really want to get confused. Micro PK is either PK at a subatomic level or where the results are so small that they have to be analyzed with statistics to discover them. Typical micro PK can involve screwing up computers. You're not usually levitating the computer or lifting it up into the air, but messing up a program or making the software do something it can't possibly do. And you as a tech support may be scratching your heads and wondering what's going on. There are a LOT of computer psi games on the internet that you can use where you can go to different websites—I know Dean Radin has a number of them available—and do ESP tests. Those are based on computer-generated targets. A computer will only issue zeros or ones and you want to make it do more zeros. What you're affecting is microscopic and usually the results are so small that you have to have statistics to figure out what is going on.

Macro PK is the more delightful kind because it's where you can see it with the naked eye. It's where you have a spoon you bend. You can actually see that something has been affected by PK. We like that. It's very clear, very obvious—especially with metal bending where you can look at it under electron microscopy, and see a difference between that bent by PK (which has melted layers) and that bent by force (which shows fractures). You can actually see a difference and determine how it was done.



*Meta-Analysis* is another key term that you'll hear parapsychologists talk about a lot. When you have a lot of tiny little results and people go, "Oh, that's not big enough to matter," what you do is combine the results of lots and lots of studies. Say take 50 studies, or 100, and combine the results so you can look at what do these studies all say? You do a statistical analysis on the study results, rather than just looking at the data from an individual

study. It's called meta-analysis. It's a well-accepted statistical technique, and we use it a lot to help show results.

Somebody asked about *Out-of-Body Experiences (OBEs)*. Out-of-body experiences are not the same as astral travel. Astral travel is where your consciousness perceives being somewhere elsewhere. With out-of-body experiences you have an actual sensation of "leaving the body," traveling somewhere, and then, at the end, coming back to the body. There have been some studies done on this with Keith Harary, Ingo Swann, and others. It's very interesting. It's different from where you simply put your consciousness elsewhere and through ESP figure out what's going on. The person who travels out of body can physically interact with their environment. For example, Keith Harary was involved in playing with a kitten, he could soothe the kitten. Ingo Swann was able to effect equipment and move things. One of the things they looked at is whether that person is really elsewhere. They did a clever study where they created a thing he had to get down and look through and tell them what he saw. And depending on what angle you looked through, you saw a different image, so they could determine from what angle he was looking at the target. So, he left his body, went to the distant location, hunched down, looked through the spot, came back to his body and told them what he'd seen. And it would appear that he actually did that—what he saw is what a person would have seen from the right angle. It wasn't just something where he said the distant location has this, this, and this there. He could tell you exactly what was at the angle they wanted him to look at. With astral travel, which I do, there's no sense of leaving the body or traveling. You just mentally go elsewhere, and it's instant.

I use the term *Psi* a lot. It's a letter of the Greek alphabet that we use as a neutral term. Parapsychologists, like psychologists, are always changing terms. Just as manic depressive disorder was renamed bipolar disorder, once a word gets introduced into the common language, people start misusing terms and they lose their meaning. Psi refers to anything psychic. It can be ESP or mind over matter. And you'll see us use that more and more because we're starting to argue amongst ourselves as to whether ESP and PK are even different things or are the same thing that we're misinterpreting as different. That's been a battle that's heated up recently, and I suspect we're eventually going to realize that ESP and PK are not different. It's not one is passive and the other active—they're the same thing. When that happens, it's going to be interesting because it means we'll have to re-look at all of the research we've done.

*Psychic photography*, also known as *thoughtography* (the old term) is where you do mind over matter to affect a photograph. They've done a lot of experiments with Ted Serios and others where they get images on film without ever exposing it to light. Of course, you can also get images done on film that has been exposed to light, which means some of the anomalous photos you see on the internet may not just be due to artifact, they can also be due to human mind-over-matter of the person taking the picture. I've seen one woman who has images of white, cloudy, jet streams on every photo she takes. They shoot all over the picture. And I'm sure that's PK. She gets it where there aren't even any ghosts. She just puts that on the film. And, of course, you can also use PK to screw up your camera. So, it's not always the ghost that's affecting your film.

We talked a little already about *Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis (RSPK)* or **Poltergeist phenomena**. I'd like to mention that being dead doesn't make you better at affecting matter with your mind. Poltergeist phenomena are actually very rare from a ghost. Most of the time when we see poltergeist phenomena it's from a human being. If you look at those instances where a ghost IS doing poltergeist phenomena, it's usually for the same reasons as you see a human poltergeist, which is to say there's usually something very emotional that's going on. They're under a lot of stress. So, you may see PK when they're really frustrated with you, or trying to communicate with you and get your attention. You're just not paying attention and they've had it and something goes flying across the room.

Somebody wanted me to talk just briefly about *Remote Viewing*. Remote viewing is a specific technique which is used to get ESP information. They've shown that just about anybody can do this. It uses a set of rules and minutia to distract the conscious mind to keep it from interfering with the unconscious information that you're trying to retrieve.

I'd like to briefly mention some of the areas of research today, then I'll open it up to questions.

(To be continued in Part II)

## DEFINITIONS.

**Altered states (of consciousness):** States other than ordinary waking consciousness, such as daydreaming, sleep dreaming, hypnotic or trances, meditation, mystical, or drug-induced states, or half-unconscious (hypnogogic) states or half-waking (hypnopompic) states. These states are important because they explain why people are more apt to notice ghosts at

night or have ESP experiences in dreams. Those states make you more psychic. So, if you want to see a ghost, make use of them. Try meditating or ghost hunting when you are tired, or sleep there overnight.

**EVP:** A form of instrumental transcommunication where voices not heard at the time of recording later appear on the playback of audiotapes. These voices often have a flat tonal quality and may be preceded by a metallic knock. The first report on EVPs in the Parapsychological literature occurred in 1959. Recently, Alexander McRae has been performing some excellent formal research on the topic, showing that these anomalies can be obtained even when the recording equipment is shielded from radio waves by being inside a Faraday cage.

**Experimenter effect:** A term used to refer to the finding that experimenters working under the same objective conditions and with subjects from the same population may get different or conflicting results, which conform to their own expectations. There are various reasons for it, which include some experimenters being able to elicit better psi from their participants, experimenters being sloppy, pulling from different participant pool levels of talent, and experimenters being the actual source of the psi.

**Focusing effect:** The general tendency for ESP or PK success to be concentrated upon particular targets more than upon others; also a form of target preference. This can be important for poltergeist investigations, where the item or items being targeted will tell you a lot about who may be responsible for the PK, what they are upset about and why they are doing it. (Part of the who, what when, where, why you are asking).

**Induction effect (Geller effect):** This is where an individual may be able to perform psychokinesis after watching someone else apparently be successful at it. It does not seem to matter whether the person being observed is using psychokinesis or not, and seems to relate more to the percipient's mind set that PK is possible and social learning by modeling an observed behavior. Here, it can mean that watching someone get EVPs may help you to be able to do so, too.

**Instrumental transcommunication:** The purported communication by human spirits, said to have survived the death of their physical bodies and exist in an afterlife or astral realm, through means of an assortment of electronic and related equipment, including tape recorders, telephones,

radios, televisions, and computers. Often these sounds and images are not heard or seen at the time of original recording, but only appear later. It was previously sometimes referred to as electronic voice phenomena or Raudive phenomena. The process may involve the mediumistic abilities of the incarnate human operators.

**Linger effect:** Also referred to as a “post-active effect.” The apparent continuation of PK at a location where it has recently been used after the PK performer has appeared to cease his or her efforts. It has been noticed primarily in healing and macro PK experiments. Some have speculated that it could be a result of relaxation, while others have postulated that it may be an experimenter effect. Also, you may notice metal bending continue to occur for days after someone tries to affect it.

**Macro PK:** Directly observable PK. PK effects which are large enough or strong enough to be detected as such by the naked eye, and thus do not require statistics for their demonstration. Examples include levitation, materialization, metal-bending (PKMB), and object movement.

**Meta-analysis:** A method of statistical analysis wherein the units of analysis are the results of independent studies, rather than the responses of individual subjects. It is an analysis of analyses, and the data points are the results of separate experiments, which are weighted according to factors such as the type of controls and number of subjects. A lot of studies today rely on this.

**Micro PK:** PK effects that are weak or slight in magnitude, which can rarely be identified as such by the naked eye, and usually require the application of statistics for their demonstration. Examples include changing radioactive decay rates, or affecting enzyme activity. You may see it with a computer acting up or a Geiger counter going off.

**Out-of-body experience (OBE).** An experience, either spontaneous or induced, in which one’s center of consciousness seems to be in a spatial location separate from that of one’s physical body. There is often an awareness of “leaving the body” and traveling to their destination. OBEs are typically of brief duration. They are generally considered a form of ESP.

**Place Memory:** Living people release energy, especially when experiencing a traumatic or emotional event. This energy can be recorded by the environment. Some people, who are sensitive to this information, can then

pick up on, read these impressions of past events and feelings which have been stored in objects, buildings, and the environment.

**Poltergeist:** Poltergeist phenomena involve the unexplained movement or breakage of objects, etc., and often seem to center around the presence of a single individual, often an adolescent; they differ from hauntings in that apparitions are rarely seen. However, there can be whole groups or families responsible for the phenomena. Most of the time, these cases can be figured out by asking who, what when, where, why. In a few instances, they may be related to epilepsy. Oftentimes, however, poltergeist activity ends when someone takes responsibility for them (although they can be reactivated by hypnosis).

**Psi:** A letter of the Greek alphabet ( $\Psi$ ), which is used as a neutral general term to identify a person's extrasensorimotor communication with the environment. Psi includes ESP and PK.

**Psi-hitting:** The use of psi so that the target at which the subject is aiming is hit significantly more often than would be expected by chance.

**Psi-missing:** The use of psi so that the target at which the subject is aiming is missed significantly more often than would be expected by chance. This tends to be noted in individuals who do not believe psi exists (see also sheep-goat effect) and therefore appear to unconsciously use their psi to miss the target.

**Psychic photography** (also known as Thoughtography): The projection by allegedly paranormal means of mental images on film or photographic plates. People have been able to get all kinds of photos even when the film has never been exposed to light. In addition to the usual dust orbs, water droplets, CCD malfunctions, low light and flash artifacts, it is possible that the human PK of the person taking the photo may be responsible for some anomalies.

**Psychokinesis (PK):** The influence of mind on external objects or processes without the mediation of known physical energies or forces. You might see it as metal bending studies, fire-walking, turning energy wheels, etc. Being dead doesn't make you better at PK, either. So, just because someone is a ghost, don't expect them to be any better at moving objects than the average

person. Of course, if you get a frustrated enough ghost, just like a really frustrated person, that ups the success rate.

**Recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis (RSPK):** Spontaneous physical effects, inexplicable in terms of known physical energies, which occur repeatedly over a period of time, especially poltergeist disturbances.

**Release-of-effort effect:** The apparent sudden production of PK as soon as the performer has ceased his or her efforts. Possibly related to striving, and the result of unblocking PK by not trying so hard to produce it.

**Remote Viewing:** This is a specific set of techniques, often involving coordinates, used to obtain ESP information at a distance.