Fear Of The Supernatural

**FEAR OF THE** supernatural is endemic in most of us. People still ask each other if they believe in ghosts, expecting the answer most people give, which is 'Of course not!' However, there are many perfectly rational, sane people out there––I'm one of them––who have had experiences that have made their hair stand on end, experiences for which there are no rational explanations.

The academic world fears ridicule more than anything else. It fears being 'tainted' by accusations of playing on superstition––charlatanism. There have been academic studies into what has come to be known as parapsychology or psi for short. Indeed, some universities both in the UK and USA have gone so far as setting up faculties to study and teach parapsychology––with the specific intention of confirming that it is a pseudo-science, without any possible basis of fact in the real world.

Many people have tried to establish the existence of two of the main 'powers' that many people claim as being more than just a figment of the fevered imagination of superstitious victims of fraudulent domination––telepathy and telekinesis. It is generally accepted that witchdoctors, for example, exercise their so-called powers to kill or cure by the simple expedient of striking fear into their 'patients'. Simple, superstitious people do not have the mental capacity to resist the sort of domination powerful witchdoctors can use to achieve their aims. But does this apply to cures of 'the laying on of hands' type that is still a requirement for sainthood?

Telepathy is frequently claimed to be a feature of common bonds between so-called practitioners––often husband and wife teams or pairs of twins. After all, few couples get through a week without using the phrase 'you must be telepathic (or a mind reader). I was just going to say the same thing.' Indeed, so often we find ourselves actually coming out with the same words at the same time. We know or think we know that telepathy didn't really have anything to with such shared thoughts. The simple explanation is that we know each other so well and share so many opinions that it is inevitable we often think alike and express our thoughts in ways we have often unconsciously rehearsed together.

Confidence tricksters often claim to be telepathic, when in fact they are no more than practised readers of body language. Much of their success can be put down to diligent study of their victim, having recognised a vulnerable (and worthwhile) target. Opportunities can then be set up relatively easily to demonstrate 'supernatural knowledge' of the victims thoughts.

Perhaps one can extend knowledge of body language to our pets, who appear so often to be able to read our minds. All animals, not having oral language skills, rely on body signals to second guess what we're going to do next. This fails to explain how Rover knows when dad's left the office and is on his way home, frequently confounding the sceptics, who claim that the animal knows our habits so well that it will go to the window and wait for us at a certain time out of habit, by reacting to activity that is no part of any schedule. Perhaps they can hear the sound of the family car much earlier than we can; perhaps they can smell us coming from miles off. Who knows? They can certainly sense our moods and emotions. Are they betrayed by body language? The answer is probably, yes.

To succeed as an interviewer/interrogator or a negotiator one needs the insight gained from a knowledge of body language. It is a huge and necessary advantage, especially if whoever is being interviewed has no concept of such skills and therefore makes no effort to conceal giveaway signals. The same must apply to psychologists and psychiatrists, who cannot possibly reach a meaningful diagnosis of a patient's problems, if they cannot read body language. They could be accused of giving misleading advice, if they didn't take any notice of it.

Meanwhile, telekinesis is dismissed as nothing but trickery, sleight of hand and so on. Independent reports of eye witnesses to events such as the claimed of poltergeists are simply dismissed out of hand as fantasy and ghost stories invented to frighten vulnerable people, mainly children at bedtime. Physical damage and injury is dismissed by scientists as the result of tantrums by disturbed people with unknown (by which they mean unexplained by investigators) projection skills and/or abnormal strength.

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Today, neuroscientists have developed their knowledge of the brain and the way it functions so far that they can tell, almost with pinpoint accuracy, what part of the brain is active when certain actions are being performed, certain emotions being experienced. Their almost magical skills––to the layman––have enabled neurosurgeons to teach patients to activate nerve endings in the surviving joints of amputees by thought alone in order to manipulate prostheses, sometimes even re-routing nerve functions from the controlling area of the brain to live nerve-endings in undamaged parts of the body to carry signals to a prosthetic device, when no direct link is otherwise possible. The advances in this area of medicine are coming so fast that, before the ink is dry of any discussion paper, something newer and even more mind-blowing will have appeared on the scene.

And yet there appears to be little or no research into the brain's ability to communicate the ideas formed in it to an outside agency. There has been research into translating thought into speech, even dreams into identifiable pictures, but a breakthrough appears to be a long way off. It certainly isn't being telegraphed abroad. Although the almost miraculous speech of Stephen Hawking may appear to be translating thought into speech, it is in fact his ability to control the word processor on his computer array with the muscles of his cheeks (I think).

Scientists now talk of 'meta-studies' carried out by supercomputers that can examine the results of thousands of research projects into the same subject matter carried out over a period of many years, making it possible to compare hypotheses, using statistics that are meaningful. Until this development, many 'results' of behavioural studies have been spurious to say the least, 'proving' stereotypical beliefs that have no foundation in actual fact from statistical samples that are invalid, because they're too small to be meaningful and/or weighted in favour of a foregone conclusion by the parameters set for the study.

The accepted reason given for rubbishing parapsychology is that, for it to work, there has to be a driving source of power/energy in the brain itself. Such a source of energy has never been detected. If it were there, it would have shown up by now. It hasn't, ergo psychic energy is non-existent. The only scientifically valid trials of psychic powers have shown, they claim, that all the practitioners tested have been cheats or downright charlatans. However, there are more recent claims that such 'scientifically valid' tests are far from scientifically valid.

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Today, we are asked to believe that we are surrounded by space that is deficient of enough energy and matter to make the observed universe function according to the laws of physics. The deficit is made up of 'dark' matter––some 25% and 'dark' energy 70%––both 'dark' because their existence or nature cannot be detected by even the most sensitive detectors known to the scientific world (yet). Dark matter is explained as matter that does not interact with baryonic matter (the normal stuff we all know and love), does not emit light, but does exert a (perhaps different?) gravitational force. The latest explanation of what dark energy is calls it (maybe) a fifth and previously unknown type of fundamental force called **quintessence**, which fills the universe like a fluid.

Particle Scientists are prepared to spend £billions worth of advanced research time and money to prove their hypotheses––I prefer to call them fudge factors, formulae with corrective factors applied to calculations to make the answer come out right, i.e. to fit the hypothesis. They don't know what dark matter (or energy) is, so they need to make some, (although they don't know what it is) so that they can measure its effects and behaviour and then find a detector system powerful enough to do that, if they can manufacture some––sounds suspiciously like a circular argument to me.

One might reasonably expect such huge scientific intellects to use their common sense, if they have any. Even Einstein had to un-think his fudge factor––Einstein's Cosmological Constant––when experimental science caught up with his General Theory of Relativity. Like, think again. But they don't, they keep trying to 'blind us with science', producing more and more fantastical simulation graphics to 'prove' that the universe is flying apart at a speed that would actually ensure that we will never be unable to see anything outside our own galaxy. The light that is reaching us from the furthest stars is billions of years old––nearly 14 billion! If this rate of expansion has been going on since 'shortly' after the Big Bang 13.6+ billion years ago and the earth has existed for about 4.5 billion of those, then surely none of it could be reaching us now.

The mathematics of advanced physics are way beyond anything I have ever been able to grasp, quantum mechanics in particular. This is the branch of physics dealing with the infinitesimally small, used to explain the function and behaviour of such mysterious particles as quarks and leptons, bosons, photons and the like. Unlike its big brother, Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, which describes the behaviour and function of all objects with mass that we can see and which obeys all the laws of physics, and is fully quantifiable, Quantum Mechanics appears to follow its own rules––except where gravity, not an electromagnetic force, is concerned.

Here we delve into the realm of matter and antimatter, which when they collide produce energy, pure energy––Star Trek! Here we come! Scientists tel us there is more matter than antimatter in the universe for reasons unknown. It would appear that matter and antimatter have been colliding since time as we know it began, producing vast amounts of energy that goes into the creation of more and more matter and antimatter available to collide with each other, producing more and more energy, and so on.

Perhaps as the building blocks of the universe fly apart, thus creating huge empty spaces in space filled with quintessentially fluid dark energy, then there are fewer collisions between matter and antimatter and therefore less surplus energy being produced. Perhaps it is all this surplus energy that is driving the universe into its race to escape from the scene of its creation, like a crowd flying from a terrorist bomb blast, individual people crashing into one another as they try to escape and running off in dizzyingly different directions and different speeds.

As the universe ages, more and more stars are maturing, using up their fuel and collapsing in on themselves, becoming red or white dwarfs or exploding spectacularly as supernovae and possibly forming new galaxies swirling around the black hole left by such an event––a mini Big Bang even. Do such new galaxies collide with older existing ones? Do they merge or consume each other when they do? This is all a work in progress. Theories abound, but there is very little observed proof.

Scientists think that, with a degree of certainty, they do know what happens with regard to the actions and interactions of large stellar objects, both in our own galaxy and in the many billions of others that are moving away from us at such tremendous speed. Unfortunately, another hypothesis is emerging that makes a case for two kinds of gravity, one that effects matter within galaxies and another which effects galaxies themselves.

However, the 'deeper' they delve into the infinitesimally small world of quantum mechanics, the less they can say that they understand anything. When they talk of particles being paired in 'quantum entanglement' across galaxies and reacting identically and simultaneously without any quantifiable information linkage between them, then things become very strange indeed. Even Einstein called this phenomenon: 'Spooky action at a distance'––he didn't actually. He called it 'Spukhafte Entfernung'––German can be so much more concise, even if a little boring!

I quote: 'The rules of quantum physics state that an unobserved photon exists in all possible states simultaneously but, when observed or measured, exhibits only one state.' In other words, if you're not looking at a particle, whatever it may be, then it still exists doing everything that such particles can do and in any state such particles can adopt. If you happen to look at such a particle, then it will do only the one thing it was doing at the moment you caught it at it––it will appear as you want it to be.

Are there fairies at the bottom of your garden?

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If we are asked to take so much on trust in 'pukka' physics, why can't neuro scientists spend even a few £millions (unlike the particle physicists multi £Billions) on what the brain can and cannot do, using some of this 'dark' energy they can't prove exists, because they can't measure it––they can't physically see evidence of its existence––they can't prove its existence except by fudge factors that help prove their maths. Sounds like just the stuff to make parapsychology work. It can't physically be measured and has never been seen in experimentation, ergo is must exist as something 'dark'––which, if you think about it, is exactly what psi has been called down through the ages.

It is a fact that most human beings use probably less than 10% of their brain capacity. What does this powerful organ do with the rest of its billions and trillions of neurons and synapses? If they don't simply wither away through lack of use––which they don't––then they must be exercising somehow. Is this where our subconscious exists, keeping tabs on––on what? We don't know, but it would be nice to find out. Perhaps our remote ancestors in stone age times could move rocks weighing hundreds of tons by thought––psychokinesis––denied as delusion by archaeologists.

Reputable engineers have demonstrated that the claimed method of building the pyramids is simply not feasible, even using armies of slaves. The ramps necessary for moving some of the key stones would have collapsed under their weight or would have had to be built to specifications higher than the pyramids themselves. The same can be said for the monoliths around Europe and in Great Britain.

'Mmmm, sorry. We're Egyptologists. We know better than modern engineers. What do you mean there are only two or three modern cranes in the world that could lift such stones? How is that relevant? The Egyptians obviously could lift them with three tree trunks, a few bits of rope and thousands of slaves. They could roll huge stones from their quarries miles away using nice round tree trunks as rollers. We've tried it with students and sample rocks over a few hundred yards. What do you mean, we weren't using rocks weighing anything like the ones the Egyptians used? We couldn't could we, we had to use fewer slaves––I mean, students."

Perhaps priests and shamans could read minds and control kings with their thoughts––telepathy. Perhaps they could travel through space and time and watch what was going on in their patch without being detected. Bah! Superstitious rubbish. But legend says they could do precisely that and much legend has been proved to have a basis in fact.