SCIENCE, PSI, SPIRITS AND SPIRITUALITY

E. Janet Warren
Alice: “There’s no use trying, one can’t believe impossible things.”
The Queen: “I daresay you haven’t had much practice. When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why sometimes I’ve believe as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass
A BRIEF HISTORY OF
SCIENCE, RELIGION AND
WORLDVIEW
Challenges for Theology

1. Contemporary Physics
   A. Einstein and time
   B. Quantum physics and entanglement
   C. Chaos-complexity theory
‘the distinction between past, present and future is an illusion, though a persistent one’

Einstein
Challenges for Theology

1. Contemporary Physics
   B. Quantum physics
      ▪ Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle
      ▪ entanglement
      ▪ quantum vacuum
      ▪ quantum field theory
Challenges for Theology

1. Contemporary Physics
   C. Chaos-complexity theory
      ▫ Non-linearity
      ▫ Sensitivity to feedback
      ▫ Long-term unpredictability
      ▫ Self-organization
2. Neuroscience
   A. Brain
   B. Mind/Brain problem
   C. Mind over matter
‘the mind is an embodied and relational process, emerging from within and between brains, that regulates the flow of energy and information’

Dan Siegel
The Mindful Brain
2. Neuroscience
   C. Mind over matter
      - biofeedback
      - CBT
      - placebo effect; nocebo effect
      - effects of meditation/prayer
      - psychoneuroimmunology
Challenges for Theology

- **Implications:**
  - Nature is inherently random, unpredictable & non-local
  - The universe is alive
  - Everything connects & interacts
  - Whole is greater than the sum of its parts
  - Indeterminism is part of the fabric of creation
  - Reality is flexible, multi-layered and intertwined
  - Humans are participants in creating reality
‘contemporary science is discovering a world that is irreversibly temporal, dynamic, interconnected, self-organizing, indeterminate, and boundlessly open to evolutionary transformation’. This ‘new cosmic story requires theological repair work’

David Toolan
*At Home in the Cosmos*
Challenges for Theology

3. Parapsychology
   A) history
   B) definitions
   C) evidence
   D) evaluation
   E) theories
3. Parapsychology

B) definitions
Parapsychology:

“scientific study of experiences which are...outside the realm of human capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists”

H. Irwin
Psi: $\Psi$

general term for extra-sensory perception and extra-sensory motor activity
Telepathy:

information exchanged between two or more minds without the use of the ordinary senses

Clairvoyance:

information received from a distance, beyond the reach of the ordinary senses
Precognition:

“information perceived about future events, where the information could not be inferred by ordinary means”

D. Radin
Psychokinesis (PK):

direct influence of mind or intention of an agent on matter in a manner beyond any known medium or cause
3. Parapsychology

C) evidence

- 1. ESP (telepathy, remote viewing)
- 2. PK & psychic healing
- 3. Global consciousness
Parapsychology

- Disembodied Psychic Phenomena:
- Out of Body Experiences
- Near Death Experiences
- Mediumship
- Apparitions
3. Parapsychology

D) evaluation
- Consistent, statistically significant low-level effect
- 4000 experiments, controlled conditions, worldwide, many decades; critical evaluated

E) theories
- how is information mediated?
- how does psi manifest itself in the individual consciousness?
- ?EMF, spirits, 6th sense
OVERARCHING THEORIES

- **Physics:**
  - Bohm’s implicate order
  - Laszlo’s connectivity

- **Parapsychology:**
  - Radin’s entangled minds

- **Neuroscience:**
  - Powell’s Möbius Mind
holokinetic reality is ‘one, an unbroken, undivided wholeness which is the background for everything in the universe, underlying both matter and consciousness, providing the raw material for manifest entities’

David Bohm
*Wholeness and Implicate Order*
‘psychic experiences are reframed not as mysterious “powers of the mind” but as momentary glimpses of the entangled fabric of reality’

Dean Radin
- Möbius Strip
‘the religious person disregards the evidence of paranormal phenomena at his peril’
H.D. Lewis
Christian Theology: Reflections and Response

- 1. Challenges and Methods
- 2. The Bible and ‘psi’
- 3. Ethics
- 4. Towards a theory…
- 5. Future research
2. The Bible and ‘psi’
- Ethics/morals
- Spiritual reality
- Emphasis on mind
- ?Evidence of nonlinearity, nonlocality, ASC, OBE, mediumship, ESP
- Interconnectedness
Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind

Mt 22:37

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind

Rom 12:2
2. The Bible and ‘psi’
   - Ethics/morals
   - Spiritual reality
   - Emphasis on mind
   - Evidence of nonlinearity, nonlocality, ASC, OBE, mediumship, ESP
   - Interconnectedness
I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows.

2 Cor 12: 2
2. The Bible and ‘psi’
   - Ethics/morals
   - Spiritual reality
   - Emphasis on mind
   - Evidence of nonlinearity, nonlocality, ASC, OBE, mediumship, ESP
   - Interconnectedness
He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together
Col 1:17

The spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and ... holds all things together
Wis 1:7
3. Ethics

- Dangers of reductionism
- Dangers of pride, idolatry
- Wise use of gifts
- Responsible research
4. Towards a theory...

- General views of interconnectedness
- Theological discussions of parapsychology
  - David Ray Griffin
  - John Heaney
  - Lisa Schwebel
- ?Christian Model
‘God is no idler but the great Energy Field in whom all creation lives and moves and has its being.’

David Toolan

*At Home in the Cosmos*
‘by thinking of extraordinary healing as necessarily always involving the co-operation of divine power and the psychokinetic power of one or more human minds, one can avoid’ the problem of a God who heals arbitrarily

David Ray Griffin
Parapsychology, Philosophy and Spirituality
Christian Model?

- Shared medium of influence
- Psi field = consciousness field = spiritual realm?
- Psi as manifestation of divine gift
- Prayer as a way to interact with realm
- Consider action of other human spirits plus angelic and evil spirits
- Discernment critical!
Mind

- Spiritual Realm
- Psi field
- Brain
5. Future research

- Biblical exegesis
- Practical theology
  - Spiritual ‘gifts’ vs psi abilities
  - Discernment
- Philosophical theology
  - God-world interaction, free will
  - Nature of spirit/soul/mind/consciousness
- Ecclesiology
  - Gift development
  - Ethical guidelines
Further Information

- e.janet.warren@rogers.com
- Irwin & Watt, *An Introduction to Parapsychology*
- Dean Radin, *The Conscious Universe*
- Lisa Schwebel, *Apparitions, Healings & Weeping Madonnas*
- Diane Hennacy Powell. *The ESP Enigma*
- Institute for Noetic Science: www.noetic.org
- www.gotpsi.org
- DVD: What the *&#% do we know?*