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Harvey J. Irwin's *Introduction to parapsychology* (3rd edition): A Reinterpretation in Terms of the Theory of Psychopraxia

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ABSTRACT: One of the best, perhaps *the* best, textbooks of parapsychology is currently Harvey J. Irwin's *Introduction to parapsychology (3rd edition).* In this book Irwin uses as key concepts extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK). The theory of psychopraxia ("the self accomplishing goals") does not make use of these terms, considering instead the endosomatic functions (*within* the mind-body complex) and exosomatic functions (*outside* the mind-body complex) of a unitary principle called psychopraxia. In this article the author attempts to redescribe parapsychology in terms of psychopraxia instead of ESP and PK, using Irwin's book as a vehicle for the reinterpretation.

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The theory of psychopraxia has been around as an almost silent bystander for nearly 20 years. It had its birth in my doctoral dissertation (Thalbourne, 1981, ch. 7, esp. p. 244), and received a definition in my *Glossary of terms used in parapsychology* (Thalbourne, 1982, pp. 62-63). Since that time I have occasionally wandered into public with aspects or summaries of the theory (e.g., Thalbourne, 1983, 1985, 1986, 2001), but mainly I have been working on a manuscript in which I describe the theory in detail, and which at long last (due to my own tardiness) is about to be published (Thalbourne, in press).

The theory begins by pointing out that parapsychologists often have trouble in saying whether their phenomena can be described as ESP or PK. Examination of the received conceptual framework from the point of view of the "Big Three" philosophical ontologies—Dualism, Materialism, and Idealism—only adds to the confusion. I suggest that we use a conceptual framework that is ontology-neutral.

This leads to a discussion and acceptance of aspects of the Thouless-Wiesner (1947) model, which postulates that psi takes place not only exosomatically (i.e., *outside* the mind-body complex) but also in the endosomatic processes of perception and volition *within* the mind-body complex. I call this the diasomatic hypothesis ("throughout and beyond the body"), and posit that it is one of no less than three attributes that ESP and PK have in common. The other two common features are that both processes (1) involve "pro attitudes" ("A person may be said to have a pro attitude towards state S when they would consciously prefer S rather than not-S *if* those two alternatives were to be brought to their attention"), and that (2) perception (and ESP) is as much a form of *action* as is volition (and PK). Consequently, I see ESP and PK as unitary. I see no useful function in a conceptual framework that distinguishes between ESP and PK. I also suggest—something that may encounter some resistance—that we have no more need for the otherwise short and handy term "psi", since, as John Beloff (1985, p. 226) points out:

> Unfortunately, the term *psi* has become so firmly connected with the exosomatic manifestations of [the self] that to use it in connection with normal psychology, for the endosomatic manifestations of [the self], now appears as a contradiction in terms. In these circumstances a new term is clearly needed that would encompass both the exosomatic and endosomatic manifestations of [the self].

The term suggested by me is *psychopraxia*, which I define in the *Glossary* (mutatis mutandis) as a:

> Key concept in a theory . . . in an attempt to achieve unification across both normal and paranormal psychology, and across action and cognition: in order to eliminate the conceptual distinction between (i) extrasensory perception and psychokinesis and (ii) normal information-acquisition and normal motor-control, it is postulated that the factor common to all four processes is the achievement of some goal . . . either the acquisition of [pro attitude]-relevant information, or the manipulation of physical events (viz., one's body, or the outside world); 'psychopraxia' may thus be defined as a fundamental . . . principle underlying all interactions between the self . . . and the realm consisting of mental and physical events, whereby under certain conditions (as yet unspecified, but probably psychophysiological) the adoption of a [pro attitude] automatically results in its fulfilment in reality; psi is thus seen as a special instance of psychopraxia, being those manifestations of goal-achievement which are exosomatic rather than endosomatic, i.e., which are not mediated by the normal sensory-motor apparatus. [fm. Gk. *psyche*, 'soul, self', + *praxia*, der. fm. *prattein*, 'to accomplish, bring about']

This paper is an exploratory exercise. It takes a textbook published on parapsychology, viz., Harvey J. Irwin's *Introduction to parapsychology (3rd ed.)* (Irwin, 1999) and attempts to reinterpret appropriate sections of it in terms of the theory of psychopraxia (in particular, its exosomatic aspects). In that way, parapsychologists and other interested parties can evaluate to what extent psychopraxia "fits" into the enterprise of paranormal research. Let me say right away that I greatly admire this book of Irwin's, despite his apparent reluctance to endorse the paranormal hypothesis, and consider it to be the best textbook we have available. This accounts for my focusing on it for special treatment.

To begin, then, Irwin opens Chapter 1 with a paragraph of suggestions as to how to define parapsychology. For example he says that "*Parapsychology* is the scientific study of experiences which, if they are as they seem to be, are in principle outside the realm of human capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists" (p. 1). I would briefly say that parapsychologists study evidence for *exosomatic* psychopraxia (hereinafter exo-psychopraxia, as opposed to endo-psychopraxia), where by "exosomatic" I mean "outside the sensorimotor complex," and to be contrasted with *endo*-psychopraxia—psychopraxia occurring within the mind-body complex. Irwin eschews any assumption that the study of parapsychology is the study of "the paranormal," but I have argued elsewhere, in a review of the second edition of his book (Thalbourne,

1994), that parapsychology is not parapsychology without the paranormal—without it, it becomes merely a branch of psychology, the psychology of the anomalous. Without the paranormal there *is* no exo-psychopraxia, and parapsychology becomes the study of somewhat mysterious and esoteric manifestations of *endo*-psychopraxia. Irwin's approach has the merit that it leaves at least something for parapsychology to study, but at the risk of foregoing the really interesting phenomena of exo-psychopraxia. It is to be noted that, unlike Irwin's hypothetical parapsychology, the new theory of psychopraxia does not have a negative definition of its content: it stipulates that the phenomena of interest have a pro attitude as part of their causation, that there are a number of intervening variables (not necessarily able to be defined right now but probably psychophysiological), leading up to the achievement of an exosomatic goal. The theory of psychopraxia likewise excludes as part of its domain "popular astrology, fairies, the Bermuda Triangle, [and] numerology" (p. 5), but would not exclude, as Irwin does, witchcraft and Tarot readings (Susan Blackmore has studied the latter for signs of exo-psychopraxia).

Irwin then gives as, and provides examples of, the three traditional domains of parapsychology—extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, and survival of death. These can be expressed in psychopractic terms as (ESP:) "the rearrangement of the 'furniture' of the so-called mind, in accordance with a pro attitude towards acquiring some piece of information, in ways that are exosomatic in origin"; (PK:) "the rearrangement of the 'furniture' of the so-called physical world, in accordance with a pro attitude towards manipulating some aspect of that physical world, in ways which are exosomatic; and (survival) "achievement of the exosomatic goal of surviving one's death and, possibly, communication on the part of the living with discarnate entities and vice versa." Irwin cites the traditional breakdown of ESP events into telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and retrocognition (p. 6). Psychopractic theory does not differentiate between ESP and PK, let alone between telepathy and clairvoyance, distinguishing which is so contentious as to lead to the artificial category "general extrasensory perception" (as Irwin acknowledges on p. 7). At present, psychopractic theory also does not allow for precognition or retrocognition, preferring instead mental extrapolation from information available in the present. Thus "precognitive" dreams about the sinking of the Titanic could come about from present (exosomatic) awareness of an iceberg floating in the course of the ship, and extrapolation that the two will collide if the present course of both is maintained, and awareness of deficiencies in the structure of the Titanic that make it particularly susceptible to damage if there is a collision. Precognition is therefore not needed. Exo-

psychopraxia can do it all, albeit in a manner like what is now called superpsi (hyper-psychopraxia? Mega-psychopraxia?)

On the next page (p. 8) Irwin introduces the term *psi*, and states that it is assumed that "the paranormal element in ESP is the same as the one in PK, that these two parapsychological domains share a common underlying process or mechanism." Psychopractic theory agrees, and Irwin comes tantalizingly close to it, but moves away at the last minute.

Irwin then goes on to talk about the survival hypothesis, which may be conceptualised as the hypothesis that discarnate entities can use psychopraxia to control and/or contact the living, or the reverse ability on the part of the living.

Irwin states that the three central issues of parapsychology are authenticity, underlying processes, and phenomenology. The latter concerns us particularly here. He defines it as

> . . . the description of parapsychological phenomena from the *experient's* point of view; that is, investigators seek to establish the characteristics of the phenomena as actually experienced and the impact such experiences have upon the individual. This approach is known as *phenomenological* research. . . . (p. 10)

Psychopraxia theory could not agree more with this statement. Not only could such research throw light on the nature of the pro attitude at issue, but also perhaps illuminate the intervening conditions necessary for psychopractic influence to take place—the links between pro attitude and the achievement of the goal. Irwin says as much when he states that ". . . phenomenological research is useful in generating hypotheses for investigation in process-oriented research" (p. 10).

In Chapter 2, Irwin addresses the origins of parapsychological research. He first mentions the apparent exo-psychopraxia of certain subjects in mesmeric trance, anticipating the modern work with hypnosis (Honorton, 1977, pp. 442-451). He then goes on to describe Spiritualism, and how it basically began in the Fox family, where apparent survival-oriented exo-psychopraxia (such as intelligent raps) took place, beginning in 1848. A possible pro attitude is the desire to find evidence of survival of death "as people found wanting alternative world-views based solely on an agnostic science or on a Christianity under siege from Darwin's theory of evolution" (p. 17). Irwin describes the "receptive" state that mediums typically put themselves in, which we may say were potentially conducive to exo-psychopraxia (either on the part of the living or of the dead). Indeed, Irwin regales us with descriptions of the careers and investigations of four Spiritualist mediums. The first, Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886) seems

to me to illustrate how a gifted person might be able to exert exo-psychopraxia to an extraordinarily controlled degree (see Chapter 5 in Thalbourne, in press, on "omega-psychopraxia"), given the physical (and sometimes the mental) feats of which he was apparently capable, such as levitation and materialisation. Nevertheless, Irwin manages to question the authenticity of these phenomena, on varied grounds.

Irwin next considers the very well-studied career of Leonora Piper (1859-1950; see Cole, 2001). She appears to have been a psychic whose mental 'furniture' was habitually rearranged to correspond to communications ostensibly from the dead. However, since her "control," Phinuit, was "quite certainly fictitious" (p. 25), we may have an illustration of the pro attitude of wanting to have a controlling entity, which may actually be a figment of the imagination, and therefore of endo-psychopraxia, though the control George Pellew was much more convincing as a discarnate entity. Even after describing the efforts made to prevent Mrs. Piper from obtaining information about her sitters by normal means, Irwin's conclusion is essentially that it is (or at least was at the time) exceptionally difficult to rule out endo-psychopraxia.

The case of Hélène Smith (pseudonym; 1861-1929), which was studied by Theodore Flournoy, seems to show, according to Irwin, how very devious, creative, and cryptomnesic endo-psychopraxia (especially the unconscious) can be, and how, especially in Spiritualists, there is usually a pro attitude towards simulating exo-psychopraxia in the form of spirits of the dead.

Irwin finally considers the case of the Australian Charles Bailey (c.1870-1947), whose specialty was "apportation of a wide range of objects" (p. 31). Despite promising beginnings, fraud was uncovered on a number of latter occasions—only endo-psychopraxia was revealed. Indeed Irwin avers that "investigation of mediums has failed to authenticate any parapsychological phenomenon" (p. 34), which seems to me too harsh a judgement.

Chapter 3 concerns the phenomenology of extrasensory perception. As I have said above, I have nothing but praise for this approach, since through it we may be able to uncover some of the conditions necessary for a pro attitude to lead to achievement of a so-called mental goal. For example, a close emotional relationship between two people appears to facilitate exo-psychopraxia between them (pp. 44-46). So too, such experiences appear to be purposive, that is, to be in conformity with some pro attitude. (In parentheses, I note that Irwin distinguishes between experiences of a parapsychological type and those of psychopathology. I have argued elsewhere [Thalbourne, 2000] that psychiatric patients should be *expected* to have the highest levels of reporting of exo-psychopraxia, and that it may

be the case that these reports are often veridical. So it is not either/or but both/and.) Amongst other interesting and useful information in this chapter are descriptions of how endo-psychopraxia can be passed off or interpreted as exosomatic, as in subliminal perception, magic, out-and-out fraud, or various mediumistic tricks.

Irwin then makes a momentous but of course common and understandable philosophical assumption, viz., that there exists a world of distinctly mental events. The dualists and idealists would agree, but so-called central state materialism would not. Thus, in setting forth the theory of psychopraxia, I have been at pains to make my theorising ontologically-neutral—compatible with any of the three major philosophical systems. For example, if materialism should prove to be true, as most conventional theorists argue, so-called ESP would collapse into PK. Thus we should be aware that by devoting chapter 4 to experimental research on extrasensory perception, Irwin is tacitly subscribing to dualism.

Irwin describes the growth of experimental research into "ESP," as for example the clairvoyance/telepathy controversy. All we can deduce from this is that the presence of a target-aware sender is not a necessary condition for exo-psychopraxia on the so-called mental world. I suggest that this phenomenon be called "sender-less exo-psychopraxia." Irwin examines in detail the Pearce-Pratt experiment on this phenomenon, and concludes that it and no other experiment can be considered conclusive as evidence of exo-somaticity, because of the theoretical possibility of experimenter fraud. (Mackenzie and Mackenzie [1980, p. 162] suggest that public demonstrations of the paranormal, such as levitations [which I regard as exo-psychopraxia], might serve the purpose of the definitive experiment.) On the topic of replicability, Irwin is quotable: ". . . in my experience of undergraduate laboratory exercises psychologists generally delude themselves of the level and quality of replicability entailed in many of their accepted phenomena" (p. 80). In his next section Irwin is again quotable: ". . . although the data of ESP experiments may testify to a genuine phenomenon these data might be attributable to factors other than ESP" (p. 81; see also p. 82). Perhaps this includes other factors like the principle of psychopraxia.

In the context of process-oriented research Irwin discusses the parapsychological experimenter effect. This problem is germane to the theory of psychopraxia: Surely an experimenter has a pro attitude towards the successful outcome of their experiment, and if the latter is indeed successful it could be the experimenter's own exo-psychopraxia bringing it about. It would seem that only successful studies conducted by experimenters with a pro attitude *against* the hypothesis would provide evidence *for* the hypothesis. In any case it seems that, according to the

theory of psychopraxia, experimenters should state in their reports what their pro attitudes are, since they may be causal.

Irwin then proceeds to discuss "the character of performance in an experimental ESP task" (p. 86). The first characteristic he cites is psi-missing, which "might be viewed as an expression of psi in a way that produces a result opposite to the conscious intent." I must disagree with Irwin here. When one obtains "psi-missing" one should rephrase it as "significantly negative scoring": From the point of view of the subject this significant negative scoring might not be missing at all, but hitting on some other, implicit, goal. This, I suggested in *The common thread between ESP and PK*, was happening in the case of goat (disbelieving) senders, who were perhaps seeking to obtain evidence against the hypothesis of exo-psychopraxia. Thus in the case of other instances of significant negative scoring it is incumbent upon us to find out if hidden goals are being achieved; this search could take place in the case of introverts, the highly anxious, those nearing the end of a long, boring exo-psychopractic task, etc., and other "psi-missers." If such a goal (or "pro attitude")—conscious or unconscious—cannot be found after an exhaustive search, it is evidence against the psychopractic thesis. Thus the theory of psychopraxia is falsifiable.

In view of the strong statement above and because the state of the evidence leaves a lot to be desired I shall not discuss all the scoring features listed by Irwin, but I suspect that all of them can be given a psychopractic interpretation. Take for example clustering, in which hits tend to occur in groups. The operation of psychopraxia entails that certain necessary conditions (thought to be primarily psychophysiological) must obtain before a pro attitude can bring about a psychopractic achievement. Clustering might indicate the sporadic assembling and failure to assemble those necessary conditions. When you're hot, you're hot!

Irwin considers target variables in "ESP" performance, and in regard to physical aspects it seems that, consistent with the conditions suggested as conducive to psychopraxia, it is the psychological aspects of the participant or of the target material that are most important. The rest of the chapter I find unexceptionable, and relatively amenable to redescription in terms of exo-psychopraxia. For example, the suggestion that feeling comfortable with, and therefore adapting well to, the experimental situation (p. 102)—a feeling that extraverts and emotionally stable persons might experience—could well describe one of the necessary conditions for exo-psychopraxia, at least for certain laboratory feats of goal-achievement.

Irwin considers the association between exo-psychopraxia on mental events and domains such as physiology, cognition and demography. Though there are replicated correlations between these variables and

reported experiences of this kind, the impression I get is that the level of replication with experimental performance is low, non-existent, or contradictory (note that Irwin argues otherwise, but not strongly: ". . . the coherence of process-oriented data is, at best, merely supportive of the ESP hypothesis" [p. 109].). Certainly, far too little research has been done to permit so-called meta-analysis in most cases. The impression is given that we need considerably more workers in the vineyard.

In Chapter 5, Irwin uses the title "Extrasensory perception and time." As mentioned above, the theory of psychopraxia presently does not allow for true precognition or retrocognition, (because Thouless and Wiesner did not theorise in such a way as to explain them: Rao, 1978, p. 279) but rather speaks of extrapolation forward or backward in time based on information currently available (exo-psychopractically, perhaps) in the present. The establishing of true precognition or retrocognition would damage that viewpoint, but perhaps not fatally, posing as it would a conundrum for the explanatory powers of the psychopractic theorist. Irwin gives first as an example the interesting work of Whately Carington, who found a displacement of hits forward and backward in time in the context of an experiment with drawings. The backward displacements could be explained as psychopraxia on the already drawn targets, while the forward displacements are less easy to explain away, their target not having been chosen at that time.

Irwin suggests (p. 117) that the fact that the interval between precognition and subsequently precognised event is less commonly found the further into the future the events pertain to, the ESP "signal" becomes weaker with time. It could also be that psychopractic extrapolation from current events becomes more uncertain the greater the interval over which prediction is made. The extrapolatory approach is more able to deal with the so-called intervention paradox, which Irwin describes as follows:

> Major conceptual problems are raised by the possibility of intervening in precognitive cases. . . . For example, if someone foresees a particular event and takes effective steps to avoid it the precogniszed event will not have taken place: how then could the case be regarded as knowledge of a future event?

No problem, if the "precognitive" event avoided is simply one of a number of potential psychopractically derived maps of the future, whose outcome can be altered by appropriate action. To his credit, Irwin cites this theory, though under different names (p. 121).

Surprisingly, Irwin devotes little space to results using random event generators, which, if they use a true form of randomness based on

quantum mechanical systems, might not be so susceptible to the argument that precognition is really psychopractic extrapolation. (However, one study of so-called "precognition" cited, viz., Schmidt [1969], is also open to an interpretation in terms of psychokinesis [Thalbourne, in press, Ch. 1]). The evidence for so-called "retrocognition" is appropriately treated as meagre.

Irwin concludes these chapters on so-called ESP by stating that they are the "receptive" aspect of psi (p. 123). I have argued in my monograph on psychopraxia that this is a highly misleading term: Such processes as perception and memory are *active* processes which entail the self actually doing something (in accordance with a pro attitude) to the "furniture" of the mind. Whether we call it ESP or psychopraxia, it is still a form of *action.*

In Chapter 6, Irwin implicitly declares his allegiance to the philosophical position that there exists—out there, beyond the self—a world of physical objects which perhaps can be manipulated by paranormal means. Enter, psychokinesis. The materialist adherent and to some extent the dualist would be happy with this characterisation, but the idealist would not—positing as they would only mental events. The theory of psychopraxia does not require definition in terms of mind or matter, although it may use these terms when it is clear that ontological neutrality is intended.

Irwin discusses whether PK exhibits patterns of performance that are in common with those of ESP: "If ESP and PK are to be regarded as expressions of some unitary capacity termed "psi" the comparison of PK with ESP becomes crucial . . ." (p. 134). In my opinion there is a good deal of overlap between the two, but Irwin does not really provide an overall summary position (as he did—a conservative one—in Irwin, 1985) until the end of the chapter, where he says that "The principal difficulty here is that little research has been directed to the psychological dimensions of PK performance" (p. 140). (Again the problem of too few workers in the vineyard.) It may be questioned whether all the canvassed features have to be similar before we say that psi is a unitary phenomenon. If I touch my nose (a feat I can easily achieve) and then try to touch my toes (which I cannot do with straight legs) there is no question that the psychopractic processes are similar and essentially "the same," but the intervening conditions are quite different. This difference does not prevent us from saying that endo-psychopraxia is working in the two cases, or indeed that it is the same process as exo-psychopraxia.

What are the necessary conditions for a psychopractic effect on the so-called physical world (and are they similar to those on the body)? Irwin concludes that the physical aspects of (non-bodily) target systems appear to

have little effect on PK performance "except by way of their psychological impact on the participant. This accords with similar research into ESP" (p. 137). Also quotable is Irwin's statement, so often made, that "PK is directed towards a *goal* rather than necessarily to the underlying physical mechanisms of the target event" (p. 138). We already know this in the case of endo-psychopraxia (e.g., in touching the tip of my nose, I am aware of having a pro attitude towards touching my nose, and a gentle exertion of will, but no idea how that attitude and that will are translated into appropriate physiological and anatomical processes.)

Chapter 7 is devoted to a number of "special topics" in PK research. The first considered is the parapsychological experimenter effect. In psychopractic terms, we can translate this as follows: subjects presumably have pro attitudes (hopefully positive) towards the experimental goal specified, but it must be admitted that the experimenter too is likely to have a pro attitude, namely "that the experiment will work (or something more specific, such that a particular correlation will appear)", and it may be that, using exo-psychopraxia, they manage to manipulate things such that the goal towards which they had a pro attitude is in fact achieved. There are indications that there are exo-psychopraxia-conducive experimenters and exo-psychopraxia-inhibitory experimenters. As Irwin points out in a different way, this presents us with a major problem in trying to establish the necessary conditions of psychopraxia. Perhaps there should be more paranormal testing of parapsychologists, or more testing of counter-attitudinal goals by exo-psychopraxia-conducive experimenters.

Irwin next discusses macro-PK, or large-scale exo-psychopraxia. On a paranormal level these feats could be said to be parallel to extraordinary mental or physical feats of endo-psychopraxia.

Then comes a section on psychic healing. As long ago as Thouless and Wiesner (1947), it was proposed that the same process that brought about endosomatic healing and growth was responsible for exosomatic phenomena such as psychic healing and materialisation—that process being termed psi-epsilon, though now more often viewed as psi-kappa (PK). Irwin alludes to this identity, mentioning the placebo and other psychosomatic effects. After considerable discussion, he concludes that research into an exosomatic component of psychic healing is extraordinarily difficult with human beings, but that research using animals on the one hand and biochemicals on the other has showed more promise of an effect.

Chapter 8 reviews theories of psi. (Of course the theory of psychopraxia is too new to have found a place in this section. Perhaps the next edition!) Irwin starts by extolling the virtues of having a theory at all, rather than simply isolated data and hypotheses. Parapsychology lacks a theoretical consensus, and only time will tell whether the theory of

psychopraxia is able to meet the challenge of filling this void. Perhaps the most that can be asked is that psychopractic theory attract a sufficient following to do justice to its testing. With two notable exceptions I shall not go into the theories that Irwin discusses, but in the meantime I note that there is no reference to Thouless and Wiesner's Shin theory, much of which in altered form is the basis of the theory of psychopraxia. (It should be noted that despite Irwin's usual meticulousness he makes a mistake in giving the date of Thouless and Wiesner as 1948 when it should be 1947.) We have to look elsewhere for description (even though often flawed) and criticism (therefore misguided) of the Thouless-Wiesner Shin theory (see, for example, Beloff, 1988, pp. 27-28; Stokes, 1987, pp. 170-172; 177-178; and Rao, 1978, pp. 277-280). (The most frequent misunderstanding in these authors is to equate Shin with mind, whereas Thouless and Wiesner (1947, pp. 194-195) meant Shin to be the 'I' or 'self' or [dare we utter the word?] the soul.)

The two theories that I wish to mention are both by Stanford: the psi-mediated instrumental response model, and *conformance behavior*. In the first model, PMIR, to quote Irwin, "psi experiences arise because, under circumstances prevailing in the environment, the individual has some disposition or need for the response to occur. . . . Stanford further proposes that psi operates below the level of consciousness . . ." (p. 168). PMIR thus shows similarities to psychopraxia inasmuch as the latter talks of "pro attitudes" (rather than dispositions or needs) and in its definition allows for the pro attitude to be unconscious (see the definition, above, p. 106). The psychopractic model is nevertheless broader, in that it incorporates endosomatic phenomena and consciously exerted psychopraxia.

The other theory of Stanford's is his *conformance behavior* model: "Psi . . . is viewed as organizing loose, disorganized or random processes such that their outcomes accord with the dispositions of someone who (or some organism which) has an interest in those outcomes" (p. 170). Again we have a similarity to psychopractic theory in the fact that Stanford talks about "dispositions" whereas we could speak of "pro attitudes." Both PMIR and *conformance behavior*, particularly the former, have a generic similarity to psychopraxia, which can by no means be said to have arisen in a theoretical vacuum.

Psychopractic theory has relatively little to say about Irwin's next topic—the survival hypothesis (Ch. 9)—other than to say that survival is not incompatible with many forms of materialism, and, elsewhere, that the self might possibly be of such a nature as to survive the death of the body, but evidence pertaining to these propositions is not gone into in detail. For the evidence brought forward by Irwin it would seem true to say that, again, the enterprise is often or always a matter of distinguishing between endo-

and exo-psychopraxia, and in the latter case ruling out hyper-psychopraxia (super-ESP).

Chapter 10 deals with the poltergeist. In most cases a "focus" person can be found who seems to be responsible for the disturbances. In such cases one might invoke unconscious exo-psychopraxia, although it must be noted that sometimes the effects observed, such as movement of heavy pieces of furniture, are beyond the endosomatic capabilities of the focus person (cf. some of the ostensible feats of, for example, D. D. Home). Irwin's mention of demonic persecution poltergeists (p. 188) reminds us that there do exist on record cases—admittedly constituting a minority—where no focus agent can be pinpointed: Either these are cases of collective exo-psychopraxia in the living, or perhaps the survival hypothesis is indicated, where the psychopraxia seems to emanate from a discarnate level of existence. More likely, as Irwin says (p. 194 et seq.) it is subconscious exo-psychopraxia on the part of the living, especially in situations of unresolved conflict, tension, or hostility, and the "goal" is expression of these in an otherwise untenable situation. Such factors as fraud might be construed similarly, except that its expression is endosomatic rather than exosomatic: The same goal is achieved, but by non-paranormal methods. Not all participants are able to distinguish between the two.

Irwin's chapter 11 concerns near-death experiences (NDEs). The formal exposition of the theory of psychopraxia says nothing about these experiences, but at this juncture it may be asked whether the NDE has any component that may be judged exosomatic[2] (such as, perhaps, the oft-reported out-of-the-body experience) or is entirely endosomatic—in some sense a very striking (and life-affecting) figment of the imagination, as researchers such as Blackmore (1993) would have it. With reference to the latter, it can be speculatively suggested that with the wide-spread knowledge now of NDEs, subsequent near-death experiences may (at least sometimes) spring from the knowledge of what they are *supposed* to be like. (Irwin considers and rejects this possibility later in his chapter.) Nevertheless, a certain innocence has been lost, making the endosomatic interpretation seem more plausible. Could the images experienced be based on popular stereotypes of the afterlife (p. 205)? This fact might account for the occasional "hellish" NDE (pp. 207-209). (In fairness to the hypothesis it must be emphasised that religious affiliation and religiosity appear to have no bearing on the NDE and its features. Says Irwin: "High religiosity

[2] We must be careful to distinguish between the exosomatic location of *entities* (such as spirits) and the exosomatic location of the effects of *actions* such as exo-psychopraxia.

seems to be more a consequence than a cause of the experience" [p. 210]). However, Irwin concludes that an exosomatic interpretation of the NDE is premature (p. 216).

Many of the same sorts of issue arise in connection with out-of-body experiences—the subject of chapter 12. Can consciousness itself be exosomatic (sometimes called "extrasomatic" or "ecsomatic"), or can the experience of an OBE be explained entirely in terms of endosomatic causes (perhaps bolstered with a little exo-psychopractically-acquired information)? With reference to our discussion above, it is relevant and interesting that ". . . the OBE can occur without the experient's prior knowledge of the phenomenon" (p. 230), ruling out (in those cases) conscious pro attitudinal causation. But is the OBE a fantasy, perhaps bolstered by exo-psychopraxia? Irwin thinks not. His is a "synaesthetic" theory (p. 239) in which he thinks that "evidence of extrasensory elements in spontaneous OBEs, however, is not yet convincing" (p. 240). "Even if the experience were shown to involve a literal separation of a nonphysical element of existence from the physical body there is no certainty that this element could survive the biological death of the body" (p. 240).

Chapter 13 concerns apparitional experiences. "In essence an apparition is encountered in a perceptual-like experience and relates to a person or animal that is not physically present, with physical means of communication being ruled out" (p. 243). Is there anything exosomatic in the experience of apparitions, either in substance or in process? Irwin appears, at least initially, to imply that this question does not matter—just so long as we are doing *some* sort of research on apparitions (the lengthy discussion of the case of "Ruth" [Schatzman, 1980] being an exemplification of this attitude.) Be that as it may, one fact that I found noteworthy in this chapter is that few people were thinking about the referent person at the time they had an apparitional experience of them. This suggests either an unconscious pro attitude towards having an experience of that person, or perhaps psychopractic agency on the part of that referent person, living or deceased. But Irwin, in a masterly discussion, exposes problems with many of the theories of apparitional experiences that he discusses (such as ones where exo-psychopraxia might be held to take place), even the skeptical ones, which leads me to conjecture that a single theory may not explain all cases, and that there are different sorts of apparitional experiences each perhaps requiring a different explanation. (Irwin in fact suggests this when he says [p. 257] that [F. W. H. Myers] "also implied that apparitional experiences might not all feature exactly the same underlying process.")

Chapter 14 concerns experiences of reincarnation. In these cases there appears to be both an exosomatic entity involved that passes from one

incarnation to another, plus information about a former life and perhaps skills that seem to be exo-psychopractic in origin. One of the parapsychological objections to reincarnation is the hypothesis that the person claiming to be some reincarnated personality acquired their information by exo-psychopraxia from the living and extant records, and dramatised it in the form of a first-person-centred narrative that they proceed to dish up to those around them. One piece of evidence against this, as Irwin notes, is that the subjects of these cases very rarely show a talent for exo-psychopraxia in regard to anything or anyone else. If they are psychics (or perhaps even given to hyper-psychopraxia) they are extraordinarily narrow in the application of their talent.

Chapter 15 is a survey of the psychology of belief in the paranormal. This branch of psychology is, as Irwin points out, legitimate whether or not exo-psychopraxia actually occurs. Nonetheless it is important to point out that exo-psychopraxia covers the domains traditionally labelled ESP, PK and survival, and not the broader field of anomalies such as "UFOs, astrology, déjà vu, the Loch Ness Monster, angels, the unluckiness of walking under a ladder, communication with plants . . .[3] palmistry, voodoo, and graphology" (p. 281).

Irwin gives a number of reasons why we would be interested in the psychology of paranormal belief, but one he does not seem to mention. He notes (p. 279) the so-called sheep-goat effect (viz., believers do better at ESP tests than do disbelievers), though I do not believe he makes it clear how this bears on the psychology of paranormal belief. My own point of view is that just as this variable appears to be predictive of exo-psychopraxia (Lawrence, 1993), other variables which *correlate* with the sheep-goat variable may also predict exo-psychopraxia. An example of this appeared just recently. One of the strong correlates of the sheep-goat variable is magical ideation, or thinking in terms of magical causes, measured by the Magical Ideation Scale (Eckblad & Chapman, 1983). (Irwin cites this correlation without attempting to explain it: pp. 290-291. The concept of transliminality attempts to make sense of this [and other] correlations with paranormal belief [Thalbourne, 2000], but unfortunately it does not rate a mention in this book.) Be that as it may, Parker, Grams and Pettersson (1998) correlated the Australian Sheep-Goat Scale and the Magical Ideation Scale with scores deriving from an ESP-ganzfeld procedure, and found significant associations, with hitters being more likely to be sheep and to score higher on the Magical Ideation Scale. Thus,

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[3] Irwin also lists witches and levitation, but both of these phenomena seem to me to pertain ostensibly to exo-psychopraxia.

correlates of the sheep-goat variable are fair game as correlates of measures of exo-psychopraxia as well. For example, I make this point with a variable likewise strongly correlated with the sheep-goat variable—mystical experience (Thalbourne, 1998-1999).

Irwin's chapter 16 is on "matters of relevance", which covers a sensitive section on parapsychology and clinical practice (clients may need help sometimes because of ostensible exo-psychopraxia and sometimes even when there is no sign of such), and a section on other applications of parapsychology. In the latter, Irwin argues that the typical level of exo-psychopractic performance is perhaps too low to permit many successful applications as yet.

Irwin's last chapter, 17, an evaluation of parapsychology as a scientific enterprise, documents the attempts made by parapsychologists to establish, with varied success, the study of exo-psychopraxia on a scientific footing. Irwin's opinions are well worth reading, though I suspect few parapsychologists will agree with his recipe for solving the scientific malaise (redefining the field as the study of the *ostensible* parapsychological). If only a theory like psychopraxia could become generally accepted within parapsychology, that fact would cure some of the malaise.

From the psychopractic point of view, Irwin's book can thus be seen as an attempt to discern whether there is any acceptable evidence for exo-psychopraxia (or exosomatic entities), or whether it can all be reduced to endo-psychopraxia. An objection to the foregoing reinterpretive exercise is that the old terminology—ESP, PK and psi—is so much shorter and simpler than the proposed replacements. While this is true, it may be said that the psychopractic terminology is more true to the phenomena at hand, and makes for greater theoretical precision, so that, for example, if we must talk of "exo-psychopraxia" to distinguish it from "endo-psychopraxia" (which is not really touched upon in the old terminology), and "hyper-psychopraxia" instead of "super-psi" then it may be worthwhile to spread our wings, terminologically, for the sake of that greater precision. Only subsequent usage of those outstretched wings will demonstrate whether this is the right way to fly.

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