

Gateway to God

The nature of spiritual sight

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"One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the finest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness quite different. . . . No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. . . ."

-William James

Introduction : The Mysterious Intelligence behind Nature

Irreducible complexity is a term used to describe many natural systems where they need all of their individual component parts in place in order to function. Take for example the heart. The heart is essentially a pump. But it serves no useful function unless there is a fluid for it to pump (namely blood). But what use is a pump and the correct fluid without channels along which the fluid can travel. Without such channels, the blood cannot circulate at all. Hence there is a need for a circulatory network to carry the fluid. And what use is all of this unless there is a system for putting nutrients into the fluid (digestion and respiration), and a system for extracting nutrients from the fluid so the muscles and organs can draw off sustenance. And what happens when an organ cannot draw off sustenance from the blood? When blood cannot reach an organ it very quickly dies. The brain dies within 30 seconds if starved of the oxygen that is in the blood. And when limbs are deprived of blood flow, they go gangrene and start to rot.. The whole system is absolutely useless unless all these parts are in place from the start. So how did such a system come to exist?

There are thousands of systems like this in nature. Some biological systems are so complex, and so dependent upon multiple complex parts, that they could not have evolved one piece at a time, but must have appeared all at once. Unless all the parts of the system evolved at the same time, the system would be useless, and would actually be detrimental to the organism. Their irreducible complexity suggests that they were created complete from the start – which strongly suggests that they are the product of intelligent design.

The genetic code is another example. The genetic code is a literal embodiment of information – information that provides instructions for creating life. Experience teaches that intelligible messages, information, come from intelligent sources. A code requires someone to create it, and this common experience makes the genetic code a potent indicator of intelligent design. So too does the genetic code's capacity to withstand errors caused by mutations. Even though mutations are potentially harmful, the rules that define the genetic code appear to be carefully constructed to minimize these errors. In fact, research indicates that the universal genetic code has a better error-minimization capacity than virtually any other conceivable set of rules that could have been used to construct the genetic code. Such radical optimization epitomizes intelligent design.

A third example is the remarkable symmetry found within the Genetic Code. The genetic code provides information that serves the function of creating life, but the genetic code is remarkable in other ways too - it has form; the structure of the genetic code itself appears to be designed because it embodies mathematical symmetries and balances that should not be there otherwise. These patterns were discovered by a scientist and mathematician named Shcherbak only a few years ago. It is astounding that the code should contain so much information, AND be in a form of such beauty and balance.

In consideration of evidence such as this, it seems a possibility that a Creator may exist - a sufficient cause and origin for this information and design.

Of course, if a Creator exists, then it would seem to be quite important and desirable for people to communicate with it. After all, such a being would be quite incredible, and it wouldn't make sense to completely ignore it's existence.

If a person truly believes that God exists then it would be natural for them to feel a compelling desire to seek out that Being. It is a bit like knowing that there is a bag full of money just lying in the street. Once you know it's there you feel compelled to go out and get it. To just ignore it seems crazy.

But how do we go out and “get” God? Even if we know that God must exist by rational argument, how do we take the next step of communicating with God, of experiencing God? The remainder of this book explores this question and offers some powerful rational arguments and empirical evidence that seems to furnish an answer.

Part 1 : The Essence of Religious Experience

Here I put forward a logical argument which proposes that all forms of genuine religious experience are mediated through a sixth sense – a sense beyond the normal 5 senses that we use to perceive everyday physical reality. We might call this sixth sense “extra-sensory perception”

Each of the 5 senses is designed for detecting specific PHYSICAL stimuli and conveying these as perceptions to the mind. To have a religious experience is to have an experience of the spiritual, which by definition is non-physical. The non-physical cannot be detected by the 5 senses. So, to have direct perception of a spiritual reality we must use a sixth sense.

Furthermore, we know that the faculty by which we perceive spiritual things is synonymous with the perception of MIND or THOUGHT – so this sixth sense must be a sense by which we can perceive mind or thought.

My hypothesis is that all forms of genuine religious experience MUST involve this “extra-sensory perception”, and embody the conditions under which this mode of perception is enhanced.

This logic seems sound. The 5 senses can ONLY be used to perceive physical reality. So how do we perceive the non-physical, the spiritual? It must be a sixth sense. And this sixth sense must have the capacity to perceive mind or thought.

I do not dispute that God could use physical signs to communicate with us, and of course these physical signs would be perceivable by the 5 ordinary senses. But DIRECT perception of spiritual realities must be via a sixth sense.

Part 2: Does a sixth sense exist?

Beyond the 5 senses that we use to perceive everyday physical reality, is there a sixth sense – a sense for perceiving the non-physical, for perceiving mind and thought, for perceiving – in other words – spiritual reality?

Well, there is a considerable body of very meticulous research on the existence of such a sixth sense. The scientific term for this sense is ESP or Psi, and research into it has been ongoing for over 100 years. The results are profoundly interesting, revealing the conditions under which this mode of perception is consistently enhanced.

A typical experiment consists of 2 people - a sender and a receiver. Both are isolated from each other so there can be no communications between them by ordinary sensory means. Then the sender focuses on an image or thought, and the receiver tries to pick up on what this is.

If ESP does not exist then the results of such experiments should be at chance level. This is because if there is no sixth sense, then there is no way for sender and receiver to communicate. Therefore, all that the receiver can do is take a blind guess. Of course, occasionally they will guess correctly, but the number of correct guesses would be the same as what we would get by chance alone.

So we have a test –

“If attempts at ESP yield results above chance level, then this is evidence for ESP”

Secondly, if there is no sixth sense, then it should be impossible to increase or decrease the accuracy of this mode of perception by any means. This makes logical sense. Think of it this way. If there is no sixth sense then it would convey no perceptions at all – and its accuracy would be zero – the same as if you were totally blind. No matter what one did to try to increase it – it would still convey no perceptions at all.

So we have a second test –

“If ESP does not exist, attempts at extrasensory perception should be UNAFFECTED by ANY variable. Consequently, if extrasensory perception is affected by ANY variable, then it must exist.”

What do the Experiments reveal?

Thousands of ESP experiments have been carried out over the last 100 years and they reveal some interesting results. Under specific conditions the level of extra-sensory perception exceeds the chance level by a significant amount. These conditions include –

- Mental state, eg dreaming, hypnosis, meditation
- Physical state, eg relaxation, sensory isolation
- Cognitive state, eg expectation, the belief or disbelief of the subjects
- Social state, eg the emotional closeness between sender and receiver
- Personality type, eg creativity and artistic ability
- Message type, eg if the message is emotionally significant, interesting, dynamic, positive
- Feedback

NONE of these variables would increase the accuracy of ESP if ESP were not real. We can only conclude that this faculty of perception is real, though it requires practice for the development of the requisite mental, physical and cognitive states.

Part 3 : Opening the Eye of the Soul - States Conducive to ESP

Rational argument proves that the sixth sense is the means by which we experience spiritual realities – by which we might become directly aware of the thoughts of others. And there is a considerable body of evidence to show that such a sixth sense is real – because it's clarity is affected by specific conditions.

Of course, our aim is not just to become aware of the thoughts and presence of others. We are aiming a little higher – to experience the thoughts and presence of God. In essence, our project is to attempt communication with God.

That's why it's so important to understand the conditions that are conducive to ESP. If we can understand and implement these conditions they should furnish us with a direct means to realise our goal.

It will take practice, of course - and a focused and disciplined mind. But we are embarking upon the greatest experiment – and the highest achievement attainable by humankind.

And it begins with a simple understanding of the conditions conducive to ESP.

The Key Factors

The key factors that facilitate ESP are –

- Relaxation – the reduction of internal physical stimuli
- Isolation – the reduction of external physical stimuli
- Meditation/trance – focusing upon a single rhythmic point
- Imagery – the ability to experience the reality of an object in virtual/mental space
- Non-hypnotic suggestion – using words to send instructions to your unconscious mind
- The emotional closeness between sender and receiver is also important. Where there is a bond, a connection. 'Love' for others and for God may be a factor.
- Belief is also important. One of the strongest and most consistent factors influencing ESP is your belief that it is possible. People who believe nearly always score higher than people who do not. This has been called the "Sheep-Goat Effect".
- Finally, feedback is an important way of increasing ESP. We can develop ESP through being aware of what we are doing when we score high, and what we are doing when we score low. This a natural way of learning, finding out what works by trial and error.

Nearly all of these factors come together in trance states – especially the trance states induced by self-hypnosis.

Scientists have been carefully investigating the relationship between trance and ESP for more than 100 years. At the deepest trance levels remarkable phenomena have been found to manifest, and these phenomena have the greatest spiritual significance. So it is to this field that we must now cast our investigative eye.

A perusal of the findings of these scientists is in order.

Part 4 : Hypnosis and ESP

Today parapsychologists are using hypnosis as an experimental device for producing ESP. They have found that it makes the production of psychic phenomena, or psi easier. Hypnotized persons quite often do significantly better in laboratory tests.

From the very beginning, hypnosis has produced fascinating manifestations for those who could bring themselves to look at them with unprejudiced eyes. As **Lee Edwards Levinson** pointed out in **“Hypnosis: The Key to Unlocking Latent Psi Faculties”** :

*“The three most prominent somnambulists in history, beginning with **Victor Race**, the first clearly documented hypnotic subject, **Andrew Jackson Davis**, the “Poughkeepsie Seer”, and **Edgar Cayce**, all discovered their latent psi abilities after they had undergone hypnosis. Over the years, many experiments have been conducted by recognised investigators which offer ample proof that somnambulist subjects under hypnosis display more acute extrasensory powers.”*

- Ref : Levinson, Lee E. "Hypnosis: The key to unlocking latent PSI faculties," *Psych. Abs.*, 43:14949, 1969
- Ref : Lee Edward Levinson “Hypnosis: The Key to unlocking PSI faculties”, *International Journal of Parapsychology*, 2/1968
- Ref : "ESP and Hypnosis", by Suzy Smith

Case Study 1 : Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815)

Mesmer lived May 23, 1734 – March 5, 1815). He was a German physician, who discovered what he called *animal magnetism* and others often called *mesmerism*. The evolution of Mesmer's ideas and practices led Scottish surgeon James Braid to develop hypnosis in 1842. Mesmer may, therefore be regarded as the father of modern hypnosis.

In the booklet **“Memoire sur la Decouverte du Magnetisme”** by **Franz Anton Mesmer**, there are certain significant sentences that lead one to believe that he was aware that he had discovered something of much greater significance than the mere curing of hysterical patients.

“Sometimes the somnambulist may perceive the past and the future through an inner sense of his...Man is in contact through this inner sense with the whole of nature and can always perceive the concatenation of cause and effect....Past and future are only different relations of it's separate parts... We possess an inner sense that is in touch with the whole universe... We possess the power of feeling the connection between events and beings in the universal harmony”

Case Study 2 : Marquis de Puységur (1815)

A former student of Mesmer's, the Marquis de Puységur gave identity to the phenomenon that came to be known as “artificial somnambulism,” the deepest form of hypnosis, a state analogous to a peaceful sleep, in which unusual phenomena were frequently produced. The Marquis discovered a 23 year old uneducated peasant named **Victor Race** who possessed the strange ability of sometimes perceiving the thoughts that de Puységur had been thinking but had not expressed, and even, at times, information that he himself did not know, revealing a sudden acquaintance with far away milieus and events completely unknown to both of them. He outlined the treatment necessary for his own cure of inflammation of the lungs, and when it was administered he recovered promptly.

“There is no need of my speaking to him; I simply think in his presence and he hears and answers me,” the Marquis wrote.

De Puysegur discovered that most of his somnambulistic patients were able to diagnose the nature of their ailments and to prescribe appropriate treatments, and some could also diagnose and prescribe for the ailments of others.

Early case studies

Experimental evidence

Part 5. The Greatest Experiment

We have seen that the trance state is a state that is conducive to ESP – that is, the perception of the thoughts and emotions of others. It is, therefore, the state conducive to religious experience – the perception of the Mind and Thoughts of God. It was through states similar to trance that the mystics attained Union with God.

Part 5: Mystics, Shamans and Avatars

Mysticism techniques

Shamanism

Buddhism

Part 6. Your Story

So you know what's most likely to facilitate communication with God. Is it worth it. There are so many other things going on in your life – work, relationships, fun. For so long God has not rated as a priority at all. Yet there is potential here to find a deep peace and abiding happiness – a sense of belonging and purpose.

Of course, only you can know what God is. No one can tell you. No one should tell you. It is a journey only you can make. No church or peer group can hold your hand. No one will give you the answers. You will be finding them for yourself – first hand. And the journey could lead you anywhere.

Appendix 1 : Techniques of the Mystics, Shamans and Buddhists.

Appendix 2 : OTHER CONDITIONS THAT ACCESS THE UNCONSCIOUS

There is a substantial body of evidence indicating that extra-sensory-perception occurs at a subliminal level, a level that we are not consciously aware of. Even though we are not consciously aware of this perception, it generates an effect or response that can be detected. Responses include -

1. Physiological responses
2. Autokinetic perception
3. Free Word Associations
4. Thematic Apperception Test effects

We might add to this list a number of non-hypnotic techniques for measuring suggestibility, such as the pendulum test. Similar to the auto-kinetic effect, the pendulum test is based on the IDEO-MOTOR RESPONSE, whereby a received idea or impression generates a microscopic motor response that is effectively amplified by the pendulum.

Of course, psycho-analysis has found that altered states, such as hypnosis and dreams, also access the unconscious.

HYPNOSIS and ESP

The belief that hypnosis is a ESP-conducive state dates all the way back to the days of early mesmerism (Dingwall, 1968); and cross-cultural surveys indicate that most reported "real-life" ESP experiences are mediated through dreams (Green, 1960; Prasad & Stevenson, 1968; L. E. Rhine, 1962; Sannwald, 1959).

There are now reports of experimental evidence consistent with these anecdotal observations. For example, several laboratory investigators have reported that meditation facilitates ESP performance (Honorton, 1977). A meta-analysis of 25 experiments on hypnosis and ESP conducted between 1945 and 1981 in 10 different laboratories suggests that hypnotic induction may also facilitate ESP performance. [Click here.](#) (Schechter, 1984). And dream-mediated ESP was reported in a series of experiments conducted at Maimonides Medical Center in New York and published between 1966 and 1972 (Child, 1985; Ullman, Krippner, & Vaughan, 1973).

In the Maimonides dream studies, two subjects--a "receiver" and a "sender"--spent the night in a sleep laboratory. The receiver's brain waves and eye movements were monitored as he or she slept in an isolated room. When the receiver entered a period of REM sleep, the experimenter pressed a buzzer that signaled the sender--under the supervision of a second experimenter--to begin a sending period. The sender would then concentrate on a randomly chosen picture (the "target") with the goal of influencing the content of the receiver's dream.

Toward the end of the REM period, the receiver was awakened and asked to describe any dream just experienced. This procedure was repeated throughout the night with the same target. A transcription of the receiver's dream reports was given to outside judges who blindly rated the similarity of the night's dreams to several pictures, including the target. In some studies, similarity ratings were also obtained from the receivers themselves. Across several variations of the procedure, dreams were judged to be significantly more similar to the target pictures than to the control pictures in the judging sets (failures to replicate the Maimonides results were also reviewed by Child, 1985).

"QUIET TIME" - REDUCTION OF SENSORY INPUT

These several lines of evidence suggested a working model of ESP in which ESP-mediated information is conceptualized as a weak signal that is normally masked by internal somatic and external sensory "noise." By reducing ordinary sensory input, these diverse ESP-conducive states are presumed to raise the signal-to-noise ratio, thereby enhancing a person's ability to detect the ESP-mediated information (Honorton, 1969, 1977). To test the hypothesis that a reduction of sensory input itself facilitates ESP performance, investigators turned to the ganzfeld procedure (Braud, Wood, & Braud, 1975; Honorton & Harper, 1974; Parker, 1975), a procedure originally introduced into experimental psychology during the 1930s to test propositions derived from Gestalt theory (Avant, 1965; Metzger, 1930).

Like the dream studies, the ESP ganzfeld procedure has most often been used to test for telepathic communication between a sender and a receiver. The receiver is placed in a reclining chair in an acoustically isolated room. Translucent ping pong ball halves are taped over the eyes and headphones are placed over the ears; a red floodlight directed toward the eyes produces an undifferentiated visual field and white noise played through the headphones produces an analogous auditory field. It is this homogeneous perceptual environment that is called the Ganzfeld ("total field"). To reduce internal somatic "noise," the receiver typically also undergoes a series of progressive relaxation exercises at the beginning of the ganzfeld period.

The sender is sequestered in a separate acoustically isolated room, and a visual stimulus (art print, photograph, or brief videotaped sequence) is randomly selected from a large pool of such stimuli to serve as the target for the session. While the sender concentrates on the target, the receiver provides a continuous verbal report of his or her ongoing imagery and mentation, usually for about 30 minutes. At the completion of the ganzfeld period, the receiver is presented with several stimuli (usually four) and, without knowing which stimulus was the target, is asked to rate the degree to which each matches the imagery and mentation experienced during the ganzfeld period. If the receiver assigns the highest rating to the target stimulus, it is scored as a "hit." Thus, if the experiment uses judging sets containing four stimuli (the target and three decoys or control stimuli), the hit rate expected by chance is .25. The ratings can also be analyzed in other ways; for example, they can be converted to ranks or standardized scores within each set and analyzed

parametrically across sessions. And, as with the dream studies, the similarity ratings can also be made by outside judges using transcripts of the receiver's mentation report.

These ganzfeld experiments found that reduction of sensory input does facilitate ESP performance. Perhaps this is why it is important to spend some "quiet time" with God each day, when you can experience God's presence and hear His voice.

SENDER-RECEIVER ACQUAINTANCE

When sender is acquainted with receiver, ESP is increased. Outside of the laboratory, ESP is often between people who are in a close relationship. These anecdotal stories are born out by the lab experiments that show an increase in performance between acquainted individuals. On a spiritual level we perceive best that which we are emotionally bonded to. So if you are pure in heart, you might perceive God.

An emotionally warm climate is important in generating high ESP scores. Conversely, an emotionally cold climate can reduce performance to below chance scores.

"BELIEF" - THE SHEEP GOAT EFFECT

The correlation between belief in ESP and ESP performance is one of the most consistent findings in the parapsychological literature (Palmer, 1978). Those who believe in ESP perform better than those who do not believe.

Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler, working at Harvard University and at the City College of New York, divided her subjects into "sheep" who believed that ESP might occur in their experiment and "goats" who did not.

Her studies, which were conducted over a nine year period and have since been replicated, showed an unquestionable difference between the "sheep" whose scores fell above chance expectation and "goats" who scored below chance levels. The phenomenon of ESP-missing is thought to be a psychological effect in which psychic material is repressed from consciousness.

In a review of 17 experiments testing the hypothesis that subjects who believed in ESP would show superior ESP performance compared to subjects who did not believe in ESP, psychologist John Palmer found that the predicted pattern occurred in 76% of the experiments, and all six of the experiments with individually significant outcomes were in the predicted direction. These findings suggest an overall statistical significance for this effect.

It is important to realize, however, that the sheep-goat studies do not necessarily distinguish those who believe in ESP from those who do not. In most studies, the "sheep" were not "true believers"; they merely accepted the possibility that ESP could occur in the test situation. On the other hand, many of the "goats" were willing to accept that ESP could occur between people who loved each other, or in certain times of crisis; but they rejected all possibility that ESP would manifest for them in their particular test situation.

ESP is sensitive to the expectation of the subject. It is a case of "believe and then you will see", rather than "see and then you will believe". The primacy of belief in allowing access to spiritual or religious experience, might be indicated by the Bible stories where the disciples could not heal because they did not believe.

PAST EXPERIENCE OF ESP

People are consistent in obtaining results like their prior ones.

Within the autoganzfeld studies, successful performance of novice (first-time) participants was significantly predicted by reported personal ESP experiences, involvement with meditation or other mental disciplines, and high scores on the Feeling and Perception factors of the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (Honorton, 1992; Honorton & Schechter, 1987; Myers & McCaulley, 1985). This recipe for success has now been independently replicated in another laboratory (Broughton, Kanthamani, & Khilji, 1990).

MUSICAL OR ARTISTIC ABILITY

When the ganzfeld experiments were repeated with music and art students, the results were even more significant - music students obtaining a hit rate of 75%, and art students 50%.

The Juilliard sample. There are several reports in the literature of a relationship between creativity or artistic ability and ESP performance (Schmeidler, 1988). To explore this possibility in the ganzfeld setting, 10 male and 10 female undergraduates were recruited from the Juilliard School. Of these, 8 were music students, 10 were drama students, and 2 were dance students. Each served as the receiver in a single session in Study 104 or 105. As shown in Table 1, these students achieved a hit rate of 50% ($p = .014$), one of the five highest hit rates ever reported for a single sample in a ganzfeld study. The musicians were particularly successful: 6 of the 8 (75%) successfully identified their targets ($p = .004$; further details about this sample and their ganzfeld performance were reported in Schlitz & Honorton, 1992).

Here we see that ESP is more of a "right-brain" faculty.

The Myers Briggs Personality Types with highest ESP ability are the EXTRAVERT, FEELING and PERCEIVING types.

THE CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE

The nature of the message being sent also determines the degree of ESP. If the message is interesting or emotionally significant for the recipient, then ESP is more likely to take place. If a message is dynamic, consisting of multiple images, then there are far more "hits" than with static target messages. A message that is emotionally positive for the perceiver is more likely to be sensed, than a neutral message.

Individual differences play a part here. Individuals who prefer messages that involve other human beings on a feeling level, tend to perform far better with picking up these messages, than with picking up abstract symbols. So individuals may score consistently well with some kinds of targets, but not with others.

FEEDBACK

Studies in which subjects are given trial-by-trial or run-score feedback have significantly larger effects than those with delayed or no subject feedback.

SUMMARY

The following are some key factors conducive to ESP, and therefore to direct religious experience.

1. Expectation of success, based on belief or prior experience - believing is seeing.
2. Being pure of heart - we perceive easiest that to which we are emotionally bonded.
3. Reduction of Sensory Input - Quiet Time.

4. Use of techniques that access the unconscious, eg meditation, hypnosis, dreams , or that serve as indicators of unconscious mentation
5. Use of techniques that access "right-brain" faculties, eg imagery, metaphor
6. Communicating regarding issues that are truly emotionally significant for you

Part 5 : ESP and Communion with God

Extra-sensory Perception is a necessary condition for direct spiritual experience. However, according to most religious traditions, the spiritual world contains more than just God. In fact most religions acknowledge a host of different spirits - animal, human, demon and angel - residing in different environments - eg heaven, earth and hell.

Extra-sensory perception is a necessary condition for any spiritual experience, but additional conditions may need to be met in order to access the higher realms. For example, God is Holy, and averse to sin, so access to God's Presence requires repentance and the grace of God. Access to lower realms would be devoid of these conditions.

Furthermore, God, angels and other such beings have freewill. So they can choose not to communicate with you - even though you want to communicate with them.

Different religions, by their own admission, provide varying degrees of access to the spirit world. Shamanism is mostly concerned with animal spirits and ancestor spirits. Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism are concerned with human spiritual self-improvement, where rising to the higher realms is a very long and effortful process taking millennia. Christianity is different from all these religions, in that it allows access to the Presence of God through Grace. Rather than us trying to reach God on our own steam, it is God reaching out to us and offering us a helping hand. So, based on the admissions of the different religions themselves, the most immediate access to the Presence of God is through God's help and Grace found in Christianity.

In summary, though all religions give access to the spirit world, not all levels of the spirit world are equally accessible by all religions. The highest levels are only accessed by Christianity.

Part 6 : A Cross Cultural Comparison

Sceptics article

References:

See the work of John Curtis Gowan on the relationship between trance, ESP and religious experience.

