

too quickly if the power is not first centralized. Those in power would lose control. The Insighters believe that no such thing would happen because the emergence of Insight awareness would create a benevolent passage (not without difficulties) toward a Utopian, planetary civilization.

In the chapter called "A History of Awakening" we learn the past-life secret of the narrator and the Celestine Prophecy's origins. Our narrator "remembers" that he was a member of a secret order of Franciscan "Spirituals" in the thirteenth century. The Spirituals (they actually existed) were supported by Pope Celestine V (from 1294–1296) but later "were condemned as Gnostics and excommunicated" (p. 108). In reality, the Spirituals were a radical sect of Franciscans (they called for a literal observance of St. Francis's rules, especially poverty) who had political differences with the next pope, Boniface VIII. They were not Gnostics in the strict sense.

The text suggests many techniques that enable an Insighter to access the Afterlife and knowledge of a personal destiny. The latter comes from Birth Visions, a kind of trance state that helps one to remember one's pure "intent" when entering life this time. The Life Review process is that time directly after death, or during a near-death experience, when a soul has a chance to see his life and prepare for whatever he needs to atone for in the next. The technique for "Holding the Vision" includes sitting in a circle with your soul "group" and focusing on the faces of each member until one can "image," as a group, the higher vision. In the story, the narrator, Maya, Charlene, Curtis, Joel, and David Lone Eagle do this while captives of the sinister experimenters. At a crucial time they manage to "hold" a "hologram" of the vision long enough to disrupt the function of the psychotronic device.

The Insighters receive magical help from "white streaks" or "movements of white light" at significant times. A white light "interferes" to stop a bullet aimed at

Maya in one scene. At the end, Wil explains, "They're the angels. . . . They respond to our faith and vision and make miracles. They seem to be a mystery even to those in the Afterlife. . . . I think we are to understand the angels next" (pp. 235–236).

The Tenth Insight is a well-organized complement to *The Celestine Prophecy*. It is slightly better written but the stilted character development remains. The book will sell well, if the five million copies sold of *Celestine* are any indication. The Internet is popping with *Celestine* pages and dialogs all over the world. I found the *Inca Games*, a "magical energy

game" or four-hour workshop (\$44–\$66, 66 maximum players) based on the "energy" of *The Celestine Prophecy*. One young man wrote, "I read the book today and feel it will affect my life in a profound and irreversible way. . . . I have a definite direction in life that will eventually reveal itself to me." Perhaps. Most of the comments I read were from Insight enthusiasts who take the teachings seriously. They truly believe that the powers expressed—the powers of magical healing, soul projection, aura sex, and manipulating love and forgiveness as if they were quantities of divine light—are real. When will they learn? □

Do-It-Yourself Parapsychology

CHRISTOPHER C. FRENCH

Test Your Psychic Powers: Find out the Truth for Yourself. By Susan Blackmore and Adam Hart-Davis. Thorsons, London, 1995. ISBN 1-85538-441-8. 159 pp. Paperback, \$9.00.

Purely on the basis of its title, readers of the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER might not feel inclined to pick up this slim volume in their bookstores, mistaking it for yet another New Age self-help manual. This impression would be reinforced by the fact that the book is published by Thorsons, an imprint of HarperCollins Pubs., Inc., that includes among its other titles such gems as *Understanding Astrology*, *Understanding Tarot*, *Understanding the I Ching*, and *UFOs: A Manual for the Millennium*. However, the fact that the first author is CSICOP Fellow Susan Blackmore might be enough to arouse interest. In fact, this volume, co-written with science writer Adam Hart-Davis, is anything but another unscientific, wishy-washy psychic self-improvement guide. It is nothing less than a parapsychological do-it-yourself guide, enabling amateur scientists to carry out simple, well-controlled investigations of various paranormal claims.

It contains ten chapters dealing with,

respectively, telepathy, crystals, dreams, dowsing, the pendulum, premonitions, psychokinesis, the Ouija board, palmistry, and astrology. The chapters tend to follow a similar format, usually opening with a few interesting anecdotal accounts, followed by a discussion of various theories about how the phenomenon in question might operate (including nonparanormal accounts). Some of the chapters include a brief historical account of scientific research into the phenomenon. The most important part of each chapter, however, is the detailed descriptions of experiments that the reader can try at home. As the title says, "Find out the truth for yourself!" One feature of many of these experiments is that they often explicitly instruct the reader to contrast the results of poorly controlled investigations with well-controlled ones. In investigating dowsing, for example, readers are encouraged to compare the results of a situation in which they know in advance which of six

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buckets contains water with one in which they do not already know. If the dowsing rod appears to react strongly to the correct bucket only in the former situation, readers will have learned something very important. They will have demonstrated for themselves that the movement of the dowsing rod is dependent upon the dowser's knowledge of the correct response and is presumably a result of unconscious muscular movements.

The emphasis throughout is upon statistical evaluation of results, and to this end the authors present simple tables of statistical significance levels associated with possible experimental outcomes, presumably based upon the binomial distribution. Unfortunately, Blackmore

Christopher C. French is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, where he teaches a final-year course on psychology, parapsychology, and pseudoscience.

and Hart-Davis make a common mistake when they are telling their readers how to interpret their findings. For interpreting the results of a dowsing experiment, for example, they say: "To help you work out how significant your findings are, on page 59 there is a simple table of probabilities. . . . The table will tell you the odds against getting that many just by chance. . . . To get a result that professional researchers would call 'significant,' you need to get a score that proves you had a less than 5 percent chance that you were just lucky" (pp. 58-9). In fact, the binomial probability is not the chance that you were just lucky; it is the probability of getting so many hits *if the results were due to chance*, not the probability that your results *were in fact* due to chance. But it would be almost impossible to explain the convoluted and unnatural logic of "null hypothesis significance testing," as it is called, to lay readers in a popular book. Another reason for not being too harsh

on the authors for this error is that it is commonly made even in introductory textbooks on statistics!

This is a minor quibble. This book is highly recommended. In particular, its clear and accessible style would make it an ideal gift for the interested teenager. Furthermore, as a lecturer in psychology, I would not hesitate to base psychology practical classes upon the ideas contained in this book. The experiments are likely to be perceived by students as more fun than yet another reaction-time task, and they will also learn a lot about experimental control in the process.

The book does not adopt either an overtly proparanormal or antiparanormal stance, and it is likely to be all the more effective for that. It will hopefully be read by many nonskeptical readers, and some of them may decide to carry out the experiments suggested. Most of them are likely to end up sadder but wiser regarding the possibility that they themselves possess psychic powers. □

NEW BOOKS

Behind the Crystal Ball: Magic, Science, and the Occult from Antiquity Through the New Age. Anthony Aveni. Times Books/Random House, New York. 1996. 406 pp. \$28 hardcover. At one time science and the occult happily coexisted, barely distinguishable in method and practice. Here the noted Colgate University professor of astronomy and anthropology strives to provide a balanced account of how and why people in the Western tradition changed the way they think about the real world. Aveni examines magical belief chronologically: The first four sections deal with magic in antiquity, magic from the Dark Ages to the Enlightenment, nineteenth-century occultism (the Fox sisters, "bumpology"), and modern manifestations (psychics versus physics, healing, UFO abductions, life after life, crystals, and geomancy). A fifth section considers magical belief at the millennium.

The Nature of Visual Illusion. Mark Fineman. Dover Books, 31 E. 2nd St., Mineola, New York 11501. 1996. 171 pp. \$9.95 paper (add \$4 if ordering by mail). This is an unabridged republication of a work first published by Oxford University

Press in 1981 under the title *The Inquisitive Eye*. A teacher of visual perception who wished to create a book that was intrinsically interesting, scientifically valid, and readable, Fineman explores the psychology and physiology of vision and the extraordinary illu-

sions that confront us (the wagon-wheel effect, Leonardo's Window, Pulfrich's Amazing Pendulum, Poggendorf's Illusion, etc.). More than 100 illustrations and demonstrations are included.

—Kendrick Frazier

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For details, contact:

Alternativa Racional a las Pseudociencias (ARP)

Attn: Miguel A. Sabadell

Apdo. 1516

E-50080 Zaragoza

Spain

Fax: +34 76 761140 • Tel.: +34 76 290043 or +34 07 201671

E-mail: sabadell@posta.unizar.es

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