

BEYOND TIME AND SPACE: HOW SCIENCE STUDIES THE POWER OF THE MIND AND ITS POSSIBLE SURVIVAL OF BODILY DEATH

*By Piero Calvi-Pariseti. OpenMind Publishing. 2025. 243 pp. Hardback
and ebook*

Piero Calvi-Pariseti's new book on the science of psi manages to combine two ordinarily incompatible qualities, comprehensiveness and brevity. The comprehensiveness stems from the number of topics covered: the nature of psi; precognition and presentiment; telepathy and remote viewing; direct interaction of the mind with both living and non-living physical systems; global consciousness; near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, deathbed visions; mediumship; and reincarnation. The brevity comes in because each topic is typically covered by the examination of between just two and eight peer-reviewed articles.

The result is a book short enough to be accessible to the interested layperson, but thorough enough to touch on all the major issues in parapsychology. The drawback is that some areas are given decidedly short shrift. This is particularly true of postmortem survival, as Calvi-Pariseti acknowledges:

As for the hypothesis of survival, the seven articles examined, plus the methodological contribution of Prof. Patrizio Tressoldi, cannot even remotely do justice to what many consider a veritable ocean of evidence. The reader should consider this second section of the book simply as a minimal selection of examples. (p. 24)

In the opening chapter, Calvi-Pariseti addresses common criticisms of parapsychology. He notes that anecdotal reports, while often dismissed, play an essential role in many scientific disciplines when systematically collected and analysed. "The 'plural of anecdotes' (an expression often used by sceptics), therefore, does constitute research data, contrary to what is too often claimed" (p. 5). While acknowledging that "the weight of anecdotes is much lower compared to other types of evidence" (p. 5), he is by no means ready to dismiss them outright.

Calvi-Pariseti also challenges the claim that psi research fails to replicate, arguing that "the replication difficulties in parapsychology are exactly at the same level as those experienced in general psychology, biomedical research, nutrition sciences, or economics" (p. 6).

Subsequent chapters examine specific phenomena. Precognition and presentiment are discussed in terms of “fast” (implicit, unconscious) versus “slow” (explicit, conscious) mental processing. The evidence surveyed suggests that anticipatory effects appear more robust in fast, nonconscious responses.

Much of his discussion draws on Daryl Bem’s (2011) well-known article ‘Feeling the Future,’ covering nine experiments conducted over eight years, in which subjects appeared to respond to stimuli that had not yet been selected by the computer. In a typical experiment, Bem’s subject had to choose which of two curtained windows on a computer screen concealed an erotic image. “At the moment the subject makes a choice, however, *neither curtain hides the photo*. It is only *after* the subject has chosen that the computer makes a random choice and assigns the erotic image to one of the curtains” (p. 47, emphasis in original). The success rate was significantly above chance.

Bem received fierce criticism from sceptics, including this primal yawp from cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter: “If any of [Bem’s] claims were true, then all of the bases underlying contemporary science would be toppled, and we would have to rethink everything about the nature of the universe ... There has to be a common sense cutoff for craziness.” Astronomer David Helfand declared Bem’s work “an assault on science and rationality.” Psychologist Ray Hyman called Bem’s work “madness, pure madness” (p. 49). And on it goes.

Telepathy is the subject of Chapter 5. Calvi-Pariseti writes that “between 1882 and 1939, 142 scientific publications reported a total of 3.6 million individual trials (remember that a trial is, for example, every instance in which a subject tries to guess a card) by more than 4,600 participants in 185 different experiments” (p. 81). The result obtained by meta-analysis was consistent with odds against chance of more than one billion trillion to one.

The controversial Star Gate project comes up in Chapter 6, centred on remote viewing. Calvi-Pariseti quotes contrasting assessments by statistician Jessica Utts and Hyman. Utts concluded that “psychic powers exist and have been well demonstrated ... based on commonly accepted scientific criteria” (p. 106), emphasising the consistency of results across laboratories. Hyman, while more cautious, nonetheless acknowledged that “the statistical results ... are far beyond what is expected by chance” (p. 107) and that the experiments were carefully designed.

The interaction of the mind with physical systems, including living systems, follows in Chapters 7 and 8. The author discusses the famed double-slit experiment in physics, then proceeds to explore “the brilliant idea of [Dean] Radin and his collaborators ... to see if the shift between wave behaviour (when particles are not observed) and particle behaviour (when they are) would happen without a physical detector. They predicted a shift towards particle behaviour proportional to levels of *mental awareness* ... Subjects were asked to focus their attention” (p. 131, emphasis in original) on the double-slit set-up and, in particular, the screen that recorded photon hits. The hypothesis was that

there would be “a shift towards a diffraction pattern, indicative of the collapse of the wave function” (p. 131), in the intervals of focused attention. The outcome?

The spectral analysis shows exactly the shift towards the diffraction pattern during the ‘active’ periods with a human subject predicted by the experimental hypothesis ($z = -4.36$, $p = 6 \times 10^{-6}$). The control sessions ... do not show any movement. (p. 131)

The use of intentionality to affect the progress of disease brings up experiments by William Bengston, who infected mice with deadly tumours, then placed his hands on their plastic cage at regular intervals. In the first experiment, five of the six mice survived, even though “there is not a single case in literature in which an animal infected with this tumour has survived more than 27 days” (p. 148). Complicating this result, four of six control mice, not subjected to the ‘laying on of hands,’ also recovered!

Subsequent experiments also showed baffling recoveries for at least some of the control animals. Conceivably, this was a kind of spillover effect having to do with the animals’ proximity to the ones being treated. When the control mice were sent to a different city, where presumably they would be subject to no inadvertent healing intentions, all of them died on schedule. Though Calvi-Pariseti is especially enthusiastic about these experiments, I’m inclined to think that until the survival of so many control animals can be properly accounted for, our conclusions must be limited.

After reviewing evidence for global consciousness (Chapter 9) and considering some sceptical demurrals (Chapter 10), Calvi-Pariseti addresses the objection that there is currently no formal theory of psi. He disagrees, citing James Carpenter’s (2012) book *First Sight*, which, to him, offers “undoubtedly the most elegant, organic and the best supported theory of psi” (p. 172). The advantages of Carpenter’s approach, he writes, are that it normalizes psi, presenting it not as a capricious aberration but as “a constant aspect of how organisms interact with reality” (p. 177).

Chapter 12 explores the nature of consciousness, as a lead-in to the final section of the book (Chapters 13–18) which, as stated earlier, offers a rather perfunctory overview of evidence for life after death. Near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences and deathbed visions come up for discussion. There is the well-known story of the ‘dentures man’, a patient suffering from hypothermia who, upon recovering, was able to identify the nurse who had removed his dentures and to say precisely where the dentures had been stored. According to the nurse, “I remembered the incident very well, but at that time the patient was in a deep coma and receiving cardiopulmonary resuscitation” (p. 198). Young children who claim to remember a past life make an appearance, though past-life regression under hypnosis receives only passing mention, perhaps on account of the high chance of confabulation by the percipient.

The book concludes with a personal statement, in which Calvi-Pariseti argues that “simply acquiring information about just one of the areas of

evidence supporting the survival hypothesis (through what in psychology is called bibliotherapy) can have profound effects on people's psychophysical well-being" (p. 242). He cites his own research in support of the thesis that "engaging in depth with the evidence suggesting the existence of an afterlife ... results in psychometrically measurable changes in attitudes and beliefs ... And this has a very positive (sometimes literally transformative) effect for bereaved people" (p. 242). Calvi-Parisetti's deep purpose is not just to win an argument, but to help people.

Overall, his book accomplishes what it sets out to do. However, there are occasional errors. For example, we're told that the remote viewing studies were "conducted at the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), a think tank linked to the prestigious university of the same name" (p. 104), but actually the institute cut all ties with the university in 1970. Case studies of children who remember past lives are confounded by confusing shifts in pronouns; in reference to one little boy, KumKum Verma, it is said that "*she* began saying at the age of three and a half that *she* had lived in Darbhanga" (p. 232, emphasis added). I also noted a few formatting problems in this self-published edition. Some of these issues may already have been resolved, as the author encourages readers to apprise him of mistakes.

These caveats are trivial. For your open-minded friend or colleague who desires a readable introduction to parapsychology, *Beyond Time and Space* is an excellent choice.

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