

## CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor:

### **A response to Kennedy's (2025) reviews**

With enthusiasm but mild trepidation, I read James Kennedy's (2025) combined review of my two books *A New Approach to Psi* (Storm, 2025a) and *A New Approach to Synchronicity* (Storm, 2025b). I must say I appreciate the effort Kennedy took in reviewing not one but two rather lengthy books. I found it overall supportive, though it's not a deep dive—which other reviewers also refrained from doing (e.g., Daw, 2025; Mörck, 2025). Of course, I realize that readers may not wish for *density*, and perhaps a review is not the place for serious theoretical probing. However, I do wish to respond to a few of Kennedy's criticisms, though he makes reasonable points that I do acknowledge, or have no need to challenge, as is the case with the two Society for Psychical Research website reviews just listed.

Labelled as “Book 1”, the first major issue Kennedy tackles in *A New Approach to Psi* is my approach to experimenter effect in psi research (aka ‘E-psi’). My point here is that I don't *generally* propose “that concern about experimenter effects in psi research is not justified” (p. 157). Fortunately, Kennedy corrects himself in a subsequent paragraph, noting that I *do* feel concern is justified in the case of *within-study* E-psi, of which there is ample evidence. And he also correctly points out that I do claim *between-study* E-psi is overblown, and indeed I do use the meta-analyses to back up my claim: But Kennedy points out that there have been those who contradict such a claim: J. B. Rhine may well have “had no doubt that experimenters have differing [psi] abilities” (p. 157), but we have come a long way since the 1930s, and one man's experiences and assumptions, or those of a few, are surely outweighed by the meta-analytic findings which show there are no marked (significant) differences. The same goes for Rosenthal (1986; as cited in Kennedy, 2025); his finding of significant effect size differences between *ganzfeld* investigators is nearly *40 years old*. My claim was based on the most *recent data*, from a number of different meta-analyses covering a range of experimental paradigms, not just *ganzfeld* (Storm, 2025a, Chapter 2).

Here we come to the real issue for Kennedy—the general problem some in academia have with meta-analysis. On the one hand, I do not think the resistance to, and criticisms of, meta-analysis are entirely justified to the

degree that we can't depend on it, but on the other hand, I wouldn't say I only have "*excessive optimism about retrospective meta-analyses* (EORMA)" (p. 157). To me, the more serious problem is that some critics of meta-analysis (e.g., R. Hyman and R. Wiseman), as well as those Kennedy lists, and those who make a big deal over questionable research practices (see especially Storm, 2025a, pp. 80–84), seem almost hell bent on seeing to it that parapsychology is recognised as suffering the same 'replication crisis' as many of the mainstream disciplines—something Stokes (2015, as cited in Storm, 2025a) also tried to argue, but not satisfactorily to my way of thinking.

Furthermore, some meta-analyses have been *prospective* (I quoted Roger Nelson saying it is needed; Storm, 2025a, p. 71), though I didn't cover that issue as well as I'd have liked to (but see Storm et al., 2010)—my point being that meta-analysis is not entirely *retrospective*. Kennedy agrees with Green et al. (2003, as cited in Kennedy, 2025, p. 158) that "one large well-conducted trial" would be superior to a meta-analysis, but, ultimately, isn't the latter the tail end of the former? Everyone wants a general picture, and individual studies (with many trials) will not exist in a vacuum for very long—one study's success (or a string of them) will compete with another's failure (or a string of them). The role of meta-analysis is to disambiguate—something many consider it does well (Allen, 2020; Jennions et al., 2013), despite its flaws and our grievances. It will be a meta-analytic technique, hopefully with any needed improvements, that will paint a bigger picture that cannot be rivalled by "a representative amount of research findings", even if they do use "post-replication-crisis methodology" (p. 161). But let's not mince words—what is meta-analysis if it is not *representative* of research findings?

Kennedy's second major criticism concerns the Trickster archetype. In fact, I'd say Kennedy (and also Ritchie, 2020, as cited in Kennedy, 2025) does not quite have the right handle on my views about the Trickster, by arguing that Storm

does not discuss alternative explanations that may be more parsimonious and testable than the Trickster archetype. Other factors that may produce persistent researcher mistakes include groupthink, resistance to change, and lack of knowledge about research biases. (Ritchie, 2020, as cited in Kennedy, 2025, pp. 158–159)

However, the Trickster is a global or superordinate category and the three ('testable?') factors Kennedy lists (on behalf of Ritchie) come under Trickster phenomenology typified as "psychosociological aberrations" (Storm 2023, p. 665)—researchers who go along with a (possibly distorted) consensus view ("groupthink"), and their stubbornness ("resistance to change") and/or "lack of knowledge about research biases", are all open doors that allow the Trickster to fly in.

I note, favourably, other remarks Kennedy makes indicating his interpretations of my words are in the manner I meant them to be taken, and

I was pleased to see he recognised at least one “practically valuable section in the book” (p. 159), namely a revised approach to research.

Then we come to “Book 2”, which goes into greater detail about synchronicity. Readers should note that there is much cross-referencing between the two books, as Kennedy rightly points out (p. 160), though not as a fault. By way of explanation, the idea of two companion volumes came out of the fact that the original single manuscript had to be split in two due to the insistence of the publisher (Routledge), which found the original typescript too big, and wouldn’t publish otherwise. This was the case with other publishers I approached.

On archetypes, while I did say they are “far too numerous to count” (Storm, 2025b, p. 4)—a “conspicuous challenge” (p. 160) to research—I concede other researchers seem to be bringing the count down to a less humbling, more manageable, level: Aarne and Thompson (1961), for example (whom I did not cite), suggest that we can easily get by with one hundred archetypal themes, and Booker (2004, as cited in Storm, 2025b) argues that all storylines can be reduced to seven basic plots, which are in themselves archetypal scenarios. Between those numbers are the sixty-four hexagram readings in the Chinese divinatory system known as the I Ching, which “presupposes that there is a synchronistic correspondence between the psychic state of the questioner and the answering hexagram” (Jung, 1951/1969, para. 986). So, we have practical launch points not entirely weighed down by some indeterminable upper limit, as even suggested by Jung himself. Also, archetypal meanings are not purely or “highly subjective” (p. 160)—another scientific bottleneck—for, as I have pointed out (pp. 33–34), there is a huge level of objectivity in the interpretations insofar as archetypes are human-wide.

In conclusion, Kennedy’s treatment of Book 2 is largely on point (especially Chapters 3, 4, and 5). Of both books, one of Kennedy’s summations conveys one of my main messages: “primary practical recommendation from these books is that parapsychological researchers should pay much greater attention to archetypes and meaning” (p. 161). Of course, I can only agree with Kennedy that “more information is needed about the many archetypes and how they manifest” (p. 161). With that, we may better understand synchronicity. And while I agree archetypes may *generally* be “uncontrollable” (p. 161), I also argue that the motivational element is key. Yet we must avoid “the inflation of emphasising personal agency” (Main, 2025), so that we come to understand that so-called ‘psi’ is more to do with who we are and less about what we think we can do.

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