

# EdgeScience

Number 41 | March 2020

Current Research and Insights

**A Case of the Reincarnation Type?  
Extraordinary and Unique Abilities  
Reexamining *The Exorcist* Case  
Fellow Travelers**

A publication of the

 **SOCIETY FOR  
SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION**

## EdgeScience #41

March 2020

EdgeScience is a quarterly magazine.

Print copies are available from  
edgescience.magcloud.com.

For further information, see edgescience.org

Email: edgescience@scientificexploration.org

**Why EdgeScience?** Because, contrary to public perception, scientific knowledge is still full of unknowns. What remains to be discovered—what we don't know—very likely dwarfs what we do know. And what we think we know may not be entirely correct or fully understood. Anomalies, which researchers tend to sweep under the rug, should be actively pursued as clues to potential breakthroughs and new directions in science.

PUBLISHER: The Society for Scientific Exploration

EDITOR: Patrick Huyghe

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: P.D. Moncrief Jr.

CONTRIBUTORS: Jeff O'Driscoll, Audrey Irvine,  
John G. Kruth, P.D. Moncrief Jr.

DESIGN: Smythtype Design

**The Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE)** is a professional organization of scientists and scholars who study unusual and unexplained phenomena. The primary goal of the Society is to provide a professional forum for presentations, criticism, and debate concerning topics which are for various reasons ignored or studied inadequately within mainstream science. A secondary goal is to promote improved understanding of those factors that unnecessarily limit the scope of scientific inquiry, such as sociological constraints, restrictive world views, hidden theoretical assumptions, and the temptation to convert prevailing theory into prevailing dogma. Topics under investigation cover a wide spectrum. At one end are apparent anomalies in well established disciplines. At the other, we find paradoxical phenomena that belong to no established discipline and therefore may offer the greatest potential for scientific advance and the expansion of human knowledge. The SSE was founded in 1982 and has approximately 800 members in 45 countries worldwide. The Society also publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, and holds annual meetings in the U.S. and biennial meetings in Europe. Associate and student memberships are available to the public. To join the Society, or for more information, visit the website at [scientificexploration.org](http://scientificexploration.org).

PRESIDENT: William Bengston, St. Joseph's College

VICE PRESIDENT: Garret Moddel, University of Colorado,  
Boulder

SECRETARY: Mark Urban-Lurain, Michigan State  
University

TREASURER: York Dobyms

EDUCATION OFFICER: Chantal Toporow

EUROPEAN COORDINATOR: Anders Rydberg

Copyright © 2020 Society for Scientific Exploration

The authors, artists, and photographers retain copyright to their work.

ISSN 2330-4545 (Print)

ISSN 2330-4553 (Online)

# CONTENTS

## 3 THE OBSERVATORY *Fellow Travelers*

By Jeff O'Driscoll, MD



## FEATURE

## *Extraordinary and Unique Abilities: Exploring Who, What, When, and How They Occur*

# 7

By Audrey Irvine

## 11 REFERENCE POINT *A Second Look at History's Most Famous Exorcism*

by John G. Kruth, on Sergio

A. Rueda's *Diabolical Possession and the Case Behind The Exorcist: An Overview of Scientific Research with Interviews with Witnesses and Experts*



## BACKSCATTER *A Case of the Reincarnation Type? Why I Have a Strong Opinion I Lived from 1896 to 1925*

# 15

By P. D. Moncrief Jr.

Jeff O'Driscoll, MD

# Fellow Travelers

I entered the emergency department through the ambulance bay and walked past the major medical rooms on my way to the physician work area. The resuscitation rooms are filled with specialized equipment and located near the ambulance entrance to facilitate immediate access to arriving patients. As I passed, I heard a familiar commotion and caught glimpses in my peripheral vision. A colleague barked out orders while other providers administered chest compressions and rhythmically delivered oxygen through the unconscious woman's endotracheal tube. I heard her ribs crack, as is common when frail elderly patients receive chest compressions.

I was about to log in to the computer when I became aware of a spiritual presence near me. A vibration began in the center of my being and radiated outward to the tips of my extremities, and reverberated back and forth until it filled every cell of my body. I'd had such experiences several times. I recognized what was happening, but I didn't yet know what to do with it. Then my unseen visitor asked for help.

I didn't know what help I could offer, or why this feminine presence would ask, but I left my computer and casually walked around the corner and into the resuscitation room. Because I was appropriately attired, known by the staff, and about to begin my shift, my entrance was inconspicuous. No one even looked up from their tasks. The physician in charge continued directing care, and everyone continued their assigned tasks. I had absolutely no responsibility for this woman's medical care. In fact, I think that is one of the reasons she came to me.

Because I'd just walked in, and because I was not involved in her care, my mind and heart were open. When I'm the physician in charge, particularly when it's a trauma patient or a medical resuscitation, I'm consumed with dozens of simultaneous medical decisions, diagnoses, treatments, procedures, and communications. In those circumstances, I rarely have spiritual experiences. On this day, however, I had none of those responsibilities. I was simply an open heart, in the present, receptive to another soul's request.

I walked to the side of her gurney and rested my hand gently on her right leg. It was the only spot not occupied by medical providers. No one noticed me. I touched her because I knew from previous experience that touch breaks unseen barriers and invites a spiritual connection. As the crowd of busy professionals continued their work, the essence or soul of this unconscious woman silently communicated with me. She asked if she could leave.

I was taken aback. Why would she ask me that? Why would she think I could answer? I was not her doctor, and this had nothing to do with her medical care. She wasn't asking for physical or medical help. She felt like a dear friend asking for reassurance. She was completely undisturbed by the commotion in the room or the consequences of their efforts. Our ineffable communication had already transcended those things.

In some inexplicable and instantaneous manner, I acknowledged her eight decades of honorable life. A flood of understanding flowed between us. We seemed to have known each other in another time. Then something came to me from eternity, as if I'd known it forever but forgotten. I silently suggested that if *she* wanted to leave, and if *she* felt it was the right time, then perhaps it was okay for her to go. It was her decision—entirely hers. As far as I know, no one else in the room was aware of our communication. I did nothing regarding her medical care. There was nothing for me to do. Everyone else was doing it. I just listened and silently shared the feelings that came through me.

I stepped back from the gurney as her last signs of cardiac activity ceased. She rose from her physical body and stood in the air, filling me with incomprehensible light and glory. She lingered for a moment that seemed much longer, as if time had slowed just for us. Her countenance was calm and pleasant. Her form resembled her now lifeless body, but she appeared much younger, as she may have looked in her physical prime.

She surveyed the commotion with a profound sense of peace, an ethereal peace that settled over me and took me to



a glorious place. Then she calmly, almost casually, turned to leave. Pausing, she looked back and thanked me. Then she was gone. As I walked away, I heard my colleague, in military time, pronounce her death. I didn't need his declaration; I'd seen her leave.

I walked back to my computer and logged on. That's how my day began. I don't know why this beautiful soul felt she needed my help, and I'm not sure if or how I helped her. I just know she asked, and she was grateful. In my experience, the essence of a fellow traveler—that portion of a soul we seldom see or hear or feel—is always grateful for our help.

**This was not an isolated experience for me;** nor was it my first. Just one month before my twelfth birthday, my 15-year-old brother, Stan, died in a farm accident. I witnessed the devastating impact his death had on my parents, but I thought I'd passed through it unscathed. Things would be different after June 18, 1973, but I didn't understand how. Twenty years after his death, Stan came to me. He told me I needed to go visit with our mother because there were things she'd never told me about his death.

I sat with my mother a few days later. Tears streamed down her face as she spoke of her oldest son. "I always knew where you were in the house before Stan died because I could hear you singing," she said. "After he died, you stopped singing."

I don't remember the singing or stopping, but she does. The experience must have impacted me in some primal way. It must have changed who I was. In my teenage years, I began hearing voices—mostly Stan's. I didn't tell anyone about the voices. I assumed others heard them as well. Sometimes they helped me; on one occasion, they saved my life.

When I was sixteen years old, with a brand-new driver's license, I piloted two friends in a Volkswagen Beetle, down a narrow country road, in the dark, at 60 miles per hour. No one wore seatbelts then, at least not in that car. A calm voice spoke to my heart: "You need to slow down."

I wouldn't have listened to my parents at that age. I was rebellious. I certainly wouldn't have listened to an authority figure. I don't think I would have listened to God if he'd been in the seat next to me. But I knew that voice. I felt it. I experienced it. And, for some reason, I listened. I slowed down as I rounded a corner. I met a pair of headlights I'd later learn belonged to a Cadillac. The damage was substantial, but no one was injured.

**As I accepted the voices,** I began experiencing the source of the messages in other ways. I hesitate to say I saw messengers because people equate that with physical sight, with corneas, retinas, rods and cones, and the occipital cortex. If that's how it worked, the people standing nearby would see the same things. When I experience messengers, the images bypass the retina, the optic nerve, the optic chiasm, and the cortical interpretation. I experience them in a pure, unadulterated way. Sometimes it seems almost physical, but it's deeper, richer, and soul-changing. It's not just interacting with another being in a profound way; it's realizing myself in a more profound realm, and remembering who I am.

Every scrap of human experience has value. Every shred of every encounter with every soul teaches me something. Each interaction yields an opportunity to connect with others, to hinder their progress or to move them along their path. And each interaction writes on my soul and changes me. One experience, in particular, helped me realize I'm not good at predicting who it will help or how.

I still remember a patient I met on a winter night. He was cold, wet, and homeless. As I entered the room, I glanced at his feet. His shoes, if you could call them that, were worn and riddled with holes. Through the holes in his shoes, I could see the holes in his socks. His feet were blistered and swollen. It wasn't frigid enough to freeze his feet, but he had minor cold-induced injuries. The relentlessly wet socks, and walking several miles daily, had taken a toll. He'd walked from the shelter to the park, from the park to the shopping district, and from the shopping district back to the shelter. That was his daily trek. In my mind, I could see his path in the snow.



Pro2sound/iStock

My patient and I were the only two people in the room. He didn't have much to say. Neither did I. We both knew what needed to be done. I grabbed a washbasin and filled it with tepid water. I faced away from him, but I could see his distorted reflection in the chromed paper towel dispenser. He watched pensively. I moved toward the end of the gurney. He repositioned himself and reached for his shoelaces. He grimaced as he leaned forward. I could tell it was painful for him. I took over the task as he leaned back onto the pillow with a look of appreciation.

I removed his tattered shoes and the remaining threads of his socks. I found no evidence of infection or serious thermal injury, just some blisters, some swelling, and maceration. I lowered his feet into the water and squirted some soap on a washcloth. I looked up occasionally as I gently washed layers of the city from his feet. His hair was long, his beard unkempt, his clothing disheveled. He'd struggled with addictions. He was the antithesis of everything the world around him had labeled as success.

I could have delegated my task to another, but I was richly blessed by my small act of service. As I washed his feet, something happened that I can only describe as miraculous. A veil

was drawn back. I saw who he was. I looked upon something sacred. In this man who had neither possessions nor the esteem of the world, I saw the glorious and indescribable nobility of every soul who suffers. I saw that portion of him that was divine. I saw God.

**I have no medical explanation** for my experiences. Some of my friends have spent their careers studying near-death experiences, like Bruce Greyson, MD, Raymond Moody, MD PhD, or Pim van Lommel, MD. Other physician friends have had near-death experiences, like Eben Alexander, MD, or Mary Neal, MD. We've all discussed these things. None of the proposed mechanisms withstand scientific rigor or scrutiny, but at least they are being discussed. To my knowledge, however, no one has even proposed a theory for the shared-death experience I had with the dying woman or the spiritually transformative experience I had with the homeless man. I just know I was wide awake, perfectly alert, and taking no medications or mind-altering substances. Other physician friends have also had shared-death experiences when patients died, but they're not willing to talk yet.

I experienced a tiny taste of empathy for that homeless man as I walked through the snowy hospital parking lot in my socks and drove home with cold wet feet. He'd left in my shoes. I had given so little. I had a heater in my car and a dozen pairs of shoes at home. I had a home.

I wept that night as I thought about what I'd experienced. I'd entered a hospital room thinking I would provide service to another soul—and perhaps I did, in some small way—but I soon realized he was ministering to me. My patient was giving me the greater gift. Since then, I've seen every soul differently than I did before. Every human being is a fellow traveler. When I see all souls equally, when I stop judging and labeling, then I find my path, and I can help others find theirs.

I had frequent experiences in the Emergency Department—several per year, give or take—but chose not to speak of them. I'm not sure why I remained silent. Some experiences seemed too sacred to discuss. Perhaps I was concerned about my reputation or how my colleagues would respond, though I don't recall thinking that. I just know that six months after I stopped seeing patients, I suddenly and inexplicably felt it was alright to share. I began tentatively, first to trusted friends, then more broadly over time.

As I wrote the concluding pages of my book, *Not Yet*, my brother came to me again. He said, "Keep going." Initially, I thought he was referring to the book, but I was literally typing the last lines at the time. A few weeks later, on my way to my first public speaking engagement, my feelings changed. A young couple sat next to me in the airport lounge and asked about my trip. The tenor of the conversation shifted when the woman asked what I'd be speaking about. As I shared the subject with her, her eyes brightened, as if she'd been given permission to discuss a forbidden topic. "My grandfather just died," she said, "and he's come to me." She took one of my books and caught her plane. And I caught mine.

**I was an emergency physician** for 25 years. I estimate I cared for more than 60,000 patients, so you might imagine

my surprise when a voice whispered, "You'll help more people with this book than you helped as a physician in the emergency department." Now I feel differently about my brother's admonition. When he said, "keep going," he wasn't talking about my book. He was telling me to keep sharing, to keep helping others.

My experiences continue. In fact, they are more frequent now. One such defining moment came recently while at a friend's speaking engagement. I wasn't speaking; I just went to support him. As he often does, usually to my chagrin, he engaged the audience in an activity, asking them to stand and pair off, facing each other eye-to-eye. The only person more uncomfortable with the activity than me was the man standing next to me. He looked like he wanted to climb under his chair. He turned quickly to the woman at his left—I assumed she was his wife—but she'd already turned to her friend. With no other choice for either of us, we faced each other.

We did our best to maintain eye contact, but the person in front of me struggled. He kept looking away. He became emotional and twice brushed away tears. At one point, I looked away also to make things easier for him. As I did so, a flash of moments marched through my mind. I saw myself earlier that very day, refining my personal mission statement: I Exist To Help Souls Heal. It's on my website, Facebook page, and business cards. It's who I am.

Committed to my credo, I reengaged the man in front of me, determined to love him enough to help him. I looked through his eyes and into his heart. His lip began to quiver. We hadn't said a word, but I saw his wounds. I knew him. I discerned how powerful the experience was for him, how much he needed it. When we concluded, he embraced me. Without offering any explanation, he thanked me. I thanked him in return.

I reflected on our encounter for days and spoke to others who had attended the event until I discovered the man's name. I connected with his wife on Facebook. She invited me to visit Andrew in his hospital room. I arrived on Christmas Eve. He was recovering from surgery and looked well. His wife sat on the other side of his bed. I could feel how much my efforts meant to her.

Our visit bypassed the usual formalities. It felt like we already knew each other.

He spoke as if he knew why I'd come, like he'd been waiting for me. Before I could ask, he volunteered his view of our shared experience. He'd only recently commenced his spiritual journey, moving from things temporal and mundane to things profound and eternal. His understanding had come quickly, accelerated by his health challenges. He was no longer afraid of death. "When I looked into your eyes that night, I knew you were a fellow traveler," he said. "I knew if I shared my story, you'd understand."

I wept as he spoke. I think we all wept a bit, but we weren't sad. Despite his health challenges, the room was filled with an unconquerable joy that transcended earthly peril. We'd found each other. A few weeks later, Andrew died. Those were our only two encounters in this life, but they were perfect. I hardly knew him, but I miss him.

We are all fellow travelers, helping one another. I wish I had learned more about that in medical school.

## The Jeff Olsen Story

LATE IN MY SHIFT, in March 1997, a nurse grabbed me by the arm, and insisted I accompany her to the trauma room. She was the only person in the emergency department who knew I sometimes saw people outside their bodies. She knew because she saw them too, and we'd talked about it.

I had no intention of being involved in Jeff Olsen's care. There were other physicians in the trauma room already. I wasn't needed, but I moved in that direction because this nurse kept tugging at my arm and insisted Jeff's wife was with him. Everybody in the department knew that his wife and 14-month-old son had died at the scene. It was part of the medical report. We knew Jeff had extensive injuries. He'd been extricated from the mangled vehicle, stabilized to the degree possible at a local hospital, and then flown to our trauma center.

I had no responsibility for Jeff's medical care. I was simply an observer. When I entered the trauma suite, I saw the usual army of professionals surrounding his gurney. Bits of an unconscious and battered body were visible through the cracks between personnel. I saw the usual flurry of activity and heard the hum of voices. Then everything faded into silence, like a television show with the sound turned off. People's lips still moved—they could still hear one another—but the room fell silent for me. A tingle—almost a vibration—radiated outward to the tip of each digit. The hair on my arms and neck stood at attention.

The treatment area was large, with an elevated ceiling. Jeff's wife, Tamara, stood in the air above the gurney. We'd never met, but I knew her. She calmly surveyed the room, sometimes looking toward me, sometimes toward her severely injured spouse. She had a pleasant countenance and a warm, welcoming disposition. She had long, wavy, blonde hair.

I walked to the gurney and looked at Jeff for the first time. I looked at his badly injured legs. People moved around me, all doing their respective tasks. Tamara continued to watch over my right shoulder. I may have felt for a pulse in his left foot. I don't recall for sure. I thought or said out loud, "He's going to lose the leg." I just knew.

Though facing Jeff, I could still see Tamara behind me. I could see her as clearly behind me as I could see him in front. I could see in every



Jeff Olsen

not a surprise. It feels more like a confirmation than a revelation.

I love such moments because everything reorders. Nothing trivial or temporal matters. I see souls as they are, without the filters that incline me to separate and label them. I see everyone as alike, and I love them all, including myself—something that is difficult when I'm in the trappings of mortality. I love such moments. I wish I had more of them, except that such experiences make it hard for me to find contentment in this world.

After Jeff went to the operating room, I pulled off my gown and shoe-covers, and finished my shift. I wouldn't see him for a month. That same persistent nurse who introduced us, insisted I visit him again. He was still in the hospital, now without his left leg, trying to recover from multiple surgeries and other trauma. As the nurse explained why we were there, Jeff began to weep. He cautiously divulged that he had left his body at the scene of the accident and met his deceased wife in her perfected state. "You have to go back," she'd told him. "You have to raise our other son." That was just one of his profound experiences.

Jeff Olsen and I are still good friends today, more than two decades later. While he was saying his most profound good-bye to Tamara, I was saying hello. She's visited us both since. On one occasion, she cautioned me, "Don't let anything interfere with your friendship." We still honor her wisdom.

—Jeff O'Driscoll

Robin Johnson

**JEFF O'DRISCOLL** received his M.D. from the University of Utah School of Medicine. He is board certified in internal medicine and is a fellow of the American College of Emergency Physicians. He practiced emergency medicine at a level-one trauma center, teaching students and residents, for 25 years, and served as chairman of the department for eight years, receiving awards and publishing articles for service quality in the emergency department. He is the author of the award-winning memoir *Not Yet: Near-Life Experiences & Lessons Learned*. Dr. O'Driscoll sees clients for intuitive mentoring and speaks internationally. He can be reached through his website [jeffodriscoll.com](http://jeffodriscoll.com).



Robin Johnson



Audrey Irvine

# Extraordinary and Unique Abilities: Exploring Who, What, When, and How They Occur

I grew up in a family which had many extraordinary experiences: telepathy, precognitive dreaming, a range of psychokinetic experiences, and seeing auras, and the occasional ghost. There was always the question, “What’s happening?”

This question prompted a life-long interest in extraordinary ability (EAs) in its many forms and has led me down the rabbit hole of who, what, when, and how these abilities occur. After years of research, I can say that EAs are a paradox: common place and rare, profound and mundane, impossible yet real.

In recent years, I have explored the extent to which such abilities occur in other cultures and world views. Do Shamans, Jewish and Islamic mystics, Hindu adepts, and Taoist masters report similar abilities? It turns out, they do. Psi abilities, multiplying or creating food, walking on water, healing, and out of body travel occur across the board. Some abilities emerge even in the face of severe suppression.

## COMMON ABILITIES

- Physical abilities
- Paranormal abilities (psi)
- Charisma (affect emotions of others)
- Healing
- Out of body travel
- Levitation
- Controlled dreaming
- Subtle energy use
- Power over nature
- Instantaneous travel
- Bilocation
- Manifestation
- Invisibility

Extraordinary abilities are not restricted to humankind, but are expressed across the evolutionary tract including mammals, birds and even the lowly earthworm. Some abilities are seen in both animals and humans including telepathy, precognition, and psychokinetic abilities.

In some cases, animals seem to have abilities that exceed those of humans. Animals are more aware of the subtle bonds that connect the animal to its territory or to its mate than humans. Stories of dogs traveling hundreds of miles to rejoin a beloved owner are not uncommon and some of these tales are exceptionally well documented.



Aurore Kervoern/iStock

Elephant in Yala National Park

Animals also have a sixth sense regarding natural disasters. An unfortunate example occurred in 2004. On December 24, a magnitude 9.1 earthquake occurred under the Indian Ocean. This quake set off a tsunami that reached out across the Indian Ocean killing at least 225,000 people. Despite the enormous loss of human life, relatively few animals, wild or domestic, died. As much as an hour before the tsunami hit land, animals began to react. People at the Yala National Park reported three elephants running away from the beach. Flamingos and bats were seen flying away from low lying areas. Domestic pets refused to go out for scheduled walks along the beach, and zoo animals retreated into enclosed areas, refusing to come out. The *Indo-Asian News* reported that buffaloes, goats, and dogs were found unharmed in areas where many humans had died.

Evidence of a behavior occurring cross-species suggests that these behaviors are innate. Rupert Sheldrake suggests that we should expect EAs to have a biological basis since they increase the chances of survival. It is highly adaptive for any being to know if they are being stared at by a hidden predator. Bonds that connect group members (packs, flocks, schools) are

also a benefit, keeping members close for protection and shared resources. Bonds that allow the young to tug at their mothers, keeping her close for feeding and protection, also increases the odds of survival.

Another hint that EAs have a genetic basis are extraordinarily talented individuals. We acknowledge that exceptional talents in athletes and musicians run in families, and a similar pattern is seen among those with EAs. Some families report multiple generations with EAs. Abilities commonly reported include telepathy, precognition, and the ability to see subtle energies (auras) or spirits.



Parapsychology Foundation Inc.

Eileen J Garrett

Eileen J. Garrett is a wonderful example of a talented psychic. She was born in 1893 and began experiencing lights and energy fields around others, animal or human, while very young. She could see the spirits of dying animals leaving their bodies and was visited by a favorite aunt just after the aunt's death in childbirth. Although punished for relating such experiences, Eileen continued to have them throughout her life, becoming famous in the United States and Europe for her precognitive and mediumship abilities. (She founded the Parapsychology Foundation [parapsychology.org] in 1951.)

The emergence of extraordinary abilities seems to be tied to the state of consciousness. Some abilities emerge very close to waking states. An accident, emotional crisis, or focused state of attention (as with athletic training) can produce exceptional physical abilities (e.g., strength to lift a car off a child), or common psi abilities. Other abilities emerge only with profound shifts consciousness (e.g., bilocation, invisibility or manifestation) and, although seen across cultures, they are very rare.

Common abilities are not the end of this story, however. We also find unique expressions of EAs; some of which are associated with specific religious traditions. Unique abilities can be those not seen in any other tradition, or abilities that have been developed well beyond a similar ability found in other traditions.

Why might we find Unique Abilities? There are several reasons, including worldview, physical terrain, historical times, needs of the people, and unique forms of practice. Each of these molds the expression of EAs in unique ways, as we will see.

## UNIQUE ABILITIES

- **Jewish—controlled dreaming**
- **Christian—stigmata, crown of thorns**
- **Islam—power of will**
- **Hindu—invisibility\***
- **Buddhist—empowerments, tulpa\***
- **Taoist—subtle energy practices**
- **Shaman—out of body travel**

\*Hindu and Buddhist traditions recognize millions of Siddhas but only 84 have come down to our time.

## Worldview

The primary controller of EAs is worldview. How we see our world, how we understand our experiences, and what we can and cannot do are all dictated by worldview. Worldview exerts influence on the development of perceptual frameworks, provides a map of the psychic terrain, and either inhibits or facilitates the expression of EAs, while defining behavior and the social response to it.

Fundamentally, worldview acts as an organizing framework for the development of our cognitive-perceptual fields. As we grow-up, our physical and social environment hones our



Can you see the dog in this image?



senses in specific ways, pulling certain things into focus while de-emphasizing others. For tribal peoples, this means seeing a leopard amongst the dapples of light on the grass. For a child in an alcoholic home, it might be reading subtle emotional cues from the abusive parent.

What does this mean for EAs? Some researchers suggest that we perceive only a very restricted range of all the information available to us. Our consensual reality is grounded in shared perceptual frameworks that filter consensual reality from this larger set of information. Intuitives, adepts, and spiritual masters are not limited to this narrow perceptual field, however. They perceive aspects of reality that the average person cannot. These may include the perception of energy states tied closely to the body or the realms of spirit, angels, and fairy. Once beyond consensual reality, many possibilities exist for the use of these perceptions. Examples include extraordinary healing, remote viewing, dowsing, and mediumship.

Worldview also provides a map of consciousness. The map outlines the psychic terrain, provides tools for moving forward, and lends interpretation of experience. Maps also warn of obstacles encountered along the way and risks. All traditions warn about the dangers of opening to different states of consciousness. These risks range from wild electrical energies shooting throughout the body to insanity and death.

Worldview can also inhibit EAs. Disbelief and open rejection of evidence are powerful suppressors of EAs. This is the case for the Scientific Worldview, which scoffs at the possibility of EAs and professionally penalizes those who suggest otherwise. Suppression can take many forms, ranging from public condemnation, social shunning, loss of jobs, to sanctioned killing, as we saw during the witch hunts in Europe.

Belief in EAs, oddly enough, can also have a suppressive effect. If EAs are believed to originate from an evil source or

to interfere with spiritual progress, they are suppressed. From the Talmudic period (70–500 CE) until the Middle Ages (15th century), practical magic using incantation (written scripts formed from the letters of the Hebrew language) was developed within the Jewish tradition. It was used to protect caravans from robbers, cure illness, and bring prosperity. By the Middle Ages, Spanish magicians were attempting to bring in the Messianic Age with the use of demonology and coercive incantations. Rabbinic scholars became alarmed. Pure, transcendental magic was sliding into impure, dark forms. With this, practical magic was banned and has effectively remained suppressed for 500 years.

Other traditions also suppress EAs as an expression of ego and a distraction from attaining the goal of Unity with God. Ironically, these traditions may still develop EAs for their own purposes, but only with those who have attained higher levels of development. EAs emerge spontaneously at higher levels of attainment, at which point guiding their expression may become important.

Worldview defines behavior. In some cultures, wild, outrageous, or unpredictable behavior is accepted and supported. Behavior may include chanting wildly (“Oh, Jesus. Yes, Jesus”), fainting, running naked through the streets, handling poisonous snakes, rubbing cremation ashes into one’s skin, or piercing the tongue, cheeks, lips with skewers. Our secular culture views this as bizarre, possibly insane and certainly scary; yet, such behavior is understood very differently in other contexts. Instead of psychosis, unconventional or frankly bizarre behavior can be understood as an indication of spirit possession, mystical states of ecstasy, or a reaction to subtle energies. Bizarre behavior then becomes an indication of spiritual attainment and a sign of holiness.

Social definitions direct social response. Some traditions have socially sanctioned roles within which the person is honored and can be guided toward a positive expression of their abilities. On the other hand, if the tradition defines the behavior as demonic or evil, the person can be killed. If sick, they can be hospitalized and subjected to (historically dubious) medical treatment.

Other factors affect the expression of EAs as well. Unique symbolism, physical terrain, the needs of the people, historical times, and unique practices affect the abilities developed.

### Unique Symbolism

Every tradition holds unique symbols that are central to its worldview. These symbols play an important role in generating the type of abilities expressed. Christianity has a particularly strong tradition of physical manifestations resulting from the image of Christ’s crucifixion on the cross. Intense, focused contemplation of the crucified Christ has yielded a variety of EAs. Of these, the stigmata, a manifestation of the crucifixion wounds on hands and feet of the aspirant, is probably the best known. Wounds open on hands and feet, and even the nails hammered into Christ’s hands and feet are visible in some cases. Physical changes are the most dramatic way of seeing the power of symbols and imagery, but symbols also guide other



EAs, particularly visions. Was the female deity who visited you the Mother Mary, Kuan Yin, Shakti, or Pacamama?

### Physician Terrain

Another factor affecting the unique expression of EAs is physical terrain. If communities are separated by mountain ranges or expanses of desert, adepts develop abilities that allow contact or communication. In this case, fast running, bilocation, or instantaneous travel may develop.

### Historical times

Historical times influence the expression of EAs in both positive and negative directions. When asked why we do not seem to see certain abilities these days, one mystic noted that it takes a long time to cultivate such abilities, along with considerable effort. Why bother with telepathy or bilocation, for example, when you can simply pick up a phone or take a car, train, or plane to visit someone? Not only do we have technologies that are easier and faster, but we also lack social institutions that permit the time for, and devotion to, transformational practice on the scale required.

### Needs of the people

Both Common and Unique Abilities arise from the needs of the people. If the people need food and water, the mystics/shamans create it. New springs emerge with the stamp of a staff. Food manifests on trees or the ground. Small bits of food feed large groups. Healing occurs: infertility is cured. Rain is brought in or tornados deflected. Shamans locate herds of animals or fish over long distances. Specific abilities emerge to address specific needs.

### Unique forms of practice

Unique forms of practice also mold the expression of EAs. The best example comes from the Taoists and their use of subtle energies. The Taoist worldview is very different from others we have mentioned. They believe in a world composed of two different but equal energies: Yin and Yang. Yin is characterized as dark, moist, cold, internal, still, nurturing, yielding, intuitive, creative, and absorptive. Yang energy has qualities that are bright, dry, hot, external, active, dominating/aggressive, expulsive, and logical/analytic. Yin and Yang energies are not only physical attributes but are also considered fundamental qualities that flow and interact with one another throughout the Universe.

The great Taoist masters developed practices to accumulate and expend these energy fields in many extraordinary ways. Using Yang energy, they can fend off attack, levitate, kill with a blast of sound, drive a nail into a board with the palm of their hand, and push an object (people or material objects) across a table or room. Bioenergy is also generated for healing.

Yin energy is a yielding, absorptive energy that is used in martial arts to redirect and absorb energies. In one demonstration by John Chang, Neikung master of Java, a bullet was fired

**“Why bother with telepathy or bilocation, for example, when you can simply pick up a phone or take a car, train, or plane to visit someone?”**

into his hand from a short distance away. He closed his hand a split second after the gun fired, and when he opened his hand, it is said the bullet was there. There was no injury of any kind. His use of Yin energies had absorbed the momentum of the bullet, effectively stopping it.

We have known since the beginning of time that humans are capable of extraordinary abilities of many kinds. We have understood these abilities to be the domain of special individuals (shamans) or the spiritually advanced (mystics and adepts). Only recently have we begun to understand that all humans hold the potential for the extraordinary. With the right tools and a supportive worldview, humans have a vast potential, the edges of which we have only begun to explore.

**AUDREY IRVINE** was raised in north Texas in a family filled with paranormal experiences. This has led to a lifelong interest in extraordinary abilities and occurrences. She received her B.S. from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and her Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Irvine received a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Endocrinology at the University of Virginia and the Department of Behavioral Medicine researching behavioral aspects of diabetes management. Later in her career, she trained in neurofeedback and practiced for 10 years. She is the author of the book *Infinite Possibility: Frameworks for Understanding Extraordinary Human Abilities*.



John G. Kruth

# A Second Look at History’s Most Famous Exorcism

## On Sergio A. Rueda’s *Diabolical Possession and the Case Behind The Exorcist: An Overview of Scientific Research with Interviews with Witnesses and Experts*

Outside of Washington, D.C., in the town of Mount Rainier, Maryland, an episode of potential demonic possession was investigated by the Catholic Church and the Duke Parapsychology Lab, including the famous scientist J. B. Rhine. The episode, which involved a 14-year-old boy, was reported in *The Washington Post* in 1949. As is the case with most claims of possession, in order to protect the identity of the family involved, the church maintained a wall of secrecy around the specific events and the activities of the clergy who investigated this case. Twenty years later, William Peter Blatty (1971) produced a fictionalized novel featuring a young girl who was possessed by a demon and had to undergo the religious ritual of exorcism to be cleansed and to stop a horrifying series of events. The book was called *The Exorcist*.



J. B. Rhine

Rhine Research Center

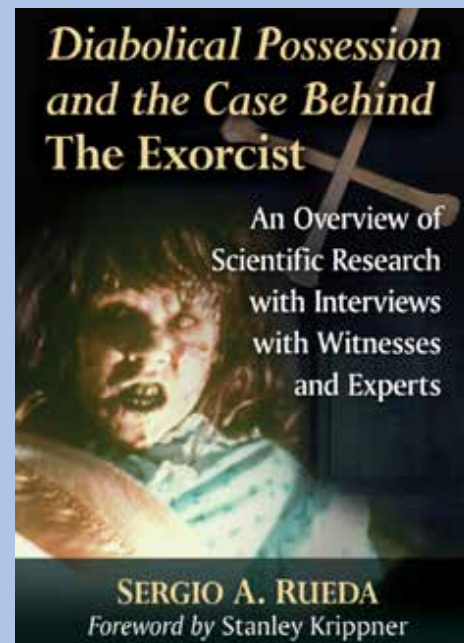
In 1973, the novel was produced as the film *The Exorcist*, which won the screenwriter William Peter Blatty an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. The film horrified audiences, caused many viewers to walk out of the theater in disgust, and elicited worldwide protests from religious leaders. Many years later, it is still considered one of the most terrifying horror movies ever made despite its antiquated special effects.

But, the real questions on the mind of nearly every person who saw the film were, “Has anyone really been possessed by the devil?” and “Is this based on a true story?” Sergio Rueda explores these questions and attempts to uncover the actual facts and observations of the 1949 case that appear to be the story behind *The Exorcist*.

### Finding His Way

Rueda begins by describing the process that led him to initiate his investigation of this story. In an interesting

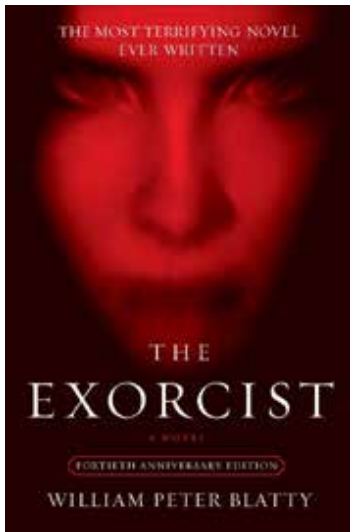
synchronistic event, Rueda discovered a document that had never been released to the public about the 1949 case. While he was researching poltergeist activity at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man (now the Rhine Research Center) in Durham, North Carolina, a file folder fell to the floor and caught his attention. The folder contained correspondence between a Lutheran Minister and Rhine, who



*Diabolical Possession and the Case Behind The Exorcist: An Overview of Scientific Research with Interviews with Witnesses and Experts* by Sergio A. Rueda (McFarland, 2018)

Sergio A. Rueda, Ph.D., is the director of the Institute of Medicine and Advanced Behavioral Technologies at Hospital Poliplaza Médica in México. He is also a trained biblical scholar, with specializations in Hebrew and Greek languages as well as biblical exegesis, archeology and theology.





was then the director of the Duke Parapsychology Lab. Though some of these letters were reviewed previously and summarized in articles and books such as *The Enchanted Voyager* (Brian, 1982), one document had never been revealed to the public before.

The Jesuit Report, as it is now known, is a detailed report of all the observations and events of the case including the procedures used by the priests involved in the sessions. This report was delivered to church officials

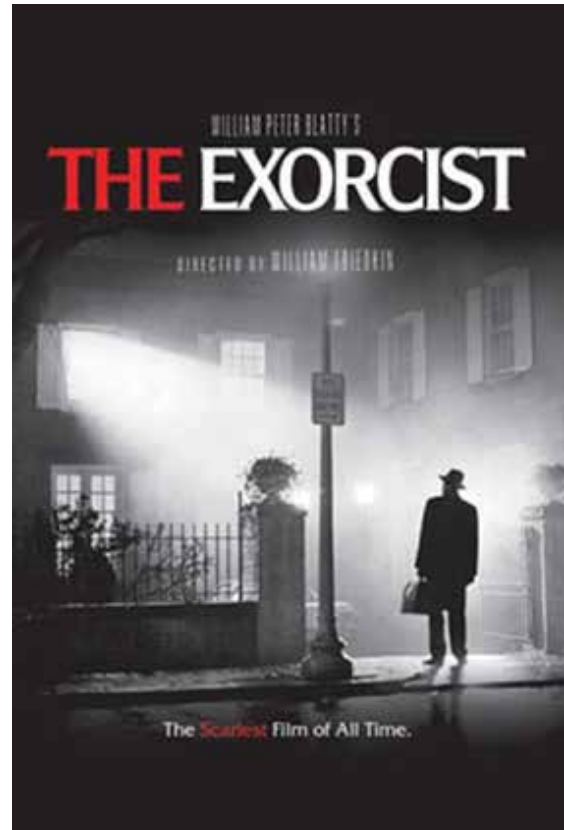
for their records but was never released to the public. A second copy of the report was sent to Rhine at the Duke Parapsychology Lab, and it was kept in their archives until Rueda discovered it by accident at Rhine's Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man.

### The Mount Rainier Case

The author provides very detailed descriptions of activity observed around a 14-year-old boy in Mount Rainier, Maryland, who was originally considered to have been experiencing poltergeist disturbances. By reviewing the Jesuit Report in detail, interviewing witnesses and participants in the case, and digging into previous articles and books written about it, Rueda paints a picture of phenomenal events that include chairs and beds moving on their own, scratches and writing spontaneously appearing on the boy's body, and strange sounds and voices heard near the boy. The result is an engaging story leading from some simple activity in a family home to a trip across the country to St. Louis, Missouri, and finally back to Washington, D.C., where a series of priests became involved in the investigation and declared it a case of demonic possession.

In the earliest phases of this investigation, Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University and his wife, Dr. Louisa Rhine, were contacted by a minister for their opinion and evaluation of poltergeist activity in the family's home. J. B. Rhine described the theories of the time which proposed that activity of this sort was the result of unconscious psychokinesis originating from a living person. Since the activity appeared to occur only when the boy was present, Rhine considered that he was most likely the source of the activity. As a conservative scientist, Rhine also suggested that the minister be extremely cautious of fraud or trickery by the boy. Finally, Rhine mentioned that discussions of demonic possession could have a strong influence on the beliefs and behavior of a suggestible child, and that statements of this sort should be carefully avoided in his presence.

Despite Rhine's advice, the priests in the case continued to explore the possibility of demonic possession and pursued other avenues to resolve these issues.



### Personal Note

To be fully transparent in this review, it is important to disclose that I have no interest or predisposition toward a demonic interpretation of these or any events. Though I have a great appreciation of and fascination with science fiction and interesting paranormal storytelling, the subtle bias that underlies my scientific perspective prevents me from attributing events that are interpreted as *evil* to a demonic entity or the devil. In fact, my natural inclination is to consider all events in context which makes it difficult for me to implicitly identify any event as *good* or *evil*.

Nonetheless, I applaud Rueda's storytelling and review of the events included in the Mount Rainier case. His description of the activities related by witnesses and extracted from the Jesuit Report is thoroughly engaging. Rueda produces an enthralling vision of the events, and though there is a great deal of repetition and duplication from chapter to chapter in the earliest pages of the book, by the time the story is completed I found myself excited and cheering for the boy finally to be rid of the demon that was said to have possessed him. Demonic possession or not, Rueda tells a wonderful story and produces a great foundation for the next section of the book.

### Interpreting the Activity

Until this point, this review may seem to be a discussion of great storytelling and an engaging series of events that formed the foundation for a popular horror film, but this book is much more complex than a simple review of the facts. In the second half of the book, Rueda provides a detailed and insightful

evaluation of the original source material in the context of four different interpretations.

The evaluation begins by considering the possibility of deception or fraud on the part of the boy and/or his family members. Rueda examines the psychology of each individual involved and is rigorous in exploring the possibility or absurdity of fraud in the context of every paranormal observation. For example, could the husband be motivated to deceive his wife or might the observing priest have professional ambitions that could lead him to emphasize certain factors while ignoring others? Rueda's analysis fairly explores even the most absurd skeptical explanations and leaves the reader questioning whether the writer is being overly critical of each event due to his zealous attempt to find a fraudulent explanation. These examples of extreme skepticism add credibility to the full analysis that follows.

Next, Rueda explores the possibility of a natural, scientific explanation for each observation using the reductionist principles of Occam's Razor. By specifically focusing on the psychology surrounding the young boy and his family relationships, the boy's subtle motivations are revealed to support possible claims of trickery or fraud. In addition, the author explores the psychological concept of a *conversion reaction*—a physical reaction, like dermal irritations, produced by strong, unconscious needs or fears—as a possible mechanism for the spontaneous appearance of words or rashes on the child's body. These proposals are interesting by themselves, but also they provide support for the next area considered by Rueda—the parapsychological hypothesis.

In a thorough review of the parapsychological literature, Rueda cites descriptions of poltergeist activity from experts such as Alan Gauld and Tony Cornell (1979), Scott Rogo (1979), and William Roll (1977), among others. Rueda manages to capture the investigative spirit of poltergeist researchers as he provides parapsychological explanations for each of the observed phenomena. Rueda produces an excellent review of how the poltergeist is interpreted in the most modern terms while applying the parapsychological explanations to each of the phenomena described in the 1949 case. This is the most extensive portion of the case evaluation, revealing the scientific nature of the author's position and giving the reader the promised scientific foundation for exploring the case of possession.

Finally, as if it were an afterthought, Rueda discusses characteristics of the case that might indicate that the activity resulted from demonic possession or a disruptive spirit. By describing factors used by religious leaders to determine whether a case is appropriate for an exorcism, the discussion becomes a lesson on the beliefs and procedures that must be established in order for a priest to be granted permission to perform an exorcism. Significant signs must be present and specific activity must be observed including the four stages leading to a diagnosis of spirit possession: Manifestation (inviting a spirit to enter a host body), Infestation (the appearance of apparitions, shadows, or other physical factors representing spirit activity), Oppression (psychological, psychic, and emotional disturbances to an individual), and finally Possession (a fully manifested replacement of the human spirit with a demonic presence).

## “Rueda discovered a document that had never been released to the public about the 1949 case.”

Rueda discusses the activity necessary to indicate that each stage has occurred including an expression of knowledge beyond the capabilities of the host/agent, xenoglossy or speaking unknown languages, and exceptional or sometimes superhuman strength demonstrated by the host.

### Spoiler Alert

Rueda concludes that the priests involved in the case were overly enthusiastic to label the events as the result of demonic possession. He proposes that the PK-like activity was more likely produced by poltergeist effects and the rashes on the boy's body arose from both fraud and a conversion reaction due to his suppressed emotions and desires.

### Additional Resources

The book contains nearly 80 pages of appendices which provide supporting information and detailed resources. These additional documents include ten letters of correspondence between Rev. Luther Miles Schulze, the minister initially called in to evaluate the Mount Rainier case, and Dr. J. B. Rhine, who directed the Duke Parapsychology Lab in 1949 when the events originally occurred. There is also a detailed interview with two primary witnesses in the case, the Rev. Luther Miles Schulze and his wife, Ruth, who had the young boy stay at their home so they could personally observe the claimed phenomena.

There is an additional interview with Ida Mae, a friend of the boy's family and the leader of the church group that organized a circle of prayers for the boy during the strange events in 1949. This interview was conducted in 1993 and includes a transcript of a brief phone call to the boy who experienced the strange activity in 1949, now a grown man. He had no memory of the events and was not interested in speaking about the situation.

Finally, there are complete interviews with experts on demonic possession. All of these experts on demonology and possession were included in the documentary *In the Grip of Evil* (1997), which the author considers the most accurate and reliable information ever produced on the Mount Rainier case.

Each appendix is annotated with comments, clarifications, and additional context to help the reader recognize the

importance of each interview or collection of documents. The comments give the reference materials a personal perspective that makes the information much more accessible and meaningful to the reader.

## The author “concludes that the priests involved in the case were overly enthusiastic to label the events as the result of demonic possession.”

### Summary

For those who are fascinated with demonic possession and the story of *The Exorcist*, this book provides all of the details and specific events that appear to have influenced William Peter Blatty in writing the novel which led to the popular film. Though this book begins with a lingering sense of repetition and continuous thematic messages through the first few chapters, it quickly matures into a riveting story of a troubled family that is battling with unexplainable phenomena. When the ministers and priests get involved in the situation, the activity appears to increase and take the form of a demonic possession which is resolved with a dramatic exorcism.

Though this story is engaging and provides a sense of suspenseful entertainment, the author clearly illustrates where the fictional account of *The Exorcist* strays from the documented activity, and he provides a firm connection between the Mount Rainier case and events described by Blatty in his novel.

Rueda then provides a fair evaluation of the phenomena following a well-defined scientific approach. He covers potential fraud, psychological contributions to the activities, parapsychological explanations, and, finally, the possibility of demonic possession. In his final evaluation, he clearly describes his reasons for concluding that it is very unlikely the events were the result of a spirit or demonic possession and how the priests involved in the investigation followed the wrong path in their evaluation of the phenomena.

Though some readers who are fixated on finding a demonic element in this story may disagree with the author's conclusions, he provides a firm foundation for his position. Even the most critically thinking scientist will leave the final chapter with questions. If these events were clearly described and documented by all witnesses involved, the results provide

very strong evidence for poltergeist activity, a topic still being questioned by many scientists tied to a materialistic and reductionist foundation. Could this case be one of the strongest examples of a poltergeist ever formally investigated?

### REFERENCES

- Blatty, W. P. (1971). *The Exorcist*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Brian, D. (1982). *The Enchanted Voyager: The Life of J. B. Rhine, an authorized biography*. Englewood, Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Gauld, A., & Cornell, A. D. (1979). *Poltergeists*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Rogo, S. (1979). *The Poltergeist Experience: Investigations into Ghostly Phenomena*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Roll, W. (1977). “Poltergeists.” In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), *Handbook of Parapsychology*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Vanderpool, C. (Director). (1997). *In the Grip of Evil* [Documentary]. US: Discovery Channel Pictures.



John G. Kruth

**JOHN G. KRUTH** is the Executive Director of the Rhine Research Center ([rhine.org](http://rhine.org)) and the Founder and Education Director of the Rhine Education Center ([rhineedu.org](http://rhineedu.org)). His 20+ years of professional technology experience and 10+ years as a professional researcher provide a unique insight into the integration of technology and parapsychological research. His research includes explorations into subtle energies of the body including psychic healing, the energy behind psychokinesis, poltergeist activity and other unconscious effects on electronic devices, and measurements of biophotons (ultraviolet light) from energy healers. Besides his research, John's current projects include the development of a community of psi experiencers at the Rhine and worldwide through the use of technology to provide online courses, broadcasts of parapsychology speakers and events, and the development of online resources for scientists and those who are looking for reliable and professional information about scientific parapsychology.



P. D. Moncrief Jr.

## A Case of the Reincarnation Type? Why I Have a Strong Opinion\* I Lived from 1896 to 1925

In late 1990 I had two telephone conversations with a psychic named Bill Jones, who lived in Chattanooga, 400 miles from my home in Memphis. I had seen an ad for his psychic services via telephone in an issue of *Fate* magazine; he charged \$40 an hour. I was concerned about some family property matters, but to be honest I was interested in contacting him in large part due to curiosity and his relatively small fee. In the previous decades, I had visited psychics perhaps three times, some of whom had provided accurate information.

I contacted Jones and set up an appointment, which took place in late November, on a Friday night as I am almost certain. It should be noted that my memory of the sequence of events, while good, is not perfect after all these years. In Part One, below, I keep my subjective feelings to a bare minimum, emphasizing relevant facts and the content of the conversations. From my perspective, the conversations were with Bill, but he claimed that he was relaying messages from a “spirit.”

### Part One: The Facts

As our first telephone conversation began, Bill was surprised by the large number of spirits that were present. One spirit gained central prominence, and from his description it seemed to me to be my paternal grandmother, Martha Alice Roach Moncrief, born 1865. She died in 1930, 11 years prior to my birth. I never knew her, but a hand colorized picture of her and my grandfather hung in the living room from my childhood on.

This spirit, via Bill, expressed her love for me, repeatedly and emphatically.

Bill then asked me, “Did you know that they lost a boy back then?” At first I was confused and could not think of a “boy” who had died, in childhood, I assumed. I did think of a half-brother, Robert Clark, who had died in infancy. But he was a child of my father and his first wife, not of my grandparents.

Bill said the name of the “boy” started with an “R.” I could not think of anyone, but then the name “Virgil” came to mind. He confirmed that “Virgil” was indeed the name. The dialect that we speak in Arkansas is called “Mountain Southern” and is a Rhotic dialect, in that the consonant R is heavily emphasized. Non-Rhotic dialects drop or minimize the R sound. Perhaps this is why he initially perceived an “R.” But I am not counting this as evidential. I had furnished the name, not Bill.



Martha Alice Roach Moncrief in 1896.

Virgil was the name of my father’s younger brother. There were four brothers, but my father and Virgil were especially close, perhaps since they were close in age; my father was born in 1894 and Uncle Virgil was born in 1896. My father spoke of him frequently, and I was told to call him “Uncle Virgil.” I had never thought of Uncle Virgil as a “boy,” hence my initial confusion with Bill’s statement. Uncle Virgil became a paraplegic in 1918 or 1919 as a result of a barn accident involving a team of horses. He finally died in 1925. I understand that this was a long time for a paraplegic to live, since penicillin was yet a few years away. He must have been cared for well. It is obvious that my father grieved for Uncle Virgil for the rest of his life.

\* I use the term “strong opinion” to avoid the word “belief,” which is not an appropriate word to use in evaluating evidence. It implies dogmatism.



Virgil L. Moncrief about 1908, with friend



The author, Peyton David Moncrief Jr., about 1980

Then, immediately after the name confirmation, Bill stated, “She says, ‘You are that boy,’” meaning that I was Virgil. This sums up the first telephone conversation.

The next day, on Saturday night, I attended a performance of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, featuring a British pianist who had been on the radio expressing the merits of Brahms’s Piano Concerto #1, which he said was neglected in favor of his Piano Concerto #2. The performance was in a large concert auditorium with a large lobby.

On Sunday (or perhaps Saturday afternoon) I decided to call my half-sister, Mildred Alice, who lived in Amarillo. We have the same father but she was of his first marriage, which ended in divorce. She was born in 1920, 21 years before me.

I have to acknowledge that “belief” was my state of mind after my first conversation with Bill. Thus I told Mildred that I thought that I had been in communication with our grandmother via a psychic. Big mistake. She had joined a fundamentalist Lutheran church and cautioned me to be wary of such things, that the Bible teaches that demons impersonate spirits of our loved ones to cause confusion or whatever.

Mildred then recalled that “Granny” had whapped her for lifting her dress when she was a small girl, since that was not ladylike. Mildred then accused “Granny” of causing trouble between her sons and their wives.

On Sunday night, I again called Bill. Bill said “She’s back,” meaning my grandmother, and that she again expressed her love. He then related that she says that she was “with you” at the “opera” but did not go with me inside because she felt out of place around all those fancily dressed people. There is simply no way that Bill could have known that I attended the Memphis Symphony in that large auditorium. I can think of no ordinary explanation for this knowledge.

This was a concert, of course, and not an opera. But in the 19th century large auditoriums for various public events and performances were apparently often called opera houses. An item from the Bygone Days column of the (Memphis) *Commercial Appeal* published this item on Dec. 5, 2019, about an event 125 years prior: “James J. Corbett, world’s heavy-weight champion, will open an engagement tonight at the Grand Opera House.” Venues then called opera houses are usually today simply called auditoriums.

Bill also conveyed this: “Don’t pay any attention to your crazy sister. The Bible is good, but there is a lot more to [things] than that.” This is obviously a succinct, appropriate (and angry or irked) response to Mildred’s statements on the telephone, from 950 miles away. I had not told Bill about my conversation with my sister.

I cannot avoid thinking that Bill was communicating with a real personality with uncanny knowledge, that this personality was my grandmother, and that the statement she made—“You are that boy”—is true. I will show other incidents that may be supportive of this view in Part Two.

Typically, claims of reincarnation rely on hypnotic regression, which I consider dubious in most cases, or on statements about a past life from small children. But in the case just described, a third person, claiming to be psychic and a spirit seer, conveys messages from a spirit to an adult

person telling him that he in effect had a previous life. I have never read about this type of reincarnation claim. I neither saw nor heard anything uncanny directly, unlike in regression claims. I have no veridical memory of a past life, as some children claim. I may have had such memories as a child and tried to tell others, but I have no knowledge or memory of anything definitive.

## Part Two: Subjective Experiences

Thus far I have avoided expressing my emotions in relating this story, separating non-essentials from the account in order to avoid confusing what I consider evidential facts from non-evidential subjective affect and experiences. But I did have an emotional reaction to my telephone conversations with Bill.

A short time into the first telephone conversation that Friday, I suddenly had a strong feeling that I was in the presence of a realm different from ordinary reality. This came as a shock. I felt as if my hair was standing up straight, though this did not happen literally. And, rather suddenly, I began silently sobbing. This might be expected in a case where a child meets a long-lost mother.

On Saturday, between my conversations with Bill, I was in a very agitated state. I felt “electric.” At the concert, I was so hyped up that I hardly listened to the music.

These experiences of affect—and the childhood *déjà vu* episodes I describe below that seem to bear on my deceased grandmother’s statement, via Bill, that “You are that boy,” meaning Uncle Virgil—are not presented as evidence of validity. But they are suggestive, and they do make me wonder.

When I was about three, I “ran away from home,” as my mother described it. I only remember my grandfather, R. L. Moncrief, “Daddy Bob,” taking me back home, along a sidewalk on the Court Square, the main part of the business district of DeWitt, Arkansas. He was upset and angry. No wonder: discovering that a child was missing is no doubt traumatic.

Years later, my mother told me that “when you ran away from home” I had gone into a store called “Round and Underwood,” which sold “sundries,” and pointed out items I wanted. (They billed my father later.) Importantly, this store was next door to the location of what had been “R.L. Moncrief and Sons” general merchandise. My grandfather was about 81 at this time and had been retired for years—the store, which had opened in about 1900, was not in operation and was rented to a tenant. Uncle Virgil undoubtedly spent many years starting in childhood in this store, his parents’ business.

This location is about 1000 feet from our then family home, from which I had ventured that day. There are many directions I could have taken as a runaway, but I took a route that in fact led very close to the location of the former store. The question arises as to whether my grandfather or father had taken me to that location and whether I was already familiar with it as a small child. I doubt it. Any visit to the Court Square would more likely have been to my father’s law office, which was diametrically across the square, far from the location of the sundries store. At the age of three, I doubt that they took me along on many walking trips to the Square for grocery shopping or otherwise.

But it cannot be completely ruled out that I was familiar with the Square and by chance went to Round and Underwood. Of course, Uncle Virgil would have gone there intentionally, and maybe I, as Uncle Virgil’s new life, did so as well. I think that this is perhaps a memory from Uncle Virgil, and that I had a desire to go back to a familiar territory with pleasant memories, hoping to find a situation that existed decades earlier.

Another episode from my childhood involves excitedly talking to Mrs. Daisy Snell about something that I do not remember. She was a splendid, patient person who helped my mother take care of me and perhaps do some light housekeeping. (My mother had acute arthritis at that time.) A relative told me years later that Uncle Virgil spoke extensively about his plans for entrepreneurial efforts, as many young men do. Is this what I was doing with Mrs. Snell? What I said to Mrs. Snell must have made no sense to her—I recall her repeatedly answering, “Uh huh” to my rant. I certainly would like to have a recording of my harangues.

Another recollection is of Daddy Bob, who lived next door, showing me the wild rabbit on a can of Brer Rabbit syrup. He was hoping that this would entertain me, this small child. Suddenly he looked at me, as if startled and surprised, followed by a sad expression. Had I suddenly appeared to him as his dead son, more than mere family resemblance?

Another occasion where I may have manifested as Uncle Virgil was when I was about 15. It was evening, twilight. I was standing at the back door, probably exiting the house. My father was standing a few feet away, outside. He suddenly appeared to see or recognize his late brother. He exclaimed something like, “Virgil! Virgil! Is that you?” and continued like this for at least a minute or more. I can only think that he thought that he was actually in the presence of Uncle Virgil. Of course, the lighting was dim, and there may be a family resemblance that appears more definite under different lighting, angles, etc. But it seems he was seeing Virgil. If it was only a close resemblance, wouldn’t he have merely exclaimed about our close resemblance at that time? I still wonder about this, especially after the revelation via Bill Jones that I “am” Virgil.

There were other *déjà vu* type experiences. There is a building, still standing, at the corner of South Main and Court Square with a beveled wall (to cover a sloping roof) that fascinated me while growing up. More than fascinated; there were times that I would stare at this building for minutes on end. (See photo on next page of Virgil on horse drawn wagon in front of that building in 1918 or 1919.) Another involves a field on a farm near town with a row of trees along a brook, which I would stare at for minutes on end. Uncle Virgil and his brother Uncle Walter ploughed that field (yearly, I suppose), I was told. And, I recall looking for many minutes, on more than one occasion, at a photo (since lost) of Uncle Virgil when he was 15. I was transfixed by it.

About 1970, I was at a bar in Little Rock with a Greenwich Village motif that catered to twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings. The proprietor, or a friend of his, played old silent films, which added to the atmosphere. On this particular night, the movie *Teddy at the Throttle* starring Gloria Swanson was





Virgil in covered wagon at the corner of South Main and Court Square in 1918 or 1919

being shown. This is a satirical film with witty and sarcastic subtitles.

While viewing it, I began to giggle uncontrollably—an exaggerated response to the funny scenes and subtitles. I giggled so excessively that the other patrons probably suspected that I was high on marijuana (not so). Normally, I rarely laugh, even when I think something is hilarious. I must have been in an altered state. I remained puzzled about this reaction for years.

After the 1990 conversation with Bill Jones, it occurred to me that Uncle Virgil might have viewed this film after it came out in 1917. I queried Mrs. Shelby (Mayme) Burnett who was 97, about whether movies were shown in DeWitt about that time. She recalled that a screen was set up in a vacant lot and movies were shown there, weather permitting. A theatre for movies was constructed soon afterward.

So it's possible that this movie was shown, and that Uncle Virgil viewed it. He probably was amused by the dry humor, but probably did not go on giggling as I did in the 1970s. In my case, an altered state may have magnified the original reaction.

I think these events and states of mind fit with a hypothesis that I am a return of Uncle Virgil, but they are, even taken together, flimsy evidence at best. Although unwarranted as evidence, however, I cannot but help take them seriously. I consider these experiences only as intimations that provide color (so to speak) for the hypothesis that I lived before as Uncle Virgil.

### Part Three—Reflections and Speculations

Reincarnation claims in the same family are not typical in many cultures. Chubu University linguist Ohkado Masayuki in a paper titled “Same-Family Cases of the Reincarnation Type in Japan”<sup>1</sup> provides some interesting examples. My case is obviously in the same family, although my mother of this life was not a native of my father's family home town. She was from a different region of the country. If I resemble Uncle Virgil, that is to be expected with a close relative.

Over the years, I have had some conversations with Bill Jones as well as a couple of later readings, which produced little or nothing of evidential value. We have become rather close acquaintances and discuss a number of topics. Bill is a retired secondary teacher and administrator.

Bill stated in one conversation that occasionally a spirit floats or moves through his house, seemingly oblivious to the surroundings. He appears to view spirits in our ordinary cognitive/perceptual 3D space much in the way we view ordinary persons. I am not sure that this is the way my grandmother and other spirits then appeared to him, but apparently it was.

I once asked Bill what he makes of all this, what it indicates about ultimate reality and meaning and so on. He declined to provide a theory. He just replied that he couldn't say, that he could only report what he sees and hears. Despite my dissatisfaction, this is probably the only statement that is warranted.

As mentioned previously, I recall rather vaguely my ranting to Mrs. Snell about some matters that excited me, but I do not recall what I said. Could it have related to my past

life? If parents and others were encouraged to record such talk from their small children, it could prove to be an invaluable source for speculation about possible previous lives. We can't expect the child to provide specific information that can be checked out, except in rare cases, but some understanding may be gleaned. Regrettably, most parents regard such statements as nonsense babbling. And any suggestion that this babbling might be related to a previous life would be regarded as "fringe" by most in the helping professions. ("What will my colleagues think?")

One thing that Bill told me was rather astonishing and thought-provoking. He said that there remains a distinct, discrete "Virgil." Anthropologist and reincarnation researcher James Matlock may be quite insightful when he says that "Reincarnation then may be understood to be a state of long-term possession [by another entity] by its nature."<sup>2</sup> Over my lifespan, I have very rarely lost my temper (I am hardly ever even irritable). I recall one or two such episodes in which another person seemed to manifest...a not "me" but also "me." This happened once when under unusual stress. In the account of the reaction to the movie, described in Part 2, I was, it seems, in an altered state, but I was experiencing "myself" as Virgil, and was both "I" and another. A Virgil personality may inhabit my subconscious.

I would like to address a relatable topic. The "Terrible Threes" and "Terrible Twos" is a behavioral occurrence that appears to be frequent enough with small children to have a name. My mother told me that I went through this pattern, with tantrums and general angry misbehavior. Could this be related to a previous personality? Perhaps we can imagine that an entity "wakes up" when sufficient neural development has occurred and finds itself in a different environment, nearly helpless in a small child's body. Even an incarnation within the same family would be different after the interval of several years. "You can't go home again," as they say. No wonder there would be grief, fear, frustration, and consequent anger and acting out.

Regrettably, in most cases, the small child is disciplined (I was not), but this is probably the opposite of the proper reaction by parents or caregivers. I suggest that there should be an acknowledgement that this may be an understandable reaction by a previous personality, and that the tantrums should be met with compassion and an attempt to understand the grievances the child is experiencing. Both for the psychological well-being of the little individual but also for possible scientific knowledge of a previous life. In almost no cases are the words of the child taken seriously.

In most cases the young child gradually moves out of the tantrum stage and seems to adjust to circumstances. But whatever the child remembered or felt during these episodes may continue in the subconscious.<sup>3</sup> Probably in most cases the old personality and the new personality come to a compatible and agreeable acceptance of the new circumstances.

Yet in some cases, the unhappiness and lack of acceptance continues, perhaps at a subconscious level and may manifest later in childhood or adulthood. The previous person may not only dislike the circumstances, but actually detest the new

personality. This could result in self-undoing or self-harm, as if a civil war was happening. Or, experiencing new frustrations that are reminiscent of previous frustrations may result in despair. In this case, self-undoing would actually be a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. This might shed some light on the mysteries of suicide.

There are some therapists who use what they call "past-life regression" as a technique of therapy. Most of these therapists vociferously deny there is any epistemic value. Of course, suggesting possible scientific value would certainly place them at odds with most of their colleagues. I would agree that there is little scientific validity to the regressions of adults; most of what is discovered is probably imaginal only.

I doubt that many will take seriously the possibility of past lives having a causative role in present distress and disturbance. I am not suggesting more past life regressions, but merely being mindful that there may be a deep well, so to speak, that could provide a fresh perspective for both the therapist and the client. That there are influences (even though not delineated) would at least show that there is a real cause somewhere, and that this perhaps can be dealt with to some extent or at least provide an alternative to complete helplessness and despair.

I realize that ideas such as this are rarely pursued, but they may provide a promising path through the vast labyrinth in which we find ourselves. We must appreciate those few in the helping professions who have the scientific curiosity, compassion, and courage to look into such possibilities.<sup>4</sup>

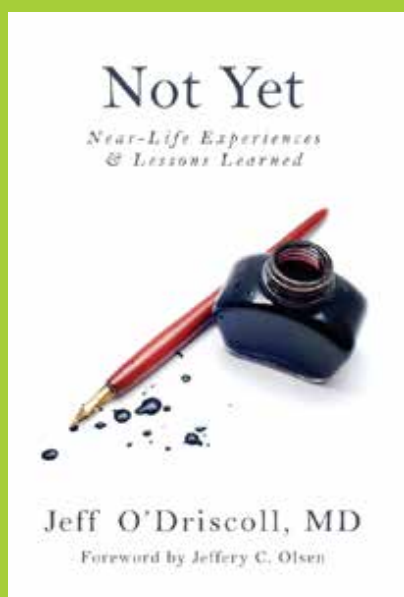
I find the words of C.G. Jung particularly appropriate in this regard: "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."<sup>5</sup>

## REFERENCES

1. Ohkado, Masayuki, "Same-Family Cases of the Reincarnation Type in Japan," *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol. 31, No. 4 2017, pp. 551-571.
2. Matlock, James, *Signs of Reincarnation: Exploring Beliefs, Cases, and Theory*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, p. 174.
3. Ibid, pp. 199-200.
4. Some of the ideas in *Biology of Belief* (2006, 2016) by Bruce Lipton, applied more widely, could contribute to attempts to develop hypotheses regarding physiological effects seemingly from previous lives.
5. Jung acknowledged Arthur Schopenhauer as an important influence. (There are about 80 references in Jung's *Collected Works*.) An essay he mentioned as especially important is "Transcendent Speculations in the Apparent Deliberateness in the Fate of the Individual," which appears in Schopenhauer's *Parerga and Paralipomena* Volume 1.

**P.D. MONCRIEF** has an M.A. in philosophy, an M.S. in counseling, and a B.A. in history/political science. He was book review editor of the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* for 13 years. He has presented numerous posters at evolutionary psychology conferences. He can be reached at [pdmoncrief@yahoo.com](mailto:pdmoncrief@yahoo.com).

# Noteworthy Books



*Not Yet: Near-Life Experiences & Lessons Learned*  
by Jeff O'Driscoll  
Jeff's Publishing Company, 2017



*Infinite Possibility: Frameworks for Understanding Extraordinary Human Experience*  
by Audrey A. Irvine  
AuthorHouse, 2008

**2020 VISION**  
Looking Forward  
Experience, Experiments,  
and Beyond

JUNE 16-19 2020    DURHAM NORTH CAROLINA USA

A combined meeting of the  
Parapsychological Association & SOCIETY FOR SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION