

BOOK REVIEWS

CONSCIOUS CONNECTIONS: ABOUT PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND HOLISTIC BIOLOGY by Göran Brusewitz. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller GmbH & Co., 2010. Pp. 100. \$68.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-3-639-29114-8.

Göran Brusewitz has been President of the Swedish Society of Psychical Research for over two decades and is a member of the Parapsychological Association. This short book is divided into three chapters: the first presents Brusewitz's master's thesis, the second is devoted to a review of parapsychological research (explicitly excluding research into psychokinesis), and the third is devoted to a summary of research on "biomagnetism, biofields, and holistic biology."

This book borders on self-publishing. VDM Publishing House offers free publication with remuneration to authors of bachelor's and master's theses and doctoral dissertations, or other scientific monographs (if this publishing option interests you, you may contact them at info@vdm-publishing-house.com). There are pitfalls in self-publishing and this book falls into several of them, including poor proofing, poor editing (Brusewitz acknowledges that he is not fluent in English, and it shows), and most importantly, lack of constructive peer review. The book is riddled with errata and sloppy formatting. (It should be noted that this review is based on the e-book version of this book rather than the paperback edition cited in the header above.)

The volume starts with a short foreword by Stanley Krippner and an introduction by Brusewitz, who outlines the contents of the book and provides a review of the Swedish and international skeptical movements.

The first chapter presents Brusewitz's master's thesis, which is the report of a nonsignificant attempt to replicate an experiment showing a psi effect on electrodermal activity (EDA). Brusewitz's experiment was well done from a methodological standpoint. In this chapter, he also reviews the literature on psi experiments involving the influence of EDA, as well as investigations of direct mental interaction with living systems (DMILS) in general. His coverage is thorough, and even includes some as yet unpublished reports. He also reviews what he sees as an inconsistent pattern in the statistical meta-analyses of research in these areas.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of parapsychological research in general (excluding PK, as noted above). Brusewitz begins with a discussion of the research on presentiment. Next, he compares the results of ganzfeld studies to studies not involving a ganzfeld but involving noise reduction (such as dream studies), as well as to studies in which the subject is in

the waking state without noise reduction (such as standard free-response experiments). His review is thorough and includes literature outside of the main parapsychological journals. He also provides a detailed review of meta-analyses in these areas. He notes that meta-analyses of forced-choice experiments indicate that precognition effects are just as strong as real-time (clairvoyance) effects. He cites Lance Storm and Adam Rock's view that the passivity of the ganzfeld procedure may not be an ideal means of eliciting psi, and that a more active approach may be required.

Brusewitz then reviews research on remote viewing, communication between neuron assemblies in separated Petri dishes, and Sheldrake's experiments involving telephones and pets. With regard to the last, there is no mention of Wiseman's criticisms of Sheldrake's research, and in general, his coverage of skeptical evaluations is inadequate in this chapter.

He goes on to discuss research relating psi success to local sidereal time as well as the possible mechanisms underlying these results, such as atmospheric disturbances.

He then reviews a striking case of spontaneous psi in which the twin sister of a girl whose chest was crushed in a nighttime car accident was awakened from her sleep by sympathetic chest pains at that moment. These sympathetic pains were so severe that the second sister had to be rushed to the hospital by ambulance but died before she got there. Her death occurred within a few minutes of her twin's death.

Brusewitz then reviews near-death experiences, the "hard problem" of how consciousness arises from the brain, quantum mechanical effects on biological systems, and reincarnation cases. He relates cases in which heart transplant recipients take on the personality of their heart donors, and he proposes the existence of a type of cellular memory based on neuropeptides. He goes on to discuss research on apparitions, hauntings, phantom hitchhikers, poltergeists, mediumship, and electronic voice phenomena. His coverage of many of these topics is quite brief. In places, he relies primarily on secondary sources, such as David Fontana's book *Is There an Afterlife?* and primarily seconds the opinions expressed in such sources. Thus, in many instances, the reader would be well served to read the secondary source instead of reading Brusewitz's book, which amounts to a tertiary source. Seasoned parapsychologists will find little that is new in Brusewitz's review of these topics.

In chapter 3, Brusewitz provides a review of research relating to "biomagnetism, biofields, and holistic biology." He begins with a discussion of animal migration, citing Sheldrake's view that such migrations are based on "morphogenetic fields," as well as other, more orthodox, views regarding the mechanism underlying such migrations. He asserts that the magnetic sense in animals is "unconscious," without providing a discussion of his grounds for this conclusion. He goes on to provide a somewhat vague discussion of research on dowsing, suggesting that dowsing phenomena may be based on electromagnetic energy. He cites (with a straight face)

claims by Jeffery Keen that dowsing may be used to determine the structure of spacetime as well as the values of universal physical constants.

He then discusses the use of magnetism to detect or influence the human aura, as well as the evidence that cell phones and television radiation can cause cancer. In this context, he cites the fact that one of the authors of a study on the effects of radiation has appeared in the media and has been invited to an international conference as evidence for the legitimacy of the research. He later bases a positive assessment of a research finding regarding biofields on laudatory remarks made in the foreword to the scientists' book. These are shaky grounds on which to conclude that a research program is valid.

He then discusses Becker's research on the use of electromagnetic fields in healing, relating this to research on acupuncture. He notes that Swedish scientists have stimulated cells with red and infrared light as a means of treating ulcers and sores. He asserts that the electromagnetic fields of the heart may be a synchronizing signal for the entire body and that the heart may have a form of emotional intelligence. In support of this contention, he cites Gary Schwartz's investigations of cases in which heart transplant patients have taken on the personality of the heart donor. He also cites research by McCraty that suggests that hearts may also have precognitive ability in the form of "presentiment."

He goes on to cite studies in which viral diseases have resulted even when the subject is not exposed to the virus but only to the electromagnetic fields left by the virus. He concludes with a discussion of "bioplasma," Gauquelin's research on "astrobiology," and other forms of "subtle energy."

It should again be noted that this review is based on the e-book version of Brusewitz's book rather than the paperback version. The e-book version comes complete with subject and name indices. The bibliographies, however, are not integrated into a single list.

In this book, Brusewitz demonstrates that he has a good knowledge of the professional literature. However, the book suffers from the lack of a good copy editor as well as a thorough peer review process, which may have improved the text considerably. As the publishing of e-books without any thorough review process becomes increasingly common, more and more books with similar defects may soon flood the market, and it may become increasingly difficult for a discerning reader to find the wheat among the chaff.

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