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THE OUTLINE OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY by Jesse Hong Xiong. Lanham, MD:

University Press of America, 2008. Pp xi + 368. \$39.95 (paperback).
ISBN-10: 0-7618-4043-5 ISBN-13: 978-0-7618-4043-5.

Xiong presents an absorbing but self-confessed “unoriginal” take on parapsychology, its history and impact on science and society. The title

of this quite voluminous and broad-ranging book is puzzling in its use of the definite article "The" (as in "The Outline . . ."), and at first, I suspected a metaphysical sense in its usage. For reasons that will soon become apparent, I quickly put it down to a simple grammatical *faux pas*. As it happens, it would have been more appropriate to use the indefinite article "an" (as in "An Outline . . .") because Xiong's book is just one of many in this ilk, and I don't think it is so grand that it will stand forever-more as a *foundational* text on parapsychology, as one might claim for Wolman's (1977) *Handbook of Parapsychology*. However, the book is easy to read, and what must be mentioned is Xiong's attempt at establishing a "framework and system of parapsychology" (p. ix). By the end of the book, my main concern was whether Xiong had been successful in his attempt, even with such "pearls of wisdom" as his recommendation that parapsychology would be best served by predominantly testing "star" subjects and focusing less on ordinary people—an oversight he notes in Rhine's work. With that instance alone as a "framework" or "systemic" principle, he might be on the right track, but participant preference is surely a matter dependent upon context. But at this point in the book, and then later, Xiong does admit that other aims are served by testing novices or naïve participants, which is no more than what parapsychology is currently doing anyway.

I shall come back to the "framework/system" issue later because one thing which I must get out the way up front is the poor English used throughout Xiong's book. For example: "despite plenty of evidence have accumulated . . ." (p. vii) and the peculiar and inappropriate use of the word "psychics" (when he meant "psychical research") as an interchangeable term for "parapsychology" (p. 3). My consternation was exacerbated in the discovery after only a few pages that the English translation of the original Chinese was supposedly corrected by two English-speakers, Jennifer Gerlach and Lamar Powell. (If their input is evident anywhere, it is only later in chapter 7 where the theoretical issues discussed are so complex that assistance would have been needed most, and as a result of good editing, the chapter reads quite well.) The reader may quickly overlook the problem with the English for the sake of the content. For example, a good point on the politico-philosophical reason why parapsychology is not a mainstream science is presented—it (i.e., parapsychology) would affect the "existing science framework and religion faiths, and change people's outlooks on the world and life" (p. vii). These points have been made many times over in better-written texts—evidence, as already stated, that Xiong makes no attempt to be original. But the fact remains that the ideological and bureaucratic resistance to parapsychology *is* its fundamental "bugbear." Besides, it is never inappropriate to repeat it, and often, in the hope that eventually the right people may come across this truth and maybe realise the folly of their ways. That being said, Xiong never offends, and his direct and honest tone can only be respected and appreciated.

Naturally the book starts with an introduction (subtitled *What Is Parapsychology?*), which takes us on a lightning-quick socio-historical tour to parapsychology's various and momentous "landmarks." This first "chapter" (not actually numbered as a chapter) attempts to explain the nature of parapsychology, which it more or less achieves with some borrowed definitions and a potted history—not such a bad thing. Many of the right names are mentioned—Dessoir, Rhine, Radin, Thouless—but there seems to be no real chronology in the telling—we go from Isaac Newton to Stephen Hawking, from *Handbook of Parapsychology* to the Society for Psychical Research, from the AAAS to CSICOP (not referred to by its current acronym, CSI), all of which seem to be thrown together to make a rather odd-tasting but tantalising stew. It is odd-tasting because the right information is there but often not in the right place, and it is tantalising because the right information is still useful and worth reading despite the jumpiness.

In chapter 1, Xiong launches into a "concise history" of parapsychology. This chapter picks up where the introduction leaves off. The author breaks the history down into chunky, oddly-named periods—"Prehistoric" (covers Greek, Judeo-Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance times), "Rudimental" (covers mesmerism and spiritualism, etc.), "Forming" (covers the "Societies," etc.), "Experimental" (covers the Rhinean era, etc.), and "Developing" (covers free-response, RNG/REG research, etc.). Xiong also manages to introduce briefly other big names, past and present, including the Fox sisters, D. D. Home, Palladino, Piper and Margery, Patrick Price, Keith Harary, Ted Serios, Ingo Swann, Uri Geller, and Joe McMoneagle (these and others are given greater focus later in the book). The status of parapsychological research in some non-English speaking countries is also discussed. This chapter too, seems rather potted and a tad encyclopaedic, as do most chapters—indeed, some chapters include voluminous quotes from other sources. But I enjoyed the entry on Robert Hare, American chemist and past AAAS president. The fact that he set out to debunk but ultimately endorsed spiritualism, only to be howled down and forced to resign as AAAS president speaks volumes. These sorts of stories abound. Also, Xiong's reviews of work and research in non-English-speaking countries are worthy.

Chapter 2 is on methodology. Xiong goes into a light discussion about experimentation, observation, and investigation. We also get a run-down on basic problems, including a good-sized section on fraud illustrated with the well-known Levy case.

Chapter 3 is on ESP and chapter 4 is on PK. The author covers a lot of ground here, which is hardly surprising given that they constitute the greatest part of parapsychology. But for any author there is always the question of knowing how far to go. Xiong spares the reader the tedious minutiae and quite successfully delivers the facts. On ESP, we not only get descriptions and examples of telepathy and clairvoyance, and so on,

but also featured are dowsing, clairsentience, xenoglossy, and the not commonly featured “clairtaste” and “clairsmell.” And on PK, we get not only a run-down on Schmidt’s RNG experiments, but also a brief account of an experiment Schmidt conducted with his pet cat on how it might be possible for an animal to warm itself by using “an-psi” to turn on a 200-watt lamp linked to an RNG. One criticism that must be made is that the chapter could have been updated for this English translation. For example, while Radin and Nelson’s (1987) favourable RNG meta-analysis is mentioned, reference to the less favourable meta-analysis in *Psychological Bulletin* by Bösch, Steinkamp, and Boller (2006) is missing. Indeed, Xiong’s source for this material is Radin (2006), in which the *Psychological Bulletin* article in question is also not mentioned. Of course, the time of writing of both authors’ works may have predated the Bösch et al. study, but my point is that there was a 2-year window of opportunity for Xiong to update his book given that its publication date is 2008. Poltergeist phenomena, thoughtography, levitation, and a host of intriguing other phenomena are covered in this chapter. We also get expanded accounts on some of the big names already mentioned.

Chapter 5 is on discarnate entities. This is the biggest chapter in the book, and the author spends a great deal of time on various topics. Again there are huge slabs of text from other sources, but the material is salient, thus demonstrating Xiong’s apt research skills. While whole books are devoted to the immensely complex topic of the afterlife, the chapter could have been a little longer by expanding the section on the biological aspects and implications of reincarnation in the subsection on children’s spontaneous memories of their previous lives. Although there are skeptics happy to run with the overly casual (indeed lame) argument from coincidence, the anatomical evidence of birthmarks and birth defects is the most difficult to explain away, and it provides good physical support for the accounts given by the children.

Chapter 6 is Altered States of Consciousness (ASC). This is a brief chapter on the correlation between ASCs and psi. The chapter covers dreams, drugs, hypnosis, and internal attention states such as relaxation, meditation, and sensory deprivation. Not surprisingly, this chapter describes the origins of the ganzfeld—spelled “ganzfield,” “ganzfled,” and “ganzfed,” all on the one page (p. 288), but correctly spelled in the index. Of note is the section on psychopathy and psi. Featured here are key names and short bios on Jule Eisenbud, Jan Ehrenwald, Montague Ullman, and others. It seems that there was a chance here for Xiong to delve more deeply into consciousness and its relationship to psi, but he failed to take it up (more on that shortly).

The final chapter (chapter 7) looks at various theories that attempt to explain psi. Theories by F. W. H. Myers, William James, and John Eccles are described, as are the usual theories to do with brain capability, electromagnetic radiation, quantum mechanics (QM), and synchronicity.

These entries are reasonably well described in the space allotted. It is not a particularly big chapter compared to other chapters in the book, and it is clear that Xiong has tried to write for a lay readership rather than scholars, and that means we can get only a cursory outline of some of the most influential or popular theories that might explain paranormal phenomena, but the conspicuous absence of the more heavy-going theories is probably explained by the fact that Xiong is a philosopher, not a physicist, physician, or psychologist, or even parapsychologist, and thus lacked the capacity to go beyond the basics. For example, the important work by Roger Penrose and Stuart Hammeroff on microtubules as a possible source of human consciousness, which goes a considerable way toward explaining out-of-body experiences (OBE) and near-death experiences (NDE), is not mentioned at all, even though OBE and NDE get considerable coverage in chapter 5.

As I read through to the end of the book, I felt that Xiong had more or less set up a reasonably good “framework” for the subject of parapsychology, as was his intention. But I take him to mean that his aim was primarily “structural” in the sense of wanting to cover everything, chapter by chapter, in a chronological and/or socio-historical manner. However, as for the “system,” I am at a loss at fathoming his intention.

What I had hoped for in Xiong's book was an expansion on his social commentary, with some possible solutions to the ongoing crisis in parapsychology—the failure of psi research to overthrow the long-suffering ideological intolerance and prejudice that have been thrust upon it. My interest *was* piqued about halfway through chapter 7 by summaries of parapsychology and aspects of QM and their relationships with the various philosophical and religious viewpoints, especially Eastern. We are reminded that any endeavour, any intellectual journey, is not just a voyage of the mind, but also of the heart. Thus (and ultimately), Xiong speaks of a return to mystical experience, and an understanding of the nature of the Divine in discoveries of a parapsychological nature, which he relates to Eastern (and Western) belief systems by comparing specific aspects of psi with Tao, Brahminism, and (possibly too much so) Elias and Seth materials. Yet he is quick to add that the same *numinosity* resides in discoveries in the physical sciences, but he is not referring exclusively to “spooky” QM phenomena, so these discoveries may not necessarily be parapsychological, but nor does he mean them to be. This perspective left me with the feeling that the reader must believe that it will all work out, for individual researchers, for the disciplines, and for philosophy and religion, but the truth is, that outlook might be a little too philosophical for some, and it will probably be parapsychologists who find themselves waiting the longest.

At the start of the book, Xiong openly promised nothing original, but I doubt he was being fair to himself. He writes in a way that sets the thoughtful reader's mind in motion, and that has got to count for something. And for what it's worth, the information packed into this big

book does make good reading, provided the reader can get over the slight peculiarities in the translation, the grammatical flaws, the often amusing typos, and the book's unintentional quirkiness.

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