

Recent Publications of Note 5 (1)¹

Anomalous Cognition and Experience

Marie, N., Lafon, Y., Bicego, A., Grégoire, C., Rousseaux, F., Bioy, A., Vanhaudenhuyse, A., & Gosseries, O. (2024). Scoping review on shamanistic trances practices. *BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies*, 24(1), 381. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12906-024-04678-w>

This paper is useful as a review of works evaluating the phenomenology and psychophysiology of... and with that ellipsis I run against the wall of what the paper is or is not about. Literally it is about “shamanistic trance practices,” which end up being subsumed under the concept of “trances.” However, this classification includes a wide variety of practices (e.g., different types of hypnosis, meditation, and so on) and potentially associated alteration of consciousness. Even when restricted to “traditional shamanism” and “shamanic practices in contemporary Occidental cultures,” it includes phenomena such as the visual shamanic magical flight and spirit possession that differ substantially in their phenomenology, behavior, and related historical and socio-cultural characteristics (Cardeña & Krippner, 2018; Dobkin de Rios & Winkelmann, 1898). Meaningful comparisons require wrestling with difficult conceptual issues, rather than throwing apples, oranges, and other fruits into a conceptual mixer and expect a very discernible taste.

Pehlivanova, M., Cozzolino, P. J., & Tucker, J. B. (2024). Impact of children’s purported past-life memories: A follow-up investigation of American cases. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1473340. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1473340>

An important follow-up, by the DOPS group from the University of Virginia, of Americans who mentioned purported past lives as 3-6 year olds (i.e., CORT, or cases of the reincarnation type). As adults, they led productive lives, had moderate-to-high spiritual well-being, and endorsed slightly more dissociation and fantasy proneness than comparison samples. Most reported having been impacted by their early ostensible reincarnation experiences, only few of them in a negative way. This supports the conclusion that unusual (anomalous) experiences are not necessarily negative and may even be psychologically beneficial.

¹ This regular feature summarizes critically recent papers of interest. If you want to recommend a paper, please send me a note with bibliographic information to etzel.cardena@psy.lu.se. In this issue, I integrated Anomalous Experience and Cognition as some papers straddled both phenomena.

Radin, D. (2023). Sentiment and presentiment in twitter: Do trends in collective mood “feel the future”? *World Futures*, 79(5), 525–535. Doi: 10.1080/02604027.2023.2216629

Although this is not a very recent publication, it deserves mention because it is consistent with the Global Consciousness Project (Nelson, 2024) and has important implications for the consideration of anomalous cognition. An analysis of Twitter (now called X) postings for 13 years showed what looked like a precognitive effect two weeks before important negative unpredictable events.

D. del Rosario-Gilabert, & I. Vigué-Guix, I. (2025). Unveiling the EEG signatures of extrasensory perception during spiritual experiences: A single-case study with a well-renowned channeler. *Explore*, 21(2), 103114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2025.103114>.

Unfortunately, what I found of note in this paper were the confused assumptions made by the authors and tacitly endorsed by the reviewers and the journal that published it. The single-case EEG data of a medium during three conditions (imagination, perception of listening to a story, and attempting contact with a “non-corporeal intelligence” or “ESP condition”) might be valuable in considering neural dynamics of channelers, although the order of the conditions did not seem to be counterbalanced, which makes any fast conclusion problematic. The more serious problems start when the paper states that the “fraud hypothesis” for the channeler was disproved because the EEG activity differed between the fantasy and ESP conditions. That is unwarranted as those results only show a difference that might be explained in different ways. Similarly, the paper also implies that the results generally supported the ESP hypothesis because the EEG activity during the perception and ESP conditions differed. That confuses what may be an anomalous experience from actual anomalous cognition or “ESP,” with the latter requiring some type of corroboration other than the reputation of the channeler.

Weisman, K., & Luhrmann, T.M. (2025), Shifting between models of mind: New insights into how human minds give rise to experiences of spiritual presence and alternative realities. *Topics in Cognitive Science*. 1–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tops.70002>

A fascinating study with a large sample ($N = 1,779$) from a team that has investigated cognitive and cultural mediators of the experience of perceiving immaterial beings such as a divinity or an ancestor. From the abstract: “A person is more likely to hear God speak if they have the epistemic flexibility and cultural support to shift, temporarily, away from a mundane model of mind into a more ‘porous’ way of thinking and being.”

Wittmann, M., Droit-Volet, S. (2024). Subjective time in ordinary and non-ordinary states of consciousness: How interoceptive feelings inform us about the passage of time. *Current Topics in Behavioral Neurosciences*. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/7854_2024_520

The paper makes a case for the proposal that time in ordinary and altered states is related to emotions and bodily sensations, in accord with the general perspective of the embodiedness of cognition.

References

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