

# Forbidden Knowledge: A Dissertation on Debunking, Parapsychology, and the Psychology of the Paranormal

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Fig. 1: A Typical Apple<sup>1</sup>

Author's Note: all quotes, unless otherwise specified, are from *Forbidden Knowledge: The Paranormal Paradox*, Bob Coultie, Lutterworth Press, 1988, UK.

## Introduction

On the very first page, Bob Coultie says that no one is without bias, not even himself:

"No book about the paranormal, no matter how objective its intentions, can be entirely free of the personal dimension. In the absence of reliable, testable evidence, one's belief or disbelief in the paranormal is a matter of personal choice. And that applies, of course, to this collection of essays and investigations. This is neither reprehensible nor surprising. After all, whether or not the psychic component occupies space in objective reality, the experiences that imply the existence of it are certainly real enough." (1)

I think I've said that more times than I care to count here on The Urban Mystic. What I disagree with, and have provided ample links to the available research, is that there is an absence of reliable, testable evidence. Bear in mind this book was written in the 80s, and most of the experiments I talk about here are current, but if these experiments are current there certainly were experiments going on in the 1980s for Coultie to look at. He might not like that there were experiments that provided "reliable, testable evidence" back then, but the whole *no evidence* thing is a standard skep-dick trick seen time and time again by skep-dicks like Mike Shermer or Joe Nickell<sup>2</sup>. They know most people won't do their own research so they say "there's no evidence" knowing full well very few people will call their bluff.

I'm pretty sure Coultie is saying here, like the Oracle in *The Matrix*, that you have to make up your own damn mind. If he is indeed saying that, I agree completely. I can only present the evidence, it is up to you to decide what it means.

On page two Coultie says the following:

"It became more and more difficult simply to believe in the paranormal. Often I found that experiments had been poorly designed and badly reported. Often I discovered beneath the overt evidence yet another layer of data rarely brought out for the public eye or ear. This data is the 'forbidden knowledge' of the title of this book. This suppression, by and large, seems not to be deliberate but due to certain information being regarded as unimportant." (2)

Here, in these two paragraphs, lies the working hypothesis of his book. There exists the experience of the "paranormal" (whatever that means; I find the word so loaded with different meanings that I usually avoid using it), and that we can, and should, create an anthropology of the paranormal experience, but that there really is no evidence for the paranormal and that all the experiments done are really lousy and for one reason or another can be disregarded.

A note about the tone. If you watched the video introduction<sup>3</sup>, you may be surprised by the tone. Is this not the right attitude for The Urban Mystic? The tone set by the video was done so deliberately, mirroring that used by Coultie in his comments on the Geller post.<sup>4</sup> He came across as extremely hostile, scoffing at my refusal to approve a near duplicate comment to one he posted eight months earlier. I had already given him time of day and a venue to voice his opinion, but he wanted more, more than what I extend to all my guests. If you do a search

on the Internet you will find that most of the pages on "Bob Couttie+nitinol" (the phrase he himself said to use) link to The Urban Mystic. In fact, the first three link to The Urban Mystic. I'm giving this guy a whole lot more publicity than he has had in decades, back when he had a two bit radio show very few people probably listened to.

As long time readers know, I speculate often but draw few conclusions. Instead I note that more research is needed and advise you, my valued couple of readers, to draw your own conclusions. In 1988, Couttie advises the same, though in 2009 on The Urban Mystic, he appears to be saying that anyone who doesn't let him repeat himself as many times as he likes, then that person is closed minded and has something to hide. I have nothing to hide, Mr. Couttie, and I hope through this exercise to demonstrate that.

## **Chapters One and Two: Uri Geller**

The first chapter deals with Couttie's meeting with Uri Geller for his radio program, also named "Forbidden Knowledge."

On page 5 we read that, promoted by Andrija Purarich in 1971, Uri Geller performed laboratory experiments the next year in a quest for fame. I won't disagree with that. Geller has always sought fame like vampires seek blood. I even removed the clip of Geller bending a spoon from the Urban Mystic Show opening sequence because the focus of the program has changed.<sup>5</sup>

I did get my hands on Purarich's book, *Uri*, but put it back after reading a few pages. Uri receiving messages from ET, a mission to save the world, it seemed like pure sensation, much more fiction than fact. *Maybe* Geller did receive ET messages, but that seems by far the least likely possibility I have come across (at least no one I have encountered has said Geller was sent by the Devil, yet).

On page 9, we read that Geller admits to Couttie in a face-to-face meeting, that he wants to be as ambiguous as possible. Well, I was able to figure that out just from the interviews with Geller available online.<sup>6</sup> Nothing surprising there. If psi is proven or disproven, Geller is out of a job. As long as controversy exists Geller still gets fame. I noted on this in another post on Geller, stating that I didn't like this attitude he has.<sup>7</sup>

On page 11 Couttie says he saw Geller bend the spoon by force when the recording crew for his radio program were not looking. Since he has no film and only one person claims to have seen this we have no way of knowing what really happened (as Couttie freely admits on the next page). On Steve's website<sup>8</sup> there is a list of quotes from magicians who have seen Geller bend things. I didn't do any calculations but there seemed nearly as many who said they saw him cheat as there were who said they found no evidence of him cheating. Magicians, it seems, are not a reliable source of information as to whether Geller is cheating or not, and neither is Couttie.

I have said many times here that my official stance is that while some of Geller's effects are real, he certainly uses tricks for his performances as well. So far, there is no disagreement between my position and the one Bob Couttie takes in his book. This leaves one to wonder what led to the hostility?

Couttie also wonders on page 11 why psychic spies are not used more often, and why so little money is spent, if it is so successful. The topic of psychic spies is definitely an interesting one. Much more can be said on this topic than will be said here (8,028 words is enough for any one post).

First off, the US government has released only a tiny portion of the results of the many psychic spy studies conducted over the past several decades. The same can be said with drug tests, mind control, radiation experiments, and a whole host of other things. The government works like a black hole: things go in but they don't come out, and they like to keep it that way. Area 51 wasn't acknowledged until the workers brought a class action lawsuit against the government because the nuclear waste being dumped there was giving them all cancer. We have no idea how much the government is spending on remote viewing, psychic spies, or pretty much anything, because so much of what they do is kept under lock and key.

Second, the subject is taboo. As mentioned in Lynn McTaggart's book *The Field* (updated edition, Harper, 2008) "Many senior staff at the CIA thought it was high time that the US looked into it (psychic spying) as well; the problem was that they were getting laughed out of most labs. Nobody in the American scientific community would take ESP or clairvoyance seriously." (147) Why is there less attempt at developing practical applications for psi? Because views like those held by Mr. Couttie are more prevalent than in any other field. If most of the people who can do work performing experiments on psi think it's nonsense then of course there will be far fewer experiments, and practical applications like psychic spying will suffer.

I'll leave the last word to Dean Radin, who actually worked on a secret government program investigating psi:

"In the 1980s, I worked on a top secret psi research program for the U.S. Government (now declassified). At the first research briefing I attended, I was shown examples of high-quality remote viewing obtained under exceptionally well-controlled circumstances. I asked in amazement, "Why is psi still considered controversial by the scientific mainstream? Why not just conduct an experiment of 20 or 30 trials with this type of remote viewing skill? That ought to convince anyone that psi is real." The answer, explained to me patiently by physicist Ed May, was simple. He said, "You're making the 'rational man' mistake." He meant that we usually assume that science is a rational process, but it's not. When we're presented with evidence that counters our prior beliefs, instead of the new evidence swaying us *toward* a new or revised belief, it tends to reaffirm our *prior* beliefs. Well, I thought, that's completely ridiculous. It's got to be a mistake. Unfortunately, after witnessing precisely these reactions to the data for twenty years, I have reluctantly concluded that the "rational man" hypothesis is indeed false." (*Entangled Minds: Extrasensory Experiments In A Quantum Reality*, Paraview Pocket Books, 2006, pages 101-02)

The second chapter deals with Uri Geller and nitinol, that mysterious substance that has plagued the pages of *The Urban Mystic* for so many months.

On pages 16 and 17 Couttie mentions that Eldon Byrd gave Geller nitinol on three separate occasions (but you knew that). Not much of import happened during the first two meetings. During the third meeting, Byrd had cut a length of nitinol wire into four lengths. One he left at

home, the remaining three he brought to the house of one of Geller's friends, John G. Fuller, where Geller bent the three pieces. Couttie proposes some ways Geller could have performed this feat.

1. Geller had prepared already bent wire before hand and switched this wire for the wire provided by Byrd. But, how would Geller have known what length and diameter wire to use? We also know from reader Steve's interview with Byrd in 2001<sup>9</sup> that the pieces of wire he had brought to Fuller's home were marked by a razor and were checked afterward, meaning that Geller did not switch the pieces with one already prepared.

2. Geller, or an accomplice, could have taken one of the wires from the first time he met Byrd and prepared it in similar fashion to scenario 1. Of course, you must, again, ignore the fact that the new wire was marked with a razor, so any wires Geller already had from previous encounters with Byrd would not match those brought the third time. Also, how would Geller know that Byrd was going to use the same diameter wire the in the next encounter?

Couttie mentions about half way down page 17 the real doozie of a hum dinger he wanted to mention several times before in the comments section, so I'll reproduce it here.

"Thanks to Renate Siebrasse of the London office of the Battelle Memorial Institute I was able to get samples of Nitinol wire and discovered that a permanent memory change could be caused by making a loop and, keeping the loop flat, pulling the ends of the wire. This produces bends virtually indistinguishable from some of those produced by Geller.

"In fact, the Nitinol literature actually warns against bending the metal too sharply because this induces strain on the outside of the curve from which the wire cannot recover. A permanent loop can be formed by tying the wire in a knot and subjecting it to a match or cigarette-lighter. The knot effectively clamps the wire and prevents the enormous amount of force released from springing it back during heating."

Like Martin Gardner, Couttie provides us with no pictures of wires he bent, so we have only his word to go on. Being poor I will not be purchasing any length of wire to test the above two methods of bending the wire, so I'll just take Couttie's word this time. However, those scenarios have a lot of "ifs" to them. How was Geller to distract Byrd long enough to tie the tiny wire in a loop or light it with a match? Wouldn't Byrd notice if a match were struck by the sound and smell?

Yes, a ventriloquist *could* reproduce the effect of a radio, but that doesn't mean every time someone turns on a radio there is a ventriloquist present. A magician can reproduce psychic effects under certain circumstances through totally non-psychic means, and there absolutely are a lot of frauds out there, but just because there *might* have been fraud does not mean there was, or at least probably was fraud involved. You must demonstrate positive evidence of fraud, not merely demonstrate that fraud was possible. All experiments cannot be as air-tight as Gary Schwartz' quintuple-blind mediumship experiments. Field work carries with it a degree of risk and uncertainty. Besides, Byrd admits in his interview that these were not experiments. The purpose was to discover anomalies involving nitinol to spur on further research.

On page 19 Couttie mentions that a spoon he gave to Geller during their meeting in the previous chapter that was bent underwent microscopic analysis, the results of which show

that force was used to bend it. However, Couttie mentions "admittedly, the conditions fell short of the ideal for a scientific examination. A full examination of the spoon before it was bent might possibly have produced interesting information, but, frankly, I doubt it."

Fortunately for all of us science does not progress by experiments people do not conduct because they "doubt it." After criticizing other investigators for not being thorough with Geller, Couttie repeats their mistakes and creates yet another flawed study. Our knowledge of whether he is genuine or a fraud has not been advanced at all. We are no closer to knowing the truth, yet Couttie *still* calls me closed minded for letting him promote his view that Geller is a fraud, a view he has come to absent of any evidence, as he himself begrudgingly admits, only once! I let him make his totally unsupported claim once and he still calls me closed minded because I wouldn't let him make his totally unsupported claim twice! Most of what he says about Uri Geller I agree with and yet there is still hostility! Please, sir, give it a rest. You are not fooling anyone.

Note: I will skip reviewing chapters three through five on mediumship. Michael Prescott and Michael Tymn (both linked at the site) are good resources for readers who wish to completely destroy Couttie's theories.

I will call bull on his claim at the end of chapter five though. On page 44 he says "...if our lives are limited to the three score and ten or so, then how wonderfully much more our lives mean to us. If you have eternity to make your mark then your existence becomes less unique, less marvelous, indeed, less human – certainly less meaningful." This notion is patently absurd. It is one of the great lies materialists tell themselves so they can sleep at night and avoid the implications of their world view, that is, annihilation.

If you are to die and that's it then what is the point of doing anything? The materialist may counter, as Couttie does, that if you had an infinite time you would just put off doing anything of import or you would get bored after the first trillion years or something, but if everything you do is ephemeral, if all your memories will vanish, what is the point of having memories? What is the point of having experiences if you will not remember them? It will be as if all those "meaningful" experiences never existed, so what's the point?

This took close to two hours of searching, but *A Course in Miracles* puts it this way, in Lesson 133 (*Workbook for Students*): "First, if you choose a thing that will not last forever, what you chose is valueless. A temporary value is without all value. Time can never take away a value that is real. What fades and dies was never there, and makes no offering to him who chooses it. He is deceived by nothing in a form he thinks he likes."

Commenting on these verses<sup>10</sup>, ACIM scholar Greg Mackie says "If we value something because it will not last, how much do we really value it? It must not be very good if the only thing that gives it value is the fact that it will end. Valuing the impermanent because it is impermanent is a way of appreciating death, not life."

The idea that death gives life meaning is absurd, and, I feel, repugnant. There is no compassion or love in such a view, and there certainly is no logic. If there is to be meaning, it comes from our link to eternity, our link to God, not to our worship of the idol of death.

## Chapter Six: Psychic Detectives

Psychic detectives are probably the worst evidence for psi. Most of the time I won't touch the issue with the portable ten foot pole I may or may not carry for just such occasions as when I don't want to touch things.

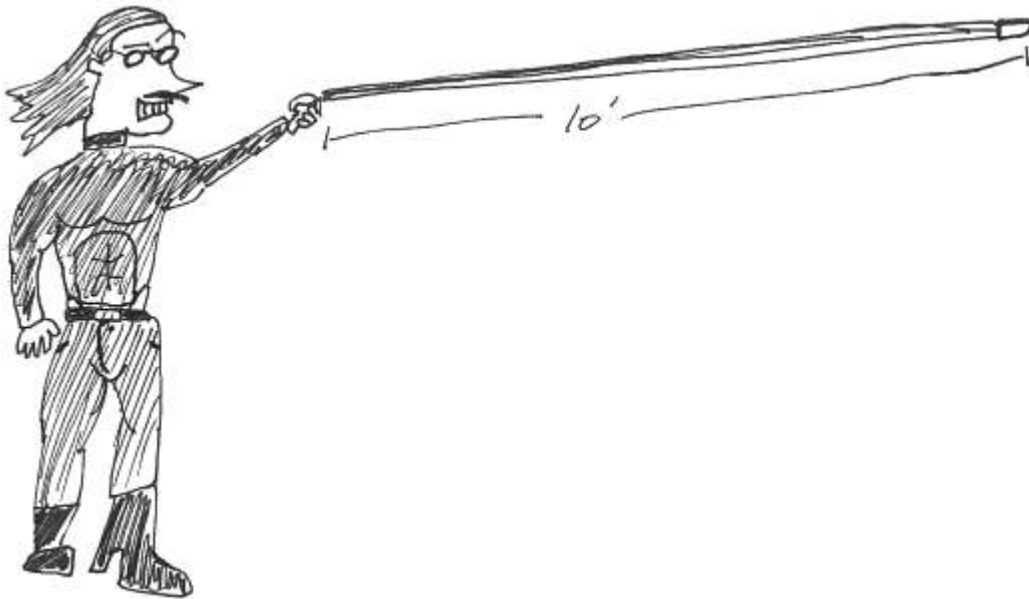


Fig. 2: Artist's Rendition (not to scale)

I personally doubt many of the claims of psychic detectives, and still I find the treatment of the subject in this chapter amusing. On page 46, Couttie states:

"All the same, there have been some noteworthy hits: Cindy Bulak, the so-called 'white witch of Broadway', reported that Sharon Tate had been killed by the thirteenth member of a Hollywood black-magic coven, which was wrong. In 1981 United Press International reported that police were embarrassed to discover the skeleton of a girl who had been missing for ten years in a locale that matched sketches made by a man who had died in 1973. A map drawn by a psychic helped lead searchers to a 2 ½ – year-old boy in Lake Park, Indiana. In 1977 Dorothy Allison predicted that a missing child would be found near a drainpipe, wearing a green snowsuit, with shoes on the wrong feet and lying face-down – all of which, apparently, was true."

After mentioning all the hits **in one paragraph**, Couttie spends the entire rest of the chapter on the misses! That's like a doctor trying to find a cure for drug-resistant TB throwing out all the drugs that work and studying only those drugs that are noneffective! We can learn from the misses, we can learn who was wrong, when and where, and we can maybe find some genuine frauds, but we cannot learn about a phenomena just by looking at the failures and not the successes. I'm no fan of psychic detectives, but this chapter just seems dishonest to me. It's like this whole book is some high-class debunking exercise or something.

## **Chapter Seven: Child Cheaters**

This chapter deals with people who investigate the paranormal claims of children, and how they are more easy to fool than the people who investigate adults. Couttie doesn't seem to like children very much.

He advises that the Cottingly affair, in which Frances Griffiths and Elsie Wright had fooled Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and all of England with fake fairy photographs for decades, should be required study for anyone investigating the paranormal claims of children. I would go farther and say it should be required for anyone investigating the paranormal in general.

Couttie brings up, briefly, the Fox sisters, who he admits were controversial figures and that there is good reason to doubt their confessions, made under pressure, but he accepts them anyway, because, well, they *have* to be fraud. We know people who are tortured will tell their captors anything they want to hear to end the torture and such confessions are not reliable at all, but the captors should believe them anyway because, well, the people are telling the captors what they want to hear. I know the Fox sisters were not tortured, but I don't see why Couttie would object to the analogy (or object to using torture to extract confessions, so long as those confessions reinforce his preconceived notions).

## **Chapters Eight through Ten: Astrology**

Chapter eight says, in a round about sort of way, nothing more than "newspaper horoscopes are inaccurate and are no better than chance." You will find no disagreement from me there.

The real substance in Couttie's treatment of astrology comes in the next chapter. First he begins with a brief history of astrology, followed by a vaguely Carl Sagan like explanation of why it shouldn't work based on the inverse square law. Sagan used gravity, Couttie does too, but adds visible light to the mix. Both make the fundamentally flawed conclusion that some sort of Newtonian physical force must emanate from the stars and planets to influence people's lives for astrology to work. Regardless of whether astrology works or not, there is no reason to believe the above assumption. I have never read where an astrologer said that a physical force is needed. Astrology, at least from what I have read, is based on relationships between the positions of stars and planets. It is mathematical, and does not involve some sort of force coming out of individual stars or planets themselves. Those relationships go away when space is viewed from another perspective, so it makes no sense to use alternate perspectives when looking at astrology.

The Newtonian force model also ignores the advances made in quantum physics, when action at a distance is possible, without anything interacting with anything and no signals being transmitted. This is the world of *nonlocality*, and it has replaced the old Newtonian vision of *local realism* as seen in Alain Aspect's experiment (the Bell test experiments), and others.

There need be no force involved in astrology, if, indeed, there is anything to astrology at all.

On page 70, Couttie says "Mars is at about 204 times the distance between the Earth and the Moon and roughly twice the diameter of the Earth." *Twice* the diameter of the Earth? Mars is

about the size of the Earth's core, meaning it can fit comfortably inside the Earth. Really, if you can make a mistake as simple as this how good can any theory you have involving the planets be?

Also in chapter nine, Couttie cites a "test" (read: debunking exercise) by the "indefatigable" James Randi of an astrologer. As a rule of thumb for any scientist, if Randi says it you can toss it in the garbage.

Chapter ten mentions the work of Michel Gauquelin. On pages 77 and 78 he says:

"Briefly, Gauquelin had found sun-sign astrology to be wanting. But when he looked at which planets were in the sky at the time of birth he noticed something curious. He divided the sky into twelve sectors, much like the houses of a horoscope, and looked at the distribution of the planets throughout the sectors in relation to leading figures in various professions in France. He found that in the case of writers and politicians the Moon was in the sector just above the horizon and at the zenith more often than chance would suggest. One of the biggest effects showed with sports champions, with about 22 percent born with Mars in the two sectors instead of an expected 17.6 per cent – an effect replicated by the Belgian Comité Para using Gauquelin's data. Many of the planets also seemed to fit the relationship of planets to occupation defined by traditional astrology."

He then goes on, briefly, on page 79 to say that, yes, there does seem to be a small effect and that more research is needed. Would it kill him to say that more often?

Couttie does mention the incident (the Thirty Years War) where CSICOP (Committee of Skepticks Ignoring Claims of the Paranormal) (founding?) member Dennis Rawlins quit after revealing to the public a massive cover up perpetrated by CSICOP on the Gauquelin "Mars effect." He claims that Rawlins merely covered up incompetence in the method used by CSICOP, and that Rawlins "still maintained that Gauquelin was wrong," Guy Lyon Playfair in his six part series on CSICOP<sup>11</sup> says that Rawlins was merely ambivalent toward Gauquelin's results. Rawlins told the public that CSICOP was "created to debunk," not to honestly investigate "claims of the paranormal."

Astrology is interesting. While I don't try to distance myself from it like with psychic detectives, there is a lot one can say on astrology and not really say anything. There seem to be as many positive studies as there are negative studies. I don't know what to make of the whole subject, and so generally don't say anything.

Michael Shermer did a test of a Vedic astrologer, Jeffrey Armstrong, on his debunking program<sup>12</sup>, and Armstrong was, on average, 77% accurate in his charts. His best score was 94% accuracy. Shermer (or someone claiming to be him) complains in the comments section that "we didn't have time to shoot enough video because of the damn unions, but if we got it all in I could have destroyed him completely!" Baby wants a Zima? Don't blame others for your problems, even if they are a union (and you know how I feel about unions).

With the data conflicting the way they do I must avoid coming to any conclusions at the present time. Astrology may be, it may be not. I don't know.

## **Chapters Eleven and Twelve: Dowsing**

As a counter point to Couttie's view on dowsing I suggest the book *Earth Magic* by Francis Hitching. Despite its name, this is a book not about magic, but about megalithic sites, energy currents, ley lines, and dowsing. More than anything, this book convinced me this stuff exists. I even wrote on *The Urban Mystic* in 2006 how ley lines were fake and had to amend my views after reading this book.

While Couttie is willing to admit that dowsing does work at greater than chance levels, he applies his B. F. Skinner operant conditioning explanation into the picture. The person is most likely, according to Couttie, picking up on subtle physical features of the landscape (water and certain minerals can be detected *from the air* by patterns on the ground), and mistaking the action of the dowsing sticks as indicating anything. The sticks respond to the unconscious perception of surface features; they themselves are not indicative of anything. Moreover, this psychological explanation "would strengthen our appreciation of the planet on which we live and our interaction with it in a way that nebulous psychic powers would not." (92) Of course. Anything nonpsychic will make Couttie's world better, because he has made a life as a debunker. It's all very psychological, you see. He is conditioned to see psi as fake, so a nonpsychic explanation being demonstrated for a phenomena will strengthen his conditioning to seeing nonpsychic explanations. This formula of explaining things away with conditioning is very easy to turn on its head. Sometimes I frighten myself with my own genius.

## **Chapters Thirteen through Sixteen: Psychology of the Psychic**

In Chapter thirteen, Couttie rejects the idea of science as being materialistic/reductionistic, or at least he says he does. He denounces "anti-science" writers (myself included?) for thinking that orthodox science operates under a materialistic/reductionistic model. He says scientists, giving examples of Einstein and Darwin (of all people!), are more like poets and mystics than materialist/reductionists. He brings up quantum physics, and says telepathy now no longer must obey the inverse square law.

At the same time he writes in chapter nine that there should be forces coming from the stars and planets which obey the inverse square law, and since they must do so, a book held at arms length should have more effect on a person than the position of the stars. I'm guessing this whole chapter was a subtle form of mockery, as Couttie completely destroys all his arguments in chapter nine right here in chapter thirteen. Either that or he is capable of maintaining contradictory views, which wouldn't look too good for anyone wanting to take him seriously.

Couttie rejects so readily all things paranormal yet he goes on to say that we shouldn't do precisely what he has just got through doing a few pages earlier. It is strange, schizophrenic individuals like Couttie who make me want to shout "make up your damn mind!" You cannot have it both ways, sir. You cannot complain about reductionism and at the same time propose reductionist theories. You cannot be, as Couttie describes himself, a "piggie in the middle," and straddle the razor's edge between two logically exclusive extremes. Either these things exist or they do not. It cannot be both.

Couttie cautiously accepts the work of Rupert Sheldrake and proposes psi could work in this

way. He seems to be pulling himself in two directions, desperately hoping not to tear himself apart.

Couttie's advice that there be stringent controls and experimental protocol and that conditions be controlled at all times by the experimenter, not the test subject, is an admirable bit of information to be found in this book. The subject of how strict an experiment should be controlled is debated in parapsychology, but one cannot fault someone for having a different opinion. I have looked into both opinions, of those favouring tight controls, and those favouring a more relaxed atmosphere, and can say that there are benefits and shortcomings of both.

In chapter fourteen Couttie says that belief in the paranormal gives us (the believer) a sense of control. This belief confers survival value (read: evolutionary psychology bullshit).

Chapter fifteen begins with calling psychics who think the government is out to get them are nuts and goes on to this assessment of the quaint little delusions of the believers:

"This should not be confused with the milder form of apparent persecution mania displayed by enthusiastic promoters of the paranormal, who like to suggest that their particular beliefs are somehow 'unorthodox', and are being suppressed by the forces of orthodoxy. Since belief in the paranormal is so widespread it is difficult to see how it can be regarded as unorthodox. Such people often try to suggest that information that validates their beliefs and hypotheses are suppressed. In fact, the evidence shows that paranormal beliefs and hypotheses are given enormous media coverage of a very supportive nature. This paranoia is not a sign of madness but of the romanticism of the believers, and is really propaganda aimed at reinforcing their beliefs." (119)

I would like to begin by assuming that Couttie does not own a dictionary, otherwise he would know what "orthodoxy" and "unorthodox" mean. I'll give him a few minutes to look these up and see why he's wrong.

Moving on, one would have to be ignorant or lying not to know that there absolutely is a suppression of information in academia and in orthodox science.

Archaeologist Cynthia Williams excavated the site at Hueyatenco in Puebla, Mexico. What she found there was quite astonishing indeed. Some crude stone tools were discovered alongside very ancient bones. These bones, belonging to animals believed to have gone extinct before humans arrived in the New World, showed clear evidence of butchering. The United States Geological Survey was called in to date the site. When USGS got there they dated the site to between 250,000 and 350,000 years ago, or more than 150,000 years before humans were said to have evolved.

Hearing of this, the Mexican government sent the army to the site. The site was closed down, all the artifacts were confiscated, and the American scientists were sent home.

Archaeologists supplied by the Mexican government then arrived at the site and fabricated stories for the media, proclaiming findings more in line with orthodox scientific thought. The head of the Mexican puppet archaeological team pressured the United States ambassador in Mexico upon instruction from the government. The ambassador told the U.S. Secretary of State, who got USGS to change the date of the site to avoid political pressures from the Mexican government. The date was promptly changed from 350,000 years ago to 35,000

years ago.

Virginia Steen-McIntyre, of the original team from USGS which dated the site, spoke out publicly against the cover-up. Soon afterward she was fired from USGS, ridiculed, and her reputation was ruined.

Years later the case was reopened by a group of troubled archaeologists. The artifacts were located and the original dates confirmed. Members of the Mexican team of "scientists" came clean and admitted they had fabricated data which did not exist in order to defend the scientific orthodoxy. To this date the general public remains misinformed about this event and are forced to rely on reports by pseudoskeptics and philosophical materialists who label Virginia and her work as pseudoscience.<sup>13</sup>

How about picking up medical journalist Robert Whitaker's book *Mad in America*? It details the sordid history of psychiatry.<sup>14</sup> Neuroleptic drugs, used to torture political prisoners in the Soviet Union and marketed as "antipsychotics" in the United States, were the best thing to ever happen to drug companies, giving them life-long patients (because these drugs are only treatment for mental illness; psychiatrists will admit there are no cures) forced to pay out thousands a year on toxic drugs. Even better, new drugs came out and the drug companies plied the psychiatrists with money to sell these new, more expensive drugs. Then the psychiatrists admitted that the neuroleptics didn't help psychotic patients, and worse, they give people Parkinson's disease by burning out the dopamine producing brain cells. Not to worry, these new "atypical" drugs are safe and they work too. Orthodox psychiatry knew all along that neuroleptics didn't help psychotic people and were very dangerous, yet for decades they suppressed the evidence to make billions of dollars.

Climategate?<sup>15</sup> Hackers released evidence that the Earth has not warmed since 1998. In fact, there has been a marked cooling trend since that time. Global warming was revealed to be manufactured. There was a massive campaign of suppressed information. Most of Russia's climate stations, the ones recording marked cooling, were ignored. Instead, only those climate stations consigned to airport tarmacs and office heat exhaust vents were recorded.<sup>16</sup> The Chicago Climate Exchange<sup>17</sup> was an \$10 trillion/year industry, selling literally nothing (carbon offsets are literally nothing: someone does not produce carbon and they sell you the carbon they did not produce so you can pollute, or something)! That would make it the second largest economy on the planet (after the USA), more than twice that of number three (China). If you count the EU (and why should you) then the Chicago Climate Exchange would be the third largest economy. This is quite literally the biggest scam in human history.

Whenever big money and academic pride and prestige are involved there ALWAYS is something being hidden.

This is not an exercise to reinforce my beliefs. I didn't believe in this stuff not too long ago, and why would I *want* to believe that there are people in the world willing to file away good science for money and prestige? Why would I want to believe the world is full of slimeball behaviour everywhere? I freely admit there is a lot of fraud and phony psychics, but there is a lot of suppression going on too. To be either someone who believes everything or nothing "paranormal" exists is naive, as I have said before.<sup>18</sup>

I must ask, what culture does Couttie live in where "paranormal beliefs and hypotheses are given enormous media coverage of a very supportive nature?" Until a few years ago I never

even saw a single program that was even couchingly supportive or even open to the possibility of the paranormal. When I was growing up Arthur C. Clarke had his two debunking programs. Bob Coultie himself had a debunking program called "Forbidden Knowledge"! Until recently there always had to be some paid, professional skeptic to "balance" everything, saying it's all fake and usually given the last word right before the credits rolled.

Even today I can't talk about my experiences, even to many people I trust, for fear of ridicule. Our society is far from open about these sorts of things. People are *beginning* to open up, but we are still decades away from the society Coultie envisions.

Chapter fifteen presents a psychological rambling that the poor, the socially dispossessed, and women in male-dominated societies are disproportionately displaying psychic abilities because it is a way to gain attention and power in a world where they are basically crap. *But* he has an out. After repeating the lie that parapsychology has failed, he says that we still need to investigate individual psychics. Okay, then, why present this psychological musing if it proves nothing and insults a whole group of people who accept psi? So you can covertly call people crazy, but in a socially acceptable way, and at the same time *appear* open-minded?

3,145 Ganzfeld trials from 1974 to 2004 produced a 7% above chance effect, total odds against chance 29 quintillion to one. If there were a file-drawer, as Coultie wants desperately to exist, it would require 2,002 missing studies, or 72,072 additional Ganzfeld sessions hidden away. As Dean Radin points out "to generate this many sessions would mean continually running ganzfeld sessions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for 36 years, and for not a single one of those sessions to see the light of day." (*Entangled Minds*, 121) The PEAR lab produced 653 remote viewing trials from 1977 to 1999, odds against chance 33 million to one. I can rattle off statistics till I'm blue in the face, so it's patently obvious that anyone saying that parapsychology has failed is either ignorant or lying.

Richard Wiseman<sup>19</sup>, archskep-dick, said of remote viewing "I agree that by the standards of any other area of science that remote viewing is proven, but begs the question: do we need higher standards of evidence when we study the paranormal? I think we do." He admits that remote viewing is proven by the standards of science, and that only his commitment to fundamaterialism is keeping him from accepting it! In commentary, Dean Radin adds the following:

"Thus, a prominent skeptic agrees that (1) the study of remote viewing is an area of science, which should thoroughly obviate the skeptical epithet of "pseudoscience" once and for all. And (2) that when judged against prevailing scientific standards for evaluating evidence, he agrees that remote viewing is proven. The follow-on argument that this phenomenon is so unusual that it requires *more* evidence refers not to evidence per se, or even to scientific methods or practice, but to assumptions about the fabric of reality."

In chapter sixteen, Coultie mentions the standard tripe about people finding patterns in randomness. Sure, but there really are patterns in nature, tons of them. A great deal of science is discovering those patterns. In fact, science is based on induction, which is all about repeatability and making predictions from patterns. When you have odds against chance 29 quintillion to one these sorts of things start to look like real patterns, not randomness. Again, even prominent skep-dicks admit psi would be proven if it were any other branch of science.

Coultie says that mediums make wild guesses at first because we all know it's fake, so they're

either consciously frauds or unconsciously frauds. The person getting the reading replies to the affirmative and the more affirmatives they get the more convinced the fake medium becomes that they really can communicate with the dead. It's a form of operant conditioning, like B. F. Skinner's pigeons (the example Coultie used on the previous page).

He also mentions the tripe about "selective memory," which, again, means nothing with the appropriate controls used in the best mediumship experiments. The mediums in Schwartz's experiments consistently received 90% or higher accuracy, compared to the less than 30% for the *best* that cold readers could perform.

On page 127 Coultie tells the story of a house wife, Leslie Brennan, who received a premonition of a chemical plant explosion several hours before it happened. He then creates a Rube Goldbergian just-so story involving obscure details about the horrid safety record of the plant ("perhaps from an overheard but unremembered conversation") that likely would not have been known by anyone not working at the plant (certainly not Mrs. Brennan), and ties it together with cryptamnesia and fears about the dangers of such plants.

Coultie points to the fact that the official plant records note that a technician had reported to a superintendent that pressure in one of the tanks had risen to levels demanding "corrective action" at noon that day. The fact that the report exists at all on the day of the disaster is taken as evidence in support of the vastly complex nonpsychic explanation he gives for her premonition. No thought is given to whether it was even *possible* for Mrs. Brennan to have seen or heard of this report at the time, or whether she knew anyone who could have seen it. No, the fact that the report *exists* means, according to Coultie, that the nonpsychic explanation is far more likely.

If you believe that you've got bigger problems than believing in the paranormal. If you believe that then I am the first hermaphrodite President of the United States with the power to make people's heads explode by thought alone, and I have a magic bottle of water from Poland to sell you that can turn you invisible and make you live forever (although Coultie wouldn't want to live forever because it's too boring).

Coultie makes numerous references to the discredited Susan Blackmore.<sup>20</sup> Rick Berger even got a confession from Blackmore, as Chris Carter explains:

"In my first book I had a section on Susan Blackmore and it basically showed that her claims- she went around for years claiming that she failed to find any psychic abilities in her experiments. So one of my friends, Rick Berger, went back and re-examined her experiments and found that they were also sloppily conducted. Nothing-no conclusions could be drawn from them. If anything, her experiments showed the existence of telepathy.

"He printed this up in a scientific journal and Blackmore was asked to respond. What she said was, "Hey, I agree. No conclusions can be drawn from the Blackmore experiments." In other words, she was saying that her work was an absolute failure and for the past 20-30 years, however long her career had been on at the time, she had accomplished absolutely nothing. It was based upon absolutely nothing.

"But then I examined her writings in a scientific journal before the Berger article and her confession, and then I examined her writings in the popular press right after. And I saw absolutely no change at all, both before and after. She was still saying, "Hey, I did years of careful research and I found nothing." Even though she had admitted just a few years

previously in a scientific journal, that her experiments on psychic abilities were absolutely useless. They were just too sloppy, too small, too poorly conducted to draw any conclusions.

"So I don't have a lot of respect for Susan Blackmore. I think she's a shameless self-promoter."

On page 131 Couttie recapitulates his evolutionary psychology bullshit, speculating on the survival value of finding meaning in randomness.

On page 132, Couttie covers his ass. He tries to look open-minded just in case he is ever proven wrong so he won't have to eat crow about psi. "As in previous chapters, I must emphasise, that this chapter should not be taken as a discounting of all apparently paranormal experiences. It is a warning that before we assume an event to be paranormal we have to ensure that none of the psychological, sociological and physical effects referred to are at work. Once we have filtered out such effects, we are left with two options: fraud and genuine psychic powers." And in the next chapter he gives you magic tricks you can perform so you can look like a total douche bag and con people!

## **Conclusions**

In general, Bob Couttie makes many references to James Randi, discredited debunker and habitual liar, and the *Skeptical Inquirer*, the publication of CSICOP, the discredited debunker organization. The founder of CSICOP left and publicly denounced the organization after he found they had been deliberately suppressing information proving astrology, the same suppression Couttie says is only going on among supporters, not the good honest skept-dicks. Dennis Rawlins told the world that CSICOP was not an open-minded organization interested in objectively investigating the paranormal, but instead was an organization bent on debunking the paranormal. Mr. Couttie could have known this at the time of writing his book, and it does call into question much of the validity of his book.

Couttie is very difficult to place. He makes all the standard debunking arguments, then seems to say these are not good enough, as if to cover his ass, or perhaps, as I stated earlier, he really is psychologically unbalanced and can't see the error in trying to tear himself in two contradictory directions at once. He deals with the objection that just because a magician can reproduce a feat does not mean it was necessarily the result of trickery (the objection I brought up earlier), but this seems to be a cop out. He doesn't seem genuine about anything. He presents such piss poor experiments, such as the obviously biased sample presented in the book, then seems to go back and admit that his sample is piss poor and biased, almost as if this whole book is some game he is playing with the reader. If anything he seems to focus on the bullshit psychological explanations more than anything. While the paranormal does not exist for him, people *think* it does and their beliefs and practices are worth studying as an anthropological exercise, much as people in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries studied indigenous cultures to show how superior they, the European scientists, were.

To me this is even worse than what the debunkers do. This is patronizing. It doesn't matter if psi exists because we can study people's beliefs about it? Give me a break. Fuck the psychology of these people. Either psi exists or it does not. That is what we must investigate, not some phony baloney bullshit. This is why you never send Dr. Phil the magician to do a scientist's job.

I went into this book thinking I was dealing with a debunker whom I had to debunk. I have come out having dealt with some pop psychologist completely lacking in substance, instead relying on pure speculation. You want to know what the "forbidden knowledge" is? It is that there is no there there. Coultie ends up being a figment of his own imagination.

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