

Learning About the History of Parapsychology

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One of the best ways to learn about parapsychology is to study its historical development. History can help you to understand the origin of ideas, theories, methodology, controversies, terms, and other things you may be interested in from the context of the times in which the developments took place, and considering both actual parapsychological work and the social aspects that influenced the field. The latter includes beliefs prevalent at the time, competition with other disciplines, patterns of intellectual influence, and the dynamics of professionalization, among other topics. From the point of view of doing parapsychology, the past literature can provide us resources to avoid past methodological mistakes, generate hypotheses for research, and evaluate controversies (for more information click here <http://www.pflyceum.org/103.html>). Furthermore, a historical perspective can do much to provide us with the human aspect of parapsychology, aspects such as information about the lives of mediums, psychics, researchers, and theoreticians.

In this short essay I present some bibliographical suggestions and links to information sources that I hope will assist interested readers to become familiar with the history and past literature of parapsychology.

Finding Sources: Guides to the Literature and Bibliographies

In addition to a variety of modern databases covering different disciplines (click here <http://www.pflyceum.org/112.html>), there are some specialized bibliographies that can be of great help. Adam Crabtree's bibliography *Animal Magnetism, Early Hypnotism, and Psychical research, 1766-1925* (1988) is particularly useful to find books (and some articles) about mesmerism, spiritualism and psychical research, many of which are annotated. Also useful is George Zorab's *Bibliography of Parapsychology* (1957), which includes many books as well as articles from parapsychological journals.

Much bibliographical and other information is available in reference books such as Anderson (2006), Berger (1991), and Melton (1996). More recently I have compiled several bibliographies of online articles and books covering topics such as psychic phenomena in general (Alvarado, 2007, 2008a), mesmerism (Alvarado, 2008b), medium Leonora E. Piper (Alvarado, 2009a), and psychical researcher Frederic W.H. Myers (Alvarado, 2009b, 2009c).

- Alvarado, C.S. (2007). Online historical materials about psychic phenomena. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 21, 607-615.
http://www.scientificexploration.org/journal/jse_21_3_alvarado.pdf
- Alvarado, C.S. (2008a). A list of online materials for the historical study of psychical research and related subjects. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 22, 396-407.
- Alvarado, C.S. (2008b). Mesmerism online: A bibliographic review. *Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 36, 115-120.
<http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/personalitystudies/publicationslink/s/Alvarado-Mesmerism-online.pdf>
- Alvarado, C.S. (2009a). Leonora E. Piper online: Some Web resources. *Psypioneer*, 5, 87-92. <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.3March09..pdf>
- Alvarado, C.S. (2009b). Frederic W.H. Myers online: I. General materials and reviews of *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*. *Psypioneer*, 5, 162-169.
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>
- Alvarado, C.S. (2009c). Frederic W.H. Myers online: II. Original writings. *Psypioneer*, 5, 215-227. <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.7July09..pdf>
- Anderson, R.I. (2006). *Psychics, Sensitives and Somnambules*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Berger, A. S. (1991). *The Encyclopedia of Parapsychology and Psychical Research*. New York: Paragon House.
- Crabtree, A. (comp.). (1988). *Animal Magnetism, Early Hypnotism, and Psychical research, 1766-1925: An Annotated Bibliography*. White Plains, NY: Kraus International. <http://www.esalenctr.org/display/animag.cfm>
- Melton, J.G . (Ed.) (1996). *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (4th ed.). Detroit, MI: Gale.
- Zorab, G. (1957). *Bibliography of Parapsychology*. New York: Parapsychology Foundation.

Old Introductions and Overviews

A good way to obtain information about the past is through old general overviews of the field. Barrett's *Psychical Research* (1911) and Lang's article "Psychical Research" (1911) in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* emphasize English-language developments, particularly the work of the Society for Psychical Research. This

is not the case with Moser's *Der okkultismus: Tauschungen und Tatsachen* (1935), and the work of others, whose books include developments from many countries originally published in languages such as French and German (Richet, 1922 & 1923; Sudre, 1926, 1960).

Barrett, W. F. (1911). *Psychical Research*. New York: Holt.

Barrett, W.F. (1918). *On the Threshold of the Unseen*. New York: E.P. Dutton.

http://books.google.com/books?id=OT7WAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA15&dq=william+barrett+psychical+research&as_brr=1

Carrington, H. (1930). *The Story of Psychic Science*. London: Rider.

Holms, A. C. (1969). *The Facts of Psychic Science and Philosophy Collated and Discussed*. New Hyde Park, NY: University Books. (Original work published 1925).

Lang, A. (1901). *Psychical research of the century. The 19th Century* (pp. 358-369). New York: G.P. Putnam's.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=on4MAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA358&dq=Psychical+research+of+the+century.+The+19th+Century#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

Lang, A. (1911). *Psychical research. Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th ed., vol. 22, pp. 544-547). New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica Company.

http://books.google.com/books?id=YQw7AJq-yBoC&pg=PA933&dq=oliver+lodge+psychical+research&lr=&as_brr=1

Moser, F. (1935). *Der okkultismus: Tauschungen und Tatsachen* [Occultism: Deception and Fact] (2 vols.). Munich: Von Ernst Reinhardt.

Podmore, F. (1897). *Studies in Psychical Research*. New York: G.P. putnam's Sons.

http://books.google.com/books?id=SESAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=podmore+studies+in+psychical+research&lr=&as_brr=1

Richet, C. (1922). *Traité de métapsychique*. Paris: Félix Alcan.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=xo8FAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=richet+traite+de+metapsychique>

Richet, C. (1923). *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*. New York: Macmillan.

<http://survivablebooks.org/#Thirty%20Years%20of%20Psychical%20Research>

Servadio, E. (1930). *La Ricerca Psichica* [Psychical Research] Rome: Cremonese.

Sudre, R. (1926). *Introduction à la métapsychique humaine* [Introduction to Human Metapsychics]. Paris: Payot.

Sudre, R. (1960). *Treatise on Parapsychology*. London: George Allen & Unwin (Original work published in French 1956).

Classics

There are many books today that are considered to be classics in the field for a variety of reasons. The ones listed below represent different areas and approaches. For examples in terms of theory and the issue of survival of death, two important works were Aksakow's *Animismus und Spiritismus* (1890) and Myers' *Human Personality and Its*

Survival of Bodily Death (1903). Others such as Crookes' *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (1874), Richet's article "La Suggestion Mentale et le Calcul des Probabilités" (1884), and Morselli's *Psicologia e "Spiritismo"* (1908) covered more specific phenomena. Richet's (1922 & 1923) book, while basically a general review of the field, is a classic in the sense of its great impact in parts of Europe, particularly in France.

Aksakow, A. (1890). *Animismus und Spiritismus*. Leipzig: Oswald Mutze.

Crookes, W. (1874). *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. London: J. Burns.
http://books.google.com/books?id=0BgHAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Researches+in+the+Phenomena+of+Spiritualism&as_brr=1&ei=9YzESKzdG6W0zATtwZSODg

Denton, W., & Denton, E.M.F. (1863). *The Soul of Things: Or, Psychometric Researches and Discoveries*. Boston: Walker, Wise.
http://books.google.com/books?id=RsoVAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:0gtmgPICYyYpl0U5_r

Flournoy, T. (1900). *From India to the Planet Mars*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=WdkRAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:0es7DIuzDCRUerk0FeNjIU#PPR1,M1>

Geley, G. (1920). *From the Unconscious to the Conscious*. Glasgow: William Collins.
http://books.google.com/books?id=fxlWAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:geley&lr=&as_brr=1&ei=Yo7ESKbUG43kywT374GSDg

Gurney, E., Myers, F.W.H., & Podmore, F. (1886). *Phantasms of the Living* (2 vols.). London: Trübner. <http://www.esalenctr.org/display/phantasms/index.html>

Morselli, E. (1908). *Psicologia e "Spiritismo."* (2 vols.). Turin: Fratelli Bocca. (Vol 1: http://books.google.com/books?id=bNc0AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=morselli+psicologia+e+spiritismo&lr=&as_brr=1#PPR3,M1; Vol. 2: http://books.google.com/books?id=ldg0AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:0NV_vVSOEXpuglKCrw)

Myers, F.W.H. (1903). *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (2 vols). London: Longmans, Green. http://www.esalenctr.org/display/hp_ctr.cfm

Osty, E. (1923). *Supernormal Faculties in Man*. London: Methuen.

Rhine, J.B. (1934). *Extra-Sensory Perception*. Boston: Boston Society for Psychic Research.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=tjJLDZwQjIYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:ISBN1606802550#PPP3,M1>

Richet, C. (1884). La suggestion mentale et le calcul des probabilités. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étrangere*, 18, 609–674.
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k171573.image.r=revue+philosophique.f613.1angFR>

Richet, C. (1922). *Traité de métapsychique*. Paris: Félix Alcan.
<http://www.archive.org/details/traitemetaps00rich>

Richet, C. (1923). *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*. New York: Macmillan.
<http://survivablebooks.org/#Thirty%20Years%20of%20Psychical%20Research>

History Books

Several modern books have presented overviews or specific studies of aspects of psychical research, including developments in specific countries. Brief general overviews appear in Beloff (1993), as well as in Inglis (1984, 1992), and in Gutierrez and Maillard (2004). Podmore's overview *Modern Spiritualism* (1902), with material about psychical research, is still very useful. Gauld's *The Founders of Psychical Research* (1968) is essential reading about the early work of the Society for Psychical Research in England, as is Mauskopf and McVaugh's *The Elusive Science* (1980) for American developments with emphasis on the work of J.B. Rhine and colleagues. Other countries are covered in the studies of Biondi (1988), Monroe (2008), Parra (1990), and Treitel (2004). With some exceptions, I have not included those books that emphasized mesmerism and spiritualism.

- Beloff, J. (1993). *Parapsychology: A Concise History*. London: Athlone Press.
- Berger, A.S. (1988). *Lives and Letters in American Parapsychology: A Biographical History, 1850-1987*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Biondi, M. (1988). *Tavoli e Medium: Storia dello spiritismo in Italia* [Tables and mediums: A history of spiritism in Italy]. Rome: Gremese.
- Blum, D. (2006). *Ghost Hunters: William James and the Search for Scientific Proof of Life After Death*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Cerullo, J. J. (1982). *The Secularization of the Soul: Psychical Research in Modern Britain*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Chéroux, C., Fischer, A., Apraxine, P., Canguilhem, D., & Schmit, S. (2004). *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Crabtree, A. (1994). *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gauld, A. (1968). *The Founders of Psychical Research*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Gregory, A. (1985). *The Strange Case of Rudi Schneider*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Gutierrez, G., & Maillard, N. (2004). *Les aventuriers de l'esprit* [The adventurers of the spirit] Paris: Presses du Châtelet.
- Inglis, B. (1984). *Science and Parascience: A History of the Paranormal, 1914-1939*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Inglis, B. (1992). *Natural and Supernatural: A History of the Paranormal from Earliest Times to 1914* (rev. ed.). Dorset: Prism.
- Lamont, P. (2005). *The First Psychic: The Peculiar Mystery of a Notorious Victorian Wizard*. London: Little Brown.

- Luckhurst, R. (2002). *The Invention of Telepathy 1870-1901*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Le Maléfan, P. (1999). *Folie et spiritisme: Histoire du discours psychopathologique sur la pratique du spiritisme, ses abords et ses avatars (1850-1950)* [Madness and spiritism: History of the psychopathological discourse about the practice of spiritism, its approaches and its avatars (1850-1950)]. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Mauskopf, S.H., & McVaugh, M.R. (1980). *The Elusive Science: Origins of Experimental Psychical Research*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Méheust, B. (1999). *Somnambulisme et médiumnité (1784-1930): 2: Le choc des sciences psychiques* [Somnambulism and Mediumship (1784-1930): 2: The impact of psychical sciences]. Le Plessis-Robinson: Institut Synthélabo pour de Progrès de la Connaissance.
- Monroe, J. W. (2008). *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism and Occultism in Modern France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Moore, R. L. (1977). *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oppenheim, J. (1985). *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Parra, A. (1990). *Historia de la Parapsicología en la Argentina* [History of Parapsychology in Argentina]. Buenos Aires: Author.
- Plas, R. (2000). *Naissance d'une science humaine: La psychologie: Les psychologues et le "merveilleux psychique"* [The birth of a human science: Psychology: The psychologists and the "psychic marvellous"]. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Podmore, F. (1902). *Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism* (2 vols). London: Methuen.
- Treitl, C. (2004). *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

History Articles

The articles listed below cover a variety of topics. Irwin (1987), Mulacz (1999), and Tietze (1985) discuss specific individuals studied by psychical researchers, while others focus on various researchers and other figures (e.g., Anderson, 1990; Corbetta, 2006; Kelly, 2001). Some topics discussed include studies of dissociation by members of the Society for Psychical Research (Alvarado, 2002), American psychologists' rejection of psychic phenomena (Coon, 1992), the Institut Métapsychique International (LaChapelle, 2005), and veridical hallucinations and psychopathology in the late nineteenth-century (Le Maléfan, 2008).

- Alvarado, C. S. (2002). Dissociation in Britain during the late nineteenth century: The Society for Psychical Research, 1882-1900. *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*, 3, 9-33. http://www.parapsych.org/PDF/Alvarado_JTD_Volume_3_2002.pdf
- Alvarado, C. S. (2003). The concept of survival of bodily death and the development of parapsychology. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 67, 65-95. http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/personalitystudies/publicationslinks/JSPR-Volume-67_pg65to95-Survival-.pdf
- Anderson, R. I. (1990). Robert Hare's contribution to psychical research. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 84, 235-262.
- Bauer, E. (1967). Max Dessoir und die Parapsychologie als Wissenschaft [Max Dessoir and parapsychology as science]. *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*, 10, 106-114.
- Bauer, E.W. (2005). A short introduction into the history of parapsychological research in Germany. Online: <http://www.pflyceum.org/86.html>
- Beloff, J. (1989). The Rhine legacy. *Philosophical Psychology*, 2, 231-239. Abstract: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/1452810418-7301387/content~db=all~content=a793916905>
- Berger, A.S. (1985). The early history of the ASPR: Origins to 1907. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 79, 39-60.
- Biondi, M. (2003). Orizzonti spiritici di Jung [Jung's spiritist horizons]. *Luce e Ombra*, 103, 33-42.
- Bringmann, W.G., Bringmann, N.J., & Bauer, E. (1990). Fechner und die Parapsychologie [Fechner and parapsychology]. *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*, 32, 19-43.
- Brown, E. M. (1983). Neurology and spiritualism in the 1870s. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 37, 563-577.
- Coon, D.J. (1992). Testing the limits of sense and science: American experimental psychologists combat spiritualism, 1880-1920. *American Psychologist*, 47, 143-151. <http://www.fsu.edu/~hps/Ron%20Numbers%20Readings/Testing%20the%20Limits%20of%20Sense%20and%20Science.pdf>
- Corbetta, J.M. (2006). Parapsicología y psicoanálisis: La “telepatía” en la obra de Freud [Parapsychology and psychoanalysis: “Telepathy” in the work of Freud]. *E-Boletín Psi*, 1(1), unpaginated (Online: <http://www.alipsi.com.ar/e-boletin/e-boletin-psi-vol1-N1-enero2006.htm#tit02>).
- Cugnaschi, S. (2002). Angelo Marzorati – Ernesto Bozzano: Prove “scientifiche” di una cosmologie “experimentale” [Angelo Marzorati – Ernesto Bozzano: “Scientific” proof of an “experimental” cosmology]. *Luce e Ombra*, 102, 83-97.
- Dening, T.R. (1994). Death-coincidences or wishful thinking? The Society for Psychical Research and the 1894 Census of Hallucinations. *History of Psychiatry*, 5, 397-416.
- Edelman, N. (2007). Charles Richet, le Nobel qui voulait comprendre se paranormal. *Revue du Praticien*, 57, 689–693.
- Gutierrez, G. Aperçu historique des activités de l'IMI [A general survey of the activities of the IMI]. Online: <http://www.metapsychique.org/Apercu-historique-des-activites-de.html>

- Hacking, I. (1988). Telepathy: Origins of randomization in experimental design. *Isis*, 70, 427-251.
- Irwin, H. J. (1987). Charles Bailey: A biographical study of the Australian apport medium. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 54, 97-118.
- Irwin, H.J. (1988). Parapsychology in Australia. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 82,31 9-338.
- Kelly, E. F. (2001). The contributions of F.W.H. Myers to psychology. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 65, 65-90.
- LaChapelle, S. (2005). Attempting science: The creation and early development of the Institut Métapsychique International in Paris, 1919-1931. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 41,1-24. Abstract:
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/109862059/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>
- Le Maléfan, P. (2008). L'hallucination télépathique ou véridique dans la psychopathologie de la fin du XIX^e siècle [Telepathic or veridical hallucinations in psychopathology at the end of the XIXth century]. *L'évolution psychiatrique*, 73, 15-39. Abstract: <http://www.em-consulte.com/article/148934>
- Marmin N. (2001). Métapsychique et psychologie en France (1880-1940) [Metapsychics and psychology in France (1880-1940)]. *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines*, No. 4, 145-171.
http://www.cairn.info/article.php?ID_REVUE=RHSH&ID_NUMPUBLIE=RHSH_004&ID_ARTICLE=RHSH_004_0145
- Mulacz, P. (1999). Eleonore Zugun – The re-evaluation of a historic RSPK case. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 63, 15-45.
- Mulacz, P. (2000). History of parapsychology in Austria. Online:
<http://parapsychologie.info/history.htm>
- McVaugh, M., & Mauskopf, S. H. (1976). J. B. Rhine's *Extra-Sensory Perception* and its background in psychical research. *Isis*, 67, 160-189.
- Noakes, R. (2004). The “bridge which is between physical and psychical research”: William Fletcher Barrett, sensitive flames, and spiritualism. *History of Science*, 42, 419-464. <http://www.shpltd.co.uk/noakes-barrett.pdf>
- Shamdasani, S. (1993). Automatic writing and the discovery of the unconscious. *Spring*, 54, 100-131.
- Shamdasani, H. (1994). Encountering Hélène: Théodore Flournoy and the genesis of subliminal psychology. In T. Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars: A Case of Multiple Personality with Imaginary Languages* (pp. xi-li). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
<http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/shamdasani/flournoy.htm>
- Sommer, A. (2009). From astronomy to transcendental Darwinism: Carl du Prel (1839-1899). *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 23, 59-68.
- Tietze, T. R. (1985). The “Margery” affair. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 79, 339-379.
- Wolffram, H. (2003). Supernormal biology: Vitalism, parapsychology and the German crisis of modernity, c. 1890–1933. *The European Legacy*, 8, 149–163.

- Wolffram, H. (2006). Parapsychology on the couch: The psychology of occult belief in Germany, c. 1870-1939. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 42, 237-260.
- Zingrone, N.L. (2002). Controversy and the problems of parapsychology. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 66, 3-30.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2320/is_1_66/ai_84547066/
- Zingrone, N. L., & Alvarado, C. S. (1987). Historical aspects of parapsychological terminology. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 51, 49-74.