

Biennial Report 2024–2025



Institut für Grenzgebiete
der Psychologie und Psychohygiene

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Institut für Grenzgebiete
der Psychologie und
Psychohygiene e.V.
Freiburg i. Br.

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Preface

The Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) is a private, non-profit research institute founded in 1950 by Prof. Dr. Dr. Hans Bender (1907–1991). The IGPP is sponsored by a non-profit association whose members represent various disciplines in the cultural, social, and natural sciences, including medicine. The IGPP is dedicated to researching phenomena and anomalies that are not yet fully understood, which can occur when the human mind interacts with the material world and indicate the limits of our knowledge.

The institute offers a wide range of free information and educational services for people interested in these topics. In addition, we offer a counseling service for people who have had exceptional (paranormal) experiences and phenomena and feel burdened by them. The information service also includes an internationally unique Research Library, “Parapsychology and Border Areas of Psychology,” which is run in cooperation with the University Library of Freiburg and currently holds 69,000 volumes and 2,300 journals, as well as a Research Archive with unique written, audio, and visual material and numerous bequests.

The IGPP organizes a public colloquium with scientific lectures on topics related to its interdisciplinary research program. The lectures are usually broadcast online, allowing participation beyond the borders of Freiburg. Numerous video recordings of past lectures are available on the institute’s YouTube platform (<https://www.youtube.com/@igppfreiburg2985/videos>).

The IGPP participates in university teaching and supervises bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral theses. The institute also cooperates with numerous German and international universities and research institutions. In addition to providing information and counseling, the IGPP pursues a broad-based interdisciplinary research program with selected topics from the frontier areas of psychology and the mind-matter problem. Our research is conducted in accordance with the Guidelines for good scientific practice of the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Since its foundation, the IGPP has positioned itself with its research topics on a narrow ridge that runs in the public eye between unshakeable belief in the reality of experiences and phenomena that are perceived as exceptional on the one hand, and stubborn skepticism, ignorance, or massive rejection on the other. The IGPP itself is ideologically neutral and institutionally independent. Nevertheless, research and consulting work in this controversial field, which is surrounded by preconceptions, is only possible because

the institute is financed by private donations.

The following activity report provides an insight into the multidisciplinary research approaches and areas of work pursued at the IGPP and summarizes the most important results and activities from the reporting period of 2024 and 2025. In 2025, the IGPP celebrated its 75th anniversary. To mark the occasion, an anniversary symposium with selected guests was held in June 2025. Just in time for the anniversary symposium, a new institute website was launched. The new website features a new logo and a modified, modern design with a ratio of images to text adapted to this medium. In July, the IGPP hosted the international conference of the Parapsychological Association (PA) for the third time in its history. From September to December 2025, the IGPP organized a series of lectures for the interested public on the current work at the institute. The director of the University Library (UB) Freiburg, Dr. Kellersohn, kindly made the UB's Parlatorium available for both the anniversary event and the lecture series. A live broadcast of the lectures via the internet and subsequent availability of the lecture recordings on our YouTube channel enable worldwide, low-threshold access to the individual lectures.

We hope that our work at the IGPP will stimulate scientific discourse on how we humans deal with the frontier cases of our everyday lives and gain insight into the underlying mechanisms.

Freiburg, January 2026

Jürgen Kornmeier

Obituaries to Prof. Dieter Vaitl (1940–2026)

Prof. Dieter Vaitl stands in the direct tradition of the institute's founder, Prof. Hans Bender (1907–1991). Professor Johannes Mischo (1930–2001) succeeded Bender in 1975, first taking over his chair of Psychology and Frontier Areas of Psychology at the University of Freiburg and then, after Bender's death in 1991, also becoming director of the IGPP. In 2001, after Mischo's death, Dieter Vaitl became director of the institute and, two years later, also took over as chairman of the IGPP's supporting association. Since Vaitl himself was chair of Clinical and Physiological Psychology at the University of Gießen at the time, he commuted between Gießen and Freiburg for several years and was actively supported in the institute's management 'on site' by a management board consisting of the department heads at the time.



Fig. 1. Prof. Dieter Vaitl (1940–2026).

Dieter Vaitl's relationship with the IGPP and Freiburg parapsychology dates back to the years when the institute, founded in 1950, was still located at Eichhalde 12 in Freiburg-Herders on the "magic hill." He worked there as a student assistant from 1964 to 1967 and always had fond memories of this private research institute, its founder, and the "anima" of the institute, its long-time managing director, Ms. Lotte Böhlinger (1917–1994). This is evident from the letter he wrote to his academic teacher, Hans Bender, on his 80th birthday on February 5, 1987, which can be read in the special issue of the *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* (Vol. 29, Issue 1, 1987) published by me on this occasion.

In his memoirs describing his time at Eichhalde, Dieter Vaitl recounts not only his participation in the so-called tape recordings with Konstantin Raudive in Bad Krozingen, but also his encounter with the 'haunted medium' H. S., who was tested for alleged extrasensory perception (ESP) using Rhine's card experiments and kept the small Eichhalde team in suspense at the time, especially since four IGPP employees themselves had personally witnessed spectacular physical phenomena, commonly referred to as "spontaneous psychokinesis," or "haunting" for short.

In the letter to his academic teacher Hans Bender, I mentioned, Dieter Vaitl notes that Bender was “far from the hostility toward happiness of many older people.” Looking back, this can certainly be said with good reason of Dieter Vaitl, who liked to respond to compliments about his handsome appearance by saying, “The drake shows off his plumage.”

Eberhard Bauer

When Prof. Vaitl became director of the IGPP in 2001, I was a doctoral student at the institute. At that time, the IGPP was still very well funded, thanks to grants from the Holler Foundation. It had departments and three times as many employees as it does today. The „Bender Institute for Neuroimaging“, an institute affiliated to the IGPP, had just started operations. Soon after, the annual grants from the Holler Foundation were suddenly reduced drastically, and from then on, cutbacks and savings were the order of the day. This led to many rumors, as well as discontent and criticism.

When I was appointed director and board member of the institute, I gained insights into the IGPP’s financial development over the last 20 years and the major financial problems of the last 10 years. Looking back, I can say that Dieter Vaitl led the institute through these challenging times with prudence, foresight, and great commitment for 20 years. To celebrate the 70th anniversary of the IGPP’s founding and his departure as director of the institute, Vaitl published the research volume “An den Grenzen unseres Wissens – Von der Faszination des Paranormalen” (At the Frontiers of Our Knowledge – The Fascination of the Paranormal) in the spring of 2020. The approximately 30 chapters summarize the multidisciplinary work of the institute over the last 20 years, which was carried out under his authoritative leadership. This volume is a continuation of the volume “An den Grenzen der Erkenntnis – Handbuch der wissenschaftlichen Anomalistik” (At the Frontiers of Knowledge – Handbook of Scientific Anomalistics), which Vaitl had already published in 2015 together with Gerhard Mayer, Ina Schmied-Knittel, and Michael Schetsche. The volume “SPUK” (Haunting), published in 2021 by Dieter Vaitl together with Andreas Fischer and dedicated to the photographs of Leif Geiges, once again ties in with Prof. Bender’s attempt to document his haunting investigations at that time.

From my personal encounters with Prof. Vaitl as a doctoral student at the institute, I will always remember his joking standard question: “So, Mr. Kornmeier, how are things going? Have you discovered the world formula yet?”

Prof. Vaitl was chairman of the board until his death. Eberhard Bauer and I were regular

guests at the Vaitl home for our board meetings, where we were well looked after by his wife Christel. During this time, I had the opportunity to get to know and appreciate Dieter Vaitl from a different perspective. Working with him on the board was always professional, trusting, and characterized by mutual appreciation.

As institute director and chairman of the board, Dieter Vaitl had a decisive influence on the IGPP for many years. And until the very end, our institute and its future were very close to his heart.

Death is, of course, also a frontier area of psychology, and the question of whether there is something after death – the time-honored “survival” problem of the Society for Psychological Research – is also a topic of interest to our institute. I would say that there is interesting literature on this subject, but the question remains open. If death is not the end, Dieter Vaitl may now have an answer to the question of the world formula. In any case, I will miss him in this life.

Jürgen Kornmeier

1. History

The scientific study of exceptional phenomena and experiences at the “frontiers of our knowledge” has a long tradition in Freiburg. The Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) made a significant contribution to this. Its founder, Professor Dr. Dr. Hans Bender (1907–1991), was probably one of the best-known and most popular academic representatives of German parapsychology after the Second World War (Fig. 2). Shortly after the end of the war, Hans Bender began to establish an institute in the building at Eichhalde 12 in Freiburg-Herdern, which began operations in 1950 (Fig. 3) and was directed by him until his death. A connection

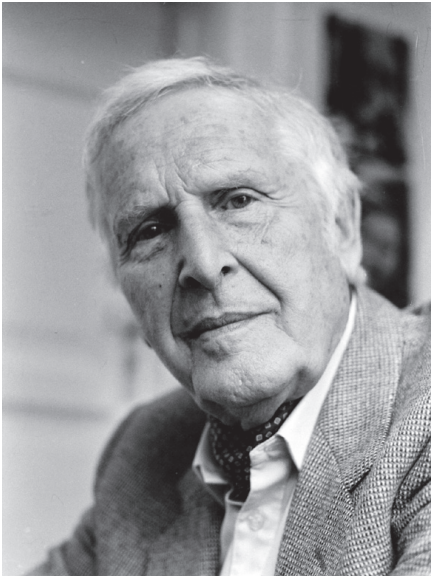


Fig. 2. The founder of the IGPP, Hans Bender, around 1980.



Fig. 3. The IGPP in Freiburg at Eichhalde 12, around 1950. (Photo: Leif Geiges/IGPP).

between the institute and the university was soon established; Professor Bender held a chair in “Grenzgebiete der Psychologie” (Frontier Areas of Psychology) at the Institute of Psychology at the University of Freiburg between 1954 and 1975. His successor, Prof. Dr. Johannes Mischo (1930–2001), held this chair until 1998, while also serving as director of the IGPP until 2001. After Prof. Mischo’s death in 2001, the leadership of the institute passed to Prof. Dr. Dieter Vaitl, who guided the institute’s fortunes until the end of 2020. Following Prof. Vaitl’s departure, the institute was headed for 1.5 years

by endowed professor Dr. Stefan Schmidt. Since July 2022, PD Dr. Jürgen Kornmeier has been the institute's director and Prof. Bender's former assistant, Dipl.-Psych. Eberhard Bauer, his deputy.

In historical retrospect, the "Eichhalde Period" can be considered the institute's "heroic" era: Until the mid/late 1980s, it was dominated by the personality of Bender, who became known to the public as the parapsychology professor par excellence ("ghost professor"). Bender's lectures and seminars at the University of Freiburg have become legendary for generations of Freiburg students. Several hundred listeners used to follow his Tuesday lectures in the auditorium maximum with fascination and amusement as he gave captivating accounts of possible "glimpses into the future" – i.e., well-documented prophetic dreams – or the latest ghost investigations, such as the Rosenheim case. Bender never became tired of pointing out that exceptional (paranormal) experiences and events ("psi phenomena") are part of human anthropology and our living environment and therefore deserve the broadest possible scientific investigation. In addition to establishing his research program in the canon of psychological disciplines, he contributed to the popularity of frontier research and its entry into academic discourse through intensive public relations work.

However, the institute's financial and human resources were very modest in the early days and were mainly provided by the foundation of the Swiss biologist and parapsychologist Dr. Fanny Moser (1872–1953) (Fig. 4). At that time, the team consisted of no more than two or three persons, usually with a degree in psychology, who, as "generalists," shared all facets of the institute's daily work – research, consulting, and information.

The financial shortcomings of frontier research, often lamented by Bender, changed fundamentally when, starting in 1992, the IGPP was able to significantly expand its traditional tasks and research areas thanks to the annual inflow of funds from the "Holler Foundation". The Hollers had already stipulated in the 1960s that their assets should



Fig. 4. Fanny Moser (1872–1953), around 1920.

go to a charitable foundation. Asta Holler (1904–1989, Fig. 5), who survived her husband by 20 years, provided financial resources in her will that were intended to enable certain services to be provided without any time restrictions. In September 1990, one year after Asta Holler’s death, the foundation began its work. Historian Heidrun Edelmann wrote a fascinating history of the Holler Foundation entitled “Vermögen als Vermächtnis. Leben und Werk der Stifter Christian und Asta Holler” (München: Oldenbourg, 2011).



Fig. 5. Asta Holler around 1970.

The improved financial situation enabled the institute to expand considerably. The number of research projects increased rapidly, and the scientific staff from the established fields of natural sciences, social sciences, and cultural studies grew steadily. Eventually, restructuring became necessary. In 1996, the Eichhalde Institute was abandoned and two floors in the building at Wilhelmstraße 3A in the city center, near the University Library and the main train station, were acquired instead. Research at the institute was divided into four departments: “Theory and Data Analysis,” “Empirical and Analytical Psychophysics,” “Empirical Cultural and Social Research,” and “Historical Studies, Archive, and Library,” as well as the research group “Clinical and Physiological Psychology.”

During the following 12 years of financial prosperity, the IGPP made remarkable scientific contributions that had a lasting impact on discourse in the field of frontier research. These contributions are briefly outlined below and summarized in the volume edited by Prof. Vaitl in 2020, “An den Grenzen unseres Wissens” (“At the Frontiers of Our Knowledge”, Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2020) (Fig. 6).

In close cooperation with the University Library of Freiburg and with financial support from the Volkswagen Foundation and the German Research Foundation (DFG), the original IGPP Library was developed into a probably internationally unique research library “Parapsychology and Border Areas of Psychology” with currently 69,000 volumes and 131 journals and other periodicals, with a total stock of approximately 2,300 journals, half of which are unique and therefore only available in the IGPP collection.

Numerous exhibitions contributed to the international visibility of the historical and archival research work carried out at the IGPP. For example, the exhibitions on the theme of “The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult,” which were shown in collaboration with the IGPP, the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris (November 2004–February 2005), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (September–December 2005), caused considerable attention.

In collaboration with the Institute of Psychology at the University of Freiburg and with the involvement of accompanying research on counseling activities, the institute developed a professional, theoretically sound, and internationally acclaimed counseling concept for people who suffer from exceptional experiences.

Among other work, the Department of Empirical Cultural and Social Research coined the term “Reflexive Anomalistics,” which also focused on the role of scientists themselves in researching exceptional phenomena.

The Empirical and Analytical Psychophysics Department made important theoretical and empirical contributions to the

topics of perception and consciousness, subjective perception of time and the self, and changes in subjective perception of time in altered states of consciousness.

With significant contributions of the Theory and Data Analysis Department, the Generalized Quantum Theory was derived from physical quantum theory in 2002 as a formal framework theory. The aim was to apply basic concepts of physical quantum theory to other scientific fields, such as biology and psychology. The underlying concepts and ideas were based on an intensive exchange between the psychiatrist and psychologist Prof. C.G. Jung and the physicist and Nobel Prize winner Wolfgang Pauli.

In 2001, the Bender Institute of Neuroimaging (BION) was founded in Giessen as an affiliated institute of the IGPP, where Europe’s first fMRI device exclusively for basic psychological research was put into operation. BION’s research focuses on neurosci-



Fig. 6. An den Grenzen unseres Wissens: Von der Faszination des Paranormalen (“At the Frontiers of Our Knowledge”), ed. by, D. Vaitl (Herder Verlag: 2020).

entific investigations of altered states of consciousness, such as those that occur during meditation or emotional disorders.

Between 2002 and 2009, the annual foundation grants declined significantly and permanently, partly due to the global financial crisis. As a result, financial support for BION ended in 2014 and the number of employees declined steadily. Today, current research projects are largely dependent on the successful acquisition of third-party funding. In addition, the IGPP will be dependent on further private sources of funding to secure its long-term existence.

To this day, the IGPP and its research topics remain the focus of very different scientific cultures.

2. Events and News

2.1 Anniversary Symposium and Lecture Series marking the 75th Anniversary of the IGPP

Exceptional experiences have always been part of the spectrum of human experience and are known in all cultures. They include extrasensory perceptions as well as experiences of unexplained mental influence on physical objects (psychokinesis). Prof. Dr. Dr.



Fig. 7. Cover of the program flyer.

Hans Bender was fascinated by these experiences and phenomena and founded the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health in 1950 with three main goals: (1) To collect well-founded information on these frontier topics and make it available to the general public and the scientific community. (2) To offer low-threshold counseling to people who have such experiences and find them psychologically stressful. (3) To research such experiences and phenomena using available scientific methods and to rule out inattentiveness, involuntary but also deliberate perceptual illusions, and mental illness as potential causes as far as possible.

In 2025, we celebrated the institute's 75th anniversary. In June 2025, we held an anniversary symposium. We are grateful to the director of the University Library (UB) Freiburg, Dr. Kellersohn, for making the UB's Parlatorium available to us for this event. Among the invited guests were members of our association, former employees, cooperation partners of the IGPP, speakers from past institute colloquia, representatives of the University of Freiburg, as well as people who have kindly supported the IGPP over the past 75 years.

The position of the sciences on frontier topics is very heterogeneous. It ranges from vivid interest over skepticism to ignorance and even offensive

hostility toward scientists who work with these topics. Thanks to private funding from the Holler Foundation and the bequest of Dr. Fanny Moser, the IGPP has been able to make a significant contribution to the research landscape in the frontier areas over

the past 75 years in the areas of information, counseling, and research defined by the institute's founder, Prof. Bender. The program of the anniversary symposium aimed to illustrate this with selected examples from the institute's past work. A second major event to mark the institute's anniversary was a series of lectures for the German-speaking population. The lectures took place weekly from September to December 2025,

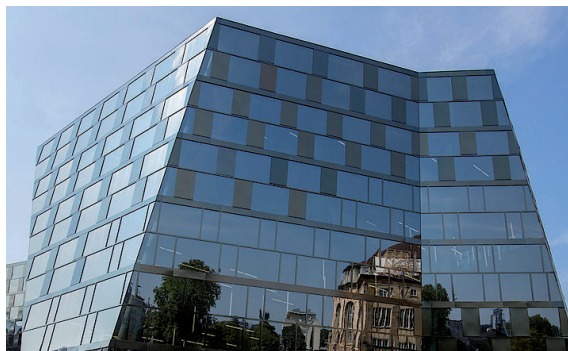


Fig. 8. University Library of Freiburg
(Photo: UB Freiburg).



Fig. 9. Audience at the symposium in the Parlatorium of the University Library of Freiburg.

also in the Parlatorium of the University Library of Freiburg. They were broadcast live on the Internet and recorded at the same time. The aim of this lecture series was to present the institute in its current form and with its current research projects to the interested German-speaking public. The recordings of the individual lectures are available on our YouTube platform (<https://www.youtube.com/@igppfreiburg2985/videos>).

We would like to take this opportunity to once again express our sincere thanks to Dr. Kellersohn and her University Library team for providing the Parlatorium for both events and for their excellent organizational

and technical support. Many thanks also to all the speakers at the anniversary symposium and lecture series, and to all our colleagues who contributed to the great success of these two events and the anniversary year 2025.

Jürgen Kornmeier and Eberhard Bauer

2.2 Fanny Moser Prize 2025

As part of the lecture series marking the 75th anniversary of the IGPP, the Fanny Moser Prize was awarded for the fourth time on September 23, 2025.

Dr. Fanny Moser (1872–1953) was one of the first women to study medicine and natural sciences in Freiburg, Zurich, and Munich, earning her doctorate in 1902 with a thesis on zoology. In 1914, she attended a mediumistic séance in Munich and witnessed a spectacular table levitation that shook her scientific worldview to its foundations. In the following decades, drawing on a unique collection of sources and research library, she undertook a critical review and analysis of the entire field of mesmerism, hypnotism, spiritualism, occultism, and early parapsychological research up to the 1930s, which led to the publication of her magnum opus, “Okkultismus – Täuschungen und Tatsachen” (“Occultism – Deceptions and Facts”, Munich 1935, reprinted 1974). Together with her second major work “Spuk – Irrglaube oder Wahrglaube? Eine Frage der Menschheit” (“Poltergeist Phenomena – Misbelief or True Belief? A Question for Humanity”, Zurich, 1950; reprinted in 1977), Fanny Moser left behind two major works on German-language parapsychological research as her personal legacy (Fig. 10). Both works have now been digitized and are freely accessible via the University Library of Freiburg. In her will, Fanny Moser stipulated the establishment of a foundation to establish and se-

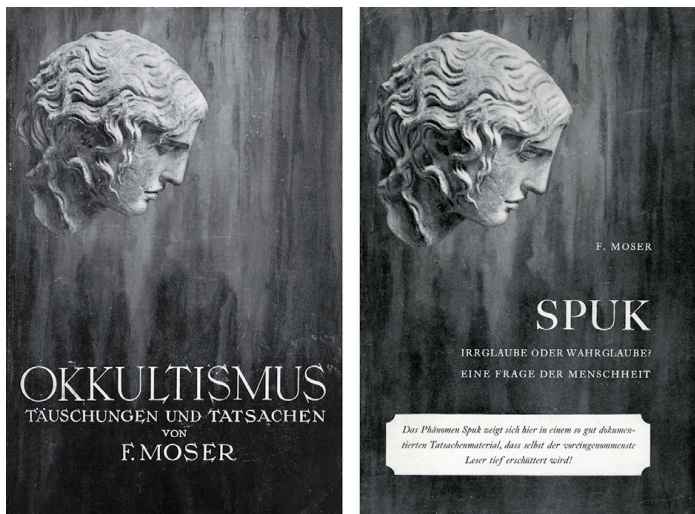


Fig. 10. The two major publications by Fanny Moser.

cure research in the tradition of her two works. For decades, the so-called Moser Legacy enabled the institute's research and consulting work on a limited scale. The testamentary disposition also stipulated that a prize should be awarded for the “best work” on the research topics she had worked on, with concrete investigations into “haunting cases” being particularly close to her heart.

The Fanny Moser Prize, awarded for the fourth time this year, was presented to physicist and psychologist Dr. Dr. Walter von Lucadou, founder and director of the “Parapsychologische Beratungsstelle” (Parapsychological Counseling Center) of the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Parapsychologie e.V. (“WGFP”, Scientific Society for the Promotion of Parapsychology). Dr.Dr. von Lucadou received the prize in particular for his systems theory-oriented approach to understanding “fleeting hauntings,” which has proven itself many times over in his years of his consulting practice.

The award ceremony, featuring a laudatory speech by Dipl.-Psych. Eberhard Bauer and a scientific lecture by the award winner, took place during a festive ceremony in the Kooperatur at the Münsterplatz and was broadcast via the internet. A video recording of the event can be found on the IGPP’s YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhZM5B_FouM).

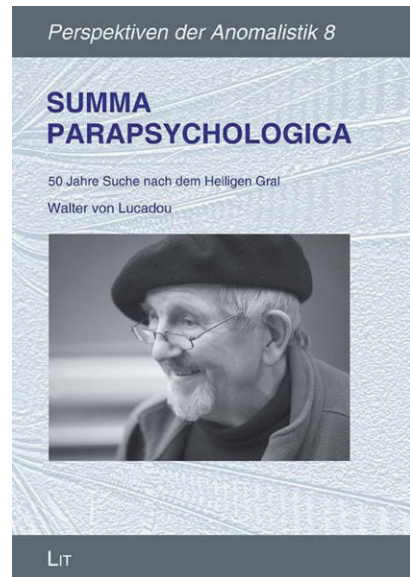


Fig. 11. Walter von Lucadou on the cover of his publication “Summa Parapsychologica - 50 Jahre Suche nach dem Heiligen Gral” (LIT: 2025).



Fig. 12. Eberhard Bauer, Walter von Lucadou, the winner of the Fanny Moser Prize 2025, Ina Schmidt-Knittel and Jürgen Kornmeier.

2.3 25 Years of the Bender Institute of Neuroimaging (BION)

A fitting celebration!

After receiving financial support from the Holler Foundation in 1992, the IGPP was able to expand. The number of employees grew, and research departments were established starting in 1998, as described in the chapter on the history of the institute. This expansion also included the founding of the Bender Institute of Neuroimaging as an subsidiary institute of the IGPP in Gießen in 2000 by Prof. Dieter Vaitl, who at that time was Chair of Clinical and Physiological Psychology at Justus-Liebig-Universität (JLU) in Gießen and, since 2001, also Director of the IGPP in Freiburg. With the BION, Europe's first fMRI device exclusively for basic psychological research was made available.

A central research topic in the early years of BION was the investigation of brain structural and functional correlates of altered states of consciousness. Altered states of consciousness are associated with dreams, hypnosis, trance, out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, but also with dissociative states and certain states of consciousness induced by intense meditation. Altered states of consciousness are a central topic of frontier research, not least because there are numerous reports that exceptional experiences and phenomena occur when people are in such a state of consciousness. For this reason, numerous experts in the frontier fields continue to speculate whether such a state is a necessary precondition for the occurrence of exceptional experiences and phenomena. In addition to structural and functional changes in the brain, the BION research program also focused on the positive and negative psychological consequences and side effects of intensive meditation practice. This also included the question of the (psycho)therapeutic potential of altered states of consciousness.

Triggered by a decline in investment income for the Holler Foundation in the early 2000s, the Holler Foundation's contributions to the IGPP were significantly reduced. As a result, the IGPP's financial support for BION also had to end in 2014.

Today, BION is a core facility of Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, located in Department 06 Psychology and Sports Science. It supports research using imaging techniques, particularly in the field of neuroscience.

However, even after BION became financially independent from IGPP, a close cooperative relationship between the two institutions remains.

On October 31, 2025, BION's 25th anniversary was celebrated in Gießen. In a ceremony in the auditorium of JLU, several speakers looked back on the last 25 years with personal memories.

Prof. Dr. Rudolf Stark (Gießen) was the first to speak as director of BION (Fig. 14). Under the heading "25 years of BION: An unusual success story!", he outlined the history of BION, which was founded in 2000 as a subsidiary institute of the IGPP. This was made possible because the IGPP was able to provide the financial resources to establish BION through funding from the Holler Foundation. The commitment and vision of Prof. Dr. Dieter Vaitl, who recognized the potential of functional magnetic resonance imaging for



Fig. 13. Invitation to BION's anniversary celebration.

the IGPP, was decisive in this regard. As the then first chairman and director of the IGPP, he was able to convince the members of the IGPP to establish BION in Gießen, where he was the first director.

In his speech, the Vice President of JLU for Scientific Infrastructure, Prof. Dr. Karsten Krüger, praised BION as a piece of the mosaic in the successful acquisition of a cluster of excellence in psychology. After Prof. Dr. Dieter Vaitl stepped down as director of BION, BION became a core unit of JLU, where researchers from all disciplines can conduct their studies using a 3-Tesla scanner.

PD Dr. Jürgen Kornmeier (Freiburg) spoke as director of the IGPP and congratulated BION on its 25th anniversary. In his pointed speech, he traced the history of BION from a Freiburg perspective. He particularly emphasized the mutually stimulating exchange between Gießen and Freiburg.

Prof. Dr. Andrea Hermann (Gießen) and Prof. Dr. Daniela Mier (Konstanz), who both began their scientific careers at BION, recalled the many clinical studies that have been conducted at BION over the last quarter of a century.

The series of speeches was followed by a humorous BION quiz organized by Prof. Dr. Ben de Haas (Gießen). The questions and answers clearly illustrated the stories that BION has written over the past 25 years.

In his speech, Prof. Dr. Peter Kirsch (Mannheim) sought to identify the soul of BION. In a not entirely serious meta-analysis of the studies conducted at BION to date, it was found that BION's focus has been more affective than cognitive.

Prof. Dr. Karin Zentgraf (Frankfurt) praised BION's excellent collaboration with sports science. She expressed her special thanks to all BION employees who made this collaboration possible.

Dr. Ulrich Ott (Gießen) summarized his exciting research on mindfulness, meditation, and other states of consciousness, which he has conducted as a member of the IGPP in Gießen over the past decades.

The ceremony ended with a show by Prof. Dr. Gebhard Sammer (Gießen), who rocked the university auditorium as a DJ. Anecdotes from 25 years of BION were mixed to the beat of the scanner.

The musical accompaniment (Jannika Epe, vocals, and Laurens Berthold, piano) also contributed to the dignified success of the event.

After the ceremony in the main university building, the celebrations moved to BION, where they continued into the early hours of the morning with delicious food and drinks and plenty of reminiscing.

Eberhard Bauer, Jürgen Kornmeier, Rudolf Stark and Dieter Vaitl



Fig. 14. Prof. Dr. Rudolf Stark, director of the BION in Gießen.

2.4 The 67th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association in Freiburg

The lecture hall of the “Haus zur Lieben Hand” was the venue for the 67th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association (PA) in Freiburg from July 15 to 18, 2025. This hall belongs to the University of Freiburg, is located in the old city center of Freiburg, and provided a practical yet festive setting for this conference. This is now the third time that the international parapsychological research community has met in the beautiful Breisgau region. The first time was in 1968 – a very exciting and fruitful time for parapsychology in Germany at that time. Prof. Hans Bender (1907–1991) enjoyed great popularity in the public media thanks to his public appearances as an expert on paranormal phenomena and poltergeist cases. The spectacular Rosenheim poltergeist occurred from late 1967 to early 1968 and attracted international attention. Prof. Ian Stevenson (1918–2007) was president of the PA at the time. He was succeeded by Hans Bender in 1969 after the then-customary one-year term of office. The fact that the PA conference was held at the University of Freiburg was a personal success for Bender: In 1967, he had obtained the position of full professor of psychology and frontier areas of psychology with a “Department for Frontier Areas of Psychology at the Psychological

Institute.” For him, this meant the complete integration of parapsychology as a legitimate part of academic psychology into the research landscape of the University of Freiburg. The second opportunity to host a PA conference in Freiburg arose in 2000, when Marilyn Schlitz was PA president. The 50th anniversary of the founding of the IGPP provided the celebratory occasion for inviting the PA to Freiburg. Thanks to the extensive endowment funds that the institute had around that time, it was able to invite visiting scholars and support external projects. Fiona Steinkamp was one of these international visiting scholars. She worked at the IGPP from 1999 to 2001 and took on the role of the Program Chair for the PA conference. The organizing committee consisted of Eberhard Bauer, Holger Bösch, and Gunda Wössner.

In 2025, the IGPP celebrated its 75th anniversary, and this was once again an occasion to host the annual PA Convention. Michael Nahm served as Program Chair and Gerhard Mayer was responsible for the on-site organization as Arrangement Chair.

Preceding the PA conference on Tuesday, July 15th, was an introductory event hosted by the IGPP, entitled “Explore the IGPP.” In the morning, eight short presentations, along with an introduction by Jürgen Kornmeier and Eberhard Bauer, provided an overview of the range of research conducted at the IGPP. The short presentations were given by Jürgen Kornmeier, Marc Wittmann, Michael Nahm, Gerhard Mayer, Ina Schmied-Knittel, Andreas Anton, Wolfgang Fach, and Liane Hofmann. In the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to tour the IGPP facilities and meet the staff. Experiments were presented and even carried out on both floors – including learning magic tricks used in “physical mediumship.” Furthermore, Eberhard Bauer led tours of the library and archives. This program was attended by approximately 60 people and received very positive feedback.

There was a great deal of interest in the subsequent PA conference. Due to the large number of submissions, only 12 papers were presented as full papers with time slots of 30 minutes. Another 26 oral presentations were given as research briefs with 15-minute time slots. This was supplemented by a poster session with 11 presentations, a panel discussion with four panelists, as well as the “Presidential Address” by Everton Maraldi on July 16 at the Greifenegg-Schlössle and the “J.B. Rhine Banquet Address” by Kelly Hayes on July



Fig. 15. Poster PA Convention 2025 (© Parapsychological Association - with kind permission).

17 at the Peterhofkeller (see Nahm, 2025).

The participants came from a total of 17 countries: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Mexico Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the USA. In a time of increasing national egoism, cultural exclusion and marginalization, this is very encouraging. The lecture hall at the Haus zur Lieben Hand was fully booked with almost 120 participants.

The conference program covered a wide range of topics and was divided into ten thematic sessions. The following list of individual sessions reflects the thematic and methodological diversity of the research presented:

Session 1: Researching Mediumship

Session 2: History and Theory

Session 3: Experiments on PK / Effects of Intention

Session 4: A View from China and the East

Session 5: Experiments with Participants from the General Population

Session 6: Bringing Psi into the Mainstream: Three Examples with Updates

Session 7: Experiments with Gifted / Skilled Participants

Session 8: Online Tools for Parapsychology

Session 9: Progress in Ganzfeld Research and Related Topics

Session 10: Surveys Assessing the Exceptional

We were able to secure the Greiffenegg-Schlössle as an attractive venue for the PA Awards ceremony and the Presidential Address. In his lecture, Everton Maraldi, the then-President of the PA, shared his thoughts on the future development of parapsychology. He saw it at a critical juncture. Despite intensive efforts over decades, it has failed to gain acceptance within the scientific mainstream. Parapsychology often seeks the causes for this outside its own field, namely in the skeptical and ignorant attitude of journal editors and researchers within the scientific mainstream. However, Maraldi also saw a fragmented landscape within parapsychology, which has developed over the years due to theoretical and methodological differences and an unwillingness to engage in open and constructive dialogue. He was optimistic, however, because there are institutions (such as the IGPP) that provide ongoing support for parapsychological research, as well as an increasing openness of some areas of mainstream research to certain topics from the field of anomalistics and consciousness research, which facilitates interdisciplinary dialogue. It could be added that the IGPP, with its multidisciplinary research approach, offers ideal conditions for preparing such an exchange. The evening concluded pleasantly with a champagne reception, delicious appetizers, and live music.

The J.B. Rhine Banquet took place in the historic vaulted cellar of the Peterhof. These nearly 900-years-old vaults provided an impressive setting for the meal and the subsequent lecture by American religious scholar Kelly Hayes, who is currently working as a permanent fellow in the project “Alternative Rationalities and Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective” in Erlangen. She spoke about her field research in a religious movement founded in Brazil, the “Vale do Amanhecer,” where she investigated, among other things, the connection between religious-ritual practice and exceptional or paranormal



Fig. 16. Group photo of the PA Convention 2025 (© Parapsychological Association - with kind permission).

experiences. In her stimulating lecture, Hayes emphasized how spiritual mediums can symbolize and thus make visible their inner, subjective experiences for others through rituals. For the J.B. Rhine Banquet Address at the PA conferences, speakers are invited who do not come from the field of parapsychology itself, but whose research or artistic work in related areas can inspire the parapsychological community to broaden its horizons.

After three enriching days of intensive knowledge acquisition, a guided tour through Freiburg's historic center was offered to interested participants on Friday evening, followed by a tourist excursion to Staufen on Saturday. There, participants enjoyed a guided tour through the historic center and a visit to a distillery, culminating in a lunch at a traditional "Straußen" tavern.

Overall, the 2025 PA Convention, including the preceding IGPP Day, can be considered a very successful event that had a clearly positive impact on the IGPP's public image. This is confirmed by numerous responses from participants.

Gerhard Mayer and Michael Nahm

Publication: Nahm (2025)

2.5 New IGPP Homepage

The last revision of the homepage dated back more than a decade and no longer met the technical or aesthetic requirements for a modern and appealing presentation of the IGPP's research activities. For this reason, a working group was established at the IGPP with the task of developing a new institute homepage. In several feedback rounds involving all IGPP staff members, guidelines and criteria for the redesign of the website were discussed and defined. In collaboration with the company Matoma from Trossingen, a new colour concept for the design of the new homepage was developed. The emerging modern design of the new website also made it necessary to create a revised logo adapted to the style of the new homepage. After several drafts and internal discussions, the decision was made in favour of a version, which fits perfectly into the modern design of the new web presence.



Fig. 17. The new logo.

The content structure of the homepage was also fundamentally revised. Instead of following the former departmental structure, which was organized according to academic disciplines, the research at IGPP is now presented on the new homepage in terms of five thematically oriented research areas: (1) Mind and Matter, (2) Society – Knowledge – Discourses, (3) Parapsychology and Paranormal Phenomena, (4) Spirituality and Health, and (5) Exceptional Experiences and Altered States of Consciousness. Within each research area, specific research focuses and concrete research projects are presented. After a number of fundamental decisions had been made, the technical implementation of the new homepage began with the creation of an initial draft (“click dummy”) by the company Matoma. This draft was subsequently revised, gradually expanded, and filled with content.

The new homepage is characterized by a modern design and a structure with numerous cross-links that encourage visitors to explore its diverse content. In addition, it includes several new features, such as the display of current news items or events on the homepage, an overview of new acquisitions for the institute's library, and a database containing publications from IGPP.

To provide visual material for the new homepage, a professional photographer was commissioned to take interior and exterior photographs of the institute as well as standard-

ized portraits of the staff members.

Thanks to the significant efforts of Andreas Anton and Ulrich Ott, the new homepage was launched in time for the symposium marking the 75th anniversary of IGPP in June 2025. The English version went online shortly before the Convention of the Parapsychological Association (PA), which took place in Freiburg in July 2025.

In addition to numerous direct positive responses to the IGPP's new website, the steady increase in access figures also demonstrates that the institute's new online presence has been successful.

Andreas Anton, Jürgen Kornmeier and Ulrich Ott



Fig. 18. The new homepage of the IGPP website.

3. Information

3.1 Library

History

The historical basis of the Institute's library comprises the collection of the Swiss biologist and psychical researcher Dr. Fanny Moser (1872–1953). Among its 2000 volumes are rare original editions from the early history of mesmerism, magnetism, occultism and psychical research can be found. Another important collection of 2500 volumes belonged to Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862–1929), a Munich physician and psychotherapist and a well-known pioneer of researches into “physical mediumship”, including telekinesis and materialization phenomena. Starting with 1970, with the help of the Stiftung Volkswagenwerk, it became possible to build up systematically a comprehensive collection of literature dealing with parapsychology and other anomalistic research topics. Since 1973, the IGPP library has been supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) (German Research Society) as a specialized research library for Parapsychology and Frontier Areas of Psychology. From 2011 to 2014, the DFG was supporting the IGPP library as a special collection (Sondersammelgebiet) as part of the University library of Freiburg. The IGPP is responsible for the scientific supervision and selection of the library and collaborates closely with the University Library of Freiburg which is the owner



Fig. 19. A view of the library rooms at the IGPP (Photo: Rene Reiche/IGPP).

of the library holdings and responsible for its technical administration. For details see: <https://www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/grenzgebiete-der-psychologie-parapsychologie/>

Profile of the Library

The task of the library is a systematic and comprehensive collection of the whole spectrum of the domestic and international scientific literature dealing with parapsychology, psi research and anomalistics (including so called “grey” literature). This includes (1) spontaneous paranormal experiences like telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis, apparitions, paranormal impressions and RSPK or poltergeist phenomena together with relevant case collections, field studies, laboratory experiments and theoretical models comprising its historical development, methods, results, problems, controversies and interdisciplinary aspects of research into scientific border areas; (2) psychological fringe experiences like out-of-body and near-death experiences, lucid dreams or multiple personalities; (3) collecting the whole spectrum of “fringe sciences”, like occultism, spiritism, e. g. “occult techniques” such as pendulum, after life contacts, mediumistic communications, channeling, memories of previous lives, voices on tape; (4) esoteric and New Age literature; (5) dowsing and radiesthesia (“earth rays”); (6) mental and spiritual healing and complementary medicine; (7) magic, possession, witches and demons; (8) secret societies, sects, lodges; (9) cabbala, numerology, symbolistics; (10) divination and oracle techniques (Tarot, I Ging); (11) UFO research; (12) conjuring magic and trickery; (13) the whole field of “anomalistics”, including phenomena in the sense of Charles Fort (“Fortean”), e. g. cryptozoology (Loch Ness, Bigfoot), Atlantis, Bermuda Triangle, Ancient Astronauts etc.; (15) literary descriptions of ‘esoteric’, ‘occult’ and paranormal phenomena.

Holdings

With currently about 69.000 volumes, the Freiburg library is one of the largest of its kind in Europe. Every year it grows by about 300 to 400 volumes. It currently subscribes to 135 journals and newsletters from all over the world. All international journals for parapsychological and anomalistic research are fully available. Its current stock of journals comprises about 2338 references, more than half of which are unique, i.e. only available in the special library in Freiburg. This makes this library a unique source of information in Germany and Europe for all questions related to parapsychology and frontier areas of psychology. All holdings of the institute’s library are listed in the online catalogue of Freiburg University Library and can be borrowed directly from the UB Freiburg (www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/olix). In the years 2022 and 2023 about 5.800 loans (local and inter-library loan) were received. In 2005 the IGPP started in cooperation with the University Library of Freiburg to digitize selected parts of the IGPP journal collection and to make them available on the Internet. Aspects of preservation (desintegration of paper) and their historical source value for the cultural, social and scientific history of spiritualism, occultism, psychical research and parapsychology play a decisive role in their selection. Until 2015, nine journals were published online (www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/dipro/igpp/), among them: (1) *Magikon* (1840–1851); (2) *Sphinx* (1886–1896); (3) *Psychische Studien* (1874–1925); (4) *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* (1907–1933); (5) *Zeitschrift für*

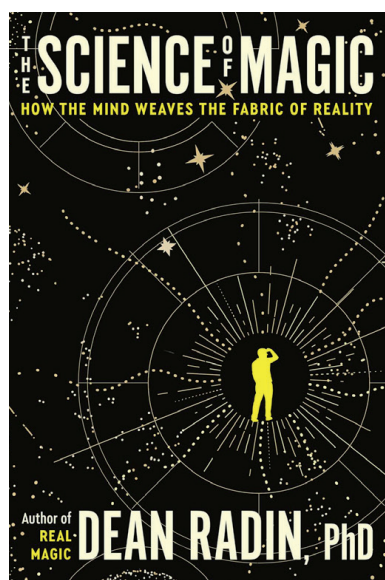
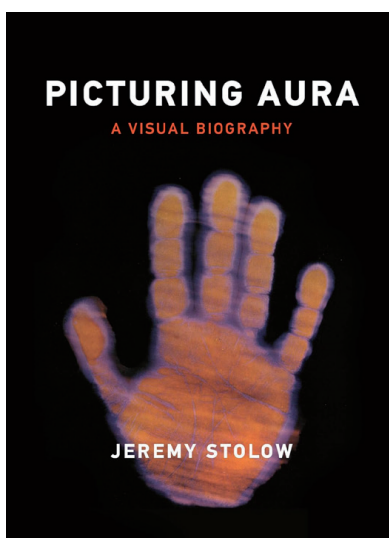
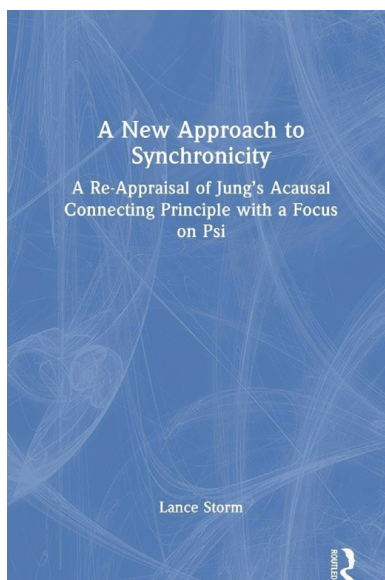
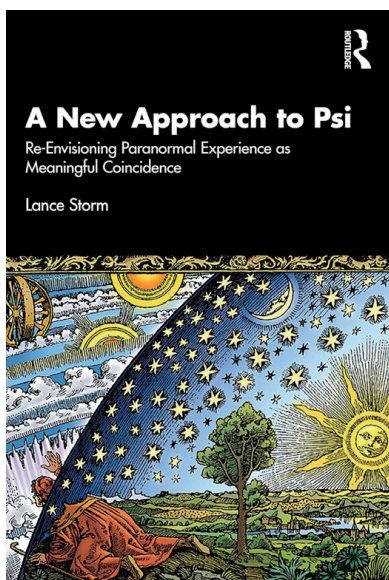


Fig. 20. Examples of new books in the library: Storm, L. (2025). *A New Approach to Psi*. Re-Envisioning Paranormal Experience as Meaningful Coincidence. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge; Storm, L. (2025). *A New Approach to Synchronicity*. A Re-Appraisal of Jung's Acausal Connecting Principle with a Focus on Psi. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge; Stollow, J. (2025). *Picturing Aura*. A Visual Biography. Stollow, J. (2025). *Picturing Aura*. A Visual Biography. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press; Radin, D. (2025). *The Science of Magic*. How the Mind Weaves the Fabric of Reality. New York: Harmony/Rodale/Convergent.

kritischen Okkultismus (1925–1928); (6) *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie* (1926–1934); (7) *Das Wunder* (1927–1929); (8) *Neue Wissenschaft. Zeitschrift für Grenzgebiete des Seelenlebens* (1950–1968); (8) *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* (1957–1968). (9) In 2013, the popular Russian magazine *Anomalija* (1990–2019) was added. The data Blu-Ray disc contains digitised issues as PDF; burned in 2023 in the Freiburg University Library. The magazine covers the popular spectrum of New Age, Esoterism and Occultism in Russia between 1990 and 2019. The digitisation of further historical journals is being prepared.

Survey of the collections of the University Library

Since November 2025, the University Library Freiburg has been conducting the research project “Nazi-Looted Property in the Holdings of the University Library Freiburg and IGPP,” funded by the German Lost Art Foundation (Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, DZK).

The project systematically examines holdings for cultural property confiscated as a result of Nazi persecution, known as Nazi-looted property. It is being carried out in cooperation with the IGPP, since, in addition to around 40,500 volumes from the University Library’s central holdings, the IGPP’s special library is also a focus of the investigation.

A particular focus is on the library’s development phase immediately after the founding of the IGPP in 1950, as holdings were integrated that still originated from Hans Bender’s time at the Reich University of Strasbourg. In this context, the project will examine whether titles confiscated by National Socialist authorities as part of the “Campaign against Occult Teachings and So-Called Occult Sciences” (“Aktion Hess”) may have made their way to Freiburg.

Eberhard Bauer

3.2 Archives of the IGPP

Overview

The mission of the archive of the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) is the long-term preservation, cataloguing, and provision of access to documents and materials that are significant for the cultural and scientific history of parapsychology and the frontier areas of psychology, as well as for the history of the institute. With its distinctive profile, the archive is of particular importance within the German and European research landscape. It is an institutional member of the Association of German Archivists.

Holdings and collections

The archive holdings comprise several broad material types, including photographs, sound recordings, film material, and objects. The main focus, however, is on written work-



Fig. 21. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (right) in front of his Munich mansion (on the left is zoologist and parapsychologist Karl Krall), circa 1928.

ing documents from the institute's time at Eichhalde 12 (1950–1995). These include extensive collections of reports on so-called spontaneous phenomena and numerous files on haunting cases investigated by the institute. The holdings also include records created after the move to Wilhelmstraße in 1996, as well as materials produced since 2014 following a change in organisational structure.

These holdings are supplemented by various bequests and partial estates of key figures in European parapsychology and related fields, such as Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862–1929) (Fig. 21) and Thomas Ring (1892–1983) (currently 46 holdings). In addition, there are numerous material collec-

tions, including academic theses and publications, posters, and extensive press collections (currently 56 holdings). In total, the holdings currently occupy around 350 linear metres of shelf space in two storage rooms in the institute's basement. An overview and further information are available on the IGPP website.

The holdings continue to grow. Alongside the incorporation of internal documents (e.g., from completed research projects), there were also external additions during the reporting period. Particularly noteworthy is the acquisition of the collection of Emil Prinz Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg (1824–1878) from the estate of Gerd H. Hövelmann (1956–2017). It includes early evidence of spiritualist practices, including rare ghost and phantom photographs of cultural-historical significance (Fig. 22). The archive also received a fragment of the estate of the philosopher Traugott Konstantin Oesterreich (1880–1949) – including eleven postcards by Max Dessoir (1867–1947) – as well as part of the estate of Dr Walter A. Koch (1895–1970), with a focus on astrology.

Archival cataloguing

During the reporting period, extensive preliminary sorting and cataloguing was undertaken, primarily for the audiovisual collections, including the holdings “Photographs before 1950,” “Photographs 1950–1995,” “Leif Geiges Collection,” and the collections of film material and sound recordings. These collections were also the main focus of digitisation work (see below).

Evaluation of the situation in the archive

Since June 2025, the archive has been undergoing an internal audit. The audit system-

atically reviews the archive's development, its use, acquisition practice, and core workflows over the past 25 years. On this basis, the archive's future development will be planned – especially in light of limited human and financial resources. This includes, among other things, defining future collection priorities, prioritising archival work, and improving user-facing services and functions.

In parallel with this review, measures identified as necessary are being implemented. These include thorough cleaning of the archive rooms and materials; reviewing and supplementing the archive equipment (in particular storage capacity and security infrastructure); arranging the holdings systematically in accordance with the archive structure; and recording, completing, and consolidating all existing cataloguing information. This work also prepares the data for electronic processing in a new archive database that is currently being established.

Digitization

The audiovisual collections are among the most valuable and in need of protection in the IGPP archive. At the same time, the challenges of preserving and providing access to these collections are particularly demanding. Analogue sound recordings, in particular, are at high risk of deterioration. They currently comprise 29 Astromag records (1949–c. 1951), 757 magnetic tapes (1952–1977), and 1,260 audio cassettes (1969–1991) in the above-mentioned collection holdings (collection groups 2–6). In addition, other collections contain more than 500 unprocessed audio tapes and audio cassettes. Digital audio recordings also require preservation measures, including 71 DAT cassettes (1998) and a collection of CD-ROMs with audio recordings and microcassettes (fewer than 100, since 2000).

During the reporting period, processing materials on the subject of “hauntings” remained a priority, as these form a core part of the archive's content (a total of approximately 800 items). In-house digitisation of audio cassettes is well advanced; 275 backup copies are now available (around 80% of the collection). In addition, digitisation of audio tapes has begun, as has the professional creation of high-resolution backup copies of selected Super 8 and 16 mm films.



Fig. 22. Self-portrait of William Crookes with the alleged spirit form “Katie King”, London, 1874.

As part of the project “Digitisation of the Institute’s Collections on the Subject of Hauntings” (DIS), additional photographic holdings were digitised. In addition, other relevant holdings in the institute’s archive (including case files, collection and press folders, and correspondence) were pre-sorted, catalogued, and prepared for possible digitisation.

Archive use

Providing access to archival material for research projects and public relations work is a key part of the archive’s activities. The archive is used by both institute staff and external researchers from the social and media sciences, the history of science, and the cultural sector, provided their research interest is recognised as legitimate by the IGPP. An overview of works produced using archival material is available on the IGPP website. A particularly notable collaboration during the reporting period was with the Kunstmuseum Basel in preparing the exhibition “Ghosts – Dem Übernatürlichen auf der Spur” (September 20 2025–March 8 2026). The archive holdings were used intensively for this purpose, including the provision of numerous exhibits (see p. 57). Other exhibitions that presented holdings from the archive included, among others, “Para-Moderne -Lebensreformen ab 1900” at the exhibition hall of the Federal Republic of Germany (Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle) in Bonn (April 11–August 10, 2025) and “Zeit für Geister - Von Ahnen und Naturwesen” at the museum of the Augsburger Puppenkiste (February 27, 2025–February 22, Feb. 2026).

Bauer, Fischer and Schellinger (until June 2025)



Fig. 23. Historical audio tapes in the IGPP archives
(Photo: Rene Reiche/IGPP).

3.3 Counseling Psychology Practice and Research

Information and Counseling at the IGPP

Since its foundation in 1950 by Prof. Hans Bender (1907–1991), the IGPP has offered a free information service for the interested public and for professionals from the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, medicine, education, pastoral care and social work on the entire spectrum of topics in parapsychology and frontier areas of psychology as well as on the state of interdisciplinary and international scientific research dealing with paranormal phenomena and exceptional experiences. Every year, around 1000 telephone, letter and e-mail inquiries from journalists, students and people with an interest in science and the general public are answered. In particular, information is also provided on training and further education issues, references to specialist literature, additional information and links to important parapsychological research institutions and organizations and information on the use of the IGPP's extensive library and archive.

The IGPP offers a special counseling service with strict data protection precautions for people seeking advice and help for disturbing or distressing exceptional experiences (ExE). ExE are commonly referred to as “psychic”, “paranormal”, “magical” etc. and have been part of the spectrum of human experience in all cultures at all times. They usually occur spontaneously, i.e. unexpectedly and without a recognizable cause. However, they can also be induced by techniques such as automatic writing or meditative practices. There are also ExE that occur after contact with healers, mediums, clairvoyants or by taking advantage of offers from the esoteric scene. Many people evaluate their ExE positively and are able to integrate them well into their world view. Under certain circumstances, however, it can also trigger insecurities and fears that are not easy to overcome. People who feel burdened by ExE often search in vain for explanations and help. The IGPP counseling service supports clients in classifying their experiences and provides coping and processing aids.

Eberhard Bauer, Wolfgang Fach, Liane Hofmann, Ulrich Ott and Annette Zwickel

Exceptional Experiences (ExE)

According to a definition by Fach and Belz ExE is a collective term for experiences “that deviate in their quality, their course or their genesis from reality beliefs of those affected and/or their social environment and/or from epistemological concepts and scientific principles and laws established in modern societies. It is ideologically neutral and implies neither statements about the reality status of such experiences nor about the mental health status of the people who report them”. The multitude of different ExE can be traced back to exceptional phenomena (ExP), which can be assigned to four basic classes. The ExP basic class model, developed by Wolfgang Fach and shown in Figure 24, is the starting point for the classification of ExE in IGPP counseling. It captures reported ExP as experiential content in a global phenomenal reality model based on the dichotomy of a self-model and a world-model as its fundamental components. Phenomena that devi-

ate from reality beliefs in the sense of the above definition can be localized as external phenomena in the world-model or as internal phenomena in the self-model. In addition, coincidence phenomena can be defined as exceptional connections and dissociation phenomena as exceptional separations of the self-model and the world-model:

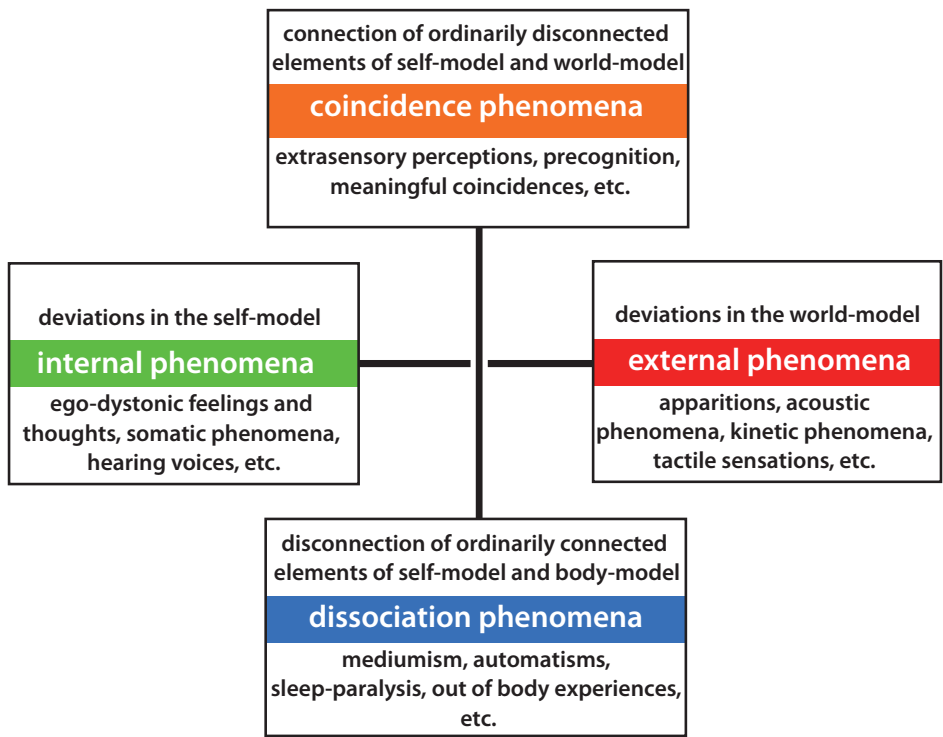


Fig. 24. ExP basic class model.

1. External phenomena are exceptional phenomena in the external environment. They often occur in the house or apartment of clients and are referred to as poltergeist and apparitions. This ExE-pattern is characterized in particular by kinetic phenomena (e.g. movement, disappearance or appearance of objects), unexplained noises (e.g. knocking, footsteps), smells, temperature fluctuations and perceptions of visible (shadows, diffuse figures, light, etc.) or invisible presences are reported.
2. Internal phenomena are exceptional phenomena that clients perceive mentally or in their bodies in the pattern of internal presence and influence. They usually attribute this experience to certain people or external powers that affect them through telepathic, paranormal or magical forces. They mainly report physical sensations (e.g. energy flows, pain, exhaustion), thoughts, feelings and moods that are ego-dystonic, or hearing inner voices.

3. Coincidence phenomena concern exceptional connections between inner experiences and external events. For example, clients describe extrasensory perceptions of the inner states of other people (telepathy) or events in the past (retrocognition), present (clairvoyance) or future (precognition, dreams). There are also frequent reports on the pattern of meaningful coincidences in which oracle techniques (e.g. tarot, pendulum) lead to accurate statements, certain incidents are experienced as fateful, or accumulations of similar events (e.g. occurrence of a number) appear as a sign of a higher order or as a curse (e.g. misfortune).

4. Dissociation phenomena concern exceptional physical phenomena and the loss of control over one's own body. This can happen, for example, by the pattern of mediumism and automatism, in which uncontrolled impulses for movement and action (e.g. automatic writing, glossolalia) occur that are experienced as heteronomous. Conversely, phenomena known as nightmare and sleep paralysis are experienced particularly in states close to sleep and on awakening. This ExE-pattern is characterized by an inability to move, often accompanied by tactile sensations (nightmares), as well as external phenomena (apparitions, invisible presence).

Wolfgang Fach

Counseling Modalities

• Documentation

The counselors at IGPP jointly manage the data of their clients using a documentation system (DOKU) that was introduced at IGPP in 1998 in accordance with the applicable standards for basic documentation. To date, approximately 5,000 individuals seeking advice in direct connection with ExE have been recorded.

The evaluation results show largely consistent distributions over the years with regard to the reported exceptional phenomena, the sociodemographic characteristics of those seeking advice as well as the characteristics of clinically significant variables. However, since 2010, the volume of counseling has declined – from around 250 clients per year to about 100 annually – due to changes in the help-seeking behavior of younger generations and the steadily increasing number of online services and forums that advice seekers encounter on the internet.

In general, it cannot be assumed that those affected find appropriate and sustainable support through online offerings, as many of them require professional care due to the circumstances accompanying their ExE.

• Data Processing

The processing of personal data is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and with applicable professional obligations (Art. 6 para.1 lit. c GDPR). In line with the documentation requirement pursuant to Section 9 of the Model Professional Code for Psychological Psychotherapists (MBO-PP/KJP), the data are retained for at least 10 years.

They are used for quality assurance in counseling as well as for statistical and scientific research purposes (Art. 89 GDPR and Section 27 of the German Federal Data Protection Act, BDSG). The recording and analysis of counseling and therapy sessions are also an integral part of quality assurance and research activities.

With the explicit consent of those seeking advice, audio and video recordings of counseling sessions are made. Depending on the respective consent, these recordings are used (1) for quality assurance and supervision, (2) for scientific research purposes, and (3) for education and professional training.

- *Data Protection*

In the counseling department, data protection is ensured by a network-based storage system that is not connected to the internet and can only be accessed by counseling staff. The database containing personal data is stored on a PC that is likewise not connected to the internet and is linked to the protected file server for data backup purposes.

- *Online Counseling Platform*

In compliance with the GDPR, an internet platform is used to ensure secure e-mail communication. It is an online counseling system provided by the technical service provider Zone 35, which has been tailored - within the available scope of configuration – to meet the specific needs of IGPP counseling services. Through the internet platform (<https://igpp-beratung.assisto.online/>), clients seeking advice can contact the counseling team, exchange confidential information, and schedule telephone or video appointments. To use the platform, users only need to register with a freely chosen display name, an e-mail address, and a password. If they wish to remain anonymous, they may choose a nickname as their display name and use an e-mail address that conceals their identity. To facilitate the categorization of inquiries and to better tailor counseling services to the needs of advice seekers, some voluntary information is requested. Optional details regarding gender, age, marital status, partnership situation, living situation, employment status, and region of residence also serve purposes of scientific documentation and research.

- *Video Consultations*

Clients can schedule video consultations with the counselors either via the online platform or by telephone. To ensure that the conversations remain confidential, the technical connection is established through the platform “sprechstunde.online,” operated by Zava Sprechstunde Online GmbH. This company is a certified video service provider that meets the specific security requirements of the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (Kassenärztliche Bundesvereinigung) for medical and psychotherapeutic video consultations. The provider guarantees that all content of the video consultation is end-to-end encrypted throughout the entire transmission process in accordance with the current state of the art and that the service provider itself can neither access nor store the transmitted data.

Wolfgang Fach, Liane Hofmann, Ulrich Ott and Annette Zwickel

Counseling Work

• *Volume of Counseling*

During the current reporting period – comparable to previous years – approximately 200 individuals from across Germany, and in a few cases from other European countries, made use of the counseling services for people seeking help related to ExE. Evaluation results show largely consistent distributions over the years with regard to the reported exceptional phenomena: The external pattern poltergeist and apparitions accounted for approximately 25% of the counseling cases. The internal pattern internal presence and influence represented about 20%. The coincidence categories of extrasensory perception and meaningful coincidences together comprised around 33%. The dissociation pattern mediumism and automatism, as well as night mare and sleep paralysis, accounted for roughly 7%. A further 15% of inquiries had an acute or anamnestic psychotic background. In this context, the reported ExE generally spanned all categories, with a particularly frequent manifestation in experiences of internal presence and influence. The increased number of inquiries from clients with psychiatric relevance may, among other factors, be related to the discussion of the question “Are ExE to be understood as subclinical symptoms within a psychosis continuum?”, which was presented at a research colloquium on January 30, 2024, and is publicly available on YouTube. This development reflects the need for clarification among those affected.

Wolfgang Fach, Liane Hofmann and Annette Zwickel

• *Counseling Approach*

In recent years, the counseling approach for clients seeking help regarding ExE has been continuously refined. Increasingly, empirically grounded and conceptually elaborated findings from accompanying research on autonomy and bonding in ExE are being put into practical application. Many clients recognize themselves in the descriptions of the typical underlying contexts of the phenomena they report. The communicated insights into biographically verifiable structural regularities often have a relieving effect and contribute to calming those seeking help. Furthermore, the depth-psychological approach of Carl Gustav Jung, with his concepts of the collective unconscious and synchronicity, has proven to be a helpful interpretative framework for advice seekers. Within this framework, not only ExE but also psychosis-related perceptions can be described in a model-like manner and integrated into a subjective structure of meaning. This provides affected individuals with a cognitive approach to understanding their experiences, an approach that is generally not taken into account within standard clinical care. The counseling process offers comprehensible criteria that support individuals in classifying their experiences and, where appropriate, facilitate referral to suitable clinical care structures.

Annette Zwickel

4. Research

The IGPP is engaged in investigating phenomena and anomalies at the frontiers of our knowledge that are not yet fully understood. These include altered states of consciousness, exceptional human experiences, exceptional information processing, exceptional psychophysical relationships, as well as their biological foundations, their psychosocial effects, and their social, cultural, and historical contexts. One goal of research at the IGPP is to integrate the findings into a broad scientific and epistemological framework, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the mind-matter problem and the still unsolved mystery of human consciousness.

Research at the IGPP is currently divided into five research areas:

Parapsychology and Paranormal Phenomena

Parapsychology deals with the interdisciplinary scientific investigation of extraordinary human experiences and phenomena, which are summarized under the term “psi” (Ψ). This includes two main areas: extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK). ESP encompasses phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition, which give the impression of occurring “outside” or independently of the usual sensory organs (popularly known as the “sixth sense”).

ESP encompasses phenomena that appear to be based on direct mental influence on physical or biological systems, outside of previously known scientific interactions.

The highly interdisciplinary field of parapsychology and paranormal phenomena is examined from a wide variety of perspectives, which are explored in greater depth in other IGPP research areas. These include experimental studies, projects on the historical development of parapsychology, physical mediumship, the history of the institute itself and the biography of its founder Hans Bender, exhibition projects on the connection between visual arts and occultism, and research on counseling and therapy for people with exceptional experiences and altered states of consciousness.

Society – Knowledge – Discourses

The social and scientific perception of phenomena such as astrology, conspiracy theories, or paranormal experiences varies greatly. The research area “Society-Knowledge-Discourses” investigates how such perceptions arise, are communicated, and are evaluated. Central questions include: What paranormal knowledge and practices circulate in society, how are they defined, where are they accepted or rejected, and what social function do they fulfill?

A central role in our research is played by the analysis of discourses that determine what is considered knowledge, truth, or power and what ideas of social reality are formed as a result. We also investigate how societies determine what is considered “normal” or “paranormal” and how people deal with corresponding experiences – such as UFO sightings,

near-death experiences, or ghostly apparitions.

These topics are addressed in interdisciplinary projects using a variety of quantitative and qualitative social and cultural science methods, which are phenomenological, hypothesis-testing, or theory-building in nature, depending on the research question.

Spirituality and Health

In Western societies, more and more people are turning away from traditional religions and seeking new forms of meaning and connection in spiritual worldviews – a change that is referred to as the “spiritual turn.” Spirituality stands for an individual, experience-oriented approach to the transcendent, characterized by self-realization and the pursuit of inner growth. Since the 1980s, this shift has also been evident in healthcare. Instead of viewing spirituality and religion critically, the focus is increasingly on their healing and beneficial aspects. Key questions in the field of spirituality and health research include: How can spiritual development processes and crises be supported psychologically? What health potential do spiritual traditions hold? And how can spirituality be appropriately taken into account in the globalized, secular healthcare system and in psychotherapy?

Exceptional Experiences and Altered States of Consciousness

Exceptional experiences (ExEs) have always been part of the spectrum of human experience and are known in all cultures. They include phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, ghostly apparitions, premonitions of death, hauntings, out-of-body experiences, UFO sightings or sleep paralysis, near-death experiences, and so-called terminal lucidity. ExEs can occur spontaneously or be triggered by contact with healers, mediums, or esoteric practices. Some people affected by such experiences become unsettled and need support.

ExEs often occur in connection with altered states of consciousness – for example, during dreaming, a flow experience, meditation, spiritual experiences in nature, or under the influence of psychedelics. Altered states of consciousness can be induced spontaneously or deliberately. Research investigates both the subjective experiences and the underlying brain processes in order to better understand the relationship between mind and matter. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the research area of extraordinary experiences and altered states of consciousness scientifically investigates ExEs and altered states of consciousness and their interrelationships.

Mind and Matter

The mind-matter problem (also known as the mind-body problem or the psychophysical problem) addresses one of the fundamental questions of humanity: How is the human mind or our consciousness related to the material world? The brain is connected to our consciousness in ways that are not yet understood. The mind-matter problem is of particular importance for frontier areas, as many reported phenomena seem to involve a connection between mental and material levels of explanation that are not yet explained. In this context, the “Perception and Cognition” working group deals, among other top-

ics, with the question of how we construct stable and reliable perceptual interpretations from incomplete, noisy, and to varying degrees ambiguous information available to our senses, and how well these internally created models of the world represent the ontological reality. We investigate perception processes, perceptual illusions, instabilities, and anomalies in perception, and how these are related to neural processes in the brain. The “Time Perception and Time Consciousness” working group investigates the under-represented but essential aspect of time consciousness in the brain-consciousness debate. Phenomenal consciousness is temporally extended in the moment of experience and linked to self-perception through the experienced dynamics and continuity.

4.1 Parapsychology and Paranormal Phenomena

4.1.1 Experimental Parapsychology

Looking forward and looking back: Replication of an EEG study on affective forward and backward priming

In affective forward priming, a prime stimulus presented before a task-relevant target stimulus accelerates responses when both stimuli have the same emotional valence (i.e., are congruent). In a controversially discussed variant of this paradigm from 2011, Daryl Bem reported that a congruent prime stimulus presented in the future also influences the processing of a present target stimulus. This is a phenomenon that we refer to in this context as backward priming and that Bem interpreted as a precognition effect. In an exploratory study published in 2025, we investigated whether both the classic forward priming effects and the backward priming effects reported by Bem can be replicated in the reaction times of test subjects and whether correlates to the respective effects can be

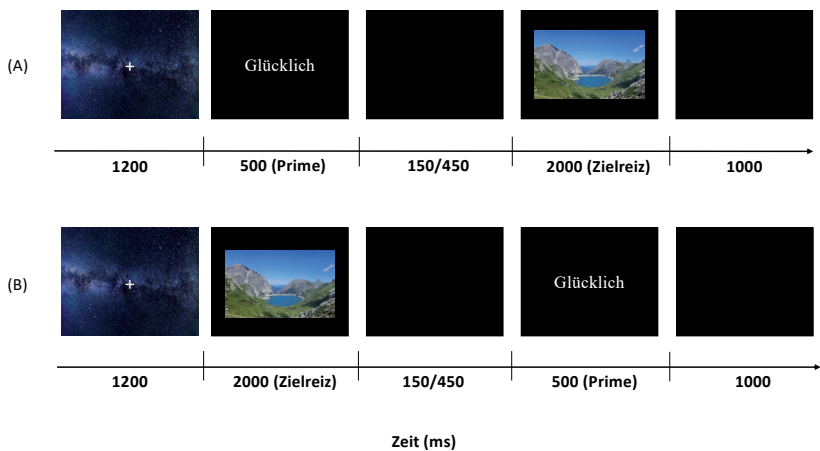


Fig. 25. (A) Forward Priming and (B) Backward Priming Conditions. In the Forward Priming Condition (A), each trial began with the presentation of a Hubble image of a starry sky for 1200 ms, followed by the prime word with positive or negative valence displayed for 500 ms. After the prime, a blank screen served as the inter-stimulus interval (ISI), lasting either 150 ms or 450 ms. The target image then appeared, and participants were instructed to indicate, within 2000 ms, whether the image conveyed a positive or negative emotional valence. Upon response, the target image was immediately replaced with a blank screen for 1000 ms, marking the end of the trial. The Backward Priming Condition (B) used the same stimulus and ISI presentation times. However, the order of the prime word and target image was reversed (a representative illustration has been substituted for starry sky and target image due to copyright restrictions).

identified in the electroencephalogram (EEG). We found interesting EEG correlates for both forward and backward priming. We were also able to replicate the reaction time effects known from the literature for forward priming, but found no corresponding effects for backward priming.

In this hypothesis-driven confirmatory study, we investigated whether the initial findings from 2025 could be replicated. Participants had to decide whether they rated photos with emotional content (the target stimuli) as positive or negative. In separate experimental conditions, the target photos were shown before (backward priming) or after (forward

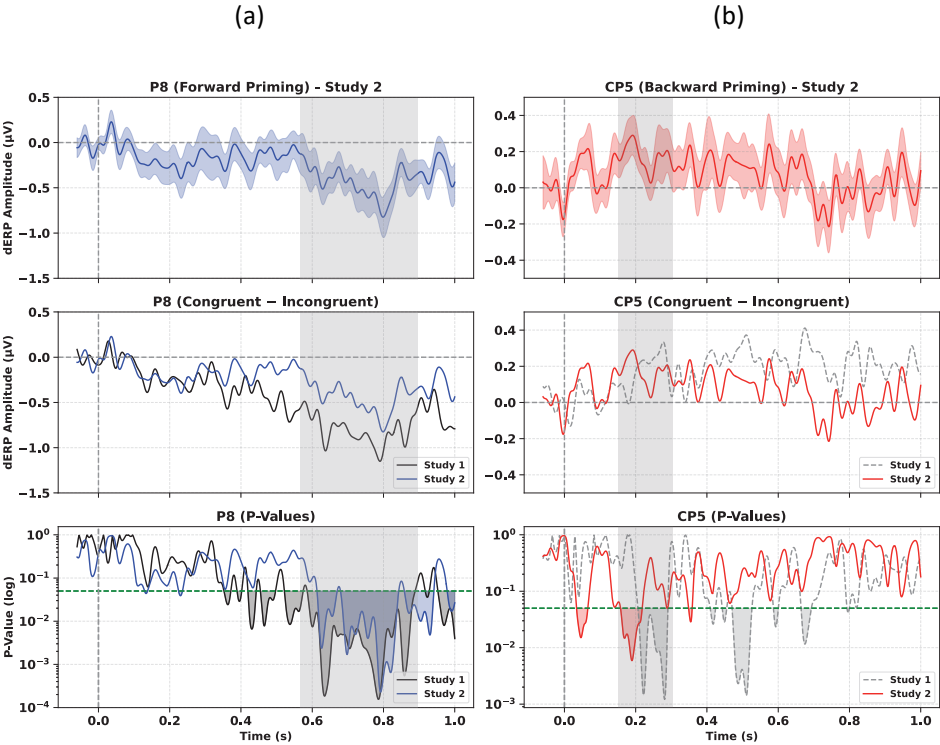


Fig. 26. (a) The first row shows the difference (congruent minus incongruent) ERP trace (“dERPs”) $\pm$ SEMs at electrode P8 from the Forward Priming Condition in the current dataset (Study 2, solid light blue trace). The second row shows the same dERP at P8 overlaid with the corresponding dERP trace from Wilson et al. (2025) as a solid black line. The third row displays p-values from “running t-tests” (each single data point from the dERP trace is compared to zero with a one-sided t-test). Solid blue line represents results from the current study, black lines represent results from Wilson et al. (2025) for comparison. The similarities of both the dERP traces and p-value traces indicate the replication of the forward priming congruency effect. (b) Same logic as in (a) for the backward priming experiment, focusing on electrode CP5. We replicated the finding from Wilson et al. (2025) of an early positivity, which, however, seems to occur slightly earlier in the present study.

priming) a visually presented positive or negative prime word (Fig. 25). Reaction times and EEG data were analyzed separately for the priming and congruence conditions and compared with each other.

We replicated the earlier findings on forward priming, according to which subjects responded more quickly to congruent than to incongruent priming stimuli. We were also able to replicate the EEG effects of forward priming from 2025 (Fig. 26). In backward priming, we did not find a congruency effect in the reaction time data. It is noteworthy that we were able to replicate the left-hemispheric centro-parietal EEG congruence effect from the backward priming condition of our 2025 study. As an important next step, this confirmatory but difficult-to-explain EEG finding in the backward priming condition, which represents a potential anomaly, must be replicated by other research groups.

Azadeh Mozhdehfarahbakhsh, Shalila Freitag, Jürgen Kornmeier, Marc Wittman and Mareike Wilson

Publication: Wilson, Wittmann & Kornmeier (2025)

VR video game-induced psi communication with red and green ganzfeld: A proof-of-principle study.

In this proof-of-principle study, we intended to employ the ganzfeld psi method with two novel features. (1) We used a set of four different interactive video games randomly selected for each trial to be played in a virtual reality (VR) setting by the sender, while the receiver was wearing goggles producing either (2) a red or green ganzfeld, randomly selected. N= 48 young couples in a romantic relationship were recruited as sender-receiver pairs, resulting in 48 trials. Regarding the main hypothesis, across all trials the experiment registered 15 hits out of 48 attempts, where the chance level lies at 12. According to a binominal test, the probability of having exactly, or more than, 15 hits (K) out of 48 trials (n) is $p=.199$. The receivers' hit rates in the green as compared to the red ganzfeld were not significantly different ($\chi^2=.814$; $p=.367$). Assessed experiential state variables for the video game and the ganzfeld sessions as well as the measured trait variable absorption did not affect the hit rate. An analysis of participants' responses revealed that independent of the hit rate the four games were identified as targets a strongly unequal number of times. The design of potential future studies is discussed.

Marc Wittmann

Publication: Lieb, Schult & Wittmann (2024)

4.1.2 History of Parapsychology and Frontier Areas of Psychology

The scope of this research area includes the cultural and social history and the history of science of parapsychological research and other unorthodox fields (“Historical Parapsychology”). The focus is on the historical reception of spiritism, occultism, psychical research and parapsychology in Germany from the 19th century until today. Of particular interest is the reception of paranormal and “anomalistic” phenomena with regard to established scientific disciplines such as psychology, medicine, literary studies or history of art. Special topics of interest are: (1) biographies of psychical researchers and psychics or mediums; (2) the history of organizations and societies in the field; (3) the role of photography in the history of parapsychological research; (4) the connection between occultism and visual arts; (5) the history of the IGPP and the biography of its founder Hans Bender. An integral part of these studies are the IGPP research library and the IGPP archives.

Historical Poltergeist Research

Reports on ghosts, apparitions and haunting phenomena have been reported since antiquity; they are widespread across cultures, and their interpretations through the centuries are also a reflection of prevailing social, religious and cultural world views and collective attitudes. Detailed descriptions of events, which today we would most likely classify as ‘hauntings’ or ‘poltergeists’ due to their typical forms of reporting and sequence of events, come from 17th and 18th century Europe, for example, especially from England, France and Germany. They were (and still are) the subject of studies on the history of reception



Fig. 27. Files containing case studies on paranormal research from the 1960s and 1970s by Hans Bender and former institute staff members in the IGPP archives (Photo: Rene Reiche/IGPP).

and mentalities, especially from the perspective of historical, religious or literary studies. Reports of hauntings and ghosts occupy a special place in discourses on the social role of superstition (*superstitio*) in the historical context of sorcery, demonology and witchcraft at the beginning of the early modern period and the emerging conflicts with the Enlightenment's claim to rationality. Early and in part extensively documented haunting reports, which are presented in relevant overviews, are situated in this field of tension. The authors of such reports were primarily those directly affected, who defended themselves against the social stigmatisation that has always accompanied 'spooky' occurrences, or scholarly treatises that attempted to grasp and 'contain' the 'occult' or 'supernatural' occurrences with theological, legal and medical terminology and cognitive possibilities of the time. It is not least to the credit of IGPP founder Hans Bender that the one affected is now part of the agenda of the international parapsychological community - mostly under the designation "Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis" (RSPK). Historical, sociological, clinical-psychological, experimental and methodological aspects of RSPK phenomena are an integral part of the relevant research agenda and are regularly discussed at conferences such as the Parapsychological Conference or the "Society for Psychical Research". The aim of counseling „haunted“ people is to help them to find a solution to their problems. The aim of such a counseling is to decipher the meaning or significance of such occurrences against the background of the current biographical or family situation. It can be shown that RSPK phenomena disappear when the "real" problem - its "meaning" -- has been understood: poltergeist phenomena lose their importance and one does not like to remember them even later - they change into literature and find their deserved place in the IGPP library for example.

Eberhard Bauer

Publication: Bauer (2024)

Bridging the Gap – an Exchange between Hans Bender and Leonid Vasiliev

It is not possible to determine exactly when the first contact between Hans Bender and Leonid Vasiliev took place. In September 1962 Leningrad State University had published a book in Russian which was brought out in an English translation the following year under the title *Experiments in Mental Suggestion* (Vassiliev, 1963). The front matter of the English edition carries the announcement that the book was published "on instruction from the Editorial Council of the University of Leningrad" and that the "English translation [was] authorized and revised by Professor Vasiliev."

The author was Chairman of the Department of Physiology in the University of Leningrad. Born in 1891, Vasiliev had graduated in 1914 from Petersburg University, became a teacher of biological sciences in Ufa, Bashkir from 1917–1921 and was head of the Bechterev Brain Institute Leningrad from 1921–1938. In 1943 Vasiliev became professor of physiology at Leningrad University until his death in February 1966. Author of some one hundred scientific papers dealing with physiology and the biophysiology of the nervous process, Vasiliev was considered an authority on parabiosis and on the medical

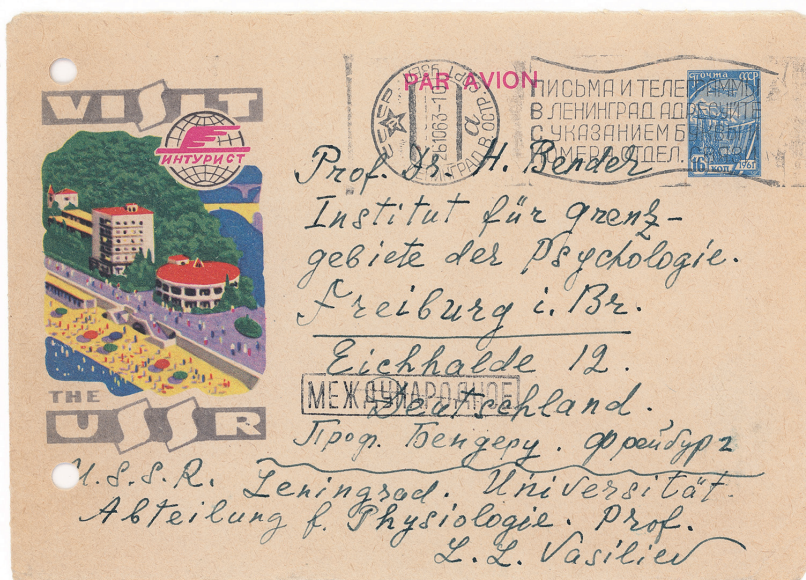


Fig. 28. Postcard from Leonid L. Wassiliew to Hans Bender.

use of ionized air. He was a Corresponding member of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Soviet Union and a holder of the Order of Lenin.

Apparently already back in April 1963, there must have existed plans to publish a German translation of this internationally acclaimed book because Vasiliev promised Bender in his postcard that he would send the originals of the illustrations of his book and the envelope carried as handwritten sender the "Physiological Department of University of Leningrad". In his card, Wassiliew also thanked Bender for sending him the German translation of the influential textbook *Parapsychologie – Grenzwissenschaft der Psyche* by the American parapsychologists J. B. Rhine and Gaither Pratt which had appeared in 1962 as Supplement (Beiheft) of *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* – a scholarly journal for parapsychological (psi) research in German founded by Bender in 1957.

In the early 1960s, Professor Hans Bender (1907–1991), a psychologist and a physician by training, was undoubtedly the dominant and most popular figure in German academic parapsychology after the Second World War. In 1950, at the age of 43, he had founded at his birthplace and hometown of Freiburg im Breisgau an independent institution, the "Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene" (IGPP for short) [Institute for Frontier Areas and Mental Health], funded primarily by private means, and headed it until his death on 7 May 1991. From 1954 to 1975, as an internationally renowned professor of psychology including border areas of psychology within the framework of academic psychology, Bender had represented the subject of parapsychology in academic research and teaching at University of Freiburg with great public resonance, often under

the half-ironic, half-appreciative label “Spukprofessor” (“Poltergeist-Professor”).

We can take it for granted, that Vasiliev was well aware of what was happening in psychical research and parapsychology in European countries by his own and that Bender's name was known to him. From the preface of his book we learn for example that in 1928 Vasiliev, in connection with a scientific mission to Germany and France, had visited the Institut Métapsychique International (IMI) in Paris and the newly founded “Institut für Metapsychische Forschung” directed by a Gymnasialprofessor Christoph Schröder (1871–1952) in Berlin. He could establish personal contacts with psychical researchers that were continued through correspondence and were, he says, of great help to his later studies on mental suggestion.

The translator, Hans-Volker Werthmann, was at that time working as a psychologist with good working knowledge in Russian at Bender's IGPP and introduced Vasiliev's work also to a German audience.

Werthmann and Bender (1965) gave the following general outline of Vasiliev's work for the German audience: His book was the first to provide a detailed overview of the results of many years of research carried out by Soviet physiologists, psychologists, doctors, biologists and technicians in the field of so-called mental (non-verbal) manipulation under the author's direction at Leningrad University. The author, professor of physiology at the University of Leningrad and a pupil of the famous Russian physiologist V. M. Bekhterev, who died in 1957, discusses the problems of the mental influence of movement processes, visual perceptions and feelings, sleeping and waking up. He describes the original experiments of the hypnogenic method and other methods. The basic principles of the



Fig. 29. Hans Bender (seated in the center of the photo) at a parapsychology conference in Moscow.

electromagnetic theory of mental manipulation are presented and the current state of the question of the energetic nature of this phenomenon is discussed.

The author's explanations show that the aim of the experimental work, to prove the transmission of telepathic information by electromagnetic radiation through a 'radio of the brain', was not achieved. Instead, the results made the electromagnetic explanation hypothesis highly improbable. Nevertheless, the Soviet scientists continued their investigations. In the long term, they probably hope to get to the bottom of the energetic nature of the telepathic phenomenon.

In summary: "This book represents a milestone in the development of international parapsychology. It shows that telepathy, this still controversial natural phenomenon of the psyche, has been recognised as worthy of investigation by completely different groups of researchers who are politically and ideologically separated from each other, i.e. completely independent groups".

Vasiliev's book remains a classic in the field of parapsychology and is quoted in parapsychological textbooks until now. His experiments are landmarks in the history of this field of research. They were thought out carefully and systematically, and conducted with attention to detail. Vasiliev's main conclusion, that there was no electromagnetic or energetic basis for paranormal phenomena, or, put into a broader frame of reference, that psi phenomena cannot be explained with the help of classical

(Newtonian) physics, helped to prepare an important theoretical insight of nowadays: Paranormal or psi phenomena cannot be conceptualized adequately with the help of a classical signal theory. Nowadays, psi or synchronistic phenomena are interpreted by some physicists as entanglement correlations in a generalized quantum theory. So, in a certain sense Vasiliev's hope has been fulfilled, that representatives "of the most advanced branch of modern science", namely physics, were taking into account seriously phenomena investigated by parapsychology.

Shortly after Vasiliev's death in February 1966, Hans Bender had the chance to visit a Parapsychological Conference in Moscow for himself and his impressions of his first visit in the former Soviet Union have survived as a report in the IGPP library. What follows is a summary of this interesting document: In August 1966, the Bio-Information



Fig. 30. A collection of essays containing the article excerpted here: "Dwelling in parallel worlds" : esoteric and New Age milieus in the Soviet period and afterward. Ed. by Birgit Menzel u. Anna Tessmann (LIT: 2025).

Section of the A. S. Popov 'Scientific and Technical Society for Radio Engineering and Electrocommunication' organised a meeting of Soviet and foreign parapsychologists. It took place after the 18th International Congress of Psychology in Moscow. Around 250 participants attended the lectures and discussions, which provided an insight into Soviet research and information about the achievements of Western parapsychology and the endeavours of newly formed groups in Romania and Bulgaria. The official negotiations were preceded by talks in a small circle, in which the French behavioural scientist Rémy Chauvin (Strasbourg) and Hans Bender himself took part from the West. E. K. Naumov, vice-president and director of the laboratory, explained the organisation of the Moscow parapsychology group. The 'Bio-Information' section is divided into four departments: Information, Instrumentation, Experimental and Mathematical Studies. The president of the 'Bio-Information' society was Prof. Dr ing. I. M. Kogan. Among the approximately 300 members were many engineers and technicians. The internal discussions centered around the following points: (1) the importance of accurate documentation of parapsychological experiments, (2) the possible influence of electromagnetic fields on the psi function, and 3) the formulation of the instructions given to the subjects before the psi experiments.

E. K. Naumov gave an overview of "Parapsychology in the USSR", referring to the history of parapsychological research in the Soviet Union. He explained that before the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party the official opinion was that telepathy was an "anti-scientific problem". The research of Vasiliev and his Leningrad group in the 1930s was conducted more or less private. The situation had changed decisively since 1960. Telepathy is seen as a problem worthy of investigation and there is no indifference to it. The number of those in favour is greater than those against. Naumov emphasised that parapsychology in the Soviet Union not only investigated the energetic problems of information transmission, but also investigating human nature in its conscious and unconscious parts in a preferred manner. Hans Bender himself gave an overview of „New aspects of parapsychological research“. He emphasised the importance of physiological methods for proving parapsychological information, but at the same time stressed the indispensability of qualitative, particularly depth-psychological approaches to the problem of motivation and the structure of the 'psi field'. Bender emphasised the necessity of intensive contact between parapsychology and other scientific disciplines, especially theoretical physics. Finally, Bender had the opportunity to visit the laboratory founded by Vasiliev in Leningrad and to meet his successor Prof Pavel J. Gulyaev, an expert for electroencephalography. At that time, the Leningrad laboratory was the only existing university-based center for parapsychological research in the Soviet Union.

Eberhard Bauer

Publication: (Bauer 2025a)

Einladung

Der Lehrstuhl für Psychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie an der Universität Freiburg i. Br. in Zusammenarbeit mit der "Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Parapsychologie" (WGFP) lädt ein zum Workshop

ZUM STAND DER PARAPSYCHOLOGISCHEN FORSCHUNG IN DER BUNDESREPUBLIK + BILANZ UND AUSBLICK

Zeit: 3. bis 4. Dezember 1983

Ort: Psychologisches Institut Belfortstraße 16, 1. Obergeschoß (Lehrstuhlräume), sowie Übungsraum 09 der Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg i. Br. (Eingang Rechenzentrum).

Programm

Samstag, 3. Dezember 1983

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|------------|---|---------------------------|
| 14.00 Uhr: | Begrüßung | J. MISCHO |
| 14.15 Uhr: | Der Lehrstuhl für Psychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie - Überblick über Forschungsschwerpunkte | J. MISCHO |
| 14.45 Uhr: | Aufbau eines parapsychologischen Labors (mit Führung) | W.v. LUCADOU |
| 15.30 Uhr: | Diskussion, anschließend Pause | |
| 16.00 Uhr: | Erfahrungen mit dem Lehrfach "Parapsychologie" | E. BAUER/
W.v. LUCADOU |
| 16.30 Uhr: | "Parapsychologie für wen?" - Nöte und Chancen einer parapsychologischen Fachzeitschrift (I)
"Parapsychologie woher?" - Entwicklung und Programm des DFG-Sonderforschungsbereichs "Parapsychologie/Grenzgebiete der Psychologie" (II) | E. BAUER |

Seite 2

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|------------|--|-------------|
| 19.30 Uhr: | "Parapsychologie an der Basis" - Einsichten und Konsequenzen einer mehrjährigen Arbeit mit der "Informations- und Kontaktgruppe Parapsychologie" | W. PFEIFFER |
| 20.00 Uhr: | Diskussion eines Memorandums: "Wie läßt sich die Zukunft der parapsychologischen Forschung in der BRD sichern?" (auf dem Hintergrund des internationalen Forschungsstands) | |

Sonntag, 4. Dezember 1983

- | | | |
|------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 10.00 Uhr: | Über die Empfindlichkeit des Menschen auf Erdstrahlung | H.D. BETZ |
| 10.30 Uhr: | Einige Überlegungen nach der 26. Jahrestagung der Parapsychological Association 1983 | G.H. HÖVELMANN |
| 11.00 Uhr: | Bemerkungen zur CSICOP-Konferenz: "Science, Skepticism, and the Paranormal" | P.H. HOEBENS |
| 11.30 Uhr: | Ein multivariates PK-Experiment | W.v. LUCADOU |
| 12.00 Uhr: | Zur Entwicklung theoretischer Modelle in der Parapsychologie | K. KORNWACHS/
W.v. LUCADOU |

gez. J. Mischio

Organisatoren dieses Workshop

Eberhard Bauer, Tel.: 0761/203-4152, priv.: Schallstadt 07664/7628
Walter v. Lucadou, Tel.: 0761/203-4171, priv.: Freiburg 0761/77869

Fig. 31. Program for the 1st WGFP Workshop, held December 3-4, 1983, at the Department of Psychology, University of Freiburg.

On the History and Structure of the Workshops of the Scientific Society for the Promotion of Parapsychology (WGFP)

The Scientific Society for the Promotion of Parapsychology (WGFP) was founded in 1981 on the initiative of the (then) Chair of Psychology and Border Areas of Psychology at the University of Freiburg i. Br. under the direction of Prof. Dr. Johannes Mischo (1930-2001). In addition to J. Mischo, the seven founding members of the WGFP included Eberhard Bauer (chair staff member), Günther Berkau (founder and director of AURUM publisher in Freiburg), Horst Boog (military historian), Klaus Kornwachs, Walter v. Lucadou (chair staff member) and Ulrich Timm. The immediate reason for founding the WGFP was a planned commission for a scientific report on the state of parapsychological research ('psychotronics') in the former USSR, which was to be financed by a Bonn ministry. Although this project did not come to fruition, it was nevertheless decided to continue the society in cooperation with the chair and to use it for targeted public relations work and network building in the spirit of an 'invisible college'. This marked the 'birth' of the first WGFP workshop, held on 3–4 December 1983 at the Psychological Institute of the University of Freiburg on the topic of 'The State of Parapsychological Research in the Federal Republic of Germany – Review and Outlook'. A second workshop followed in March 1985, also at the Psychological Institute in Freiburg. For 25 years, from 1986 to 2011, the WGFP workshops were held continuously at the 'Villa Bauer', which belongs to the Offenburg Adult Education Centre and has not been available since 2012 due to a roof fire. Between 50 and 60 people – 'by invitation' – are regular visitors to these working meetings. These can be divided into a 'hard core' consisting mainly of 'active' researchers in the field of parapsychology, student visitors and a general audience with a predominantly scientific background. From a scientific-historical and sociological perspective, the WGFP workshops bear similarities to the development and structure of comparable organisations and societies dedicated to parapsychological and anomalistic topics, such as the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) or the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE).

Between 1983 and 2024, with the exception of the years 2020–2023, 447 lectures were given by 223 speakers at WGFP workshops, 248 of which were published in this or a similar form, mostly in the *Journal of Parapsychology and Border Areas of Psychology* published by WGFP or in the *Journal of Anomalistics* published by the Society for Anomalistics.

In retrospect, the presentations can be divided into the following thematic groups, which naturally overlap: (1) History of science, sociology of science, and problems of reception in parapsychological research; (2) Spontaneous reports of paranormal phenomena, including surveys and case studies; (3) Paranormal attitudes and 'occult' belief systems, including social and personality psychological as well as clinical correlates and counseling approaches; (4) Experimental paradigms of ESP and PK research (including methodology, statistics and controversies); (5) Model concepts, theoretical approaches and conceptual considerations; (6) Anomalistic research, taking into account astropsychological, astrobiological and geophysical aspects; (7) Interdisciplinary interactions between

borderline areas and ethnology, literary studies, philosophy and epistemology, theology, psychotherapy and psychopathology.

Eberhard Bauer

Re-analysis of a remarkable reincarnation case

These questions become even more pronounced in the context of so-called reincarnation cases, i.e., cases in which young children spontaneously report memories relating to events in another life. A particularly striking and rich example concerns a girl from Sri Lanka, Gnanathilaka Baddevithana, whose statements were investigated independently by two researchers in the early 1960s. The first of them, H. S. S. Nissanka from Sri Lanka, produced written documents, audio recordings, and photographs as part of his research and was ultimately able to identify a person to whom Gnanathilaka's statements applied. The second researcher, Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, visited Sri Lanka only for a relatively short time and was unable to conduct his research in similar depth. A comparison of the two studies shows that some of the arguments put forward by critics of this kind of investigations are not valid: The fact that Stevenson was only briefly present at the site and that he used interpreters did not lead to a flawed and distorted interpretation of events. On the contrary, the results of Stevenson's investigation are consistent with all of Nissanka's essential findings. Instead of a short stay and the use of interpreters leading to distorted and likely exaggerated investigation results, it merely meant that several details were not recorded by Stevenson. Many of the cases investigated by Stevenson could therefore actually be phenomenologically richer and stronger in terms of evidence than his publications suggest (Matlock et al., 2024). This finding supports the notion that such reincarnation cases could indeed be authentic. They are of enormous importance for theory building in parapsychology, because no other mind-brain anomaly suggests so directly that at least some mental content can exist without a corresponding brain – regardless of how this is to be interpreted.

Michael Nahm

Publication: Matlock et al. (2024)

4.1.3 Further Topics and Projects about Parapsychology and Frontier Areas of Psychology

General Counseling and Information Services about Parapsychology and Frontier Areas of Psychology

Since its foundation in 1950 by Prof. Hans Bender (1907–1991), the IGPP has provided the public with an information and counseling service covering the whole spectrum of parapsychology, fringe sciences and anomalistic phenomena, summarized under the neutral term “Exceptional Experiences” (ExE). This includes information and material about the distribution and phenomenology of psychic experiences together with expert knowledge regarding the state of the art of interdisciplinary research related to border

areas of psychology and anomalous phenomena. A special counseling program of the IGPP is designed to meet the individual needs of individuals who have to cope with “occult”, supernatural or paranormal experiences causing them and others emotional distress (“mental hygiene”).

Eberhard Bauer

An Award-Winning Review of Theories in Parapsychology

In the context of theoretical and historical research, an article on the renowned German biologist, philosopher, and theorist of parapsychology, Hans Driesch (1867–1941), was published (Nahm, 2024b). As the founder of a holistic theory of organisms, his ideas are gaining renewed relevance in light of the current resurgence of holistic approaches to life, although Driesch’s work as a key catalyst for this development is barely known today. His biological-philosophical approach was also considered in key sections of a monography on theories of parapsychology. This treatise was written for a competition issued by the Institute of Noetic Science and received second prize (Nahm, 2024c).

The task consisted in providing a broad overview of theories of “non-local” or parapsychological phenomena. In addition to modern scientific theories, ancient and esoteric models were to be included as well. These theories needed to be subjected to critical analysis. Moreover, their philosophical implications and frameworks were to be discussed and empirical tests proposed in order to assess the validity of important theories. In the course of these activities, modern theories were categorized into different groups with respect to their approach: psychological theories, field theories, hyperdimensional theories, and theories based on quantum physics. Regarding the latter, a further distinction can be made between theories that, firstly, are based on the processes on the microscopic quantum level and those that, secondly, see these processes as manifesting in the macroscopic environment as well. This is the case, for example, in the concept of “synchronicity” or in the “Generalized Quantum Theory.” Because many of the mentioned theories address different aspects of theory formation while sharing common basic assumptions regarding philosophical frameworks, they are in general not mutually exclusive. Thus, psychological theories are, in principle, compatible with virtually all more scientifically oriented theory groups. Similarly, as it is the case in physics, field theories and hyperdimensional theories of parapsychology are generally compatible with each other. It is therefore advisable to work towards a synthetic approach in which existing theories are embedded in a common framework. Nevertheless, irreconcilable differences between some theories exist as well, for example, regarding the possibility of documenting a replicable extrasensory “signal transmission.” This is considered principally impossible within the framework of the Generalized Quantum Theory. Therefore, suitable tests of this theory involve conducting experiments with “gifted individuals” in terms of psi abilities. In such experiments, it would first be necessary to define precisely what constitutes successful replication under the given experimental conditions, and at what point the scrutinized theory would have to be considered refuted or confirmed. More concrete proposals on this subject are con-

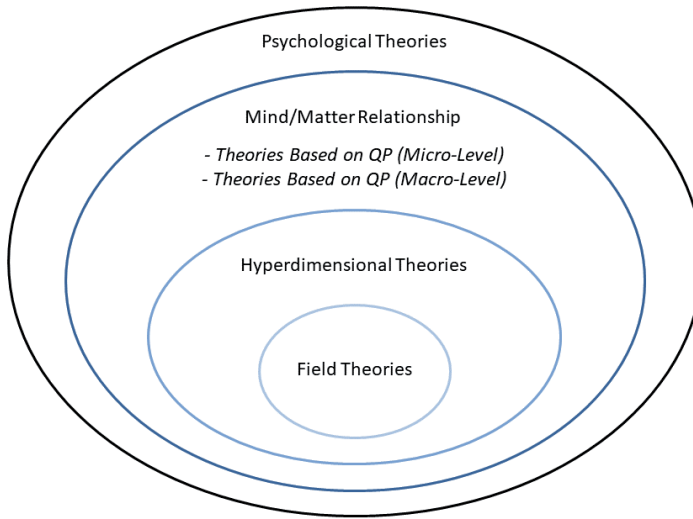


Fig. 32. The possible relationship of different kinds of theories of parapsychological phenomena in a framework of a synthetic approach. Because psychological theories are largely independent of natural scientific theories or premises, they are compatible with many of such theories. Similarly, theories focusing on the relationship of mind and matter are compatible with hyperdimensional theories and field theories, while hyperdimensional theories can comprise field theories – just as they do in physics already.

tained in the mentioned monograph (Nahm, 2024c).

Michael Nahm

Publication: Nahm (2024 b, c)

The Ghost in the Machine – Information, Meaning, and Non-Locality: a special Chapter in Human Factor Engineering

From April 17, 2023, to February 17, 2025, Dr. Dr. Walter von Lucadou gave a lecture at the IGPP entitled: The Ghost in the Machine – Information, Meaning, and Non-Locality: A Special Chapter in Human Factor Engineering. The lecture took place in the institute's Bender Forum, was broadcast live on the internet, and was recorded. The videos of the 20 individual lectures are available on the institute's YouTube platform as a separate playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiJcb9j7DqNXssAuBu9n9Dn8J-DRLYcmRi>

The following is a summary by Dr. Dr. von Lucadou of the lecture content:

“Human factor engineering” or the question of the “man-machine interface” is a modern technical discipline that primarily addresses the problem of how to create adequate “user interfaces” for machines, i.e., how machines can be made more “user-friendly” or “more human-centered,” so that operating errors, misjudgments, or misinterpretations and the resulting accidents in the interaction between humans and machines can be avoided or at least reduced. Because issues of (emergency) medicine, ergonomics, and perception psy-

chology play an essential role here, this is a genuinely interdisciplinary field of research and application that is becoming increasingly important and will likely play a role that should not be underestimated in the future.

One aspect that is usually familiar to practitioners in this context, but is otherwise immediately dismissed as “nonsense,” is the question of why technical devices seem to have a significantly higher error rate for certain individuals than is the case for “normal” users. There is a wealth of anecdotal material on this subject, which finds its humorous counterpart in the “completely serious laws of Murphy and Klipstein,” familiar to every engineer. However, the reality of these often labelled as paranormal phenomena is controversially discussed and almost entirely unexplored.

After all, Prof. Robert G. Jahn of the renowned Princeton University (USA) wrote in a letter as early as 1983: “From a high-tech perspective, the investigation of paranormal phenomena in connection with ‘human factor engineering’ or the ‘man-machine interface’ is becoming increasingly important, accompanied by the development of increasingly sensitive instruments and more complex and highly integrated data processing systems. In particular, the possible susceptibility of these devices and processes to the influence of the human observer and his consciousness raises a number of pragmatic design questions and seems to force the occurrence of quantum physical phenomena in macroscopic areas.”

The lecture will discuss a systematic investigation and theoretical classification of this problem. Fundamental questions such as the “meaning of information,” the question of the interaction between hardware and software (also known as the “mind-body problem”), and the question of the adequate description of psychophysical systems will be discussed. Practical advice and tips for dealing with such “metaphysical” engineering problems will also be provided.

The lecture consists of seven parts:

Part 1: Machines and Humans

Part 2: How we form a Picture of the World

Part 3: Unusual Experiences

Part 4: A Theory for Everything?

Part 5: Non-classical Systems

Part 6: Applications of VQT and MPI

Part 7: Man-Machine Interaction

Walter von Lucadou

Ghost Hunting and Ghost Hunting Groups in Germany

The aim of this research project was (1) to obtain an overview of the current situation of the ghost hunting scene in Germany, the composition of ghost hunting groups (GHGs), the specific approach to paranormal investigations (PIs), and the extraordinary experiences (ExEs) made in the process, and (2) to better understand the people who pursue this time-consuming and resource-intensive leisure activity. Ghost hunting requires a

high level of commitment. We wanted to know what kind of people are drawn to it and what individual motivations the individual ghost hunters have. We also wanted to obtain information about what kind of ExEs prevail and how strong paranormal and supernatural beliefs are among those involved. To this end, we created two questionnaires, the first addressed to entire ghost hunting teams and the second at individuals. In addition to the questionnaire items we created ourselves, the latter also included a questionnaire on extraordinary experiences (Fach, PExE-II) and a questionnaire on paranormal beliefs (Schofield et al., BitSS).

Results Study 1: In many respects, GHGs follow similar models and use techniques and methods familiar from early American and English role models. However, social networks have now largely replaced traditional websites and local television programs as a place to present their own PIs. Differences emerged primarily in the second step, namely data analysis and documentation. In addition, the groups varied greatly in terms of their size and the frequency of PIs per year.

Results of Study 2: As expected, ghost hunters report more ExEs than existing comparison groups and also have more pronounced paranormal beliefs (BitSS), which is understandable given their choice of hobby. Surprisingly, 85% believe in a connection between paranormal phenomena and deceased persons, although 30% describe themselves as atheists or agnostics. This suggests that the belief that the spirits of deceased persons can make themselves known is not necessarily linked to religious belief in a god. Unlike the clientele of the IGPP counseling service, ExEs are generally not disturbing to ghost hunters, but rather arouse curiosity and a desire for further investigation. Almost two-thirds stated that previous ExEs were a significant motivation for taking up ghost hunting. In addition to the entertainment aspect, the possibility of “real” contact with the paranormal plays an important role for many ghost hunters, something that cannot be found in the media offerings on this topic. Their motivation ranges from scientific interest to the desire to confirm or question their own beliefs.

Gerhard Mayer, Sonja Nowara
Publication: Nowara & Mayer (2024)

Journal of Anomalistics / Zeitschrift für Anomalistik - a Cooperation Project of the Gesellschaft für Anomalistik (Society for Anomalistics) and the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene

Since 2021, the bilingual scientific journal *Journal of Anomalistics / Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* has been published as a collaborative project of the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) and the *Gesellschaft für Anomalistik* [Society for Anomalistics]. It appears twice a year. The four issues from 2024 and 2025 comprise approximately 950 pages. The journal's content reflects the multidisciplinary nature of anomalistics. Thematic contributions range from classic parapsychological experiments to historical analyses, philosophical reflections, literature and media analyses, theoretical legal considerations on questions of potential contact with extraterrestrials,

and much more. In 2024, a particular focus was placed on biofield science, which deals with unorthodox healing methods. Two two-part articles, based on a doctoral dissertation, examine the reliability of various diagnostic tools in this field. In the field of experimental parapsychology, new methodological approaches are emerging, as exemplified by articles from the Munich research group led by Prof. Markus Maier. Equally interesting avenues are being explored by James Houran's group, which is testing AI in the qualitative analysis of reports of exceptional experiences, and by Arian Weibel, who is applying a computer-assisted method for comparing mediumistic texts. The Journal of Anomalistics also sees itself as a platform for making previously difficult-to-access material available online. For instance, issue 2/2025 features the first complete English publication of the research report on the IGPP-funded study „The Use of Psychics in Police Investigations of Missing Persons.“

Gerhard Mayer

4.1.4 Clinical Parapsychology

Plan Structures and Basic Conflicts in Connection with ExE

Using the plan analysis method developed by Caspar, so-called plans are derived from a person's observable behavior. Plans are conscious and unconscious programs of action consisting of a goal component and the means to achieve it. The result of a plan analysis is a hierarchical plan structure in which the entirety of the deduced means-end relationships is represented. At the lowest level, conspicuous behaviors are formulated in the indicative (e.g., "laughs when he talks about bad childhood experiences"). From this, plans formulated in the imperative are derived ("distance yourself from negative emotions"), which serve the higher-level plans ("show that you are over it"), until finally the highest-level plans ("avoid the victim role") aim to fulfill basic needs ("maintain self-control"). Figure 33 shows an example of a reduced excerpt from a plan structure.

In a plan-analytical study, twelve counseling cases were used to examine the relationships between bonding styles and ExE. Four categories of plans were defined in the field of tension between autonomy and bonding: (1) *separation-avoidance plans* (e.g., "avoid conflicts") restrict autonomy, (2) *heteronomy-avoidance plans* (e.g., "avoid compromises") restrict bonding, (3) *separation plans* (e.g., "keep everyone at a distance") prevent bonding, and (4) *heteronomy plans* (e.g., "meet all expectations") prevent autonomy. The plan categories were linked to psychodynamic basic conflict processing modes of operationalized psychodynamic diagnostics. Accordingly, active conflict processing in the *control/autonomy* mode manifests itself in heteronomy-avoidance plans, while the active mode of *individuation* is associated with separation plans. Passive conflict processing in the *submission/care* mode is expected to result in separation-avoidance plans, while the passive mode of dependence is expected to result in heteronomy plans.

The twelve counseling cases examined represent two of six typical ExE patterns: ESP, meaningful coincidences (MFC), internal presence and influence (IPR), poltergeists and

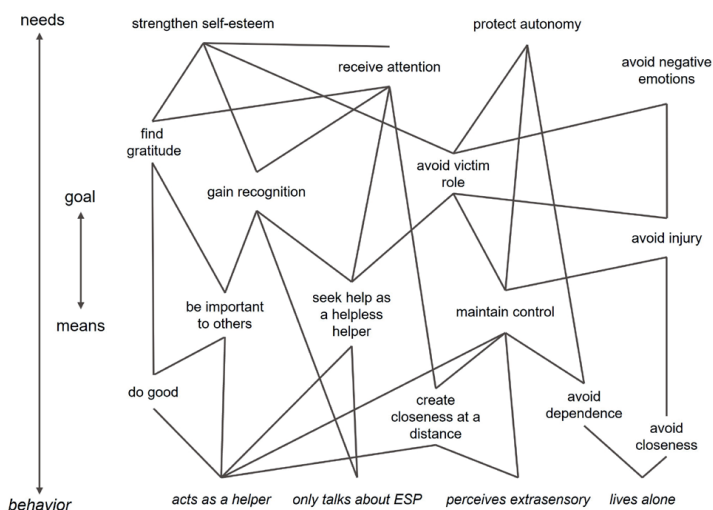


Fig. 33. Reduced excerpt of an exemplary plan structure.

Previous plan-analytical studies based on video recordings of counseling sessions at the IGPP showed that clients use their ExE functionally to fulfill central needs such as control, recognition, meaning in life, or social bonding. At the same time, plans associated with ExE often contributed to conflicts being avoided and central problems not being actively addressed. Attachment research has shown that negative bonding experiences in early childhood often lead to the development of insecure bonding styles in adulthood. An insecure-dismissing bonding style avoids bonding, while an insecure-enmeshed bonding style avoids autonomy.

apparitions (SPK), mediumism and automatisms (MED), and nightmares and sleep paralysis (NAM). Video recordings of counseling sessions, biographical material, and questionnaire data served as the data basis for the plan analyses. Biographical analyses showed that all clients suffered from a lack of stable, reliable affection in their childhood and youth, often associated with separation, loss, or violence. During the counseling sessions, unresolved or ambivalent bonding to primary caregivers came to light, which manifested themselves in conflictual ways in later relationships. Clients with coincidental phenomena tended to have an insecure-mixed bonding style with a precedent of autonomy through control/self-sufficiency (ESP) or bonding through submission/care (MFC). The intrusive patterns clearly differentiated between individuation (IPR) and dependence (SPK). The dissociative patterns were characterized by a precedent of acute threats to autonomy (MED) or bonding (NAM) as well as by disorganized bonding behavior. The plans developed confirmed these assessments: the plan structures of ESP clients were dominated by heteronomy avoidance plans, while in MFC cases they were dominated by separation avoidance plans. IPR clients were particularly characterized by separation plans and SPK clients by heteronomy plans. In MED cases, acute plan conflicts were evident between heteronomy avoidance plans and heteronomy plans, and in NAM cases between separation avoidance plans and separation plans. The exceptional phenome-

na reported in each case can be interpreted as representations of blocked autonomy or bonding and point to system-centered plans that fulfill a compensatory function for the overall psychophysical system.

Wolfgang Fach

Publication: Fach (2024)

4.1.5 The Occult in Art and Photography

This field of work comprises: a) archival and documentary activities, b) the investigation of research questions, and c) service, organizational, and research tasks, for example in connection with exhibitions and publications.

Art and Mediumship

During the reporting period, ongoing work on the topic “The Occult in Contemporary Visual Art and Exhibition Practice” focused in particular on the research area “Art and Mediumship,” a field that had already been relevant in the early history of the Institute. The current aim remains to document and bibliographically record as comprehensively as possible the history of mediumistic drawing and painting, a practice that spread from around 1850 primarily within the context of Spiritualism. In recent years, this field has received comparatively significant attention in art history and the media, not least due to the great interest in the artist and “painting medium” Hilma af Klint (1862–1944).

The extensive case material is examined from various perspectives, including those of Spiritualism, parapsychology, Art Brut, and Outsider Art. A further focus lies on the dissemination and presentation of mediumistic images, for example in the context of museum projects, the art market, or Spiritualist and other “border-scientific” institutions. At present, particular attention is being given to the significance of the painting medium Margarethe Held (1894–1981), about whom an exhibition is being prepared in collaboration with the Charlotte Zander Collection in Cologne (fig. 34).

Andreas Fischer

Exhibition Project “Ghosts. Tracing the Supernatural” at Kunstmuseum Basel

From 20 September 2025 to 8 March 2026, Kunstmuseum Basel presented “Ghosts. Trac-



Fig. 34. Mediumistic drawing by Margarethe Held, ar. 1950. Collection Zander, Köln.

ing the Supernatural”, an exhibition that examined the ghost motif as a cultural, aesthetic, and epistemological phenomenon. Curated by Eva Reifert and realized in collaboration with Andreas Fischer, the IGPP, and the British art historian Susan Owens, the exhibition brought together more than 160 works and objects spanning around 250 years. At its center was the question of how the invisible, fleeting, and rationally elusive can be represented in images, objects, and media-based stagings.

Organized thematically, the exhibition traced a broad arc from historical representations of the ghostly and early illusion techniques of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to modern and contemporary artistic positions. Painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, film, and installation entered into a multilayered dialogue. Historical reference points included works by Benjamin West and John Everett Millais, which addressed the supernatural within the tension between history painting, vision, and narrative; Odilon Redon, whose visual worlds foreground the dreamlike, the imaginary, and the significance of the unconscious for ghostly experiences; and René Magritte, in whose work the uncanny emerges from the displacement of the everyday and the destabilization of perception. These were juxtaposed with more recent and contemporary positions, including Katharina Fritsch, Sigmar Polke, Mike Kelley, Willie Doherty, Rachel Whiteread, Cornelia Parker, and Ryan Gander. Their works demonstrated the diverse ways in which the ghost motif has been interpreted in recent art: as the trace of an absence, as a sign of historical or personal burden, as a spatial experience, or as a reflection on artistic roles, perception, and immateriality. A central section of the exhibition was devoted to exhibits from the history of occultism and Spiritualism. These included early spirit photographs from the nineteenth century, objects from the context of scientific occultism such as photographs and casts of materialization phenomena, for example by Albert von Schrenck-Notzing as well as Gustave

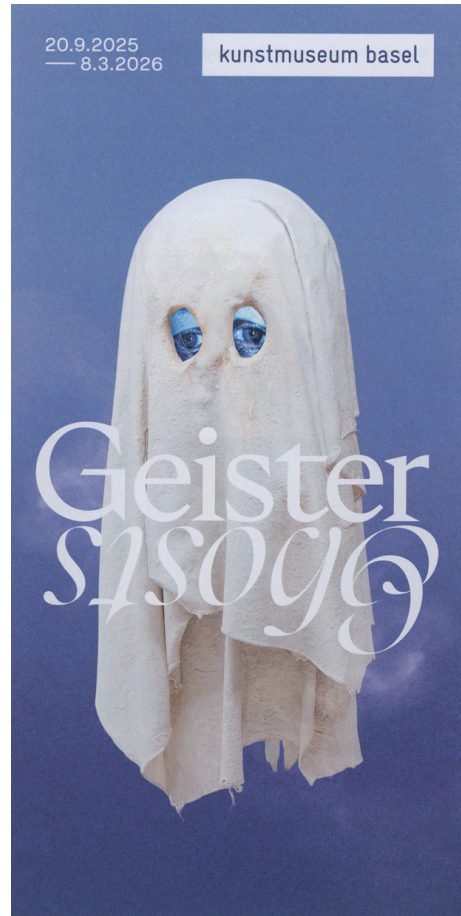


Fig. 35. Flyer for the exhibition “Ghosts. Tracing the Supernatural” at the Kunstmuseum Basel (Work shown: Tony Oursler, *Fantasmino*, 2017).

Geley and Franek Kluski. Also included were works by Georgiana Houghton, Madge Gill, and Augustin Lesage, who linked their image production to Spiritualist ideas. A reference to the poet and physician Justinus Kerner and his interest in somnambulist, visionary, and otherworldly phenomena further situated the exhibition within the field of tension between art, psychical research, medicine, and occultism.

Numerous exhibits in this section came from the archive and library of the IGPP. The exhibition received a strong public and media response, attracting around 77,000 visitors in total.

Andreas Fischer

Publications: Fischer (2025a, b)

4.2 Society – Knowledge – Discourse

4.2.1 Spread and Reception of the Paranormal

“Everyday Miracles 2.0” – Paranormal Experiences in Germany

Twenty years ago, the IGPP conducted a survey of a representative sample of people regarding their experiences with the paranormal. At that time, over half of the respondents reported having personally experienced extraordinary phenomena such as telepathy, prophetic dreams, UFO sightings, and apparitions of deceased individuals. These results were published in the book “Everyday Miracles” (Bauer & Schetsche, 2002). The results showed that, although such experiences are rare in an individual’s lifetime, they are widespread in the general population, can be easily integrated, and rarely require psychological counseling. To celebrate the IGPP’s 75th anniversary, the study was relaunched in 2025 as “Everyday Miracles 2.0” to collect updated information on the conceivability and prevalence of paranormal phenomena in Germany.

Method: Unlike the first survey, which was based on telephone interviews with 1,500 people in 2000, an online survey of 2,000 people was conducted in 2025. The sample was recruited via the BILENDI panel, which has approximately 150,000 registered email addresses, and was quota-weighted according to age, gender, and federal state. The original questionnaire was largely retained and supplemented with new topics and items, including telepathy, near-death experiences, and out-of-body experiences. This time, unlike the first survey, questions were also asked about “esoteric” practices – specifically, if the respondent had ever visited an astrologer, spiritual healer, or medium; or if they had contacted the dead. Additionally, items were integrated from the validated PAgE-R questionnaire from IGPP Counseling, and specific questions were asked for the first time about information and counseling needs. Instead of a qualitative follow-up survey, the questionnaire contained an open-ended question about subjective experience reports.

Main Results: Pretests were conducted in October and November of 2024. The main survey took place in December 2024. A total of 2,071 people from the online panel completed the questionnaire. First, let’s look at conceivability (Fig. 36). Regardless of their own experiences, most respondents can imagine that certain paranormal phenomena exist. The data has not changed significantly over time except for questions about precognition (reversed) and UFOs as extraterrestrial flying objects. More people now find the existence of UFOs conceivable (over 30 percent of respondents). This can certainly be attributed to the increased public, scientific, and political interest in extraterrestrial life in recent years. (See the entry by Andreas Anton.)

Another finding shows that personal experiences of the extraordinary are very common. Around 75% of respondents reported at least one such experience. Compared to the first survey, which included many déjà vu experiences, the current study shows higher prevalence rates for all types of experiences surveyed, even without including déjà vu (Fig. 37). The different methods used (telephone interviews versus online questionnaires) may play

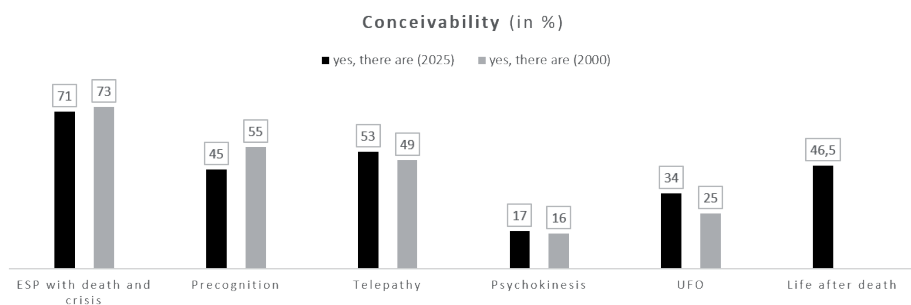


Fig. 36. Conceivability of paranormal phenomena.

a role here, although there are no significant differences in conceivability rates. In fact, the current conceivability rates are sometimes lower than in the first wave, meaning the current online sample is not necessarily more ‘open’. Nevertheless, the specific situation of the oral survey in the first wave did have an influence, as seen in the follow-up survey at that time. At that time, it became apparent that respondents with paranormal experiences tended to communicate cautiously and reservedly with the interviewers for fear of skepticism and stigmatization. In this respect, the anonymity of an online questionnaire clearly suits our research subject. In fact, it is possible that the prevalence rates of extraordinary experiences were underestimated in the first survey.

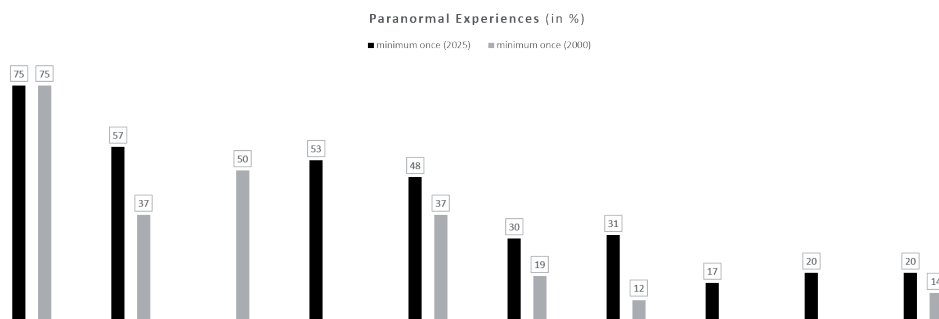


Fig. 37. Prevalence of extraordinary experiences.

Despite their prevalence, extraordinary experiences are rarely associated with stress. Only 14% of those affected said they actively sought information or advice. For most people, extraordinary experiences do not seem to be a big deal. In contrast to these ‘everyday miracles’, the figures for esoteric practices are lower (Fig. 38). (No comparison over time can be made because such practices were not included in the initial survey.) They are probably reported less frequently because astrology, spiritual healing, and séances are practices linked to prior knowledge, convictions, and beliefs.

Nevertheless, the corresponding belief systems and practices have not disappeared entirely. Six to sixteen percent of our respondents have encountered them at some point, hoping to find help in alternative practices as an addition to or alternative for orthodox counseling or health procedures. Outlook: The results once again confirm the population's openness to the paranormal. They also show that extraordinary experiences are an integral part of human culture and psychology. Three-quarters of the population have had an extraordinary experience themselves. Once again, the paranormal seems to be quite normal, at least statistically speaking - and the trend is rising. However, this raises

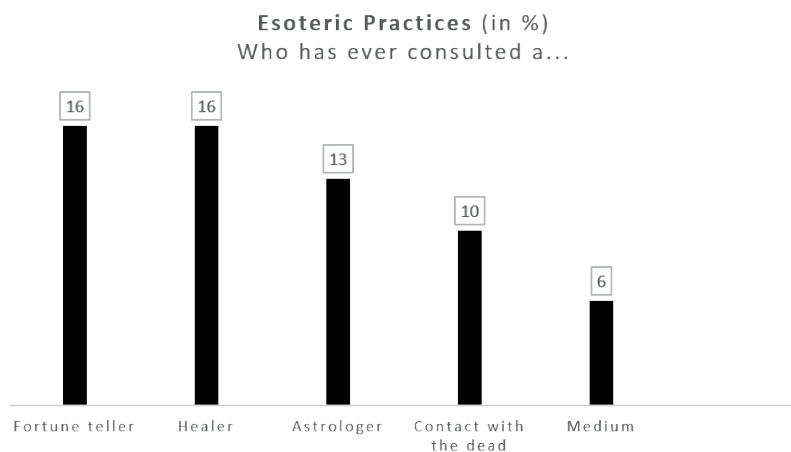


Fig. 38: Prevalence of esoteric practices.

the question of what is extraordinary about these experiences if most people have them and the 'supernatural' content or cause is unclear. In the future, we will examine the subjective interpretations, meanings, and attributions (transcendental, esoteric, spiritual, secular, etc.) that people have of their experiences. We will also search for connections with demographic characteristics and statistical significance. Apart from age – with increasing age, imaginability and personal experiences decrease – we have found few influencing factors, presumably because the wide distribution of 'everyday miracles' spans the entire population.

The data is scheduled to be published in *Frontiers of Sociology* in the first half of 2026. Additionally, a qualitative interview study will be part of a subsequent research project, which will be funded by third-party funds if possible. The application will be submitted in 2026.

Ina Schmied-Knittel

Publication: Schmied-Knittel & Anton (2025)

4.2.2 Sociology of Conspiracy Thinking

Book project: Paranoia Society. How Conspiracy Theories Shape our Present

Countless scientific and journalistic contributions on conspiracy theories in recent years begin with the assessment that they are currently experiencing a boom. The assumption underlying this diagnosis is that the multiple crises of the recent past have generated uncertainty, disorientation, and a sense of loss of control, thereby increasing the propensity for conspiracy theories and fostering tendencies toward societal polarization. However, empirical evidence from recent years neither clearly demonstrates a “boom” in conspiracy theories nor an intensification of societal division. With regard to conspiracy theories, several studies even point to a declining trend. Thus, there are justified reasons to doubt the notion of a current “boom” in conspiratorial thinking.

In another respect, however, conspiracy theories have indeed gained enormous significance: never before has there been such a high level of sensitivity to the topic in the German public sphere. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, intense public debates about the societal impact of conspiracy theories could be observed; since the pandemic, however, they have definitively become a political issue. In public discourse, they are generally considered to be manifestations of extreme views and components of dangerous, anti-democratic ideologies. At the very least, they are seen as illegitimate and false opinions that challenge societal consensus. In short, conspiracy theories are perceived across various discursive fields as an increasingly pressing socio-political problem.

These considerations should not be taken to imply that there is no societal polarization at all or that conspiracy theories are entirely unproblematic. However, the discrepancy between public perception and empirical findings calls for careful analysis. It appears that the “paranoia” often attributed to adherents of conspiracy theories, in a certain sense, also characterizes the current public handling of conspiracy theories: fears of conspiracies on the one hand and fears of conspiracy theories on the other mutually reinforce one another. We refer to this societal dynamic- by way of a cultural-studies metaphor - as a paranoia society. The aim of this book is to examine this development from a sociological perspective. Central to this endeavor is the question of how conspiracy theories emerge as social interpretive frameworks, what functions they fulfill, and how modern societies can deal with them appropriately. The underlying premise is that a neutral analysis requires not reducing conspiracy theories solely to their negative potential, but also considering them as a cultural resource for legitimate and necessary criticism of abuses of power and authority within democratic states.

Work on the volume is scheduled to be completed by autumn 2026, and it is expected to be published by Kohlhammer Verlag at the end of 2026.

Andreas Anton and Noah Sproß

4.2.3 Extraterrestrials and UFOs

Human Life after Contact with Extraterrestrial Civilizations

The research project examining the societal impacts of a real first contact between humans and an extraterrestrial civilization is being conducted in cooperation with Professor Michael Bohlander of Durham University and Dr. John Elliott of the University of St Andrews in the United Kingdom.

One component of the project consists of an international exploratory survey study on attitudes toward the thematic complexes of extraterrestrial intelligence and the consequences of a first contact across different countries. To this end, an extensive questionnaire was developed, and data were collected online via the Durham University website between July and October 2024. The aim was to obtain data from as many different countries as possible. In total, 7,441 participants from 88 different countries took part. It should be noted that this is not a representative study. The results indicate that, within the sample, there is generally a higher level of openness toward the topic under investigation. For example, approximately 78% of respondents stated that they believe humanity will one day come into contact with an extraterrestrial civilization. Sixty percent even assume that Earth has already been visited by extraterrestrials. Categories such as gender, age, and country of origin have little influence on response patterns. By contrast, educational level and religious or spiritual beliefs do have an effect: respondents with higher levels of education tended, on average, to be more sceptical toward the topic, while religious or spiritual individuals were overall more open.

In %	„strongly agree“ + „agree“
Do you believe humanity will ever make contact with an extraterrestrial civilisation?	77,8
Do you believe that extraterrestrials have already visited Earth?	60

Tab. 1: Responses to questions about contact with extraterrestrials in the past or future.

The questionnaire contained questions about various contact scenarios, such as the discovery of an extraterrestrial radio message, the discovery of an artificial, non-human-made object on the moon, or a direct encounter with an extraterrestrial spacecraft. The results were clear: the closer the extraterrestrials came to humanity in the various scenarios, the more dramatic the social consequences expected by the respondents. Although most survey participants would react with curiosity or even enthusiasm to contact with extraterrestrials, some would also be concerned or afraid. The following table shows the cumulative results for the response options “existential” and “severe” for various scenarios

involving the discovery of extraterrestrial life or intelligence. Another part of the project involved inviting experts from various disciplines (such as psychology, sociology, religious studies and law) to write articles on the possible consequences of first contact with an extraterrestrial civilisation, based on specific guiding questions. A call for contributions was published in mid-2024, which led to numerous

In %	“existential” + “severe”
An undisputedly alien spacecraft crewed by biological entities landing on earth.	81,8
An undisputedly alien automated spacecraft landing on earth.	78,9
An undisputedly alien active spacecraft arriving in earth's orbit.	74,9
Observing an undisputedly alien active spacecraft in outer space within our solar system.	63,8
Finding an undisputedly alien derelict artefact on earth.	62,7
Finding an undisputedly alien derelict artefact in outer space.	58,3
Receiving a radio signal from outer space.	58,0
Finding primitive animal life on another planet.	33,9
Finding microbes on another planet in our solar system.	26,9

Tab. 2: Assessment of the impact of various scenarios involving the discovery of extraterrestrial life forms or intelligence.

submissions. All contributions were reviewed by the editors, and 19 were selected for publication. These contributions will be published together with the results of the survey study in an anthology entitled “Human life after contact with extraterrestrial civilisations”, which is scheduled to be published by Routledge Publishing at the end of 2026.
Andreas Anton, Michael Bohlander and John Elliott

4.3 Spirituality and Health

Counseling for “Spiritual and Meditation-induced Crises” (SMK)

Spiritual practices such as yoga and meditation enjoy great popularity in Western societies, and practitioners turn to them for a wide variety of motives. Such practices can have numerous health-promoting psychological and physical effects. Under certain circumstances, however, they can at times also lead to unusual and distressing experiences, even to states of crises that require professional guidance and support. Problems and crises of this kind are discussed in the literature under the term “spiritual crisis” among others.

Dr. Liane Hofmann, as the first editor and co-author of the anthology “Spirituality and Spiritual Crises: Handbook on Theory, Research, and Practice” (2017), laid the theoretical foundation for therapy and counseling in spiritual and meditation-induced crises. Together with Dr. Ulrich Ott, who researches the negative effects of meditation, she developed essential theoretical and empirically grounded principles related to the topic of “spiritual and meditation-induced crises” (SMK). To promote the transfer of these insights into therapeutic and counseling practice and to contribute to improving services for those affected, the new counseling focus on SMK was established.

The differentiation of the counseling services into the two focus areas of “Exceptional Experiences” (ExE) and SMK is also reflected on the new IGPP website, which launched in summer 2025. People in spiritual and meditation-induced crises experience phenomena and undergo specific developmental processes that require particular approaches and counseling strategies. The backgrounds and concrete procedures of counseling work in the area of SMK were presented at the IGPP colloquium as well as in a special issue of the journal “Bewusstseinswissenschaften” [Consciousness Studies] (2024).

The societal relevance of this topic is underscored by numerous media inquiries and reports, in which the described expertise was incorporated through interviews (e.g., SWR’s report “Sick from Meditation” and articles in leading media outlets such as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*; see the public relations section). This increased media coverage led to inquiries from various sectors:

- A professional association of meditation teachers (MBSR-MBCT Association) showed great interest and invited us to give an online lecture on our counseling work.
- Meditation providers contacted us to develop their prevention concepts.
- Psychotherapists sought collegial supervision in the treatment of patients with SMK issues.

Numerous inquiries from affected individuals confirmed the aforementioned risk potential of spiritual practices and the resulting need for counseling. During the reporting period, consultations were held with approximately 180 individuals seeking advice. Some of these consultation requests were received via the website of the “Network for Spiritual Development and Crisis Support” (S.E.N. e. V., Germany). A cooperation agreement with this network has been in place since 2021 mediated by Dr. Liane Hofmann.

SMK counseling utilizes the IGPP's online platform for booking appointments and secure email communication (<https://igpp-beratung.assisto.online/>). Counseling sessions can be conducted by telephone or video call (with written consent). In addition, online questionnaires on a specially created platform (<https://surveys.igpp.de>) are used to determine the symptoms and stress levels of those seeking advice in more detail. Based on a sufficient data foundation, the next step will be to develop a typology of counseling cases (recurring phenomenological patterns, triggers, and typical courses). In addition, informational materials will be created that can be made available in digital form to those seeking advice on specific problems (e.g., Kundalini phenomena). In the medium term, the findings will be incorporated into a training program for multipliers (health-care professionals, meditation instructors). The establishment of a nationwide network of qualified contact persons is intended to facilitate the referral of therapy and support services to those seeking advice in their local area.

Liane Hofmann and Ulrich Ott

Hofmann & Ott (Eds.) (2024); Hofmann & Ott (2024)

4.4 Exceptional Experiences and Altered States of Consciousness

4.4.1 Phenomena near Death

Ongoing Studies on Terminal and Paradoxical Lucidity

In 2009, Michael Nahm introduced the term “terminal lucidity” into medicine and consciousness research to describe the unexpected surge of mental clarity before death in individuals who had previously been dull, confused, demented, or non-responsive. The related term “paradoxical lucidity” was introduced in 2019 by a team of authors including Nahm. The criterion for paradoxical lucidity is an unexpected episode of mental clarity in the presence of severe neurodegeneration of the brain (e.g., in the late stage of Alzheimer’s disease, brain tumors, strokes), hence the attribute “paradoxical.” Unlike terminal lucidity, however, it is not directly related to the proximity of death and can occur months before a patient’s passing. Although the correct differentiation between these two concepts and phenomena has already been the subject of several publications, misleading depictions still occur and require correction (Nahm, 2024a).

In recent years, there has been an increase of international research on both phenomena. A team, including Michael Nahm at the IGPP, has conducted surveys on terminal lucidity in adults, but also on the occurrence of such episodes in children. New results have been published on the latter topic (Kothe et al., 2025). Furthermore, a monograph on terminal lucidity and other near-death phenomena has been published (Nahm et al., 2025a). The book’s chapters address various aspects of terminal lucidity, including the impact of these impressive experiences on family members and caregivers. The book also includes chapters on near-death experiences, shared death experiences, near-death visions, after-death communications, and experiences of dying animals. The aim of these publications is to raise public and researcher awareness of such phenomena, to normalize the handling of these anomalies, and to highlight their significance for theories of consciousness. This also applies to experiences reported by seemingly comatose patients. The aforementioned book also contains chapters on this topic.

Michael Nahm

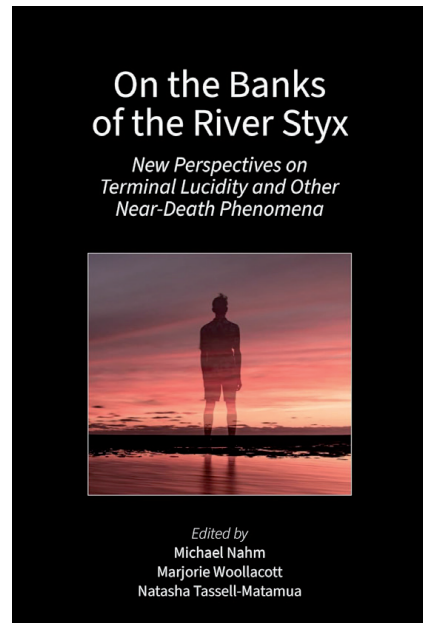


Fig. 39. Monography on terminal lucidity and related phenomena.

Coma Experiences and Locked-in Experiences

As research into consciousness-related anomalies becomes increasingly accepted in academic circles, experiences of people in seemingly comatose states are also receiving increased attention. However, compared to near-death experiences and other end-of-life experiences, interest in this topic is still fairly low. This applies to the current state of knowledge as well. Of the various possible types of experiences in seemingly comatose states, a striking case study focused on the conscious perception of the environment that coma patients sometimes obtain through their sense of hearing – even when performed test suggest that their brains have suffered lasting damage and clear consciousness is deemed impossible (Nahm et al., 2025b). Such patients experience themselves as trapped in an immobile body, what, in the process of events occurring in intensive care units, is often described as a profoundly traumatizing experience. Only after they awaken from their apparent coma are they able to recount their experiences. In the presented case, the patient, 33-years-old Gil Avni, was in a suspected coma for 44 hours and then woke up from it again.

The term “locked-in syndrome” describes the state of being conscious and awake in a motionless body from a medical-diagnostic and external perspective. A term for this state from the personal perspective of the experiencer, such as in the term “near-death

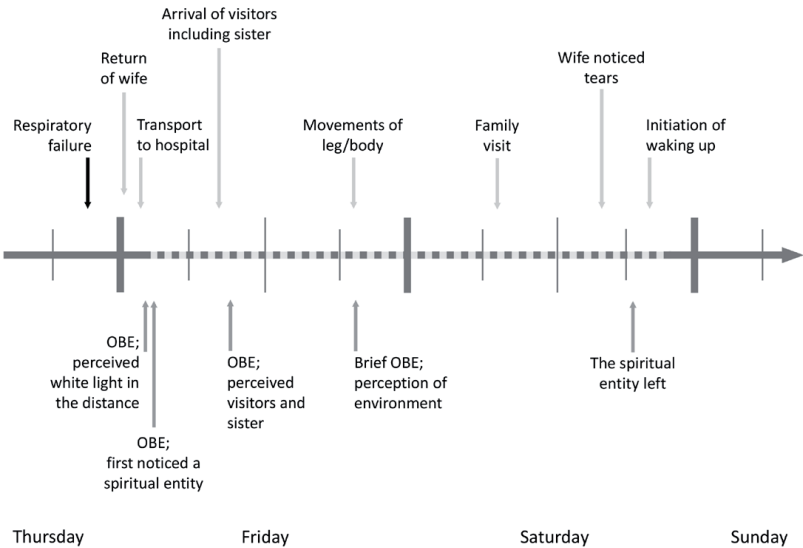


Fig. 40. Important events along the timeline of Gil Avni’s coma experience. The time span shown runs from Thursday evening (December 17, 2015) until Sunday morning. Days are separated by thick gray vertical lines. The thin gray vertical lines indicate time intervals of six hours, the longer ones representing noon. The dotted area within the horizontal line indicates the 44 hours Avni spent in a coma but was fully conscious. The occurrences of externally observable events are depicted above this line, personal experiences of Avni are depicted below it (from Nahm et al., 2025b).

experience,” is still lacking. However, such a term is of great importance to emphasize the significance of these subjective experiences and their implications, and to stimulate further research. For this reason, the term “locked-in experience” was introduced in the present publication (Nahm et al., 2025b).

The case of Gil Avni is particularly intriguing because it includes elements of near-death experiences and out-of-body experiences. For example, after waking up, Avni accurately reported events that had taken place both inside and outside his hospital room, which he claimed to have perceived through visual impressions. He was thus able to correctly describe the clothing of the people involved. In these instances, Avni appeared to possess a form of extrasensory perception, which, as with numerous comparable episodes in near-death experiences, poses challenges for neurophysiologically based models of consciousness.

Michael Nahm

Publications: Kothe et al. (2025); Nahm (2024a); Nahm et al. (2025a, b)

4.4.2 Phenomenology of Exceptional Experiences

Studies using the Phenomenology of Exceptional Experiences Questionnaire (PExE-II)

The “Questionnaire on the Phenomenology of Exceptional Experiences” (PExE) was developed at the IGPP and, beginning in 2011, was used in a revised version as the PExE-R as a standard instrument in counseling work as well as in various studies. The instrument is based on a model for the assessment of exceptional phenomena (ExP) as constituents of exceptional experiences (ExE), which was inspired by Metzinger’s theory of mental representation. Without adopting its naturalistic assumptions, a worldview-neutral, phenomenological approach assumes that experience is structured by a phenomenal model of reality with a differentiation between self and world. This results in four basic classes of ExP according to their possible locations and relations: internal ExP in the self (e.g., alien thoughts), external ExP in the world (e.g., apparitions), coincidental ExP as exceptional connections between self and world (e.g., extrasensory perceptions), and dissociative ExP as exceptional separations between self and body (e.g., automatisms).

The dimensionality of the ExE construct was confirmed in four independent samples (ExE counseling clients, persons with near-death experiences, students, and the Swiss general population). Factor analyses led to a reduction of the original item pool from 32 to 20 items and to the establishment of a stable hierarchical structural model with an ExE general factor and four subfactors corresponding to the basic classes. The internal consistencies of the scales were in the good to very good range in all samples (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .72-.80$ for Externality, $.77-.84$ for Internality, $.74-.83$ for Coincidence, $.64-.82$ for Dissociation, and $.86-.92$ for the global scale). On this basis, the PExE-II was created in 2017. With 20 ExP items and a five-point response format (“never” to “often”), it assesses

the frequency of ExP on a global scale as well as on four subscales (Externality, Internality, Coincidence, Dissociation). In addition, ExE periods in which ExP occurred, contextual conditions and valences of the ExP, as well as sociodemographic data are assessed. Three studies with the German version of the PExE-II (ExE counseling clients, students, and persons with sleep paralysis), as well as two studies with French and Italian translations, confirmed the factorial structure and the reliability of the scales (see Activity Report 2022/23). This also applies to two recent studies with an English translation in the USA (PExE-II; Christine Simmonds-Moore, University of West Georgia) and a Spanish translation (FExE-II; Yolanda Alonso, University of Almería). Table 1 shows the scale values of the two samples as well as those of the ExE counseling clients and German students from the previous PExE-II studies. That the scale values of the USA sample are very high and even exceed those of the counseling clients is attributable to a selection effect, since it was a study on ExE and visual imagery. Comparable values were also found in the Italian PExE-II study, which explicitly addressed people with ExE (Tab. 3).

The frequency values of the Spanish students raise questions. Apart from a comparable level of Internality, they are highly significantly ($p < .000$) higher than those of the German students. And while among the German students all scale values are highly significantly lower than those of the counseling clients, among the Spanish students there is no statistically significant difference with regard to Externality and Dissociation. Do Spanish students really have exceptional experiences to a greater extent than German students? The frequency differences could, for example, also be attributable to scalar measurement differences between the language versions of the PExE-II. Against this speaks the fact that the values are not uniformly elevated across the scales and that Internality is identical in both samples. A recruitment effect would also be possible: while the German students often completed the PExE-II in the context of university courses and studies with more general research topics, the Spanish students were specifically addressed with an online survey on the topic of ExE. For this reason, the frequency of ExE could be

Scale	Sample															
	ExE-Clients				Students				Students				Participants			
	Germany				Germany				Spain				USA			
	MD	M	SD	α	MD	M	SD	α	MD	M	SD	α	MD	M	SD	α
Externality	1.20	1.36	1.15	.84	.60	.72	.64	.71	1.00	1.08	.76	.73	2.00	1.90	1.04	.85
Internality	1.00	1.34	1.10	.81	.80	.86	.69	.68	.70	.89	.75	.76	2.20	2.15	1.01	.80
Coincidence	2.20	2.10	1.04	.80	1.20	1.34	.76	.71	1.60	1.65	.84	.75	2.40	2.37	.99	.84
Dissociation	.40	.76	.89	.78	.40	.50	.57	.64	.60	.68	.64	.66	1.20	1.20	.86	.70
ExE-global	1.30	1.39	.80	.89	.75	.86	.53	.86	.95	1.07	.60	.88	1.95	1.90	.83	.92
<i>n</i>	186				518				418				355			

Tab. 3. Samples and PAgE-II scales with median (MD), mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and Cronbach's alpha (α) as a measure of internal consistency.

higher, but would then not be representative of Spanish students.

Regardless of these considerations, it can be assumed that different frequencies of ExE are associated with different boundary conditions. To investigate possible contextual differences, principal component analyses were performed based on the 14 contextual items of the PExE-II. This resulted in a stable structure with four components: negative ExE and seeking help, positive and enriching ExE, ExE through practices and the esoteric scene, ExE and drugs. While both negative and positive ExE generally occur spontaneously, ExE in the case of spiritual or esoteric practices and especially in the case of drug use is usually brought about intentionally. Figure 1 shows the prevalence of the four contextual dimensions among the three samples. While the influence of practices does not make a significant difference in a Kruskal-Wallis test, the prevalence of all other components diverges highly significantly ($p < .000$) (Fig. 41).

Among the Spanish students, all contexts are of below-average importance. Thus, there is no indication of particular influences that would account for a higher frequency of ExE. The fact that the Spanish students neither evaluate their ExE as particularly positive or negative and report a significantly lower degree of engagement with them argues against a self-selection effect due to a specific interest. Against this background, the increased ExE frequencies could also indicate a cultural difference. It is possible that ExE are more widespread in the Spanish population, are therefore more “normal” and less distressing, but also less enriching. At present, the results cannot yet be interpreted unequivocally; intercultural research is required here.

Wolfgang Fach with Yolanda Alonso and Christine Simmonds-Moore

Archiving of ExE Reports from the Counseling Psychology Practice of the IGPP

Over three decades since the establishment of systematic case documentation in the counseling psychology practice of the IGPP, unique descriptions of exceptional experiences (ExE) from the perspective of those affected have been collected. This has created a valuable corpus for ExE research, which, in addition to written documents, also contains audio and video recordings that were made with the consent of the counseling clients. In its original form, however, this material is hardly usable, since the phenomenologically relevant core contents, that is, the descriptions of ExE from the first-person perspective, usually concern only isolated passages and are overlaid by a wealth of accompanying information. In addition, the documents contain personal information that does not readily permit direct scientific use for legal reasons and is subject to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

For the period from 1996 to 2009, approximately 3,000 cases were subjected to systematic review. In the first step, it was examined whether phenomenologically usable material in the form of detailed subjective descriptions, for example from e-mail correspondence with counselors, was available. Cases without corresponding substance were excluded after a counter-check. The remaining corpus was then validated with regard to its assignment to the established ExE form circles and evaluated on the basis of a two-dimensional

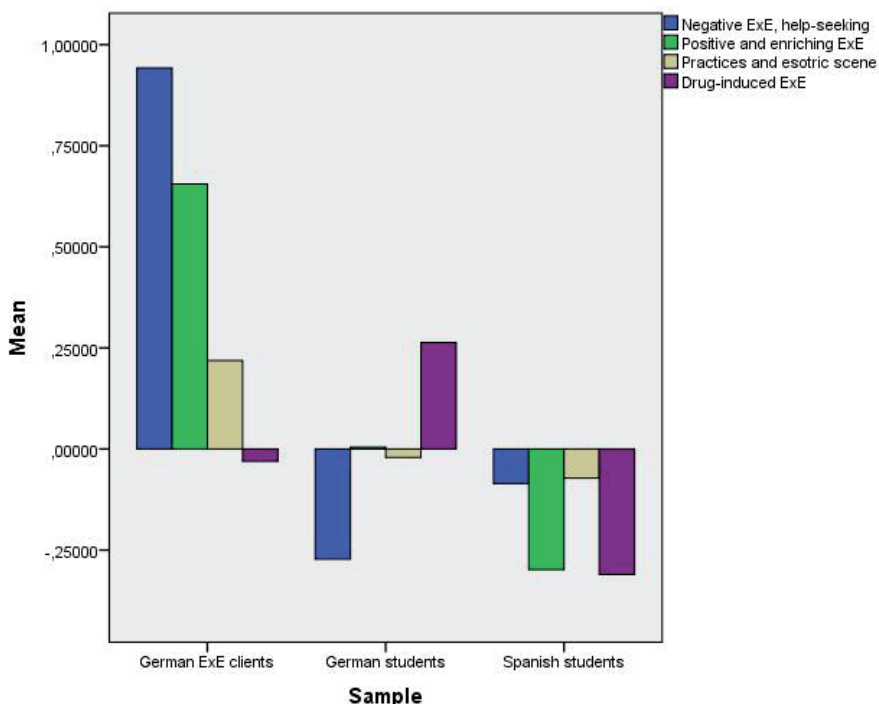


Fig. 41. Mean z-standardized component scores of three samples, calculated using the regression method. The principal component analysis was conducted on the basis of the total sample ($n = 1122$). The individual samples showed a similar four-component structure. Positive values indicate above-average, negative values below-average levels relative to the overall mean ($M = 0$, $SD = 1$).

rating. In this process, the phenomenological quality, defined by the degree of differentiation of the experience description, as well as the scientific relevance, measured by the potential for central research questions, were each classified on a three-level scale (low, medium, high). With the help of this cross-classification, a differentiated evaluation is possible: cases with high expression in both dimensions are considered paradigmatic representatives of their form circles and are intended for preferential use in research and teaching. Lower-rated cases remain as supplementary context material in the anonymized collection.

The content-related indexing for the specified period is complete; however, final anonymization is still pending. This represents a central step toward achieving GDPR compliance, since only fully anonymized data may be further processed and archived for scientific purposes without restriction. For this final step, standardized work processes have been developed that ensure the systematic removal or irreversible alteration of all directly and indirectly identifying features. In this process, personal identifiers are consistently separated from the phenomenological core material and replaced by anonymized refer-

ence structures. These procedures follow the principle of data minimization as well as the requirements of purpose limitation, data security, and informational self-determination. In parallel, a new data capture system was implemented using the open-source software “Samarbeid.” This system enables, already at the stage of initial recording of future cases, a structural separation between personal administrative data and phenomenological research data material. Through this data protection-compliant architecture, it is ensured that scientifically relevant contents can be archived and used in anonymized form in the long term without allowing conclusions to be drawn about the identity of the persons concerned.

On the basis of the cases reviewed so far, a total of approximately 1,200 to 1,500 cases with relevant written material is expected for the overall period from 1996 to 2030. Of these, up to 400 could additionally contain audio or video recordings. This forecast serves the planning of the remaining preparation and anonymization phase. While the first project phase has successfully opened up the scientific potential of the archive material, the forthcoming GDPR-compliant anonymization constitutes the decisive next step in making the valuable experiential testimonies available in the long term, in a legally secure and research-appropriate manner.

Cyril Costines and Wolfgang Fach

4.4.3 Meditation

Research at the Bender Institute of Neuroimaging (BION)

The BION was opened in 2000. Since the commencement of a new statute at November 23th 2012 it is an institution of the Department of Psychology and Sports Science of the Justus Liebig University Gießen, cooperating closely with the IGPP. The core of the BION is a magnetic resonance tomograph (MRT), which is exclusively available for psychological investigations of brain functions. The MRT generates a homogeneous magnetic field of 3 Tesla and provides cross sections of any requested orientation, representing the interior head structure and brain function during particular tasks.

Research groups of different divisions of the department work at the BION. In addition, research groups from all over Germany can apply to use the MRI for their own studies. On October 31, 2025, the 25th anniversary of BION was celebrated in the auditorium of the University of Gießen. The event was recorded for the IGPP archive. The following report focuses on the work of the research group “Altered States of Consciousness – Meditation Research”, led by Dr. Ulrich Ott, an employee of the IGPP, in coordination with PD Dr. Jürgen Kornmeier.

Varieties of Contemplative Experience

This project is being conducted in close cooperation with Willoughby Britton and Jared Lindahl, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, and intends (1) to develop

a detailed description and classification of phenomena induced by meditation, (2) to determine factors that have an influence on the occurrence of these phenomena, and (3) to identify appropriate strategies for prevention and treatment. These questions were explored through interviews with meditators, primarily from Buddhist traditions. Based on the analysis of the interview data, a questionnaire on unexpected and difficult meditation experiences was developed and used in three studies with meditators, as well as teachers and participants of meditation courses. Clients seeking counseling for „Spiritual and Meditation-Induced Crises“ at the IGPP complete the questionnaire to assess the frequency and severity of these experiences and to address them specifically during counseling sessions. Freya von Hohnhorst’s doctoral dissertation on the clinical-diagnostic classification of meditation problems has been largely finalized and is expected to be submitted in early 2026.

*Ulrich Ott, Liane Hofmann, Michael Tremmel and Freya von Hohnhorst mit Willoughby Britton und Jared Lindahl
Ott, Tremmel & von Hohnhorst. (2024)*

Motivations to Meditate

The goals people pursue through meditation are wide-ranging, from relaxation to enlightenment. Based on a comprehensive collection of potential motives, Peter Sedlmeier surveyed beginners and experienced meditators about why they started meditating and why they continued their practice. Factor analyses of the extensive item pool revealed a nuanced picture with a dozen factors. To simplify and improve usability, a short version of the questionnaire was developed, capturing six key motivations with five items each. Furthermore, in September 2025, an international study on virtues and personality traits that meditators strive to cultivate through their practice was conducted by Karin Matko (now at the University of Melbourne, Australia) in cooperation with Ulrich Ott.

Ulrich Ott, together with Peter Sedlmeier and Karin Matko

4.5 Mind and Matter

4.5.1 Perception and Cognition

Perception is Construction

Our everyday experience suggests that we see the world exactly as it is and that our perception at a certain moment is based on information gathered through our senses at this very moment. However, there is strong evidence that the content of our perceptions is the result of a weighting of sensory information with endogenous predictions based on our past perceptual experiences. The ‘reliability’ of current sensory information and endogenous predictions determines their relative contribution to the result of perceptual interpretation, a process known as ‘precision weighting’. Our perception is therefore not a direct projection of the world onto an inner screen, but a construct that is to a varying extent shaped by our previous experiences. So, to a large extent, we see what we know. This knowledge about how our perceptual system works is also of great importance for the assessment of exceptional experiences, which are always closely linked to perceptual experiences.

In experiments, the reliability of sensory information can be manipulated by varying the ambiguity of the stimulus. When subjects view disambiguated or clearly visible visual stimuli, a positive EEG signature with a large amplitude (“P400”) and maximum deflection at central electrode positions appears in the event-related potential (ERP) between 300 and 600 milliseconds after the onset of the stimulus. If the subjects view an ambiguous or poorly visible stimulus variant, the P400 amplitude is greatly reduced. This effect was observed with high effect sizes (Cohen’s d : 0.8-2) in very different stimulus categories (geometry, movement, emotional expressions, abstract figures, letter/number stimuli) in stimuli with varying ambiguity and with varying visibility of crucial stimulus elements. According to our current working hypothesis, it reflects certainty or uncertainty about the current perceptual interpretation. Accordingly, we refer to this exceptionally strong effect as the “ERP Uncertainty Effect” and report in the following two studies related to it.

(1) We see what we expect – at least partially. An EEG Study

In the first study, we investigated whether the ERP Uncertainty Effect could be a possible correlate of the precision weighting during the perception process as introduced above. All previous studies on the ERP Uncertainty Effect had in common that disambiguated/clearly visible and ambiguous/less visible stimuli were presented in separate experimental blocks. In the current study, we used the ambiguous Necker cube and disambiguated cube variants as stimuli and supplemented our paradigm with a condition in which ambiguous and disambiguated cubes were presented alternately within an experimental block (Fig. 42). This paradigm was based on the basic assumption that the endogenous prediction of the next stimulus is determined quasi-automatically by the memory trace

of the previous stimulus. By alternating the presentation of disambiguated and ambiguous stimulus variants, the predictive component of the perception process was based alternately on a previous certain and a previous uncertain perception. Accordingly, the weighting of the prediction should also alternate between stronger and weaker. Since the currently observed stimulus also alternated between disambiguated and ambiguous, the corresponding stimulus-controlled weighting should also vary.

In line with our hypothesis, we found a functional relationship between P400 amplitude and the expected weighting of stimulus and prediction (Fig. 43). We interpret this P400 amplitude modulation as a newly identified physiological correlate of the theoretically postulated precision weighting.

Ellen Joos, Mareike Wilson, Shalila Freitag and Jürgen Kornmeier together with Ludger Tebartz van Elst and Anne Giersch

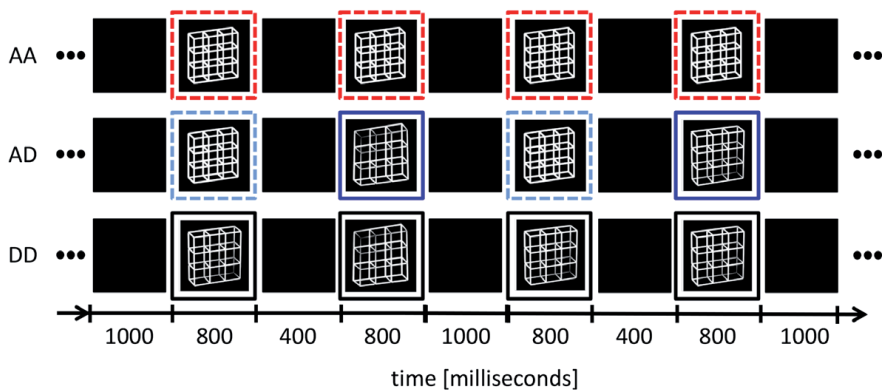


Fig. 42. Ambiguous Necker lattices and disambiguated lattices variants were presented discontinuously for 800 ms with inter-stimulus intervals (“ISI” with a blank screen) of 400 ms. In conditions (aa) only ambiguous lattices, in condition (dd) only disambiguated lattices were presented and in condition (ad) ambiguous and disambiguated lattices alternated with each other. For each presented stimulus, participants had to indicate by key press their perceived 3D orientation.

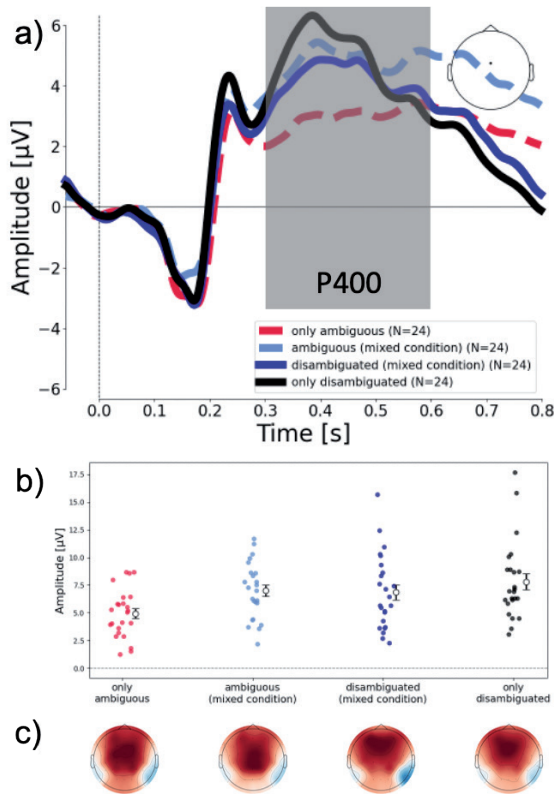


Fig. 43. a) Grand mean ERP traces from the Cz electrode separately for the three different experimental conditions. Two ERP traces were calculated for the mixed condition 'ad', to show the separate ERP responses to ambiguous and disambiguated lattices in this condition. The zero on the abscissa indicates stimulus onset. The P400 ERP component in the temporal region of interest (grey shaded area) shows largest amplitudes for condition 'dd' with purely disambiguated stimuli and smallest amplitudes for condition 'aa' only ambiguous stimuli. Ambiguous and disambiguated lattices evoke about equally large P400 amplitudes in the mixed condition 'ad'.

(b) Individual dots represent peak amplitudes of the individual participants. Open circles plus antennas indicate grand means $\pm$ standard errors.

(c) Voltage maps indicating the P400 peak distribution on the head for the separate conditions and ambiguity levels (mixed condition). Dark red colors indicate large positive amplitudes, white indicates zero amplitudes and blue indicates negative amplitudes.

(2) Perceptual Certainty requires both low Ambiguity and Predictability of the Stimulus

The experimental paradigm underlying the ERP Uncertainty Effect has thus far employed strictly separated conditions in which either ambiguous/poorly visible or disambiguated/clearly visible stimuli, or alternating ambiguous/poorly visible and disambiguated/clearly visible stimuli, were presented (see above), thereby creating a high degree of predictability of successive stimuli. According to preliminary results from a pilot study, no ERP Uncertainty Effect is measurable when ambiguous/poorly visible and disambiguated/clearly visible stimulus variants are presented randomly. This indicates that a certain degree of temporal predictability of the stimulus is a necessary prerequisite for the “ERP Uncertainty Effect.” The aim of this second study was to confirm this pilot finding and to determine the number of stimulus repetitions required to maximize the effect.

We presented Necker lattices (ambiguous/disambiguated) or smileys with sad and happy facial expressions (low/high visibility). In Experiment 1, blocks containing only ambiguous/poorly visible or unambiguous/highly visible stimuli were shown. For the analysis, the EEG data was then divided into so-called triplets (triplet 1: stimuli 1, 2, and 3; triplet 2: stimuli 2, 3, and 4; etc.). In Experiment 2, in addition to the blocks with separate and ordered stimuli, we introduced blocks, where ambiguous and disambiguated stimuli were presented in randomized order. The same type of blocks was executed for the smiley stimuli, with high and low visibility smiley stimuli in randomized order (Fig. 44. A, D). As a result, in the blocks with randomized order the stimuli were no longer predictable. The ERP Uncertainty Effect did not occur when the stimuli were presented randomly, confirming the findings of our pilot study. When the order of the stimuli was predictable, the ERP Uncertainty Effect occurred for both the lattice and smiley stimuli. Further analyses revealed that the effect reached its maximum after 8 to 10 stimulus repetitions (Fig. 44 B, C, E, F]. Our results suggest that temporal predictability appears to be of great importance for our perceptual certainty.

Shalila Freitag, Ellen Joos, Mareike Wilson and Jürgen Kornmeier together with Ludger Tebartz van Elst

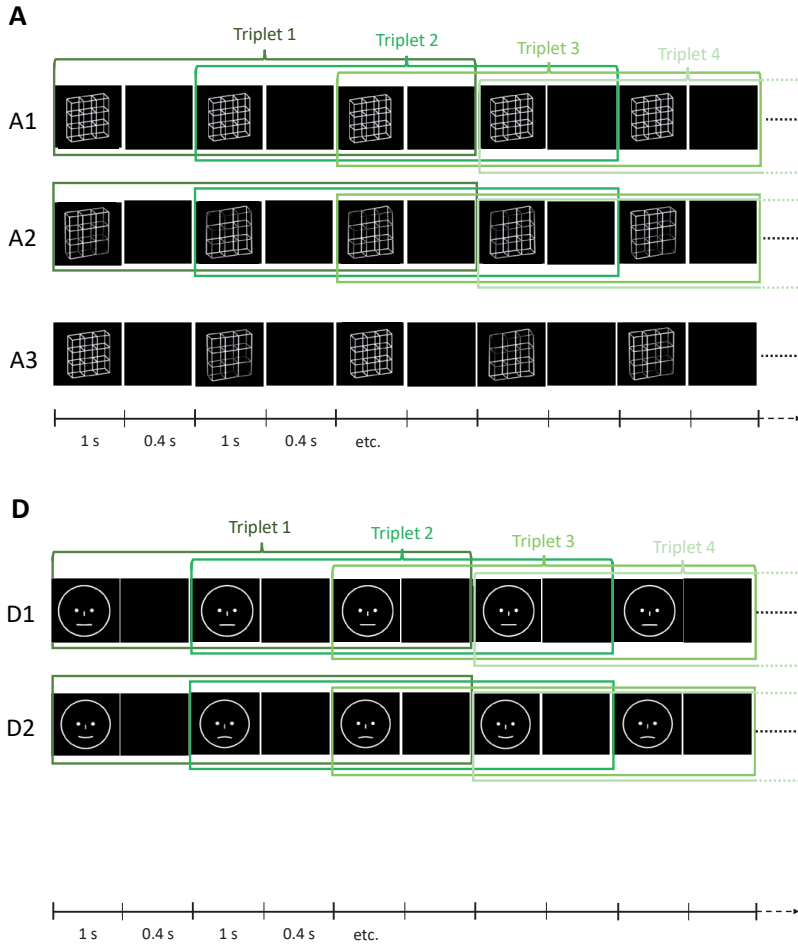


Fig. 44 A, D. A und D: Experimental paradigm for lattice and Smiley stimuli, respectively. For both, one condition consisted entirely of ambiguous (A1)/low-visibility (D1) and one of disambiguated (A2)/high-visibility (D2) stimulus variants. In a third condition of the lattice experiment both ambiguous and disambiguated stimulus variants were presented in random order (A3). Stimuli were presented for 1 s and followed by a 0.4 s inter stimulus interval (blank screen). Participants were asked to respond to the orientation/emotion of the stimulus on screen via button press. Grouping into triplets (three consecutive stimuli) for a specific data analysis step was marked in shades of green.

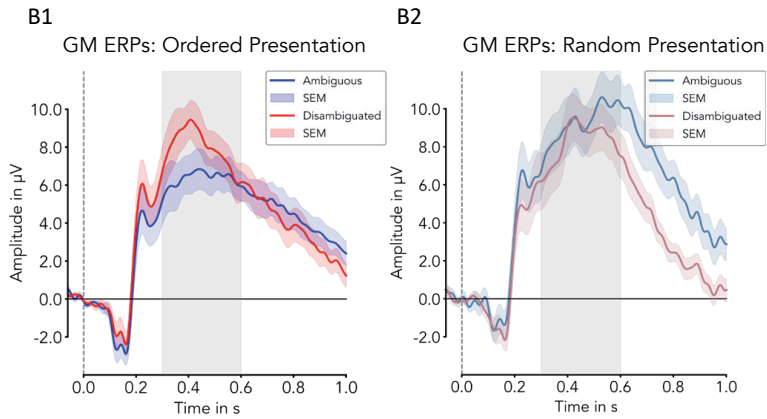
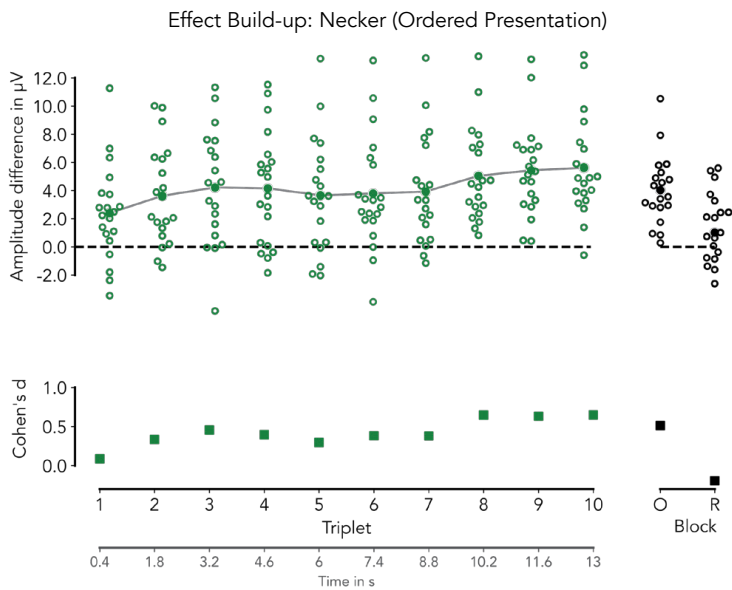
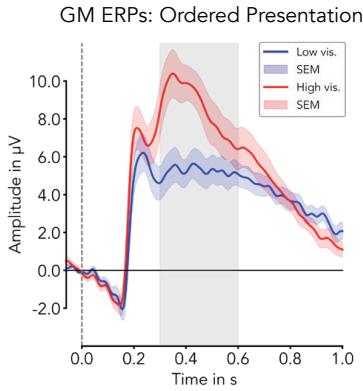
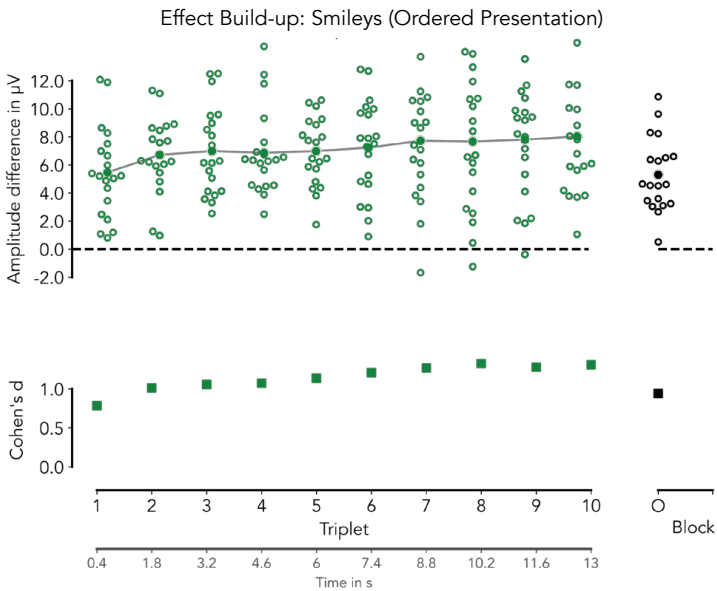
B**C**

Fig. 44 B and E: Grand mean ERP (event-related potential) traces at electrode Cz as amplitude over time (0 ms = stimulus onset). ERP traces evoked by ambiguous (B)/low-visibility (E) stimuli are shown in blue, ERP traces from disambiguated (B)/high-visibility (E) stimuli in red. The temporal region of interest for the P400 peak, 300 – 600 ms, is marked in grey. In B1 and E presentation was ordered (paradigm: A1+A2 and D1+D2, respectively). In B2 the ambiguous and disambiguated lattice stimulus were presented in random order (paradigm: A3).

E



F



C and F: Results of the triplet analysis (EEG data from three consecutive stimuli averaged across trials in a sliding window). Shown are P400 peak amplitude differences (disambiguated/high-visibility minus ambiguous/low-visibility) over triplets and their respective effect sizes (Cohen's d). Each open marker is one participant and the respective grand means filled markers. Elapsed time with respective the first stimulus onset in the block is given in grey on the bottom. Green marks the triplets, in black the same data is shown for blocks (O: ordered presentation the triplets were extracted from; R: random presentation of stimuli). Our analysis indicates that it takes about 6 to 8 seconds or ordered stimulus presentation to bring the ERP Uncertainty Effect to its maximum. Moreover the ERP Uncertainty Effect is absent in the random condition.

Reduced Brain Activity or reduced Temporal Precision? – An EEG Study on P3b in Schizophrenia

For decades, psychiatry has been unsuccessfully searching for reliable biomarkers as an ‘objective’ supplement to the diagnosis of psychiatric disorders. A significant proportion of those seeking advice from the IGPP counseling unit are suspected of having a psychiatric disorder. Accordingly, such a biomarker would also be of great importance for the work at the IGPP.

The P3b (sometimes referred to as “P300”) is a prominent component of the event-related potential (ERP) with maximum positive amplitude between 250 and 500 milliseconds after the appearance of a stimulus. It usually occurs in so-called “oddball paradigms” after onset of a rare target stimulus (‘oddball’) within a sequence of frequently appearing non-target stimuli (‘standards’). In the scientific literature, the P3b is discussed as a correlate of cognitive processing and even as one of the most reliable biomarkers of consciousness. Importantly for the present project, numerous EEG studies have found significantly lower P3b amplitudes in patients with schizophrenia than in neurotypical participants.

Event-related potentials (“ERPs”), such as P3b, are the result of repeated presentation of a stimulus and averaging of the EEG traces measured during the repetitions. The vast majority of EEG studies interpret the reduction in P3b amplitude in patients with schizophrenia as an indication of reduced neural activity in the underlying brain areas. Alternatively, however, the underlying neural processes could exhibit a certain temporal variability across trial repetitions, while having comparable intensity of neural activity. This would then also lead to an amplitude reduction in the averaged ERP. The aim of this project was to use data analysis methods (frequency analysis) to differentiate between these two explanations using EEG data. This was done in two separate visual oddball studies, one with checkerboards of different sizes (Fig. 45a) and another with numbers between 1 and 9 (Fig. 45b).

In both studies, we found lower P3b amplitudes in patients with schizophrenia than in neurotypical controls. Frequency analyses of the EEG data showed that patients had lower temporal precision of the signals underlying the P3b across individual trials (measured with reduced inter-trial coherence, “ITC” in the delta and theta frequency bands), but no reduction in signal strength (power in both frequency bands) compared to neurotypical controls (Fig. 46.)

Our results suggest that the reduction in P3b amplitude in patients with schizophrenia is associated with a reduction in temporal precision, but not with a reduction in the intensity of neural activity. These results complement earlier findings of temporal processing inaccuracies at the phenomenological, psychological, and neurological levels in schizophrenia spectrum disorder, which have been linked to disturbances in self-perception. Our study also impressively demonstrates that experimental results and, ultimately, their interpretation with regard to possible causes can depend heavily on the choice of analysis methods.

Mareike Wilson, Ellen Joos and Jürgen Kornmeier together with Anne Giersch, Anne Bonnefond and Ludger Tebartz van Elst
 Publication: Wilson, Joos, Giersch, Bonnefond, Tebartz Van Elst., Hecker & Kornmeier (2024)

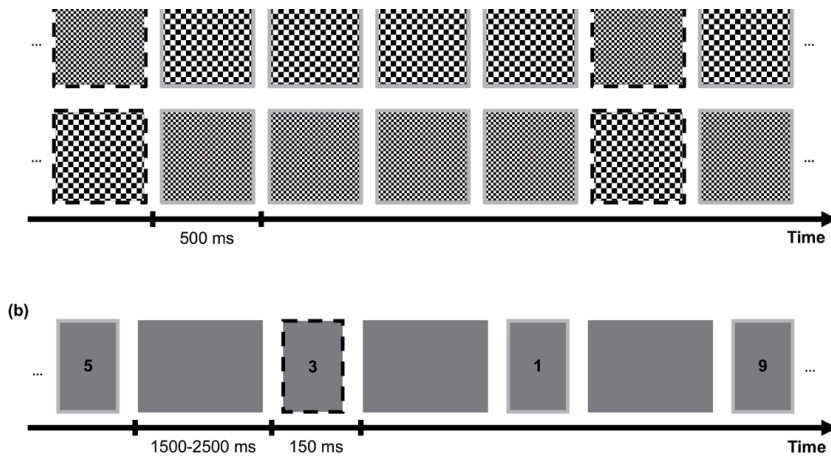


Fig. 45. (a) Checkerboard oddball paradigm and (b) number oddball paradigm. In (a), the top row corresponds to the Small Rare Condition, and the bottom row to the Large Rare Condition. Marking of the oddballs by a dashed black frame is only for demonstration purposes in this figure. The oddball occurred after every fifth stimulus. Each checkerboard was presented for 500 ms and participants had to count the occurrence of the rare stimuli and report this number at the end of an experimental block. As seen in (b), participants were either presented with a Go or NoGo trial (black dashed lines, oddball) for the second study. During a Go trial, participants were asked to press a button if a number was presented that was not 3. During a NoGo trial, participants were presented with the number 3 (oddball stimulus) and needed to refrain from pressing the button. The stimuli were presented for 150 ms. The interstimulus interval was presented for 1.5–2.5 s.

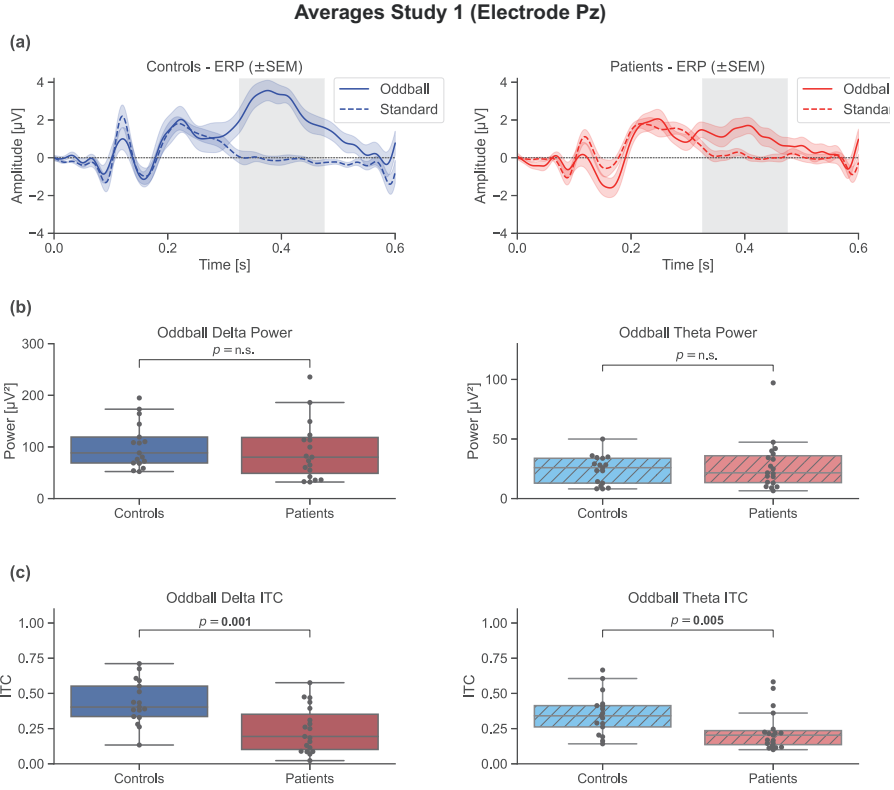
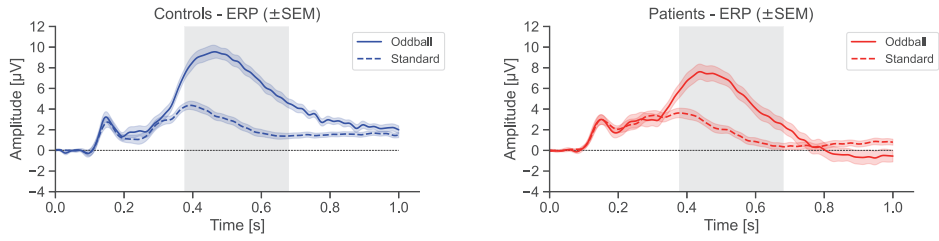


Fig. 46. (a), (b), and (c) are the results at electrode Pz of the Checkerboard oddball paradigm and (d), (e), and (f) of the number oddball paradigm. The control participants are depicted in blue and the schizophrenia patients in red. The first row ((a) and (d)) shows the Event-Related Potentials (ERP) $\pm$ Standard Error of the Mean (SEM). The x-axis shows the time in seconds (0=stimulus onset) and the y-axis the amplitude in μ V. The dashed lines show the ERP of standard stimulus and the drawn line the oddball stimulus. The gray square corresponds to the temporal region of interest (tROI) for finding the peak of the P300 ERP component, used in rows two and three.

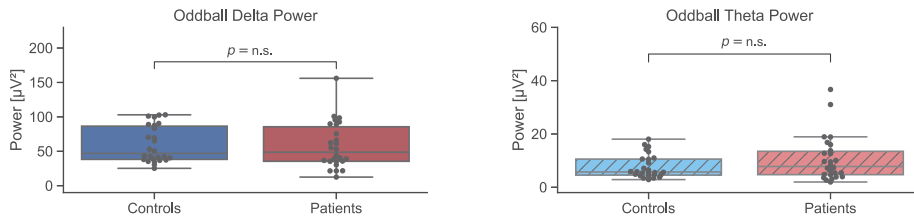
Rows two ((b) and (e)) and three ((c) and (f)) show the results of the time-frequency analysis of the Oddball trace. Depicted is the single trial power (μ V²), (b) and (e), and Intertrial Coherence (ITC), (c) and (f), of the delta (left side) and theta (right side) frequency bands in the tROI. Statistics was calculated using a one-sided Wilcoxon rank-sum test and shown are the p-values. The black data points represent data from individual participants.

Averages Study 2 (Electrode Pz)

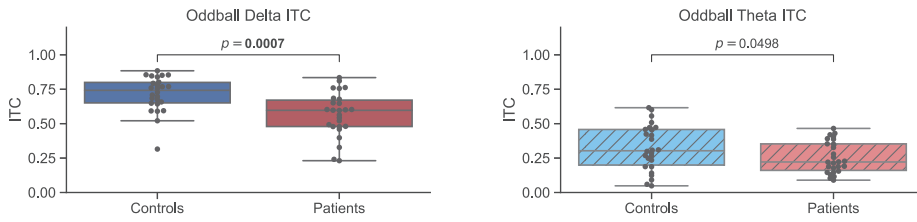
(d)



(e)



(f)



4.5.2 Time Perception and Time Consciousness

How do we perceive time? How is the subjective experience of time related to cognition, emotion, and body states? Findings on the relationship between affect and time, together with recent conceptualizations on self- and body processes have connected time perception with emotional and bodily states. Next to fundamental research on the relationship between the experience of time with cognition and affect, we study how the sense of time is modulated in altered states of consciousness such as in meditation, Floatation-REST, the Ganzfeld, when playing VR video games, in psychedelic-induced states as well as in certain neurological and psychiatric conditions. Non-ordinary experiences of a spiritual and anomalistic nature are part of the lived human experience which are studied for a comprehensive understanding of consciousness. We explore frontier areas of anomalous experience and cognition as undertaken with experiments on precognition and remote viewing, when phenomena happen where the usual concepts of time and space do not seem to play a role.



Fig. 47. The Floatation-REST cabin.

Altered States of Consciousness when Floating

*Study realized in the context of the Hanns Seidel Foundation scholarship for Helena Hruby, MSc., from funds of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
Assessment of health-psychological stress reduction through floating tanks: The micro-phenomenology of Floatation-REST.*

This micro-phenomenological study examines altered states of consciousness (ASC) during Floatation-REST, a sensory isolation method where individuals lie in a tank filled with Epsom salt-saturated water in complete silence and darkness. Salubrious effects of Floatation-REST have been shown in persons suffering from mental health conditions; these positive outcomes might be related to the experience of ASC. Micro-phenomenological interviews were conducted with fourteen participants who completed a 60-minute Floatation-REST session, to capture the generic structure of ASC. We found that most participants experience four distinct phases during a session (diachronic structure): after an initial acclimatization phase (1), participants experience a transitional phase (2) that prepares them for a subsequent ASC phase (3), followed by a phase of temporal and spatial reorientation (4). The ASC phase is characterized by the experience of positive emotions, deep relaxation, a loss of orientation in space and time, and a reduction in bodily sensations and thoughts (synchronic structure). The characteristics of the ASC phase emerge gradually and progressively intensify. This micro-phenomenological analysis of Floatation-REST sheds new light on the potential of this therapeutic technique. We discuss possible future research and therapeutic applications of Floatation-REST.

Helena Hruby and Marc Wittmann

Publication: Hruby, Wittmann, Schmidt & Bauer (2025)

Experience after Floatation-REST: Relaxation during floating mediates the After-Glow Effect

The term “afterglow” originally described the heightened mood and relaxation following psychedelics and later extended to other altered states. Despite anecdotal reports, little research has explored this effect, especially in Floatation-REST (Reduced Environmental Stimulation Technique). In this method, individuals float in thermoneutral, supersaturated salt water in a dark, quiet tank. Using a crossover design, 34 participants (17 females, 17 males; avg. age 32.2, SD = 8.8) were randomized to 60 min of Floatation-REST or Bed-REST (a control condition on a waterbed). Floatation-REST induced significantly weaker body boundaries, significantly stronger time distortion, and significantly greater relaxation. Post-exposure, participants reported a significantly stronger afterglow, significantly more state mindfulness, and significantly greater interoceptive awareness. Mediation analysis showed relaxation during floating fully explains the afterglow effect. These findings align with psychedelic research, suggesting Floatation-REST elicits similar effects and laying the groundwork for future studies on prolonged afterglow experiences.

Iraklis Pantazis and Marc Wittmann

Publication: Pantazis & Wittmann (2025)

4.5.3 Dual-Aspect Monism

Complementary Structural Determinants of ExE

None of the main epistemological positions (anti-realism, indirect realism, direct realism) is, under their respective prevailing conception of reality, compatible with a reality of the exceptional phenomena (ExP) reported in ExE. This applies in particular to the indirectly realist standard paradigm of mental representation in the cognitive sciences and psychology. Within the framework of a dissertation entitled “The Spectrum of the Exceptional. Conceptual Approaches, Empirical-Phenomenological Investigations, and Plan-Analytic Case Studies on Mental Representation,” a phenomenological approach was developed that allows different ontological interpretations and thereby also a reality of ExP. Without having to commit to a reality status, ExE can be described as deviations in the phenomenal experience of self and world. With the differentiation between a phenomenal and a cognitive model of reality, the distinction between phenomena and beliefs is taken into account. ExE are based on phenomena that are experienced in the phenomenal model of reality and interpreted in the cognitive model of reality as an exceptional experience.

The distinction between phenomenal experience and experience as cognitive processing of what is experienced is reflected in dual-process models of human information processing. They connect classical cognitivist and connectionist perspectives and correspond to theories of human self-regulation that distinguish between intentional and self-organized processes. However, how the level of self-organization can interact with phenomenal consciousness is completely unclear. Psychophysical correlations between mind and brain and psychosomatic relationships have so far resisted a satisfactory explanation. Against this background, more recent systems-theoretical and psychophysical approaches are considered. Thus, enactivism (from “to enact”: “to bring forth,” “to perform an action”) has gained increasing influence in the cognitive sciences since the 1990s. It understands the mental, with recourse to the phenomenology of the lived body originating with Husserl, as “embodied.” According to this view, the place of origin of the mental is not the brain, but the whole organism as a “lived body” structurally coupled with and interacting with its environment. Coordinated, simultaneously occurring behaviors of two or more people, which phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty or Schmitz describe as intercorporeality or mutual incorporation, are today investigated in modern embodiment research as so-called synchrony.

It is shown that the project of enactivism, in its holistic approach, to overcome psychophysical dualism cannot succeed as long as the classical principle of causality is maintained. With a generalized concept of entanglement, the principle of complementarity, and a dual-aspect monism, alternatives are presented that do not presuppose interactions between mental and physical processes, but rather proceed from psychophysically neutral structural determinants. A phenomenological complementary-aspects paradigm is introduced, on the basis of which ExE can be interpreted both naturalistically in the

sense of a theory of mental representation and within a dual-aspect monism.

The psychological relevance of the structural determinants becomes apparent with regard to basic human needs. From various need theories, autonomy and bonding are determined as basic needs and, in systems-theoretical terms, in the sense of self-organization and structural coupling with the environment, as complementary structural determinants of all living systems. Building on Grawe's consistency theory, it is argued that ExP are expressions of system-centered mechanisms of inconsistency reduction and represent disintegrated autonomy and bonding.

Wolfgang Fach

Publication: Fach (2024)

5. Personnel

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5.2 Staff members of the institute

Institute Management

PD Dr. rer. nat. Jürgen Kornmeier, Institute Director
Dipl.-Psych. Eberhard Bauer, Deputy Director

Service / Administration

Alexandra Gleisberg, accountant
Kirsten Krebber, M.A, assistant, editor
Karin Moos, M.A., assistant, social media
Dr. Frauke Schmitz-Gropengießer, assistant, editor
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Dr. Wolfgang Fach, research staff
Andreas Fischer, research staff

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Emre Gözübüyük B.Sc., stud. assistant (January until November 2025)

Dr. Liane Hofmann, research staff

Helena Hruby M.Sc., PhD student, Scholarship holder of the Hanns Seidel Foundation (until June 2025)

Dr. Ellen Joos, research staff (since January 2024)

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Dr. Dr. habil. Marc Wittmann, research staff (Coordinator: Time Perception and Time Consciousness)

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6. Appendix

6.1 Publications

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6.2 Fund Raising

2022/2025: Kornmeier, J., & Tebartz van Elst, L.: Neural processing of sensory ambiguity in healthy subjects and patients with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder. DFG (€ 404.600.-).

2023/2025: Wittmann, M., Wilson, M., & Kornmeier, J.: EEG and behavioral correlates of forward and backward priming. FUNDAÇÃO Bial (€ 55.000.-).

2025/2028: Bastos, C., & Wittmann, M.: Exceptional experiences and stable self-transformation over time in contemplative practice. FUNDAÇÃO Bial (€53.000.-).

2025/2028: Schmidt, S., Wittmann, M., Trautwein, M.-F., Böhme, R., & Costines, C.: Investigating the impact of Floatation-REST and meditation on interoception and self-consciousness: A study of physiological and subjective changes. FUNDAÇÃO Bial (€59.000.-).

2025/2030: Kornmeier J.: Beratungs- und Forschungsarbeit zu außergewöhnlichen Erfahrungen am Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (IGPP). Stiftung, die namentlich nicht aufgeführt werden möchte (€ 470.000.-).

6.3 Doctoral, Master and Bachelor Theses

Doctoral Theses

Fach, W. (2024). Das Spektrum des Außergewöhnlichen: Konzeptionelle Ansätze, empirisch-phänomenologische Untersuchungen und plananalytische Fallstudien zur mentalen Repräsentation bei außergewöhnlichen Erfahrungen. Dissertation, Universität Bern.

Master Theses

Arimoto, R. (2025). Long-term effect of Floatation-REST from psychological and phenomenological perspectives. Masterarbeit, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg.

Pantazis, I. (2024). The afterglow effect of Floatation-REST. Masterarbeit, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg.

Simran, S. (2025): fMRI Investigation of Emotion Perception: Effects of Ambiguity and Hysteresis. Masterarbeit, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg.

Bachelor Theses

Kalveram, R. (2025). Proof of Principle – Erste Hinweise auf Wirkung und Anwendungsparameter eines Flotation-REST Prototyps. Bachelorarbeit, Deutsche Hochschule für Gesundheit und Sport.

Ünal, M. (2024). Does temporal predictability alter processing in uncertain perceptual states? Bachelorarbeit, University College Freiburg.