

Is Belief In Telepathy Unscientific?

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Rigorous experiments seem to suggest that ESP and mental telepathy are real, yet these phenomena are rejected as hoaxes by mainstream science, because belief in mind reading would contradict the most basic laws of our understanding of reality. Or would it? Via Reality Sandwich, Chris Carter argues that telepathy and quantum physics go hand-in-hand:

Like Price and Hebb before them, both Wiseman and French hold that the claim of telepathy is so extraordinary that we need a greater level of evidence than we normally demand. Why should this be so? Most people believe in the reality of telepathy based on their own experiences, and are puzzled by the description of telepathy as “extraordinary.”

Psychologist James Alcock recently wrote that the claims of parapsychology “stand in defiance of the modern scientific worldview. That by itself does not mean that parapsychology is in error, but as the eminent neuropsychologist Donald Hebb pointed out, if the claims of parapsychology prove to be true, then physics and biology and neuroscience are horribly wrong in some fundamental respects.”

However, a number of leading physicists such as Henry Margenau, David Bohm, Brian Josephson, and Olivier Costra de Beauregard have repeatedly pointed out that nothing in quantum mechanics forbids psi phenomena. Costra de Beauregard even maintains that the theory of quantum physics virtually demands that psi phenomena exist. And physicist Evan Harris Walker has developed a theoretical model of psi based upon von Neumann’s formulation of quantum mechanics.

Ray Hyman’s 1996 argument (in the *Skeptical Inquirer*) that the acceptance of psi would require that we “abandon relativity and quantum mechanics in their current formulations” is thereby shown to be nonsense. Contrast Hyman’s statement with that of theoretical physicist Costa de Beauregard, who has written “relativistic quantum mechanics is a conceptual scheme where phenomena such as psychokinesis or telepathy, far from being irrational, should, on the contrary, be expected as very rational.”

Psi is certainly incompatible with the old scientific worldview, based on Newtonian mechanics and behaviorist psychology. It is not incompatible with the emerging scientific worldview based upon quantum mechanics, the neurosciences, and cognitive psychology.