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importance), and succeeds the study description with an account of what has happened since, whether the work has been replicated, how it has led to theory modification and so on. This kind of structure works better to emphasise the community of science and to illustrate the progressive nature of research—even in a field as underpopulated as parapsychology. Practically, they are easier for students to manage (or photocopy!). *Basic Research in Parapsychology* would benefit from being reorganised into such self-contained chapters that incorporate the editor's commentary and evaluation, along with recommended further reading for those sufficiently moved as to want to find out more or even replicate for themselves.

In conclusion, *Basic Research in Parapsychology* is a welcome second edition of a very worthwhile book that, despite limitations, does give a flavour of the range of experimental methods employed within parapsychology. It should prove to be a useful resource for those wishing to engage with original reports, particularly if used as a companion to a more traditional textbook introduction to the field.

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Alterations of Consciousness: An Empirical Analysis for Social Scientists
by Imants Barušs. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003.
xii + 291 pp. \$39.95 (cloth). ISBN 1-557-989-931.

There is no denying that the current interest in consciousness has spilled over into the science behind altered states of consciousness. The American Psychological Association (APA) recently published a scholarly overview of the related area of anomalous experiences (Cardeña, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000), and

is now venturing into the undergra covered by other books (Farthing, 1999). Imants Barušs was to provide an account for the college student, and APA is marking the occasion with the APA Handbook of Consciousness: Alterations of Consciousness and various altered states of consciousness and others as to what goes on in our minds. This book is well covered, but I missed some details of inner experience (e.g., Hurlburt, 1999). Barušs give a fairly comprehensive survey of the field, might use dreams for self-exploration throughout the book, a personal anecdote of a precognitive dream that, unfortunately, did not come to fruition. Crick's theory of Crick (basically that dreams should not try to remember) is not supported by a lack of empirical support, I find the

Hypnosis is a very complicated topic, covering areas as individual differences, social changes. Barušs's strategy to explain hypnosis (defined as sleep-like states including the environment) does not help matters. This has been discarded by most hypnosis researchers. Hypnosis as having much to do with altered states about hypnosis is defensible, as discussed in the following chapter, "Trance," discussing abduction experiences. I would have thought this matters, but to his credit, Barušs at least

The chapters on "Psychedelics" are the strongest in the book. I suspect that this is one of the author's interests in altered states, and he has given considerable attention to them. So I wished for a more critical assessment of them, but I found the coverage reasonable.

Barušs ends his chapter on "Death experiences" with a number of questions: "Is there anything meaningless or meaningful? Is there anything real?" His decision is to leave these questions unanswered. I preferred him to take a stand on this, but I respect his reasoning. What I found more troubling was a reference in the same paragraph or sentence repeated 15 repetitions of the same reference, which I eliminated. For all its minor problems, *Consciousness* provides a good and interesting overview of human experience that occupies

now venturing into the undergraduate end of the market, which had been covered by other books (Farthing, 1992; Wallace & Fisher, 1998). The goal of Barušs was to provide an accessible introduction for the layperson and the college student, and APA is marketing this book with an Instructor Resource Guide. *Alterations of Consciousness* includes chapters on "ordinary" waking, and various altered states of consciousness. The contributions of Klinger, Singer, and others as to what goes on in our minds during waking and daydreaming are well covered, but I missed some discussion of non-clinical and pathological inner experience (e.g., Hurlburt, 1990). The chapters on "Sleep" and "Dreams" give a fairly comprehensive survey of both areas, with a proposal on how one might use dreams for self-exploration. The author also provides, as he does throughout the book, a personal example; in this case of a purported precognitive dream that, unfortunately, was not compelling to me. The dream theory of Crick (basically that dreams are "software" mental garbage that we should not try to remember) is not mentioned, but on the other hand given its lack of empirical support, I find the omission justifiable.

Hypnosis is a very complicated topic, requiring an integration of such diverse areas as individual differences, sociocultural influences, and neurophysiological changes. Barušs's strategy to explain hypnosis through the concept of "trance" (defined as sleep-like states including decrease in volition and reaction to the environment) does not help matters. The concept is vague, multivocal, and has been discarded by most hypnosis researchers who no longer consider hypnosis as having much to do with sleep. Nonetheless, most of what the author states about hypnosis is defensible, although he may overstate its dangers. The following chapter, "Trance," discusses shamanism, dissociation, and alien-abduction experiences. I would have preferred a less cursory discussion of these matters, but to his credit, Barušs at least treats them as deserving of attention.

The chapters on "Psychedelics" and "Transcendence" are among the strongest in the book. I suspect that transcendental experiences are at the core of the author's interests in alterations of consciousness, and he devotes considerable attention to them. Some enthusiasts of entheogens might have wished for a more critical assessment of the actual danger of psychedelic use, but I found the coverage reasonable.

Barušs ends his chapter on "Death" (which includes near-death and past-life experiences) with a number of questions (e.g., "Are experiences with death meaningless or meaningful? Is there life after death?"), as he does throughout the book. His decision is to leave the answers to the reader. I would have preferred him to take a stand on this and other issues, making the reader privy to his reasoning. What I found more bothersome, though, is the multiple use of a reference in the same paragraph or sentence. Various paragraphs contain 10–15 repetitions of the same reference, which judicious editing would have eliminated. For all its minor problems and omissions, *Alterations of Consciousness* provides a good and readable overview of significant aspects of human experience that occupied some of the greatest minds in early

description with an account of research that has been replicated, how it has led to a better understanding of structure works better to emphasize the progressive nature of research in parapsychology. Practically, the book is available as a photocopy! *Basic Research in Parapsychology* is reorganised into such self-contained sections of commentary and evaluation, along with a glossary, so that it can be used as a reference work sufficiently moved as to want to read it.

Parapsychology is a welcome second edition that, despite its limitations, does give a flavour of the field as it is practised within parapsychology. It should be used by those wishing to engage with original research, rather than more traditional textbook introductions.

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Interest in consciousness has spilled over into the field of parapsychology. The American Psychological Association published a scholarly overview of the field (Singer, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000), and

psychology (e.g., Freud, James, Janet), but which this discipline, under the dominance of behaviorism, had neglected for too long.

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Maya: The World as Virtual Reality by Richard L. Thompson. Alachua, FL: Govardhan Hill Publishing, 2003. 304 pp. \$15.95 (paper). ISBN 0-963-530-00-0

Maya is a text that explores several concepts and ideas related to the *Matrix* movies and the notion of how to present a virtual world that would mirror our day to day experiences. The book starts off with a good history of virtual reality projects from their beginnings as a 1960's military project to present day uses and then jumps off to discuss basic computer theory such as the Turing Machine and how it is related to the author's thesis. From there he discusses the notion of *Matrix* style "brain in a vat" experiments and how such a thing would be possible considering the theoretical limits of computing and human cognition. Thompson posits the idea of "what if physical reality as we know it is virtual?"

The author then discusses various physical and mathematical phenomena such as chaos theory, quantum mechanics, and relativity theory, and how such concepts could be integrated into his theory of experience as virtual reality. His descriptions of the applicable physical phenomenon were good, especially those pertaining to quantum mechanics and how the notion of the Many Worlds interpretation could be used to demonstrate how a Virtual Reality system could shunt an individual from world to world based on those choices made. Thompson is obviously well read and is quite open about discussing ideas from such authors as Tipler, Dyson, and Kurzweil and how they might apply to his premise. But there were some shortcomings, usually where he takes a good idea and goes on a bit of a tangent, such as "Physicists have taken it as a matter of faith that all of the molecules in nature move according to their equations, and in this sense, physics can be viewed as a branch of theology" (p. 32) and the unfortunately used example of using the requirement of quantum mechanics to have an observer to assert that "The standard Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics seems to bring mind and consciousness into physics" (p. 71).

The next major section discusses parts of the author's theory of virtual reality. Some micro-PK experiments, remote viewing, telepathy, reincarnation, poltergeists, healing, and so on. He explains the relevant research in the field and suggests directions for further study. But the author's explanation of phenomena than tying it to the premise of virtual reality. Unexplained phenomena under the sun are explained under the sun. The theory explains the underpinnings, mere phenomena. Perhaps the best part is where he says "the universe built for us" based on universal laws. He asks "what are they for the existence of the universe?"

Towards the end he touches on Eastern concepts that may apply to his notion of virtual reality. He discusses universal consciousness as the source of all things and the most potential to be of interest. The concept of Maya is so pivotal in Hinduism and Buddhism. His description of these concepts as he did in the book is interesting rather than deep descriptions of the concepts. He refers to the Tibetan school of Buddhism, to the point of a difficult time keeping up.

In conclusion, this book takes the reader through a journey and discusses how it may apply to a virtual world, metaphysically, and philosophically. It provides an opportunity to explore these concepts further. Whether you believe it's important to not just read about it, but to experience it. If you liked the *Matrix* movies, this book is a good book for you.

Faith, Science, and Understanding by Richard L. Thompson. Alachua, FL: Govardhan Hill Publishing, 2000. xvi + 208 pp. \$11.95 (paper) ISBN 0-3000-8372-6.

The relation of science to religion is a topic that has been an attempt to find, in our current scientific era, an explanation for psychic phenomena. If the success of