

BOOK REVIEW

The Medium, the Mystic, and the Physicist: Toward a General Theory of the Paranormal by Lawrence LeShan. Allworth Press, 2003. 320 pp. \$22.94. ISBN 978-1581152739.

The Medium, the Mystic, and the Physicist, first published in 1974, reads as if it were published this week. The premise of this classic remains relevant to contemporary parapsychologists and to those of other disciplines taking part in the study of consciousness. LeShan describes his book as, “a story of adventure, as a search for the meaning of impossible events,” giving examples of anomalous perceptions from laboratory experiments, spontaneous cases, mediumistic cases, and from the psychotherapy setting which beg for a theory to explain them. This book describes his theory of the paranormal and the adventure of shaping this theory.

LeShan interviewed serious sensitives who had a high frequency of paranormal events in their lives. During the years of LeShan’s inquiry, it became clear that at the moment when paranormal information was acquired (when “telepathy” or “clairvoyance” or “precognition” was happening), sensitives were reacting to the world as if it were constructed and “worked” differently than what we normally believe it to be. At those moments they used a different metaphysical structure of the world than our ordinary, everyday, metaphysical structure.

LeShan identified two other groups, mystics and Einsteinian physicists, who reached the identical conclusion: that there are two ways of being in the world, which LeShan calls the Sensory Reality for our usual way of knowing, and the Clairvoyant Reality, independently described by these groups where information is gained other than through the senses, with a unity of subject and object and an experiential quality of deep wholeness. We get a chance to see this, almost intimately, by reading Eileen Garrett’s sessions with LeShan and in quotes from other sensitives, mystics, and physicists, bringing the Clairvoyant Reality within our grasp.

Out of these findings a theory of the paranormal emerged. This is based on the idea that each metaphysical system permits certain activities and events (which are “normal” when in the system) and does not permit other activities and events (which are therefore “paranormal” when you’re in it). In the everyday metaphysical system (the “Sensory Reality”), ESP is “paranormal.” In the other system (the Clairvoyant Reality), ESP is “normal.” ESP-type events occur when an individual is relating to the world as if its metaphysical structure were that of the Clairvoyant Reality. LeShan

sees this theory accounting for most of the data that we have in parapsychology.

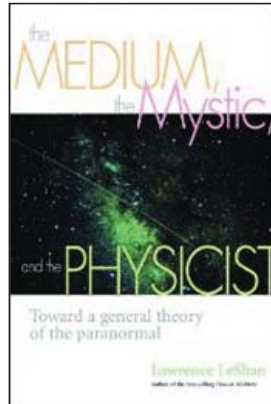
LeShan chose to use “psychic healing” in a practical test of his theory of two “realities,” by learning and teaching the psychic healing ability in order to access the Clairvoyant Reality. He categorized different types of healing based on the behaviors that healers felt were related to the healing effect and used one particular type coined *Type 1*.

Type 1 healing is a process where the healer goes into an altered state of consciousness in which s/he experiences herself or himself and the healee as one entity. There is no attempt to “do anything” to the healee, but simply to meet her or him, to be one with, to unite with. The healer is focused by love, by caring, by *caritas*, on the healee: This is an essential factor, and at this moment of intense knowing, of being one with the healee, at this “ideal organismic condition,” both healer and healee exist at home in the universe in such a way that the healee’s self-repair system functions with greater efficiency. Under these conditions, there are sometimes positive biological changes.

He chose a series of meditations and exercises that are used to facilitate the shift in consciousness to the Clairvoyant Reality. They are designed to strengthen the structure of the ego, then loosen the individual’s usual concepts of dealing with space, time, the location of the self, etc., and to make her or him emotionally aware of alternative valid ways of conceptualizing in these areas. The final step is to allow students to move in a step-by-step progression until one arrives at the altered state of consciousness theoretically associated with psychic healing.

LeShan also identified a Transpsychic Reality and specifies differences across the Sensory, Clairvoyant, and Transpersonal Realities. *The Medium, the Mystic, and the Physicist* ends with a discussion on “a new note on a work in progress” and 101 pages in the appendices of parapsychological literature relevant to his thesis.

At the present time, Type 1 healing is trained and practiced in five-day introductory seminars and three-day advanced seminars. Several double-blind studies have been done on Type 1 healing with promising results. These further support LeShan’s theory and belief in parapsychology’s value today as we learn more about human potential.



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