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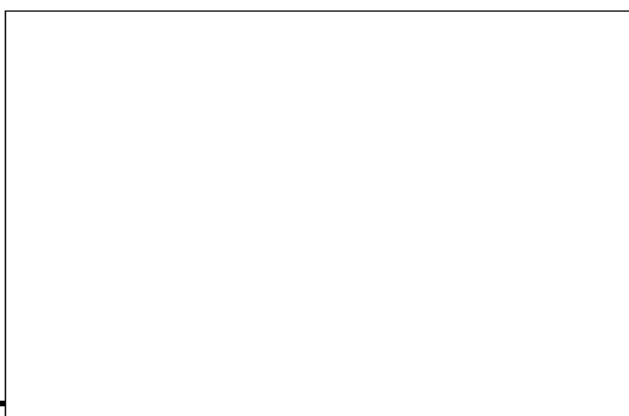
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'Spreading the Gospel' of ESP

F. Regis Riesenman (M '40) would be a wealthy man if he chose a career as a professional gambler. He can shuffle a pack of cards, memorize the order of its contents in 10 seconds, reshuffle the pack several times and predict which card you will pick out at random. He can tell you exactly how many cards are left in a cut deck by brushing it lightly with his thumb, or simply by looking at the cards from across the room.

But Dr. Riesenman is not a gambler (although people tell him he is "10 times better than Kresgyn"). He is a practicing psychiatrist and a self-appointed expert on parapsychology. He uses his knowledge of magic and card trickery to expose fakes who claim psychic powers. And he is convinced that only a few men and women, like his friends Jeane Dixon and Uri Geller, are genuine psychics.

Dr. Riesenman has been interested in psychic phenomena for more than 50 years, long before psychologists began to take ESP seriously. "I've always been about 50 years ahead of my time in everything," he boasts. He is now phasing out his psychiatric practice in Arlington, Va. to devote himself full-time to parapsychology.

What is ESP? A new energy, Dr. Riesenman says, that so far has defied the efforts of researchers to understand it.

"It's the fifth state of matter," he explains, "intangible, nothing you can touch or feel." The unit of energy that allows psychics to read minds, bend spoons, identify criminals and cure disease has tentatively been labelled the "tachyon" or "psitron." "It cannot be screened by lead or mercury shields. It can only be explained by the application of quantum mathematics or quantum physics."

Dr. Riesenman theorizes that the psitron is similar to the neutrino, a subatomic particle that has no mass but can be identified by instruments. However, although researchers at Stanford, Yale and Columbia are looking into the problem, no instrumentation has been developed to monitor psychic energy.



Dr. Riesenman, a devout Catholic, believes that the ability of some oriental mystics to control the autonomous functions of their bodies (such as heart beat and respiration) can be explained by parapsychology. And he thinks that research into psychic energy can yield benefits for medical science.

Everyone has some psychic ability, he says, and training in Eastern meditation techniques, mind control and self-hypnosis can help people treat the symptoms of disease. "More and more people will learn how to use what psychic powers they have," he predicts.

Dr. Riesenman himself once was afflicted with Bell's palsy, a disease he says he was able to cure in eight hours by reciting a prayer.

Some police departments have found ESP a useful tool in criminology; one psychic employed by the Chicago police has solved 37 murders. Another psychic, a friend of Dr. Riesenman, identified a murderer in Washington simply by touching a photo of the victim.

"Each psychic becomes a sending and receiving television and radio set," he explains. "Every individual has a 'life force' at a unique frequency that leaves its imprint on any object he touches. We emanate this life force

from our fingers and breath. A psychic is sensitive to this. With this life force (or 'vibration') perceived, the psychic knows the individual's past, present and future.

"When the psychic visits the scene of a crime, he simply tunes into traces left by the criminal. Similarly, he can learn about the spirit world by tapping its collective vibrations."

Even genuine psychics are not always accurate, however. Dr. Riesenman, for example, doesn't believe Jeane Dixon's prediction that a nuclear holocaust will destroy much of the world in the early 1980s. "Jeane is good in assassinations and deaths. She's 100 percent on that," he says. "A lot of the psychic's ability to predict the future is based on intuition, ability to use reason and information." Overall, Jeane Dixon's predictions are accurate 70 percent of the time, says Dr. Riesenman.

The psychiatrist first began to read books about ESP when he was 12 years old. "I was interested in this, but thought it was nothing but coincidence," he says. His skepticism turned into belief and he read every book and article available in the field. A convert to parapsychology, Dr. Riesenman now says he is "spreading the gospel" of the new science.

-- Andy Lang (C'75)