

Response to Friedman and Krippner

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In my review, I argued that Friedman and Krippner's book was undermined by a fundamental problem. Specifically, the volume sought to promote the use of orthodox science to study people who experience paranormal events. However, paranormal events themselves have never been demonstrated scientifically.

Thus, when the volume's contributors seek to discredit orthodox science as a means of demonstrating the occurrence of paranormal events (which they do repeatedly), it appears self-contradictory—if not disingenuous—to so stridently promote its use in studying people's experiences of them. Protests that scientific objectivity is a myth, that traditional epistemologies are self-defeating, and that linear determinism is an obsolete delusion (a canard reproduced in Friedman and Krippner's response to my review) entirely undercut claims that extraordinary people can usefully be studied with conventional scientific approaches.

Friedman and Krippner's response is premised on a restatement of their distinction between what they call 'psychic events' and 'psychic experiences.' This distinction is artificial. To even comprehend the contrast requires working definitions of the terms *events* and *experiences*. I cannot think of any definition of the latter that is not dependent on the existence of the former. (To illustrate, is it possible to experience an event that did not happen?) Friedman and Krippner's recommendation that we study experiences of events that might not have occurred remains logically incoherent. If events cannot be said to exist, then experiences of them cannot be said to exist, either.

To paraphrase the distinction offered in my review, it is like considering a traveler's anecdotes about a trip to Atlantis. In Friedman and Krippner's argument, we need not concern ourselves with the question of whether Atlantis actually exists. Indeed, we are obliged to cast aside empirical claims that Atlantis *doesn't* exist, on the basis that empiricism cannot be trusted. However, we should nonetheless employ empiricism to draw conclusions about the traveler's testimonial.

This is no less self-contradictory in Friedman and Krippner's response than it is in their book. (In their response, Friedman and Krippner suggest that the distinction had 'eluded' me in my original review. It had not. As described above, I explicitly presented it, and its critically flawed nature, as my review's major cross-cutting theme.)

Without even mentioning several other contestable claims presented by Friedman and Krippner, the primary fact remains that parapsychological events have yet to be demonstrated. Therefore, as of now, attempting to study experiences of these events is at least premature, if not absurd.