

ARTICLE

The Ultimate Specter Detector

By Joshua P. Warren

(1060 words)



I have spent over twenty years traveling the world, documenting evidence of the paranormal and downright weird. From Mayan ruins, to the castles of Vlad the Impaler in Transylvania, to my Bermuda Triangle Research Base in Puerto Rico, I've pulled all the stops, measuring everything before my restless eyes—EMF, electrostatics, IR and UV, alpha, beta, gamma, temperature, optics—you

name it. And yet, why do we still understand so little about these things called “paranormal,” “mystical,” or “Fortean”? Whether investigating ghosts, UFOs, ESP, cryptids, or common spirituality and consciousness, why does it sometimes seem we are spinning our wheels? Maybe it's because we've gotten just a little too far from the most important thing . . .

Before one goes wandering up dark staircases with meters in dusty, old houses, or thrashing through the prickly wilderness with thermal cameras, or freezing on a clear night, straining to see lights flit through the heavens with night vision, it all often begins with simple human reports: “I saw this here . . . this is what happened to me.” It starts with the human experience.

There is no telling how many times I may have wasted opportunities to experience the paranormal because I was too focused on dials and gizmos. And yet this is the curse of the scientific era. We live in a time where almost everyone is focused on a gadget. When you look around a restaurant, how many people are staring at their cell phones instead of engaging the person beside? Our technology is sucking our attention inward to an artificial world, and further from the vast, infinite mystery, all around us, that spawned humans and the ability to create these wonderful toys.

We are taught a deception in school. It is implied that instruments are the common bond

bringing us closer to truth. And yet instruments are created by humans, built by humans, operated by humans, and interpreted by humans. Human fingerprints smudge each layer of their existence and use. An instrument alone cannot prove that I love someone, or hate something, or what I dreamed last night, or what happened 1000 years ago. Sometimes, it's stunning to dwell on how, before the invention of cameras and recorders, everything substantive we know about human history—how civilization itself developed—is based upon eyewitness testimony and subjective human accounts. Instruments give us a means to share and compare aspects of the human experience; nothing more. They are important, but let us never overstate their usefulness and position in our understanding.

Most important is that tiny portal, that wormhole, between your ears, seated in a lump of warm flesh we call the brain. This wormhole-brain is where your entire conscious experience stems from, and it's key that we take it seriously. The purpose of science is not to give us truth, but to merely provide models that seem consistent with the current level of human experience and observation. That is why the conclusions based on science are constantly changing. As the swamis say, *truth is that which never changes*. Only the human consciousness possesses the most important element of understanding truth: context.

If we are to create instruments that are able to better record paranormal experiences, these instruments must act more like the human brain. This is a challenge since the brain is composed of self-aware, subatomic particles literally popping in and out of what we call "existence." There is no greater mystery. How do we bring our instruments closer to this state? My latest research digs into the relationship between the brain and gravity, and how that scientific tools may react more like a brain if the gravitational forces on the devices were reduced, similar to how they affect action inside the human head. But regardless of technology, it is essential to remain focused on the key to our understanding of it all . . .

Whenever I reach out to the public, through television, radio, websites and books, and ask for strange experiences, the flood gates open. I have stopped trying to classify everything into simple compartments like "ghosts," "UFOs" or "cryptids." There is a much more complex phenomenon happening here. When a man dreams he is being attacked by a demon, then awakens with searing scratch marks on his back, what has happened? When a woman leaves a new camera in her bedroom for an hour, then finds it has taken photographs of her room, in her absence, *from the ceiling looking down*, how do we file this neatly into a well-labeled folder?

Not only are strange and paranormal experiences rampant, but many, many reports come from people who would be considered very credible on the witness stand in a courtroom. They are often well-adjusted folks with degrees, solid jobs, and successful lives. Some, like military and law enforcement personnel, are those we hold in such high regard we give them powerful weapons and the right to kill humans, trusting they have the judgment to make

wise, responsible decisions. This is why we must peer deeper into their brains when the familiar world seems to suddenly distort around them.

Though we often feel isolated, humans are not at all separate from the environment. On the contrary, we have evolved, over millions of years, to be especially tuned to its signals. Therefore, we must resist the tendency to brush aside human reports while gazing on a piece of plastic equipment like a new oracle. It is important for us to listen to others, and be open-minded enough to give them the benefit of the doubt for a moment, however weird, wild or confusing their experiences may seem. The instruments only work if they are present when the event is taking place. And right now, our database is far too small to make ultimate evaluations. Man-made instruments will always change, but the human mind will always remain the ultimate specter detector.

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©2014 Joshua P. Warren, author of 16 books, and owner of the Asheville Mystery Museum in Asheville, North Carolina. His newest book is called *It Was a Dark and Creepy Night: Real Life Encounters with the Strange, Mysterious & Downright Terrifying* (New Page Books, 2014, EAN: 978-1-60163-328-6 \$15.99). See: JoshuaPWarren.com