Journal of Anomalistics
Zeitschrift für Anomalistik

www.anomalistik.de www.igpp.de

Comments on

(1) M. A. Maier, A. Vogel, J. Storch, & M. C. Dechamps: ***Non-Classical Correlation Between Subjective and Objective Color Observations: Change of Effect as a Function of its Empirical Documentation***

(2) M. A. Maier, A. Vogel, & M. C. Dechamps: ***Macroscopic Complementarity Between Subjective and Objective Food Image Assessments: A Conceptual Replication of the Color-Erasure Effect***

In: ***Journal of Anomalistics*****, *26*(1) (2026), 14–36 and 37–74**

Beyond the Principle of Elusiveness? Analysis of the Experimental Results of the Erasure-Confound Paradigm

Thomas Rabeyron[a, b]

(a) University of Lyon 2 (CRPPC) and Institut Universitaire de France

(b) University of Edinburgh (Koestler Parapsychology Unit)

Thomas.rabeyron@univ-lyon2.fr

Abstract – This commentary analyzes the results of two protocols by Markus Maier's team that focus on the erasure paradigm, which combines two conceptual innovations: the shift of the task from a volitional intention to a perceptual evaluation, and the deliberate introduction of a confound aimed at maintaining the psi effect (what we propose to call the "erasure-confound paradigm"). After situating this work within the context of the limits of the Rhinian paradigm – particularly with regard to the psi paradox and the principle of elusiveness – we discuss the contributions and limitations of this new research paradigm. The analysis highlights the original and promising nature of the results obtained and

situates them within a broader theoretical framework concerning elusiveness aspects of psi phenomena. Several avenues are also opened to determine to what extent the strategy implemented allows for a sustainable circumvention of the principle of elusiveness.

Keywords: Psi, generalized quantum theory, principle of elusiveness, psi paradox, erasure paradigm, decay effect

Background: Reasons for the Failure of the Rhine Paradigm

It is rare for a new paradigm to emerge in psi research. In this regard, the work conducted by Markus Maier and his team – the two articles presented in this issue representing its current evolution – appears to mark a significant break and constitutes one of the most promising research programs in experimental parapsychology. But before addressing the specific content of these two articles, I believe it is necessary to recall the general context in which this work takes on its meaning, as the significance of Markus Maier's proposal can only be fully grasped in light of the difficulties faced by experimental parapsychology for over a century.

Research on psi phenomena began with the collection of accounts reported by individuals who had experienced "extraordinary" events, which contemporary literature now refers to mainly as "anomalous" or "exceptional" experiences (Cardeña et al., 2014; Rabeyron, 2020). The goal was then to demonstrate in the laboratory, under controlled conditions, the existence of "psi interactions" that characterize some of these experiences and that seem to transcend the usual laws of space, time, and causality. This experimental approach, based in particular on statistics, was developed beginning in the 1930s by J. B. Rhine (1934/1973) at Duke University, giving rise to an experimental paradigm aimed at demonstrating the existence of psi.

Since its inception, this paradigm has produced statistically significant effects, though with modest effect sizes – most often ranging between 0.10 and 0.20 – as reported by a number of meta-analyses (Cardeña, 2018; Mossbridge et al., 2012; Storm et al., 2010). These studies have given rise to recurrent controversies regarding the nature of these effects, controversies fueled by the absence of a theoretical framework capable of explaining the "substrate" from which such interactions might arise. Researchers subsequently applied this same experimental methodology to new paradigms – *remote viewing*, *Ganzfeld*, premonition, retrocausality, etc. (see, e. g., Bem, 2011, and the meta-analysis by Bem et al., 2016) – without, however, succeeding in convincing the scientific community of the existence of psi or in truly producing scientific knowledge on a cumulative model. In light of the philosophy of science as conceived by Lakatos (1970), it then becomes difficult to consider this research program as "progressive": it fails both to formulate strong theoretical hypotheses and to accumulate new knowledge according to the usual criteria of testability and falsifiability. Rhinian-oriented experimental parapsychology

remains, so to speak, indefinitely trapped in its initial stage of demonstrating the existence of psi and thus fails, so far, to become a mature scientific discipline.

In an article (Rabeyron, 2020) and two recent books (Rabeyron, 2023, 2026), I have proposed identifying the epistemological causes of this situation through the "psi paradox." The argument can be summarized as follows: psi phenomena arise and develop within an "entanglement" or "communion" between a subject and its environment; yet scientific activity rests on a radical separation of subject and object, a separation that constitutes precisely the condition of possibility for objective measurement. Attempting to demonstrate the existence of psi interactions within the standard scientific framework thus amounts to invalidating the very conditions of its demonstration. The reciprocal contamination between the scientist and their object of study – which is here constitutive of psi – thus prevents any stable accumulation of knowledge, since we are not able to determine whether the effects obtained correspond to factors external to the experimenter or whether, on the contrary, they are produced by the experimenter's beliefs, expectations, and intentions within the experimental setting.

Another factor at the root of these reproducibility difficulties stems from what I have proposed to call the "principle of elusiveness" (Rabeyron, 2023, 2026). Well known to researchers studying spontaneous phenomena such as poltergeists (Roll, 1977; Tierney, 2012), this principle refers to the fact that psi phenomena tend to reveal themselves by concealing themselves. Their emergence thus seems inseparable from their elusive nature. This principle constitutes a fundamental function related to the very origin of psi interactions: they behave like fireflies that can no longer be distinguished once they are directly illuminated (Rabeyron, 2023). Similarly, psi phenomena can emerge and survive only in the "shadows," and any attempt to explicitly objectify them leads to their disappearance. This observation is also central to the *Model of Pragmatic Information* (MPI) and is known as the "Non-Transmission Axiom" (NT axiom), which posits that psi cannot be used to transmit information, explaining its characteristic elusiveness and difficulty in replication (Lucadou et al., 2007).

Toward a New Research Program

These two factors (the psi paradox and the principle of elusiveness) might explain the difficulties and dead ends inherent in the experimental paradigm when applied to the study of psi. But while it is one thing to diagnose the failure of a paradigm, it is quite another to propose a new one that allows for moving beyond the difficulties encountered. To achieve this, it seems necessary to understand that psi phenomena belong to a different ontological realm than those studied by the "normal" sciences – a fact that a number of philosophers had already intuitively perceived. Plato, with his allegory of the cave, had already sketched out an irreducible duality

between the apparent order of the world and its ontological foundation. Spinoza (1677/1996), for his part, proposed distinguishing the "divine substance" from its "attributes" or "modes" as we can apprehend them. It was then Schopenhauer (1819/1969, 1851/1974), in the wake of Kantian criticism, who developed the idea of a "will" underlying the phenomenal world, of which psi would constitute a form of expression. More recently, the Pauli-Jung Conjecture (Pauli, 1954/1994) and physicist David Bohm's (1980) theory of the "implicate order" have clarified the distinction between two orders of reality, the most primordial of which is the locus of the emergence of psi interactions.

Atmanspacher (2003; Atmanspacher & Rickles, 2022) has provided a contemporary model following these ideas – in particular the Pauli-Jung Conjecture – through a "decompositional dual-aspect monism" (see also Atmanspacher, 2020; Atmanspacher & Fach, 2013, for related extensions). In this model, an "ontic order" is decomposed into a first-person subjective experience and a third-person-apprehendable external world, with these two registers (subjective and objective) maintaining relationships of complementarity and incompatibility between them. Such an effort at formalization also gave rise to the *Generalized Quantum Theory* (GQT) (Atmanspacher et al., 2002; Filk & Römer, 2011; Römer, 2023; Walach & Römer, 2000, 2011; Walach & von Stillfried, 2011), which proposes a formal framework inspired by quantum mechanics to model psi interactions.[1] The question that then arises is that of the experimental translation of such a model.

As mentioned earlier, Lucadou et al. (2007) developed the *Model of Pragmatic Information* (MPI), which incorporates these principles of elusiveness through the non-transmission axiom (NT axiom): they assume that acausal correlations cannot be used causally, otherwise they would violate the constraints imposed by special relativity. This model gave rise to an ingenious research program called the "correlation matrix method" (CMM; Lucadou, 2015; Tierney, Watt, & Flores, 2018; Walach et al., 2022). This paradigm aims to allow sufficient "freedom" for psi effects to persist within the system while moving in the matrix, thereby circumventing the NT axiom. It is thus assumed that a significant number of correlations can persist within a correlation matrix, escaping the constraint of direct documentation. Nevertheless, despite promising initial results, this paradigm appears to have been overtaken by the principle of elusiveness and has gradually led to non-significant results (Walach et al., 2022). The research program developed by Markus Maier and his collaborators builds on this research and aims to find an alternative solution to improve the reproducibility of psi interactions while circumventing the principle of elusiveness.

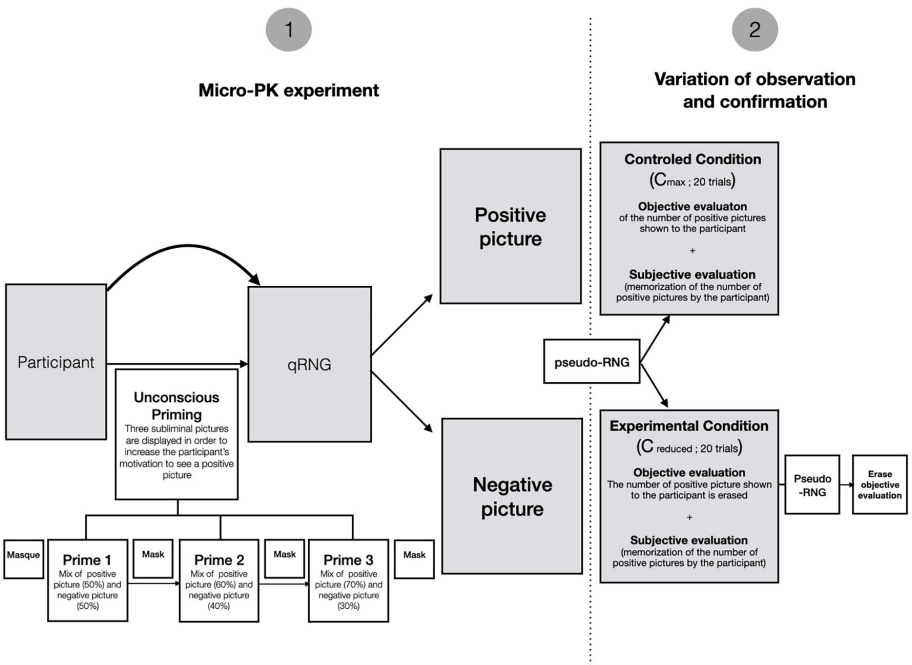
1 In my own work, based in particular on observations in the field of exceptional experiences (Rabeyron, 2020), I likewise arrived at the conclusion that dual-aspect monism seemed to be the most coherent epistemological model for accounting for psi interactions, but only on the condition that the principle of elusiveness be incorporated into it (Rabeyron, 2023).

Protocol Based on a Micro-PK Task and Data Erasure

The program by Markus Maier and his team stems from an intuition: if the observation, documentation, and measurement of psi effects tend to make them disappear, then an asymmetry in documentation between conditions should be introduced into the experimental setting – that is, the degree of objectification of the collected data should be modulated to determine the impact of this parameter. The first implementation of this idea (Maier & Dechamps, 2018; Dechamps et al., 2021; Maier et al., 2022) – in which I participated and which was the result of theoretical exchanges with Markus Maier and his team over the past decade – was based on a micro-PK task in which part of the data was deleted and the other part retained (see Figure 1). The hypothesis was that erasing the data would reduce the degree of objectivity of the observed effects, which we could then verify through a difference in effect size between the two conditions ("erasure" vs. "non-erasure").

Figure 1

Micro-PK and Erasure Experiment (Maier et al., 2022)



I will not go into the details of this protocol and will simply note that, following initial encouraging results, this "erasure paradigm," much like the Correlation Matrix Method, encountered unstable effects that prevented true reproducibility.

Protocol Based on Color Assessment and Data Erasure

It was in response to this "failure" that this new research program was designed, based on a novel conceptual innovation. In a classic parapsychology experiment, participants are usually asked to act on the apparatus according to their intention (for example, to influence an RNG or to guess a target). Maier and Dechamps (2025) introduced a perceptual task based on the aesthetic evaluation of a stimulus. Theoretically, and according to the classification proposed by Atmanspacher and Rickles (2022), the protocol evaluates a "structural correlation" rather than the "induced correlations" typically studied in parapsychology. In the former case, the participant perceives information; in the latter, they attempt to influence the system.[2]

Specifically, participants are asked to subjectively evaluate a color (a colored square displayed on the screen whose hue and brightness vary randomly). Each participant then indicates, on a visual analog scale, how much they like this color. Out of a total of 20 trials, half are stored in a file ("non-erasure" condition), while the other half are permanently deleted ("erasure" condition). In the deletion condition, only the participant's subjective evaluation is retained, without the ability to determine the corresponding color. The central hypothesis is therefore that the storage of the data will have an impact on the subjective evaluation of colors and that it will thus be possible to demonstrate a significant difference between participants' responses depending on whether the objective data related to the images were stored or not.

An initial article by Maier and Dechamps (2025) reported on their theoretical explorations and the variability of the early results obtained using this approach (for example, they initially studied the evaluation of brightness rather than the aesthetic dimension of colors). Maier thus gradually arrived at the idea of introducing a new parameter that may seem counterintuitive but is in fact particularly ingenious for circumventing the problem of elusiveness. This parameter consists of including a confound in the experimental design, which takes the following form

2 Maier, Vogel, and Dechamps (2026), however, revisit this distinction in their second article and propose that we consider the blurring effects as perceptually induced correlations, insofar as subjective evaluation involves an autonomous contribution from the subject and is not merely a passive recording. In reality, such correlations are already used in other experiments, but in a slightly different form. For example, in retro-priming tasks (Bem, 2011), the participant is also asked to perceptually evaluate an image based on their preference (is it positive or negative?).

here: the colors assigned to the two conditions ("erasure" vs. "non-erasure") are the same in an experiment, so that an alternative explanation to a psi effect is conceivable. The effect could result from the fact that the colors selected randomly in one condition might be preferred by participants due to their characteristics. This confound therefore does not allow to determine whether the observed effect is a causal effect or an acausal (psi) effect. Maier and Dechamps (2025) replicated this experiment several times and were able to obtain a significant effect that appeared to be replicable. But how can we then be sure that this effect is a psi effect and not the consequence of the confound described above? Maier and Dechamps (2025) then subsequently used a statistical permutation method that allowed them to rule out this confound and confirm that the effect is not the consequence of the confound.

Empirical Demonstration of the "Effect and Decline" in the Absence of Confound

The first article presented in this issue (Maier et al., 2026) is part of this research program but serves to confirm a hypothesis underlying the research described previously, namely that the absence of confound should lead to a causal prediction and thus eliminate the psi effect. This research therefore aimed to confirm retrospectively, in an empirical manner, the reasons for introducing a confound into the protocol presented previously. In this study, conducted with 6,448 participants, the authors implemented a design in which the 20 colors are, for each participant, individually selected at random via a quantum random number generator (QRNG), thereby eliminating any confound (the colors vary each time, and thus the variation in results between the "erasure" and "non-erasure" conditions cannot stem from the fact that, by chance, the colors in one condition are preferred by the participants).

The prediction derived from the NT axiom is therefore that, under these conditions, the psi effect – which takes the form of a difference in effect size between the "erasure" and "non-erasure" conditions – should initially emerge before declining (as observed in Correlation Matrix Method experiments). The results strikingly confirm this prediction: the Bayes factor reaches a maximum of $BF_{10} = 39.77$ at $n = 2{,}946$ (very strong evidence in favor of H_1), before dropping sharply to a $BF_{01} = 6.16$ (moderate evidence in favor of H_0). An exploratory permutation analysis shows that the probability of obtaining such an "effect-and-decline" pattern is only 2.90%. This result thus appears to provide empirical confirmation of a prediction that had previously remained largely conjectural. Maier and his team thus bridge the gap that was missing from their demonstration: they first produced consistent results across four studies using the erasure-confound paradigm, then replicated the same protocol, this time without confound, to show that it is precisely the *presence* of the confound that allows the psi effect to be maintained in the system.

Protocol Based on Taste Assessment and Data Erasure

The second article revisits the research protocol based on subjective color assessment but this time modifies the stimulus (Maier et al., 2026): participants are now asked to evaluate photographs of food dishes ("*How delicious does this food look to you?*"). The objective data stored in the "non-erasure" condition correspond to the dish's identifier and its associated caloric value. For each study, a subset of photographs is randomly selected using a quantum random number generator: 10 images for Study 1 (5 vs. 5, presented over 10 sessions spaced at least two hours apart) and 12 images in each of the other three studies 2a-2c (6 vs. 6, presented in a single session), with each study based on an independent selection of photographs. Participants' ratings are collected on a visual analog scale ranging from 0 to 100. The article rigorously follows the previous methodology, which has proven effective for color evaluation: (1) initial documentation of an effect; (2) reproduction of the effect while introducing a confound; (3) *a posteriori* elimination of the confound through stratified permutations. From a theoretical standpoint, confirming the effect with a new type of stimulus serves to highlight its potential robustness. It should also be noted that preference for a dish likely involves a greater emotional investment than that related to a color and therefore yields greater variability in the ratings (however, the reasons for this choice of stimuli are not explicitly stated in the article).

Four studies were thus conducted with 647 participants: an initial study (1) yielding a BF_{10} = 1,309.22 (d = 0.66), followed by three other studies (2a; 2b; 2c), whose protocol – slightly modified from Study 1 – remained identical, even though each new study used a new set of stimuli randomly drawn from the same pool of 100 images. The effect was then replicated with varying magnitudes but always in the predicted direction: Study 2a, d = 0.50; Study 2b, d = 0.29; Study 2c, d = 0.26. We must then rule out the confound which, as with the color experiment, stems from the fact that the same photographs are used in both conditions – erasure and non-erasure – for all participants. The permutation test confirmed that the effect cannot be explained by random pairing of stimuli with conditions. This analysis yields p = 0.002, a robust fixed effect in a multilevel model (β = 4.72, p = 0.011), as well as converging sensitivity analyses (Edgington: p = 0.003; Fisher: p = 0.006), ruling out the hypothesis of a confound induced by the random selection of images. These results thus confirm the findings from the experiment conducted with colors and suggest that the observed psi effect is sufficiently stable and robust to persist despite repeated experiments.

Theoretical Comments: Can the Principle of Elusiveness Truly Be Circumvented?

As noted in the introduction, this research program appears particularly innovative and seems to be capable of truly offering a potential solution to the reproducibility difficulties observed for over a century in experimental parapsychology. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to highlight several fundamental theoretical issues in order to put these preliminary results into perspective, as they require further confirmation beyond their innovative nature.

Explanation of the Preference Effect in the Non-masked Condition

The empirical result of these two articles can be summarized as follows: *when the objective parameters of the stimuli are recorded (colors or photographs of food dishes), participants tend to evaluate these stimuli more favorably than when they are obscured*. Demonstrating the effect is essential, but the direction of the observed effect is not explained. But why does recording lead to a more favorable evaluation and not the opposite? Why is the "non-erasure" condition systematically associated with higher evaluation scores? Why does storing the parameters of a photograph of a food dish result in a person preferring that dish?

We thus observe an entanglement, a "co-incidence," between two parameters, without being able to truly determine their causal relationship. This also raises a more fundamental theoretical problem, already identified in the parapsychological literature by the *Decision Augmentation Theory* (DAT; May et al., 1995). According to this theory, micro-PK effects are actually precognition effects: the experimenter anticipates and unconsciously chooses the "right moment" to select the data and begin the experiment, which then results in an effect that appears to be an interaction between the participants and the RNG. The same problem arises in the experiments conducted by Maier and his team, which creates uncertainty regarding the nature of the effect: does it truly originate from the participants, or does it originate from the experimenters? Is it an effect of erasure, or is it an effect of precognition or micro-psychokinesis? In the specific case of this experiment, this translates into the following questions: Is it because the data will be stored that the participants will appreciate certain stimuli more? Or, conversely, is it because they appreciate certain stimuli – or certain dishes – more that these stimuli were stored? In short, is the observed effect truly the consequence of the erasure variable introduced into the experimental setting?

These different possibilities cannot actually be distinguished for epistemological reasons stemming from the "psi paradox" (Rabeyron, 2023): this ambiguity regarding the "source of psi" appears to be intrinsic to the conditions of its emergence. These phenomena emerge from

an order of reality, the ontic order, within which spatio-temporal distinctions are not effective. They arise from an "informational magma" not organized by the coordinates of space, time, and ordinary causality, which renders the previous distinctions and questions obsolete. The synchrony induced by the solidarity of the elements constituting the ontic order thus manifests as co-incidences, synchronicities, which can be sporadically observed but whose causal origins cannot truly be determined. Nevertheless, despite all these difficulties, it seems relevant to reflect further on the direction of the effect obtained and its potential consequences at the theoretical and empirical levels.

From this perspective, we might consider the following idea: the decomposition of the ontic order into the epistemic order occurs independently of time (we have to distinguish an ontic time from our epistemic time), such that the distinction between "before" and "after" is irrelevant between the "moment" of the participants' choice and the moment of data erasure. There is a "whole" that breaks down depending on multiple parameters (experimenters, participants, documentation, etc.). But one can imagine that within all this "magma," the storing of data has a predominant influence (which would explain why we are able to reproduce this effect). From a psychological point of view, this might mean that *we tend to bring into existence what we like*. Concretely, we would have, in a discreet and unconscious way, at the ontic level, a tendency to make what we appreciate "exist". Conversely, one can imagine that we tend to "destroy" what we do not like. This makes perfect sense from the perspective of the homeostatic logics that govern psychic life: what we love corresponds to values that are themselves correlated with elements of reality that promote our internal balance (and thus our survival); conversely, what we hate corresponds to values that are themselves correlated with elements of reality that undermine our balance (and thus our survival). *We therefore tend, in a subtle way, to "steer" the creation of the world in a way that promotes our survival.*

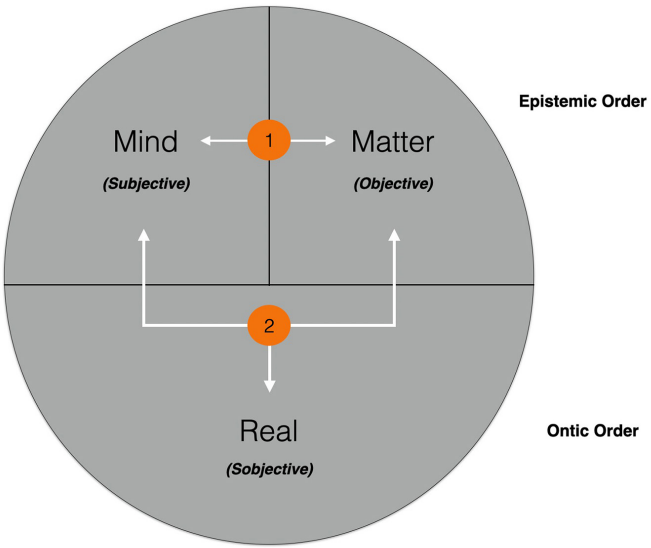
The two types of complementary-incompatible relationships

Another major theoretical contribution of this program of research lies in highlighting the relationship of complementarity and incompatibility between the subjective and objective measurements of the same stimulus. This relationship seems, more precisely, to be conceivable in terms of two distinct dimensions if we refer to the "Orpheus model" (see Figure 2; Rabeyron, 2023, 2026): a *horizontal* complementarity-incompatibility relationship between the subjective and the objective; a *vertical* complementarity-incompatibility relationship between the epistemic and the ontic. This dual relationship raises specific issues that likely have consequences for the emergence of psi interactions. The task would then be to determine how such a formal

conceptual framework leads to experimental hypotheses that extend the approach of Markus Maier and his team. We could also consider the implications of this model for understanding other phenomena through the logic of "oscillations"[3] between subjective experience and objective measurement, between epistemic experience and its ontic origin (for example, we could consider psychosomatic phenomena in which "oscillations" between the psyche and the body are sometimes observed clinically[4]).

Figure 2

Horizontal and vertical relationships in the Orpheus Model



3 Moritz Dechamps (2019) was able to demonstrate in his PhD "oscillations" in the evolution of psi effects as the data accumulated. These oscillations can be interpreted as the consequence of these relationships between the subjective epistemic order and the objective epistemic order.

4 It is somewhat like applying pressure to a water-filled mattress: this automatically alters the distribution of water within the mattress. The mattress represents a "totality" in which all elements are interconnected, producing automatic feedback loops. The same logic seems to apply in any experiment aimed at objectifying psi effects.

Relationship Between Acausal Entanglements and Causal Correlations

Another point that seems crucial from a theoretical standpoint concerns the nature of the relationship between causal and acausal relationships. I have proposed the hypothesis that *acausal relationships develop from causal relationships because the latter serve as the ground from which the former emerge* (Rabeyron, 2023, 2026). Acausal relationships are, in a sense, "folded" or "encrypted" within causal relationships. This would explain why maintaining a confound helps sustain the effect: it is not merely, as Markus Maier and his team suppose, that the confound protects the acausal correlation by rendering the source of the effect undecidable (thus avoiding the NT axiom). This causal relationship serves as the fuel upon which the acausal effect relies to emerge. It is thus a matter of *blending the copper of ordinary causality with the gold of psi*, for the latter cannot exist sustainably within the epistemic order without this causal underpinning.[5] It always ends up "evaporating," particularly as the degree of observation and measurement increases (Rabeyron, 2023, 2026).

This hypothesis helps explain why traditional parapsychology experiments ultimately fail. By rigorously separating the subject from the object, such protocols eliminate causal relationships, so that the effect persists for a time before eventually disappearing, as it no longer has the necessary ground for its emergence. This is precisely what is highlighted in the first experiment by Maier et al. (2026) published in this issue, which gives rise to the observed "*effect and decline*." But this effect would be difficult to observe directly because, as mentioned earlier, *acausal relationships are most often masked by causal relationships*. For example, in psychotherapy, "physical" exchanges (auditory, visual, etc.) between the clinician and the patient mask the "underlying" relationships that might emerge between them on the ontic level (Rabeyron, 2020). Such relationships only become visible when they are separated, provided that a sufficient therapeutic relationship has been established beforehand (an "organizational enclosure" according to the MPI). At the experimental level, the challenge therefore lies in maintaining causal relationships while simultaneously bringing to light the acausal relationships underlying them. This is precisely what Markus Maier and his team appear to have succeeded in doing: the confound maintains a form of causal relationship within the experimental setting, which could explain why the psi effect remains stable even when the experiment is replicated.

5 Another metaphor drawn from minerals comes from the relationship between corundum and chromium: a few atoms of chromium transform corundum (colorless) into ruby (bright red). Chromium is, in a sense, "encoded" within the crystal lattice of corundum and enables its transformation. In this regard, one might ask to what extent causal relationships also require acausal relationships to develop, as if the latter were their original, hidden point of emergence and contact with reality.

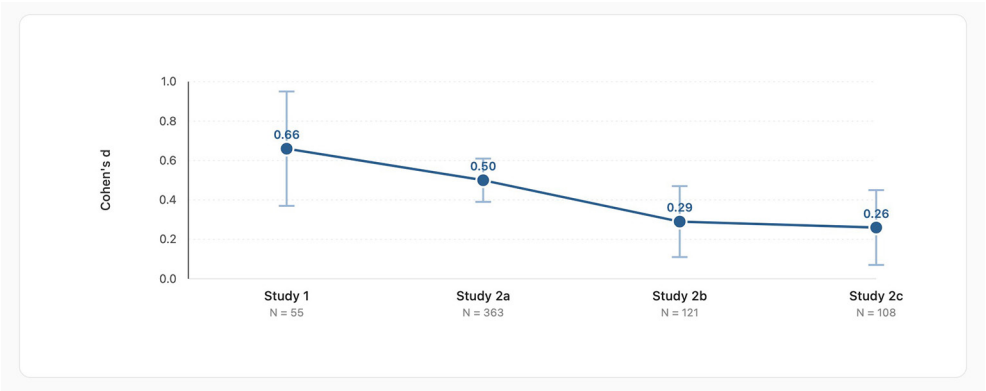
The Principle of Elusiveness and the Decline Effect

Nevertheless, as with any protocol aimed at objectifying the existence of psi, this research program still risks meeting the same grim fate as previous parapsychological paradigms. The same structural problem encountered in correlation matrix experiments is indeed likely to arise: at a certain level of analysis, the experiment ultimately produces a statistical prediction, specifically in binary form (participants' results with erasure (0) vs. participants' results without erasure (1)). This binary distinction constitutes a causal relationship between a prediction and a result. The same was true in the correlation matrix experiments: the psi effect could shift within the matrix, but one could still predict that the effects would be more pronounced in the matrix with participants compared to the matrix without participants. No matter how sophisticated the attempts to circumvent elusiveness may be, the experimental conclusion always takes the form of an empirically testable assertion: condition *X* will exhibit an effect, condition *Y* will not, which reintroduces a causal-predictive structure.

These theoretical perspectives suggest that a decline effect should be observed in the data collected by Markus Maier and his team: as the protocol is replicated, the causal evidence for the effect increases, which consequently would lead to a decrease in the psi effect. It turns out that the protocol involving gustative evaluation does indeed show such a decline effect: Study 1 ($d = 0.66$); Study 2a ($d = 0.50$); Study 2b ($d = 0.29$); Study 2c ($d = 0.26$; see Figure 3). The trend in effect sizes across the four studies shows a steady decline that does not appear to be due to chance. Based on the chronological order of the four studies, a permutation test yields $p = 1/4! = 1/24 \approx 0.042$ (one-tailed). A meta-regression weighted by the inverse of the variance of d (fixed-effects model) also reveals a significant linear decrease: $b = -0.138$ (95% CI: [-0.231; -0.046]; $z = -2.92$; $p = 0.0018$, one-tailed). This empirical signature is precisely what is predicted by the NT axiom and the idea that the acausal effect fades as the causal documentation of the protocol grows. This trend in effect sizes might lead us to formulate the following prediction: if the experiment were repeated identically, the effect sizes would continue to decrease (or even reverse) until they become insignificant.

Figure 3

Evolution of Effect Sizes in the Taste Evaluation Experiment



I therefore fear that the methods for circumventing the principle of elusiveness implemented by Markus Maier and his team could, in the final analysis, only delay the inevitable. The confound-erasure paradigm amounts to making a prediction about elusiveness itself, which transforms the decline effect into a relationship that can be predicted and anticipated in a stable manner. *Predicting elusiveness amounts to distorting elusiveness, for elusiveness cannot be predicted because it is necessarily elusive*. Psi is fundamentally a new emergence, a pure creation arising from the ontic order that "projects" itself into the epistemic order according to a specific "psi function" (Rabeyron, in press). But novelty can only be new once, just as one cannot reproduce an artistic work identically while producing the same effect of novelty. Psi is a singularity whose repetition is, for ontological reasons, incompatible with the very act of reproducing it, in the same way that a joke can only make the same audience laugh once. In this regard, it is somewhat as if Markus Maier and his team were attempting, by varying the stimuli (colors, dishes), to tell the same joke in different forms in the hope of continuing to make the audience laugh. This strategy allows the comic effect to be maintained temporarily, but the audience will eventually grow tired of it…

The Principle of Elusiveness: A Difference in Nature or in Degree?

Another theoretical point I would like to bring up for discussion concerns the formulation of the NT axiom itself. The term "non-transmission" could be misleading, as it suggests that no transmission of information is possible from the ontic order to the epistemic order. Psi does not allow

for "transmission" or "extraction" according to causal logic, and therefore psi cannot be used as a stable signal as one would with a causal and linear signal. However, psi can nevertheless allow for the transmission of information, thus falling into the category of "pseudo-signal" (Lucadou et al., 2007). From this perspective, the relationship between measurement and the emergence of psi is not one of fundamental incompatibility, but rather a *relationship that operates according to a difference in degree*. Information extraction via pseudo-signals is possible, but their stable and repeated transmission seems impossible. Nevertheless, the research program developed by Markus Maier raises the possibility of stable information extraction from the ontic order. The key question now is to determine whether this extraction can be sufficiently stabilized by circumvention measures (confound + erasure), and if so, whether they can be used for other tasks and under what conditions.

Observation, Recording, Documentation

Another methodological point deserves further clarification: the distinction between *storing* (the fact that data is stored in a persistent file), *observation* (the fact that a human agent becomes aware of the data), and *documentation* (the fact that the data is indexed and accessible to other observers). These three dimensions are not equivalent from a theoretical standpoint, and it would be interesting to test whether the erasure effect depends on one or the other. One can imagine, for example, data that is recorded but placed in a digital "vault" that would make its observation physically impossible. Conversely, would data erased after being briefly observed prior to its destruction retain a residual effect? Is observation cumulative: would a stronger effect emerge if observed by several successive experimenters?

Markus Maier and his team could attempt to include these parameters to determine their effects on the results. Nevertheless, I emphasize once again the consequences of the psi paradox: an experimental setting studying psi does not, *a priori*, allow – from an epistemological standpoint for reasons already mentioned – for distinguishing the respective contributions of recording, documentation, and observation. It would therefore be conceivable to introduce these variables to observe their effects, but I fear that these experimental variations will not lead to definitive conclusions. However, being able to demonstrate this problem experimentally will still be useful and will definitively rule out the possibility of experimentally distinguishing the influence of these different variables.

A Posteriori Permutation and the Temporality of the Ontic Order

Another theoretical point that Markus Maier and his team could elaborate on concerns the epistemic function of *a posteriori* permutation. In this regard, I would first like to recall the steps of the experimental setting:

1. A confound is deliberately maintained to prevent determining whether the effect is causal (confound) or acausal (psi): this produces a form of entanglement between the causal and acausal effects that prevents them from being "untangled";
2. The erasure of part of the data allows for differentiating the effect of the storing, observation, and documentation.
3. We (partially) "de-entangle"[6] the causal (confound) and acausal (psi) effects after the experiment has been conducted through permutation.

Maier and colleagues therefore assume that the introduction of confound "protects" the acausal correlation but that it can then be revealed by this permutation test. This strategy implicitly rests on the idea that there is no linear temporality at the level of the ontic order, insofar as the subsequent erasure of the data has a "retro-causal" effect on them. But if time is not a fundamental parameter of the ontic order, performing a permutation after the fact amounts to the same thing: it leads to conducting a test that documents the psi effect according to a causal relationship, which, in theory, should objectify the effect and make it disappear. For the reasons mentioned earlier, I fear that this will eventually happen, but let us imagine that it does not. This would mean that the temporal lag between the effect and its detection, combined with the erasure and the introduction of a confound, would allow the effect to be stabilized and to avoid the principle of elusiveness.

Experimenter Effect, Intentionality, and the Source of Psi

In the discussion of the first article, Maier et al. (2026) address the influence of the experimenter effect. Their conclusion is that this effect, although theoretically possible, seems unlikely, given the operational complexity that it would entail for the experimenters to exert such an influence on the experimental setting. This conclusion, however, rests on reasoning that remains tied to a

6 I say "partially" because, in reality, it can be statistically demonstrated that the effect is not reducible to confound, but it is impossible to determine precisely when the effect is causal or acausal. This is an important point from a theoretical standpoint, showing that the demonstration of the psi effect is probabilistic and statistical.

causal representation of such an experimenter's influence. Yet, psi effects seem to obey finalistic logics and are, from this perspective, opposed to the logic of causal relations (causal: cause > effect; finalistic: effect > cause; Rabeyron, 2023, 2026). This means that the system on which the psi effect operates "adjusts in reverse" to intentionality. For example, in a poltergeist case, an unconscious idea results in a consequence in the subject's material environment: intention precedes cause. A metaphor will help clarify this idea: the psi effect operates like a chain of dominoes, but in the opposite direction of ordinary causality. It is enough to have the initial intention (to knock over the first domino) for the entire set of dominoes to eventually fall (the causal chain of material events resulting from the fall of the first domino).

Consequently, contrary to what Markus Maier and his team propose, it is not necessary for the experimenter to be aware of all the details of the setting in order to influence it. The experimenter will simply exert an influence "at the end of the chain," and the psi effect will "travel back up" the causal chain. The literature on the experimenter effect provides ample documentation of this phenomenon, starting with the experiments by West and Fisk (1953), who conducted a classic ESP task by varying only the experimenter analyzing the data as a parameter, which allowed them to show that one of them obtained significant results while the other did not. Wiseman and Schlitz (1997, 1999; Schlitz et al., 2006) similarly obtained different results with an identical protocol.

However, it seems to me that the very question of the source's location (participants vs. experimenters) stems from a line of reasoning that remains captive to the spatio-temporal coordinates governing the epistemic order. In the ontic order, there is no separation between distinct agents: there is a *communion of wills*, in Schopenhauer's sense (1819/1969, 1851/1974), within an entangled system, where the experimenter, the participants, and the apparatus form an indivisible whole. Any parapsychological experiment therefore reduces this totality to separate elements that maintain relationships of complementarity and incompatibility. It is thus epistemologically impossible to construct a protocol fully independent of the conditions of its enunciation that would allow for separating the effect of the participants from the effect of the experimenters due to this logic of communion.

Stimulus and Pragmatic Information

As previously mentioned, Maier and his team do not explain the theoretical reasons that led them to choose the pictures of food dishes. This choice seems judicious, however. Color preference involves limited engagement: subjective variations are small, and the pragmatic information generated by each trial remains very modest. Taste preference, on the other hand, involves a

more intense hedonic investment, richer memory associations, and more pronounced individual preferences. Theoretically, the richer the task is in pragmatic information (the more important it is to the subject), the greater the potential magnitude of the effects should be. One could therefore consider other stimuli (faces, highly emotionally charged images, etc.), perhaps even more engaging, and see if this alters the observed effects, while taking all the epistemological precautions previously mentioned regarding the possibility of empirically distinguishing such variables.

Regarding future research strategy, however, I would propose to Maier and his team to replicate the taste protocol exactly before varying the stimuli. Otherwise, this would amount to introducing novelty into the system, which would certainly favor the production of a psi effect but would no longer allow us to determine whether the effect persists due to this introduction of novelty or due to the protocol itself. It is precisely this ambiguity that, in my view, is illustrated by the research program of certain researchers who manage to repeatedly produce significant effects but by varying at least one parameter between each replication. The protocol would therefore need to be *strictly* identical and reproducible, so that other research teams could claim to replicate it under the same conditions. Only independent and repeated experimental validation could then demonstrate that the effect is stable. But this brings us back to the principle of elusiveness: by proceeding in this way, the effect is objectified and "used" in a causal manner. The reader will thus have understood the paradoxical logic in which we find ourselves when it comes to objectifying psi effects – a situation that amounts to trying to jump over one's own shadow… The data obtained by Markus Maier are still too preliminary to determine whether he and his team have achieved such a feat.

Conclusion

The research program developed by Maier and his team constitutes one of the most original and promising paradigms in psi research. It proposes an experimentally testable approach aimed at avoiding the reproducibility issues encountered in this field. The approach to effects as perceptually induced correlations, as well as the gradual development of a strategy based on (1) identifying an effect associated with a confound, (2) storing only one part of the data, and (3) analyzing the data retrospectively to distinguish the psi effect, is particularly ingenious and leads to promising results. The theoretical comments offered in this article do not constitute a challenge to this program, but rather an outline of complementary perspectives for future research. I hope that this protocol will make it possible to stabilize the effects, but the elements presented in this article call for a certain degree of caution for epistemological reasons that have, until now, made it very difficult to reliably document psi effects.

Nevertheless, this research program already offers an original perspective that could truly become a new paradigm based on the recognition and consideration of the principle of elusiveness. Perhaps we can then hope, as Markus Maier and his team have begun to envision, that this paradigm will gradually come to fruition as research methods are refined. In this regard, the erasure-confound paradigm paves the way to elaborate the experimental parapsychology research program on renewed theoretical foundations. The future will tell whether this path will indeed make it possible to overcome the aporias of the Rhinian paradigm, or whether it, in turn, will run up against the paradoxical logic that has characterized the study of these phenomena for nearly a century.

References

Atmanspacher, H. (2003). Mind and matter as asymptotically disjoint, inequivalent representations with broken time-reversal symmetry. *BioSystems, 68*(1), 19–30.

Atmanspacher, H. (2020). The Pauli-Jung conjecture and its relatives: A formally augmented outline. *Open Philosophy, 3*(1), 527–549.

Atmanspacher, H., & Fach, W. (2013). A structural-phenomenological typology of mind-matter correlations. *Journal of Analytical Psychology, 58*(2), 219–244.

Atmanspacher, H., & Primas, H. (1996). The hidden side of Wolfgang Pauli: An eminent physicist's extraordinary encounter with depth psychology. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 3*(2), 112–126.

Atmanspacher, H., & Rickles, D. (2022). *Dual-aspect monism and the deep structure of meanin*g. Routledge.

Atmanspacher, H., Römer, H., & Walach, H. (2002). Weak quantum theory: Complementarity and entanglement in physics and beyond. *Foundations of Physics, 32*(3), 379–406.

Bem, D. J. (2011). Feeling the future: Experimental evidence for anomalous retroactive influences on cognition and affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 100*(3), 407–425.

Bem, D., Tressoldi, P. E., Rabeyron, T., & Duggan, M. (2016). Feeling the future: A meta-analysis of 90 experiments on the anomalous anticipation of random future events. *F1000Research, 4*, 1188.

Bohm, D. (1980). *Wholeness and the implicate order*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Cardeña, E. (2018). The experimental evidence for parapsychological phenomena: A review. *American Psychologist, 73*(5), 663–677.

Cardeña, E., Lynn, S. J., & Krippner, S. (Eds.). (2014). *Varieties of anomalous experience: Examining the scientific evidence* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.

Dechamps, M. C. (2019). *Mind-matter interactions and their reproducibility* [Doctoral dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München]. Fakultät für Psychologie und Pädagogik.

Dechamps, M.C., Maier, M.A., Pflitsch, M., & Duggan, M. (2021). Observer dependent confounds of quantum randomness: Effect stability and replicability. *Journal of Anomalous Experience and Cognition, 1*(1–2), 114–155.

Filk, T., & Römer, H. (2011). Generalized quantum theory: Overview and latest developments. *Axiomathes, 21*(2), 211–220.

Kennedy, J.E., & Taddonio, J.L. (1976). Experimenter effects in parapsychological research. *Journal of Parapsychology, 40*(1), 1–33.

Lakatos, I. (1970). Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes. In I. Lakatos & A. Musgrave (Eds.), *Criticism and the growth of knowledge* (pp. 91–196). Cambridge University Press.

Lucadou, W., Römer, H., & Walach, H. (2007). Synchronistic phenomena as entanglement correlations in generalized quantum theory. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 14*(4), 50–74.

Lucadou, W. (2015). *The correlation-matrix method (CMM): A new light upon the repeatability problem of parapsychology.* 58th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association & 39th SPR International Annual Conference, University of Greenwich, United Kingdom.

Maier, M.A., & Dechamps, M.C. (2018). Observer effects on quantum randomness: Testing micro-psychokinetic effects of smokers on addiction-related stimuli. *Journal of Scientific Exploration, 32*(2), 265–297.

Maier, M.A., & Dechamps, M.C. (2025). Macroscopic complementary relation between subjective observations and objective measurements of colors. *Journal of Anomalistics, 25*(1), 15–60.

Maier, M.A., Dechamps, M.C., & Rabeyron, T. (2022). Quantum measurement as pragmatic information transfer: Observer effects on (s)objective reality formation. *Journal of Anomalous Experience and Cognition, 2*(1), 16–48.

Maier, M.A., Vogel, A., & Dechamps, M.C. (2026). Macroscopic complementarity between subjective and objective food image assessments: A conceptual replication of the color-erasure effect. *Journal of Anomalistics*, *26*(1), 37–74. https://doi.org/10.23793/zfa.2026.037

Maier, M.A., Vogel, A., Storch, J., & Dechamps, M.C. (2026). Non-classical correlation between subjective and objective color observations: Change of effect as a function of its empirical documentation. *Journal of Anomalistics, 26*(1), 14–36. https://doi.org/10.23793/zfa.2026.014

May, E.C., Utts, J.M., & Spottiswoode, S.J.P. (1995). Decision augmentation theory: Toward a model of anomalous mental phenomena. *Journal of Parapsychology, 59*(3), 195–220.

Mossbridge, J., Tressoldi, P., & Utts, J. (2012). Predictive physiological anticipation preceding seemingly unpredictable stimuli: A meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 3*, 390.

Pauli, W. (1994). The influence of archetypal ideas on the scientific theories of Kepler. In C.P. Enz & K. von Meyenn (Eds.), *Writings on physics and philosophy* (pp. 219–279). Springer. (Original work published 1954).

Plato (1991). *The republic*. Basic Books. (Original work published ca. 375 BCE).

Rabeyron, T. (2020). Why most research findings about psi are false: The replicability crisis, the psi paradox, and the myth of Sisyphus. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, Article 562992.

Rabeyron, T. (2023). *Codex Anomalia: De l'énigme du psi à la relation psyché-matièr*e. InterEdition.

Rabeyron, T. (2026). *The Psi Enigma: When anomalous experiences transcend the everyday world*. Routledge.

Rhine, J. B. (1934). *Extra-sensory perception*. Branden Press.

Roll, W. G. (1977). Poltergeists. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), *Handbook of parapsychology* (pp. 382–413). Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Schlitz, M., Wiseman, R., Watt, C., & Radin, D. (2006). Of two minds: Skeptic-proponent collaboration within parapsychology. *British Journal of Psychology, 97*(3), 313–322.

Römer, H. (2023). Twenty years of generalized quantum theory. *Journal of Anomalistics, 23*, 145–154.

Schopenhauer, A. (1819). *The world as will and representation* (Ed. 1969). Dover.

Schopenhauer, A. (1851). *Essay on spirit seeing and everything connected therewith* (Ed. 1974). Clarendon Press.

Spinoza, B. (1677). *Ethics* (Ed. 1996). Penguin Classics.

Storm, L., Tressoldi, P. E., & Di Risio, L. (2010). Meta-analysis of free-response studies, 1992–2008: Assessing the noise reduction model in parapsychology. *Psychological Bulletin, 136*(4), 471–485.

Tierney, I., Watt, C., & Flores, A. (2018). Measuring organizational closure in the MPI/GQT/CMM context. *Journal of Parapsychology, 82*(2), 198–202.

Tierney, I. (2012). Lessons from a case study: An annotated narrative. In W. H. Kramer, E. Bauer, & G. H. Hövelmann (Eds.), *Perspectives of clinical parapsychology* (pp. 20–29). Stichting Het Johan Borgman Fonds.

Walach, H., & Römer, H. (2000). Complementarity is a useful concept for consciousness studies: A reminder. *Neuroendocrinology Letters, 21*(3), 221–232.

Walach, H., & Römer, H. (2011). Generalized entanglement: A nonreductive option for a phenomenologically dualist and ontologically monist view of consciousness. In H. Walach, S. Schmidt, & W. B. Jonas (Eds.), *Neuroscience, consciousness and spirituality* (Vol. 1, pp. 81–95). Springer.

Walach, H., & von Stillfried, N. (2011). Generalised quantum theory – Basic idea and general intuition: A background story and overview. *Axiomathes, 21*(2), 185–209.

Walach, H., von Lucadou, W., & Römer, H. (2014). Parapsychological phenomena as examples of generalized nonlocal correlations: A theoretical framework. *Journal of Scientific Exploration, 28*(4), 605–631.

Walach, H., Kirmse, K. A., Sedlmeier, P., Vogt, H., Hinterberger, T., & von Lucadou, W. (2022). Nailing jelly: The replication problem seems to be unsurmountable. Two failed replications of the matrix experiment. *Journal of Scientific Exploration, 35*(4), 788–828.

West, D. J., & Fisk, G. W. (1953). A dual ESP experiment with clock cards. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 37*, 185–197.

Wiseman, R., & Schlitz, M. (1997). Experimenter effects and the remote detection of staring. *Journal of Parapsychology, 61*(3), 197–207.

Wiseman, R., & Schlitz, M. (1999). *Replication of the experimenter effect and the remote detection of staring*. Proceedings of the Parapsychological Association's 42nd Annual Convention, 147–153.

Zusammenfassung

Jenseits des Prinzips der Flüchtigkeit? Eine Analyse der Ergebnisse des Erasure-Confounds-Paradigmas

Dieser Kommentar analysiert die Ergebnisse zweier Versuchsprotokolle der Forschergruppe um Markus Maier, die sich auf das Erasure-Paradigma konzentrieren und zwei konzeptuelle Neuerungen kombinieren: die Verlagerung der Aufgabe von einer willentlichen Intention zu einer perzeptiven Bewertung sowie die gezielte Einführung eines Störfaktors (Confound) zur Aufrechterhaltung des Psi-Effekts – ein Ansatz, den wir als „Erasure-Confounds-Paradigma" bezeichnen. Nach Einordnung dieser Arbeiten in den Kontext der Aporien des Rhine'schen Paradigmas – insbesondere hinsichtlich des Psi-Paradoxes und des Prinzips der Elusivität – werden die Beiträge und Grenzen dieses neuen Forschungsparadigmas diskutiert. Die Analyse hebt den originellen und vielversprechenden Charakter der erzielten Ergebnisse hervor und situiert sie in einem breiteren theoretischen Rahmen zur Frage der Elusivitätseffekte. Mehrere Perspektiven werden zudem aufgezeigt, um zu bestimmen, inwiefern die implementierte Strategie eine nachhaltige Umgehung des Prinzips der Elusivität erlaubt.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Psi, Generalisierte Quantentheorie, Prinzip der Flüchtigkeit, Psi-Paradox, Erasure-Paradigma, Decline-Effekt