

# Eugène Osty

Eugène Osty (1874-1938) was a French medical practitioner and psi researcher. He was director of the Institut Métapsychique International in Paris and is noted in particular for an innovative investigation of the medium Rudi Schneider.

## Life and Career

Eugène Osty was born in 1874 in Paris. After studying medicine there he moved to Berry in central France, and worked as a medical practitioner.

In 1909, intrigued by the accuracy of a palm-reading, he decided to carry out research. He served with the French army medical corps during World War I, then returned to Paris and devoted his time to the study of clairvoyance and related studies. He joined the [Society for Psychical Research](#) (SPR) and the [Institut Métapsychique International](#) (IMI), where he collaborated with [Richet](#), [Flammarion](#), [Bergson](#) and Boirac.<sup>1</sup>

On the death in 1924 of [Gustave Geley](#) he succeeded him as director of the IMI, having now retired from medicine. From 1925 until his death in 1938 he contributed articles on clairvoyance and mediumship to the *Revue Métapsychique*. He was appointed honorary vice-president of [Harry Price](#)'s National Laboratory of Psychical Research in London.

He investigated sensitives such as Stanisława Popielska, Jan Guzyk, Jeanne Laplace and Pascal Forthuny, but is best known for his 1930 investigation of the Austrian physical medium [Rudi Schneider](#).<sup>2</sup> He and his engineer son Marcel created a device that used an infrared beam able to detect anomalous movements of objects in the dark, activating a warning bell to draw attention to them and cameras to record them.<sup>3</sup> The experiments were initially carried out at the IMI in Paris and later at Price's laboratory. In recording movements, the device confirmed that they were genuinely anomalous, and not caused by trickery.<sup>4</sup> (See a full description [here](#).)

Osty and Price later fell out when Price criticized him over his control procedures during the Paris sittings. Osty believed that he may have inadvertently irked Price by maintaining contact with the SPR, with which Price had a frosty relationship.<sup>5</sup> In 1933, the SPR invited Osty to give the Frederic W.H. Myers Lecture, where he discussed the Schneider experiments and the precautions that were taken to prevent cheating.<sup>6</sup>

Osty used the term 'metagnomy' for his expanded definition of psychometry, which encompassed contributory features such as the material of the objects used and the length of time they were handled. A commentary can be found in GNM Tyrrell's *The Personality of Man*.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding out-of-body experiences, Osty used the term 'autoscopy' or 'la vision de soi'<sup>8</sup> (visions of the self), treating the phenomenon in psychological terms as

hallucinatory. 'The sensation of being out of the body was seen as an illusion, a confusion of the mind, and not as a real exteriorization', he wrote.<sup>9</sup>

Critics at the SPR found fault with the quality of his case histories, in terms of their selection and editing.<sup>10</sup> One was [Alan Gauld](#), who, however, added, 'It would take an immense mass of erroneous material to outweigh Osty's more remarkable cases and a great deal of misrecording and misverification to undermine them'.<sup>11</sup>

## Works

### Books

*Lucidity and Intuition: An Experimental Study* (1913). Paris: Libraire Felix Alcan.

*The Meaning of Human Life* (1919). Paris: La Renaissance du Livre.

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### Selected Articles

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Un métagnome: M. Pascal Fortunhy (1926). *Revue Métapsychique* 3, Mai-Juin.

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Two distinguished painter-mediums: The work of Marjan Gruzewski and Augustin Lesage (1928). *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 22/5, 302-6.

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La Vision de Soi (1930). *Revue Métapsychique* 3, 185-97.

Enquête sur le don ou la science du sourcier. Exposé de l'enquête (1931). *Revue Métapsychique* 4.

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Alexis Didier: Clairvoyant extraordinary, part 2 (1935). *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 30/1, 14-35.

Séances de connaissance extra-sensorielle en public (1937). *Revue Métapsychique* 2.

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## Literature

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Berger, A.S., & Berger, J. (1991). *The Encyclopedia of Parapsychology and Psychical Research*. New York: Paragon House.

Braude, S.E (2016). [Rudi Schneider Investigated by Eugene Osty](#). *Psi Encyclopedia*. London: The Society for Psychical Research.

Gauld, A. (1982). *Mediumship and Survival. A Century of Investigations*. London: Heinemann.

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## Endnotes

### Footnotes

- [1.](#) Berger & Berger (1991), 302.
- [2.](#) Guiley (1994), 239.
- [3.](#) Braude (2016).
- [4.](#) Osty & Osty (1931/32).
- [5.](#) Gregory (1977), 514.
- [6.](#) Osty (1933).
- [7.](#) Tyrrell (1954), 175-85.
- [8.](#) Osty (1930), 185-97.
- [9.](#) Alvarado (2016), 124.
- [10.](#) Inglis (1984), 135.
- [11.](#) Gauld (1982), 134.

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