

PROCEEDINGS OF
THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF
PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

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UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS
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SUMMARY REPORT

The first International Conference of Parapsychological Studies met at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands, from July 30 to August 5, 1953. Sixty-three members, drawn from fourteen nationalities, and comprised largely of physicists, chemists, biologists, psychologists, sociologists, physicians, engineers and mathematicians, met to consider problems which arise in the investigation of types of communication between individuals which are not explicable in terms of any known form of contact through the sense organs, and types of contact between individuals and their physical environments which are not explicable in terms of contemporary physics and biology—processes designated generically as psi-gamma (paranormal cognition) and psi-kappa (paranormal action upon bodies not in physical contact with the individual). Such processes are often entitled “telepathy,” “clairvoyance,” “psychokinesis,” etc.

After preliminary sessions delimiting the field of enquiry, four Working Groups were established: the first dealing with quantitative experimental studies of the various classes of paranormal activity; the second with interpretation of material gathered in the practice of psychiatry; the third with qualitative and spontaneous (not experimentally controlled) phenomena; and the fourth with the psychological study of those persons who appear to display a relatively large amount of paranormal sensitivity (“special sensitives”).

Attention was given to the establishment and maintenance of scientific standards, the development of appropriate experimental and quantitative methods, the devices for discovering specially sensitive individuals, and the most profitable ways in which to combine and extend the concepts and methods of the

various sciences in an attempt to understand more fully the relations between the living organism and the environment. The various scientific groups, assisted by men working in the philosophy of science, discussed the possibility of developing a theory sufficiently comprehensive to give some sort of order to the variety of phenomena described.

While most of the problems had been investigated for many years on a small scale by individual scientists and by societies for psychical research, the spread of interest among scientists has been notable in recent years; and a primary activity of the Conference, beyond the authentication of various classes of facts, was the effort to develop a scientific program to deal with all types of unknown relations between individual and environment, whether at present classifiable or not.

There was, for example, marked interest in the problems of unexplained or "unorthodox" healing (recoveries from disease transcending the present concepts of psychosomatic medicine); and a medical committee was established and empowered to take the first steps towards the organization of a research center for the investigation and interpretation of such phenomena.

While most of the research workers in the field of parapsychology were known to one another through the technical journals, the opportunity to meet for a week under University auspices marked an important forward step in understanding across the barriers of nationality, language, and professional specialization.

INTRODUCTION

In placing before the members of the First International Conference of Parapsychological Studies and other interested readers the summaries of papers presented to the conference at Utrecht, a few words may be said regarding the context, the spirit, the achievement and the promise of this conference.

Coming of age during the last quarter of the 19th century, *parapsychology*, or *psychical research*, began very soon to achieve a genuine internationalism in spirit. Britain, the United States, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, made outstanding contributions; and the documents from that era indicate a lively intercommunication, despite the barriers of national culture and of language. Indeed, parapsychology played its part in the international psychological gatherings of the period, and frequently broke into the psychological publications from the new psychological laboratories.

Under the leadership of Carl Vett, a series of international Congresses of Psychical Research was held in the period between the two World Wars, beginning with the Congress in Copenhagen in 1921. These paved the way for the somewhat different type of Conference held at Utrecht in 1953. It was felt desirable to limit the size of the gathering and to direct invitations mainly to those who had taken part in research investigations in this area of science. The extraordinary hospitality of the University of Utrecht, of the Netherlands Government, and of KLM, the Royal Dutch Air Line, and the very generous support of the Parapsychology Foundation of New York made possible the gathering held at the University

of Utrecht at the end of July and in the first days of August, 1953.

The Conference at its closing meeting determined that Proceedings should be published which would summarize the contributions of that week. The present publication is simply the fulfillment of that promise. It is, unfortunately, impossible to print the full text of the many addresses. A very considerable amount of editorial work was required in preparing a summary of each study presented to the Conference, referring this to the author for approval, yet maintaining some uniformity in style. The presentations are too brief, and in many cases, too lacking in documentation to serve as research reports in the full sense. In many cases, however, these studies in their complete form will find their way into the regular scientific publications of parapsychology and into the publications of other sciences. Let the reader kindly remember that this is simply a *Proceedings of the Conference*, neither more nor less. It will chiefly interest those who took part. It is appropriate, however, that it be deposited in libraries wherever there is a serious attempt at completeness of parapsychological materials.

Perhaps the fact should be explicitly pointed out, despite its obviousness, that in the interpreting of paranormal phenomena there are still enormous differences of opinion. No participant in the Conference is responsible for any views expressed but his own.

From the perspective of 1955, it appears that this Conference achieved its major purpose in moving toward a high level of seriousness in parapsychological science, enabling scholars from different lands to meet with one another, and orienting the public to the fact that a great university may today be proud to give its utmost hospitality to these studies so rich in challenge, so far-reaching in ultimate implications.

Parapsychology was once limited mainly to the work of societies for psychical research. But it is evident from the whole cycle of activities in the last twenty-five years, including notably the experimental work at Duke University, the

investigations at Harvard, Stanford, the City College of New York, Bonn, Freiburg, Oxford, Cambridge and the University of London, among others, that parapsychology as an aspect of university research has come to stay. Something like the structure of a science is being achieved. The Utrecht Conference is a milestone on the way.

GARDNER MURPHY

The Menninger Foundation

Topeka, Kansas

May, 1955

LIST OF CONFERENCE MEMBERS

Following is a list of members of the International Conference of Parapsychological Studies at Utrecht.

Mrs. Edward W. Allison (U.S.A.)
Mr. Robert Amadou (France)
Prof. Hans Bender (Germany)
Dr. John Björkhem (Sweden)
Dr. Gotthard Booth (U.S.A.)
Mr. G. Spencer Brown (Great Britain)
Dr. Hilde Bruch (U.S.A.)
Dr. Orlando Canavesio (Argentina)
Dr. Wilfred Daim (Austria)
Dr. E. J. Dingwall (Great Britain)
Mrs. Laura Abbott Dale (U.S.A.)
Dr. Jacques Donnars (France)
Dr. Jan Ehrenwald (U.S.A.)
Dr. Jule Eisenbud (U.S.A.)
Prof. H. Th. Fischer (Holland)
Mr. Antony G. Flew (Great Britain)
Dr. Haakon Forwald (Sweden)
Prof. Gebhard Frei (Switzerland)
Mr. Jean Gebser (Switzerland)
Dr. Wm. H. Gillespie (Great Britain)
Mrs. K. M. Goldney (Great Britain)
Prof. Hornell Hart (U.S.A.)
Prof. Gustav Hartlaub (Germany)
Dr. Peter Hohenwarter (Austria)
Dr. Betty Humphrey (U.S.A.)
Dr. Winfried Hümpfner (Austria)
Mr. David Kahn (U.S.A.)
Dr. J. Kappers (Holland)
Dr. W. Kat (Holland)
Mr. Raphael Khérumian (France)
Dr. J. M. J. Kooy (Holland)
Prof. D. J. van Lennep (Holland)
Prof. Sven Krohn (Finland)
Dr. William Mackenzie (Italy)
Mr. A. Mak (Holland)
Mr. Gabriel Marcel (France)
Dr. Marcel Martiny (France)

Dr. R. A. McConnell (U.S.A.)
 Dr. Joost A. M. Meerloo (U.S.A.)
 Dr. C. A. Meier (Switzerland)
 Prof. Heinrich Meng (Switzerland)
 Mr. A. M. J. Mitchell (Great Britain)
 Mr. C. W. K. Mundle (Great Britain)
 Dr. Gardner Murphy (U.S.A.)
 Dr. H. Musaph (Holland)
 Mr. J. Fraser Nicol (Great Britain)
 Mr. Edward Osborn (Great Britain)
 Mr. F. Claude Palmer (Great Britain)
 Mr. Denys Parsons (Great Britain)
 Prof. C. A. van Peursen (Holland)
 Dr. J. J. Poortman (Holland)
 Mrs. Dorothy H. Pope (U.S.A.)
 Prof. H. H. Price (Great Britain)
 Dr. Wolf Dietrich Rasch (Germany)
 Mr. William G. Roll (Great Britain)
 Dr. Louis Rose (Great Britain)
 Mr. William H. Salter (Great Britain)
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 Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler (U.S.A.)
 Mr. Michael Scriven (U.S.A.)
 Prof. Emilio Servadio (Italy)
 Mr. Aage Slomann (Denmark)
 Dr. S. G. Soal (Great Britain)
 Prof. Stefano Somogyi (Italy)
 Prof. F. J. Stratton (Great Britain)
 Mr. René Sudre (France)
 Prof. W. H. C. Tenhaeff (Holland)
 Dr. R. H. Thouless (Great Britain)
 Dr. S. W. Tromp (Holland)
 Dr. Montague Ullman (U.S.A.)
 Prof. Hubert J. Urban (Austria)
 Dr. Paul Vasse (France)
 Mrs. Paul Vasse (France)
 Mr. René Warcollier (France)
 Dr. G. D. Wassermann (Great Britain)
 Dr. Thorstein Wereide (Norway)
 Dr. Joseph Wüst (Germany)
 Mr. G. Zorab (Holland)

This list does not include a number of prominent Dutch scholars, University professors, psychiatrists, analysts, and officials of the Netherlands Ministries of Education and of Public Health.