

**PARAPSYCHOLOGY,
PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS
CONCEPTS**

PROCEEDINGS OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

HELD IN ROME, ITALY

AUGUST 23-24, 1985

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**Edited By
Betty Shapin and Lisette Coly**

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PARTICIPANTS

Corrado Balducci	Formerly Apostolic Delegate The Vatican
Sergio Bernardi	Parapsychological Centre of Bologna Rome, Italy
Michael Grosso	Jersey City State College New Jersey, U.S.A.
James A. Hall	University of Texas Health Science Center Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.
Michael Perry	Durham Cathedral Durham, England, U.K.
Leslie Price	<i>Theosophical History</i> London, England, U.K.
Steven M. Rosen	College of Staten Island New York, U.S.A.
John Rossner	Concordia University Montreal, Canada
Emilio Servadio	Italian Psychoanalytical Society Rome, Italy
Rhea A. White	Parapsychology Sources of Information Center New York, U.S.A.

OBSERVERS

Dr. Anindita Niyogi Balslev	Højbjerg, Denmark
Professor Balslev	Højbjerg, Denmark
John Cutten	London, England
Umberto di Grazia	Rome, Italy
Dr. Paola Giovetti	Modena, Italy
Professor Filippo Liverziani	Rome, Italy
Charles Parmitter	Madrid, Spain
Dr. Rosemarie Pilkington	New York, U.S.A.
Maria Cartia Santini	Rome, Italy
Anna Maria Turi	Rome, Italy

PARAPSYCHOLOGY FOUNDATION, INC.

Eileen Coly	President
Lisette Coly	Vice President
Allan Angoff	Chairman, Domestic and International Programs
Robert R. Coly	Administrative Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

LISETTE COLY: How do you do, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Lisette Coly and I am Vice President of the Parapsychology Foundation. I call to order this our 34th Annual International Conference. This conference is now in session.

We thank you for coming to present, exchange and, perhaps, to argue your views on the issue of "Parapsychology, Philosophy and Religious Concepts." The Foundation has for many years looked forward to the opportunity for sponsoring a conference in Italy and we feel it significant that this year's conference with its particular theme should take place here in Rome, the Eternal City.

It has been said that a little philosophy inclines a man's mind to atheism, but that depth in philosophy brings men's minds about to religion. Some thirty years ago, our founder, Eileen Garrett, was asked, "Is parapsychology a philosophy of life? Does it imply a definite attitude toward religion?" She responded, and I quote: "Parapsychology is above all a science, but I consider that study in this particular field, whether general or specifically experimental, must also supplement and illuminate the meaning of all religious experiences . . . for myself, I merely accept with serenity the knowledge that a divine potency which exists in all life wraps around me."

Eileen Garrett died in 1970 and while in great pain a few months prior to her death she gave what was to be her last published interview. It is interesting to note that at the end of her life she said: "There must be a greater order than we can conceive of—to the whole aspect of being. We have to go, I think, through all kinds of experiences and perhaps after we go we have to meet another set of circumstances for which we have been prepared or ill-prepared here. But whether we have liked it or not, we have to go through with it, because the experiment of being is all important to a God-head we don't even comprehend."

Differences in philosophical and religious beliefs bring man to many disputes and impasses to say the least. This leads us to inquire if the answer does not perhaps lie beyond the world of sensory experience. And is not this searching beyond the world of sensory experience what the science of parapsychology is all about?

At this time I am very pleased to introduce to you the President of the Parapsychology Foundation. Ladies and Gentlemen, Eileen Coly.

EILEEN COLY: On behalf of the Parapsychology Foundation I am very happy to welcome you—participants and observers—to this year's annual international conference and I thank you for the efforts you have all made to be with us for the next two conference days.

I greet you today with great pleasure. It has always been the aim of the Parapsychology Foundation, as envisioned by my mother, Eileen Garrett, to bring together people of diverse backgrounds, from varied academic disciplines, cultures and religions, to meet, examine and confront the enigmas presented to us by psychical research and now the science of parapsychology.

Part of the pleasure I feel today is due to the fact that we are very fortunate to have with us one of the very learned and revered pioneers of parapsychology, Dr. Emilio Servadio, of Rome, Italy. Dr. Servadio was at the Foundation's very first International Conference held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 1953, and has continued to contribute greatly to the growth of our field ever since.

I would also like to share with you that we at the Foundation have a special feeling for Dr. Servadio. He met Eileen Garrett in 1946, I believe, and, apart from their very fruitful professional association, they grew to become very close personal friends and that has carried over to our family. Dr. Servadio has also the distinction of having attended the largest number of Foundation conferences. Out of a total of 34 conferences Dr. Servadio has attended 27—which you will agree is quite an impressive record. All of us at the Foundation value both our personal and professional relationship with Dr. Servadio and we thank him for his gracious support through these many years.

At this time I would like to share with you a brief communication from Professor Giorgio di Simone, President of the Centro Italiano di Parapsicologia of Naples, who has expressed his deep regret at being unable to attend this conference. He writes as follows: "With the kind permission of the Parapsychology Foundation, I wish to express in a few words my opinion on the matter discussed here. It is impossible to deny the existence of a relationship between parapsychology and philosophy (a certainly close one), as well as between parapsychology and religious ideas (a less close relationship, this last, since religious ideas are usually restrained by rituals and dogma). As far as I am concerned, it is long since I have drawn a functional distinction between paranormal phenomena able to be analyzed in a strictly scientific way, and "borderline" parapsychological phenomena ("frontier" parapsychology). In 1981 I founded "Gnosis" an institute for research on the survival

hypothesis. In my opinion this last but not least aspect of parapsychology, is obviously more open to new and revolutionary "philosophical" approaches to the meaning of human personality and of its presence in the physical world. Seen from this point of view, frontier parapsychology aims to go beyond science (which in its definition, is bound to observe and analyze our planet's physic and psychic phenomenology), and at becoming a fundamental branch of human knowledge, seen as a whole. As far as parapsychology and religious ideas are concerned, I think that a link alone may be found with a frontier parapsychology freed from any preconcepts; the possibility that parapsychology itself may draw a new logic and rational conception of human thought and of the nucleus that is the primary source of personality."

Now I would like to briefly introduce you to the other members of the PF staff. My daughter, Lisette, Vice President of the Foundation and Associate Editor of these conference proceedings you have already met. Over there is Robert Coly, our Administrative Secretary and Treasurer and, as such a man to be reckoned with! This then brings us to Allan Angoff, who will be our conference chairman. I will now turn you over to Allan and we can get to the business at hand.