

PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

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The paper served to initiate a discussion of parapsychological concepts. In the case of each concept examined (extrasensory perception, telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis) the definition found in the glossary of the *Journal of Parapsychology* provided a starting point. Most current psi concepts and their definitions have been formulated by Dr. Rhine and his colleagues, and may be found in the *Journal*.

First, the definition was considered from a terminological point of view. If it seemed ambiguous, or if the meaning was not very clear, an alternative formulation was suggested. Next it was considered whether the description which this definition gave of certain types of psi phenomena seemed empirically justified, or how it might be brought to experimental test.

The possibility of distinguishing between the various types of psi was examined. The author reconsidered the old issue whether it is possible to distinguish experimentally between telepathy and clairvoyance, and discussed the practical and theoretical difficulties in ascertaining whether the concept of precognition is required or whether the phenomena may be accommodated by ESP (telepathy and clairvoyance) and PK. On the other hand, we may distinguish, with relative ease, PK findings from other psi phenomena.

We distinguish psi phenomena according to different types of "targets." In telepathy the targets are mental events; in clairvoyance, objective states of affairs; in precognition, future events; and in PK the aim is to bring about a physical change. However, it is only from our ordinary, common sense point

of view that there are these differences. We must examine the possibility that, in fact, there is no difference in modus operandi between apparently different forms of psi. Or, again, there may be different types of psi but these differences may not be brought out by the classifications which we make.

The main purpose of the paper was to emphasize that theories and assumptions about psi are implied by our concepts and definitions. These definitions should only be accepted as working hypotheses and as such be brought to empirical test. If this is not done, there is perhaps some danger that the terms we have selected for a preliminary description of the phenomena will act as blinders in future research and hide the road towards the kind of understanding which will lead to effective prediction and control.